

Children's Moment

February 15, 2015

Title: Who Is God

Object: Picture of Universe

Scripture: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Romans 1:20

As a Christian community we need to teach our young children the foundations of our faith. Let me ask you, “Who made you?” Can any of you answer this question? Right, God made you. Did you know in Psalm 139 written by King David, it says that God designed you while you were still inside your mother?

What else did God make? How about all the stars in the heavens? In the Bible Isaiah tells us that God can measure the heavens by the span of His hand. Can you imagine God holding everything in His hand? Wow that is one big hand – so we know we have a very big God.

Can any of you tell me why God made each of us and all the things in the heavens and universe? God made everything for His own glory.

If God made everything for His glory how can you and I glorify God? We glorify God by loving Him more than anything else and obeying what He teaches us in the Bible.

Is there any reason why someone should not know about God? Our verse this morning says, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” What this means if people will just look around them they will see evidence of God everywhere.

I want you to look for things that tell us there is a God this week and next week you can let me know what you find. Will you do that? You dad and mom can help?

Dear Jesus we thank you for the wonders you have created and the delight they bring. Help us to live for your glory. Amen.

-S- Seeing God In Christ

Jesus has explained to the remaining eleven disciples that His time on earth is almost over and that they should be keen to know the meaning when Jesus said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.**” (John 14:6) Jesus is saying, “I am God. I am not merely a manifestation of God, I am God manifested.” Understanding this divides truth from false views of Christ, separates true believers from believers in false Christs and is the difference between believers and unbelievers, and it is also what separates Christianity from all other religions. Many people today regard Jesus as a good man; the Muslims believe Jesus to be a prophet. But, no one who claimed to be God – if the claim were false could be called good and certainly would be a false prophet. If a man made such a claim and knew it to be false then he would be both evil and a deceiver. If a man believed his claim to be God to be true and it was not, that would make him a lunatic. The historical evidence overwhelmingly shows Jesus to be neither a liar nor lunatic. Jesus was and is God, just as He claimed. This is true whether one believes or not – eternal truth is eternal and is not reliant on people to believe. The question is not is there a God and is Jesus the Christ, but the question has always been - do you believe?

When one has moments of confusion and doubt we think if only we could have tangible proof – if we could see God. If we could see God, even if it was just for a fleeting moment we would be able to live for God, to be faithful in this lost and dark world. Have we not all felt this way at times? And if we are honest there have been times that because we do not see God we think He is holding out on us – making it more difficult for us to remain faithful because He denies us this most

desired experience. Have you ever had these thoughts or are Philip and I the only ones? Well if you have ever had doubts then this exchange between Jesus and Philip in the upper room will be of great interest to you.

Seeing - Knowing God

To be fair to Philip we need to see that Philip asked this question in the context of the teaching Jesus was giving that He was the only way to God. This is an exclusive statement. Jesus now goes on to explain how through Him one can know God. Jesus continues saying, ⁷“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” (John 14:7) The nature of Jesus’ statement of being the way and the truth and the life followed by what He says here in verse 7 and the context of His teaching to the disciples this last night implies that He said these things to provoke a discussion among the eleven. He knew He was about to leave the disciples and would no longer be seen physically and they might fall into despair. In their despair God would seem remote. So here Jesus is teaching them that they had in fact already seen God and would know God in a personal way from now on. Even though they may not have realized it, since at this point they have not received the Holy Spirit – it is true nonetheless. Philip locks onto “from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” This prompts his response in verse 8 to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Philip is saying, “I don’t know about the rest of these men, but I am pretty sure I have not seen God. So show God to me now and it will be enough for me to deal with whatever is coming.” We are not unique, Philip and the other disciples wanted assurance by the seeing of God long before we do now.

Seeing - Human Limitations

We do not want to be too hard on Philip; after all he had the advantage of the Old Testament only. He was probably thinking I have followed the promised Messiah for 3 years – I think it is a fair request. He is probably thinking what about Moses. Moses asked to see God and God answered, *“I Myself (God) will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you...”* (Exodus 33:19) Then God placed His hand over Moses and passed by. What about Elijah? Read along with me in 1 Kings 19, the LORD confronts Elijah saying, **11***“Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD.”* And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but the LORD was not in the wind.* And after the wind an earthquake, *but the LORD was not in the earthquake.* **12***After the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.* **13***When Elijah heard it, he wraped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”* Not only did Moses and Elijah hear or see God but in Exodus 24, Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders of Israel *“saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.”* (Exodus 24:10) None of these passages mean that they literally saw God – they saw or heard His presence and they knew it was God, but they did not look upon God. We know this by what God told Moses, *“You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”* (Exodus 33:20) However, the experience of being in the presence of God was something greatly desired by Philip and if it was good enough for Moses and Elijah and Aaron, well it would good enough for Philip. Philip believed Jesus was the Messiah and as the Messiah He could do anything – heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out

demons how much harder could it be for Jesus to do the miracle of a theophany (*the·oph·a·ny*)? Can anyone tell me what a theophany is? Theophany is the visible manifestation of God to humans. Philip thinks it is reasonable request and that there is historical precedence for what he asks Jesus to do.

