

Jesus as God

John 17:6-19

INTRO:

In the first four hundred years of the Church there were various controversies about Jesus and who he *was* and who he was *not*. This is how all of the Creeds were developed. The biggest argument in those days was that Jesus was not really a human being.

The church insisted that he was, for he was born of a human mother, he suffered, bled, and died just like all other human beings do. Others insisted that Jesus only appeared to be human, but was *not* really human. The Church said, “**No!**”

It is so interesting that in our own day the greatest challenge seems to be to believe that Jesus is divine. It is so great a threat to people in our day to think that Jesus might just possibly be not just an inspiring human being, a noble human being, but also God.

I wonder what this tells us about us that we are fine with Jesus n=being human but his divinity makes us stumble!

ME:

I remember as a young Christian wondering if it was idolatry to pray to Jesus. **Aren't we only supposed to pray to God?** Well now I know that we are only supposed to pray to God, and that is why we pray to Jesus, or in Jesus' name.

YOU:

How do you feel about all this? Do you have any questions about Jesus? You understand he was human, right? And...that he was divine? God and man. Man and God. Let's look at John's Gospel as we try to grow in our understanding of all this:

GOD:

John 17:6 "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of

them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

WE:

We are eaves dropping on Jesus' long prayer to his Father that closes out John's Gospel.

The prayer is a window into the heart of God, for us who are listening in on Jesus' prayer.

Jesus is the complete revelation of God and he shows us what God is really like. Jesus has made God known to us and to the world. In John's Gospel, Jesus is the revealer of God, he is the Son who can show the Father to us the best.

Jesus has revealed his Father's name to the people the Father gave him.

Why?

To reveal the name of his Father to the people he was given by his Father. To make a “**name known**” is to make the very essence of the person known. These ragtag disciples may not know many things, but they know the true God. Jesus speaks to them so that they may have total joy in the full knowledge of the Father.

There is no other God behind Jesus, no greater knowledge of God to be had than looking at this Jew from Nazareth in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

*God is . . . **What is God like?***

I read that by definition God is large, even undefinable. And that God is *not*. God is *not* male, *not* female, *not* graspable, or definable. Islam forbids any representation of God. No images, portrayals, or other artistic attempts to contain or limit God. Orthodox Judaism historically refuses to speak the name of God. There’s even a commandment:

Thou shalt not make any graven image of the holy, unmentionable God.

Have you ever heard of “negative theology?” It says that since we can’t say for sure what God is, we can only say what God is *not*: *not* a creature, *not* a principle, *not* a thing.

That's an interesting way to look at God, but it is not enough. It simply will not do. **Can you pray to a principle? Me either! Can you love and worship and abstraction?**

When the darkness of life surrounds you, you want a God who *is, not* a God who is *not!*

- *The Gospel of John, where Jesus is tough to pin down and figure out.*
- *The Gospel of John, where Jesus goes to a wedding and turns 180 gallons of water into wine.*
- *Jesus goes to the Temple, which is a place of prayer and makes a whip and drives the merchants and leaders out of the Temple.*
- *In John 3, Jesus gets into an argument with a theologian, Nicodemus, spins his head with double talk and confuses him nicely.*
- *Jesus meets a woman at a well and sticks his nose into her personal life. She runs away quickly all dazed and confused.*
- *Jesus did magic on a crippled man in John 5,*
- *broke religious law in John 6*

Who can we make sense of all this?

When asked over and over again who he was, Jesus answered. He answered and said he was *bread, life, the vine, the door, the good Shepherd, the water of life!*

And we all asked loudly in our minds:

what in the world!

Now, finally, seventeen chapters later, Jesus makes some sense. Some even say the veil was lifted, as Jesus clearly says,

“The Father and I are one. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”

Jesus sweeps all the double negatives aside as he shows us God is **not** indefinable, not unreasonable, **not** incomprehensible, **not** theologically negative! Jesus and the Father are one. Look to Jesus and see God—not just a form of God, not just a reflection of God. Some say that when you look at this Jew from Nazareth—who was weirdly born, briefly lived, was unjustly condemned, violently died, and unexpectedly raised—we have seen as much of God as we can ever hope to see.

Jesus was not a human form with a bit of the Almighty God stuffed inside! Jesus Christ is the fullness of God.

