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## “THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE”

**I** RECENTLY heard a missionary story of a boy who got malaria. The widowed mother had previously lost her husband to the same terrible fever. She was given instructions by the witch doctor of how to cure her son. The prescriptions included beating him, forcing him to swallow terrible mixtures, building a fire on the boy's chest, and finally smashing out all of the boy's teeth. For all of this the witch doctor was paid handsomely. The widow's water buffalo (her only means of plowing and earning a living), her last bit of rice, even a beam holding up her house had to be removed to pay the "doctor's" bill.

Perhaps we don't go to the above extreme, but nevertheless our lives are shaped by our beliefs about God just as much as were those of that poor widow. Who is God? What is He like? How can we know Him?

### CHRIST, THE IMAGE OF GOD

Christ Reveals the Personality and Character of the Father. Moses, though he "spoke face to face" with God, yet even he was not allowed to see the glorious face of the Divine Person, but only the "back parts." Others have seen His hair, hands, feet, and form, but since sin entered the world and brought with it a separation between man and his Creator, no man has ever been able to look upon the surpassing glory of the face of God (see John 1:18). For this reason, Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity, and came to live as a man among men. He did this so that we men might know our Creator once more. He (Christ) who is in the "express image of his [the Father's] person" (Hebrews 1:3) is the "one mediator between God and man" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Christ declares, "I and my Father are one." "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (John 10:30; Matthew 11:27).

Christ came to teach fallen human beings what God desires them to know about Him. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, wisdom, and love; but God saw that sin had cast a dark veil over nature, and so a clearer revelation was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He therefore sent His Son into the world, to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God, “that they might know thee” (John 17:3).

Christ’s identity was preserved in His humanity. In the gift of Christ, a channel of communication was opened between God and us. When Christ laid down His divine form and glory, and became a helpless babe in Bethlehem, did He lose His identity? Did He cease being the divine Son of God? No! He was “Immanuel,” God with us. He said, “if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” He was still the divine Son of God, bearing the express image of His Father’s character, even though He had divested Himself of His divine form, which was in the express image of His Father’s person (Hebrews 1:3).

Thus, as we behold Christ in the varied circumstances, trials, and temptations “that are common to man” (1 Corinthians 10:13), we are seeing the mind of the Father. As we behold Him suffering the keenest hunger in the wilderness, and being tempted to satisfy his hunger by turning the stones to bread, and choosing rather to die than commit sin, we are beholding the abhorrence with which God views sin. When we behold Him nailed to the cross, and praying, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do,” or when we hear Him with tenderness tell Mary Magdalene, “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more,” we are beholding the forgiving heart of God. Jesus spoke and acted just as His Father would have were he there.

. . . but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. . . . Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as

my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. — John 8:26  
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When we see His life, one of constant self denial, hardly stopping to eat or rest, constantly healing the afflicted, and speaking encouraging words, we are seeing the loving, self-sacrificing heart of God.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. — John 5:19-20

We see the mind of God in His attention to the little details, as Christ carefully folds with His own hands the napkin or scarf, which had covered his head, before leaving the tomb. And we behold the compassion of God in Christ, as He ministered to the physical wants of the people in the feeding of the 5,000, and when He thought of the emotional needs of His mother as he suffered upon the cross. In all of this we behold God's great heart of love.

Whether we look to the close personal friendship with John the beloved, who leaned on His breast, or when we behold Him humbly wash His disciples' feet, calling them "friends" (John 15:15); in all of these and more we behold the person of our Father. We are seeing just what the Father would do in the same situation.

More than this, we see in the life of Christ the character of God manifested in fallen flesh, under the very same circumstances we are placed in, and with the very same capabilities and liabilities. Only by studying the life of Christ can we get to know Him intimately, and come to know the heart of God. It is by contemplating and appreciating His character, that we are transformed into the same image:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. — 2 Corinthians 3:18

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. — 1 John 1:1-3



When we truly have this fellowship with God, our Father, and His Son, we will come to love them with all our hearts for what they are, and we will become like them.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. — 1 John 3:2

Then, when “we shall be like him”, we will receive answers to our prayers, and will know that they are heard, and will work in harmony with those prayers. Then also we shall understand how His going forth is prepared as the morning, and will find the truthfulness of Christ’s words,

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. — John 17:3