But how does Jesus reply? Instead of granting Philip's request or explaining why his request was unwise, as God did for Moses, Jesus begins to teach what it really means to see God and how one is to see God. Philip says, "Lord, we would know God - if only we could see Him." Jesus answers Philip in verse 9, I am paraphrasing, "Philip, how strange that you would ask this question. Have you not been with Me for 3 years? You have seen Me almost everyday day and it is not painfully oblivious that the Father and I are One? Philip do you not know Me? If you do not know Me then even if you saw God how do you think you would know Him? Jesus is the only "theophany" of God. So Jesus answers Philips question and the same question we have asked at times, that even physically seeing God would not bring true knowledge of who God is, if we do not know who Jesus is. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "*See is not always believing.*" Believing in Jesus is seeing.

Seeing – Christ

Jesus also directed Philip to what was the right way to see. Jesus said, "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father.*" The right way to see the Father is centered on knowing Jesus as the Christ. He is saying if you have seen Me, Philip, how can you ask, "*Show us the Father.*" We have looked at the wrong way to attempt to see God, but by contrast there is a right way to see. First, we need to see Jesus with spiritual understanding and that knowledge only comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that God the Father and Christ gives when one is called and their soul regenerated. Secondly, we see when we surrender our lives to Jesus as our Savior,

our Lord and our Master. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave.” (1 Corinthians 7:22) We are slaves to sin and this world or we are slaves to Christ. I am a slave of Christ and am thrilled to be His slave and a freeman by His grace. Thirdly, we come to know God the Father, who we cannot physically see and become intimate with Him by believing in and knowing or seeing Jesus. We gain and improve our spiritual sight by what God reveals to us in His Word, the Bible and by the power and wisdom given to us through the Holy Spirit. Philip was in the direct presence of Jesus and we are not. However, we do have the Holy Spirit, which Philip did not at the time of his conversation with Jesus, and we have the New Testament. Both of these are a tremendous blessing that we should be forever thankful.

I would like to delve deeper into the what is the right way to see and how accurate the Bible is and the detail God gives us in the Bible to help us see and know His truth. I would like to jump ahead to the story of Peter and John’s trip to the tomb of Jesus in chapter 20. In this story there are three different words used that are translated as “saw”, “see”, “seen” or “seeing.” Our language as compared to the Greek is at times limited and all three Greek words are translated in the English language as “see.” The first word is *“blepō”* (*blep – oo*) used when John having outdistanced Peter arrives at the tomb and peers into the tomb and sees the linen clothes that Jesus was wrapped in lying there. This word simply means John saw an image with his eyes – the empty tomb and the wrappings. Now Peter arrives and he is not one to hang back and pushes John aside entering the tomb. As he enters he sees the grave clothes. But now the word used is *“theōreō”* (*theo-reo*). This word means as he saw he “puzzled over” or “scrutinized” what he saw. Peter was evaluating the fact that the grave clothes that Jesus had been wrapped in were

here, but Jesus' body was not. If Jesus body had been taken away, why had the grave clothes not been taken with Him? If someone removed the wrappings before taking Jesus' body why were they not strewn about? The wrappings lay exactly as they had been when they were on Jesus and the head cloth was set off by itself. While Peter is *"theoreo"* or puzzling over what he is observing, John now enters. John observes Peter and **sees** what Peter is studying and John believes. Now we have a third word for "seeing", it is *"eidon"* (*aid -don*) which means to see with understanding – so John saw *"eidon"* he understood and he believed. John saw and understood the only thing that would account for the presence of the grave clothes and the absence of Jesus' body was the resurrection. Now back to our passage this morning in John chapter 14. There in the second half of verse 9 is the word *"eidon"*, Jesus says, **"He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"** When we understand the meaning of the word *"eidon"* then we have a clearer understanding what Jesus was saying to Philip and to us. Isn't it amazing the detail God placed into even the words the Holy Spirit directed the writers to use so that we might see with understanding what God has placed into the Bible so that our faith and understanding might be increased.

This applies directly to us – if seeing God the Father or Jesus physically is the most important thing – then we are deprived. Philip did not see God, but he did see Jesus almost every day for three years. But, Jesus is not here physically, we cannot see Him with our eyes. However, if perceiving is the true seeing *"eidon"*, then we are NOT deprived, for we can perceive Jesus, perceive His presence here now and perceiving Jesus, we know Him and perceiving Jesus we then perceive and know God. Indeed we are able to know God in a very real and intimate way just as the disciples did, but the world is unable for it is spiritually blind. Since the world is unable to see or know Jesus why then should we be surprised that they do not

understand, they do not see Jesus or understand us and even hate us.