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word (the Christ) was with God...and the Word was God.”

That is how this Gospel of John begins. It’s beautiful. I remember this is the first text I learned in the original Greek in seminary! It’s beautiful in Greek or English! Notice the last bit:

The Word was God!

But as we watch Jesus save the wedding, chase folks out of the Temple, as we watch as he confuses us by what he says and what he does, is rejected, suffers, dies on a cross and says it is “**glory**,” one might say that to

say “**Jesus is God**” takes on a bit of an edge. We who believe say, yes, in this Nazarene we have seen the fullness of God. Even in his outrageous and confusing words and actions, even the most confusing and offensive of them, *we have seen the fullness of God!*

We are Christians if we are seeking after, trying to make sense of, seeking to imitate, falling in love with, trying to look like this Nazarene Jew who . . . was one with the Father.

Perhaps it was easier to take Jesus as a confusing enigma. Who knows where he is going or who he is, but when the veil is lifted and the enigmatic becomes clear, distinct, and definite . . . that is much more challenging.

Jesus and the Father — ONE! *They are ONE!* When we look at Jesus with our eyes and ears, we are looking at and listening to the fullness of God.

Author Marcus Borg wrote that:

*Christianity find the primary revelation of God in a person. This does not make Christianity superior, but it does make it different. For Christians, to use language from John’s Gospel, in Jesus ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us.’ This is the central meaning of the incarnation: **Jesus is what can be seen of God embodied in a human life. He is the revelation, the incarnation, of God’s character and passion—of what God is like and of what God is most passionate about. He hows us the heart of God.***

*And because Christians find ultimate disclosure of God in a person and not in a book, Jesus is more central than the Bible. Jesus **edges out** the Bible:*

when they disagree, Jesus wins.

Yet, of course, we know about him primarily through the Bible, and in particular through the New Testament.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

Jesus is God, he and the Father are one.

YOU:

Are you any clearer about this now? If not, that's okay, maybe it will take more time. But do not give up! Take Jesus at his word, ***he is the Word! He and the Father are . . . One. Jesus as God.***

CLOSE:

Jesus prays to his Father before he prepares to leave his disciples, asking his father to protect his disciples and to continue to love them and be with them.

N. T. Wright asks:

So ***what is Christianity about then?***

Christianity is all about the belief that the living God, in fulfillment of his promises and as the climax of the story of Israel, has accomplished all of this —the finding, the saving, the giving of new life—in Jesus. He has done it. With Jesus, God's rescue operation has been put into full effect once and for all. A great door has swung open in

the cosmos which can never be shut. It's the door to the prison where we've been kept chained up. We are offered freedom: freedom to experience God's rescue for ourselves, to go through, to go through the open door and explore the new world to which we now have access...in Jesus of Nazareth heaven and earth have come together once and for all.

What does this look like in real life? It looks like transformed lives. Let me shower you what I mean:

***The Ultimate Gift** is about an arrogant, spoiled young man named Jason Stevens. Jason expects a huge inheritance when he hears that his grandfather has died. What he gets instead is a crash course in life. Jason is required to do twelve tasks—what his grandfather calls "gifts"—designed to challenge him in improbable ways. Among Jason's tasks is the challenge to make one true friend within a month. He soon befriends Emily, a little girl battling leukemia. In this scene, Jason finds Emily sitting alone in the hospital chapel. She is staring at a statue of Jesus with his arms outstretched.*

"I wonder if he takes advance orders," she says.

"For what?" Jason asks.

"For my place. You know—up there," Emily answers as she points upward.

"What do you think it's going be like?" Jason asks.

"Butterflies—lots of butterflies. Do you know God paints every color on a butterfly with his finger?" asks Emily.

"I didn't know you thought about stuff like that," Jason replies.

"I think about dying," Emily says, as she begins to cry. **"There's something basically unfair about a person dying. I even hate the idea."**

"You know," Jason says softly, **"I don't know much about God or Jesus, but I can promise you that those arms are meant for you."**

Soon after Emily's death, Jason eventually inherits \$100 million from his grandfather. He invests every dime of it to build **Emily's Home**, a facility for families whose children are facing extraordinary health challenges.

That is a transformed life. That's what it's all about.

Let's pray that our own transformation continues...