Seeing – Believe First

We can now observe that the first half of this paragraph is the discussion of “knowing” and “seeing” and then the second half focuses on “believing.” The word “know” occurs four times and the words “seen” or “show” five times in the first half of the paragraph, but in the second they are not found. What is now used is the word “believe.” Look in your Bibles beginning in verse 10, **“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.**

¹¹**Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.”** How many times do you see the word “believe”? I do not believe there is any mystery why this paragraph is structured as it is. In spiritual things belief must, must come first and then true “seeing” or understanding or believing follows. Back in John chapter 4, please turn to chapter 4, verse 48. I will give you a little time to get to John 4:48. Jesus said of many of the people who were following, **“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”** (John 4:48) They simply did not understand that they needed to believe in order to truly see. How about us? Are we of the former way? Seeing is believing. Look around you the false religions often teach you must blindly see in their leader or writings that cannot be proven true in order to believe and they are no different from the lost world. The world is blind to what it does not want to see – for the truth convicts it of its sin. The world says how can you believe something you cannot see. Many churches say if you speak in tongues this is evidence that you believe, even if the gift of tongues comes before understanding, this is not right. **“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you**

simply will not believe.” Jesus turns this around and says, “Believing is seeing.” Jesus is frustrated with many of the people who were following Him just to see the next miracle and says, “*Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.*” Immediately following this statement the reverse is brought to light. Look at verse 49, “*The royal official said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’* 50 *Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son lives.’* *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off.*” His son lived by the power of Jesus and the man’s faith. Again we see this principle in chapter 11, before Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead He turns to the unbelieving Martha and asks her, “*Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?*” (John 11:40) As lost people it is natural to think and say, “Seeing is believing.” When it comes to the physical things of this world this thought process works. On the other hand when it comes to things beyond this world, spiritual life and truths it is reasonable and it is right that one must believe first in order to see. To believe in Jesus as the Christ and then see God through Him is logical and right.

Seeing – Faith

Augustine said, “*Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.*” We see God by believing in Jesus, but this does not mean that God is intangible and our faith is based on wishful thinking. Going back to our study passage, Jesus explains this as He continued saying, ¹¹“*Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.*” Jesus is not calling for people to have “blind faith”, but He calls us to “thinking faith.” Jesus tells us to test Him and His claims on the basis of the things He has said and verify they have proven to be true and test His claims by the deeds

He has done. I challenge people all the time to test God – read the Bible and see if it is not true. See if the Words and deeds of Jesus stand up to critical thought. As my father’s time on earth was short and he was dealing with advanced cancer my father had to wrestle with the mercy of God. He knew he had not believed and deserved nothing in return for his unbelief. So, if there was a God then in truth he deserved God’s wrath and not mercy. My father was plagued by many events of his life. As we visited I asked him what was the purpose of life? Was it meaningless – ending in an black hole in the ground? Was it broken relationships, cancer and death? Had he considered my question he realized he had placed his faith in the wrong things of the world, the cult I had been raised in and rejected and left when I had become a Christian? Had this cult given him peace, now as he approached death? I shared my testimony with my father and he had to admit that I had become a very different person and I had a peace he did not know or understand. Then I shared with him that my belief in Jesus was not blind but based on the Word, the Bible, proven true and the deeds and miracles that also proved Jesus is who He said He is. That Jesus did all these things – lowering Himself to come to earth, taught sinners about God, truth and salvation. That He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6) That His words and deeds proved His claims to be true. Jesus promised to bring people back to God and He did this by dying of the cross in their place, my place and my father’s place. Jesus did this and proved again this was truth by rising from the dead and that He lives this very day. Further, that the tragedies and sins of this life do not keep us from being saved by God’s grace. Jesus said clearly, ²⁷“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and **no one**

is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. ³⁰**I and the Father are one."** (John 10:27-30) My father began to see the truth as God brought his soul to life, even as his body was dying. Belief is meaningless unless it rests on the truth of the words and works of Jesus. God brought turmoil into my father life for him to finally see his only hope was Jesus. Six weeks before he died he came to faith by the only way possible – like John seeing or "*eidon*" the grave cloths of Jesus and understanding the resurrection, my father saw Jesus as the Christ and because he understood he saw God through Christ.

Closing

Faith without reason is worthless. Jonathan Whitfield, the eighteenth century pastor, was preaching to coal miners in England. He asked one man, "**What do you believe?**" The man responded, "**Well, I believe the same as the church.**" Jonathan replied, "**And what does the church believe?**" The man shot back, "**Well, they believe the same as me.**" Seeing he was getting nowhere, Whitfield said, "**And what is it that you both believe?**" Without hesitation the man said, "**Well, I suppose the same thing.**" This belief is of little value and faith is absent for there is no foundation.

To believe in Jesus on the basis of His works or miracles is not the best kind of faith, but it is true faith and it is better than no faith and is often where many beliefs begin. The better faith is the object of our faith – Jesus. Look at the world around us, people have faith in many things; their own abilities, their egos, money and even other people – people who so often are not faithful. People place their faith in religions with dead gods and faith in their own works. The truth is that faith is worthless if one places their faith in people, things or religions that do not prove themselves true – true in the past, in the present and will be eternally true in the

future. It is faith in Jesus, who has proven Himself forever true that we are saved and it is through Jesus we come to know God the Father. Believe in Jesus based on the truth of what He said and did "*eidon*" with understanding – based upon the truth of the Bible and this will enable you life by Jesus – to be Jesus' slave and know truth, salvation, grace, mercy and the peace of God.