

# Johns Answer 2

## WHO IS JESUS?

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### STUDY THREE: JOHN'S ANSWER - PART TWO

#### SUMMARY:

- Jesus' exclusive claim - 'I am the way': John 14:6
- Seeing Jesus is seeing the Father - Knowing Jesus is knowing the Father: John 14:7-9
- The mystery of incarnation - 'I am in the Father ... the Father is in me': John 14:10,11
- The promise of the Spirit - a further indication of Christ's deity: John 14:15-16:33
- 'Father ... ' - The Prayer of the Son of God: John 17
- The confession of Thomas - 'My Lord and my God': John 20:22-31

In John 12:44-46 Jesus cried out: 'When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness.'

In these words we are given the precise, central meaning of Jesus as 'the Light of the world.' In this man Jesus, God is seen. In this man Jesus, all the ignorance, all the genuine questions, all the confusion about who God is and what God is like are dispelled. Because this man Jesus has lived among us there is, for those who **see** him, for those who **believe** in him, no more darkness. The nature, the character, the person of God is here before us.

#### ***JESUS' EXCLUSIVE CLAIM - 'I AM THE WAY ... ' JOHN 14:6***

Jesus takes this concept up and hammers it home in John 14. In the presence of his disciples he lays before them one stupendous claim after another. The first is the well-known verse 6:

'I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.'

We must be careful not to let our familiarity with this verse rob it of its power. At least five absolute claims are packed into these few simple words.

[1] 'I am the way' - an exclusive, absolute statement. Jesus Christ here claims that he, and he alone, is the way, that is the **road**, to God. There is no other road to God. Every other supposed road to God does not lead to the God who is the Father of Jesus Christ. Other religious or spiritual roads may lead to some kind of religious or spiritual experience, but Jesus Christ alone is **the one road** to the God of the Bible.

[2] 'I am the truth.' Again, an exclusive, absolute statement. Not only did Jesus teach the truth about God, he claims that he **is** the truth. He, in his person, in his living, in his speaking, is the truth about God. Not **part** of the truth, but **the** truth. Everything outside of Jesus Christ, everything other than Jesus Christ is not **the** truth. It is either **partial** truth and partial error, and therefore misleading and deceptive; or it is total error. Only the person who knows Jesus Christ knows the true, undiminished, unadulterated truth about God. That is what Jesus is claiming here.

[3] 'I am the life.' This identification of himself with life has been a recurring thought in Jesus' teaching, indeed, in John's Gospel. Again Jesus makes a claim that excludes all but himself as the source of a real relationship with God: he and he alone is **the** life. He claims that apart from him there is no spiritual life. Apart from him there is only spiritual death. All of the spirituality, all of the devotion, all of the religious endeavours that abound in various religions all around the world, all of these, no matter how sincere, hold people in spiritual death. Jesus here makes the claim that only in him can a person find spiritual life, for he, and he alone, is **the life**.

[4] '**No-one** comes to the Father except through me.' In case we had not understood the implications of the three claims just made, Jesus spells it out so that there can be no mistake. **No-one** comes to the Father except through him. No matter how important someone is. No matter how religious or spiritual someone is. No matter how many followers someone has, or how many people they have influenced. No matter how good or kind or law-abiding. No matter how devoted. No matter how genuine. **No-one**. Everyone who rejects Jesus Christ cannot come to God.

[5] 'No-one comes to the Father **except through me.** ' If Jesus Christ had no real right to make the claims he did, this would be one of the most repulsive. These three words reduce all of our human ideologies and religions to nothing. These three words stand in stark judgement on all who have promised their followers eternal blessedness or union with the divine. If these three words are true, then all the promises and claims of all other religions, cults and philosophies are empty and false. All of the hype, all of the charisma, all of the countless millions of devotees, all of the pain and the sacrifice - all of this, all around the world, means nothing and achieves nothing of any eternal value. According to these words of Jesus Christ: no-one comes to the Father **except through him.**

The meaning and the force of these simple words of Jesus are clear: *there is no other way.* Those who believe in him must also bear with the hatred and rejection that the exclusiveness of this claim attracts. Only by distorting and reducing the obvious meaning of the words can we escape their absoluteness and their narrowness; but then we would be left with an impotent apology for the Gospel.

## **SEEING JESUS IS SEEING THE FATHER -KNOWING JESUS IS KNOWING THE FATHER: JOHN 14:7-9**

'If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'

In John 1:18 we read 'No-one has ever seen God.' In 1 Timothy 6:16 Paul reminds us of God who 'lives in unapproachable light, whom no-one has seen or can see.'

Isaiah, confronted with a vision of the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem, cried out in horror and dismay 'Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty' (Isaiah 6:5). And Elijah over-awed and afraid in the presence of the Lord, 'pulled a cloak over his face' before he stepped into that presence. (1 Kings 19:13). He did not dare to look at God.

Moses, not really appreciating what he was asking, said to the Lord: 'Now show me your glory.' The Lord replied: 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But you cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live ... When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.' (Exodus 33:18-23)

And on Mount Sinai the Lord surrounded himself with a dense cloud to keep himself hidden from the people of Israel. There, even the sound of his powerful voice caused the people to tremble with fear, begging Moses 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.' (Exodus 20:19; read chapters 19 and 20.)

These passages help us to understand the awesome claim that Jesus is making here in John 14:7 and subsequent verses.

That which is impossible, that which is potentially destructive to us, here, in Jesus Christ becomes possible, and is potentially life instead of death. Here in Jesus Christ the knowledge of God which had been impossible before is available and accessible to all. That which before had only been seen in shadows and symbols here stands before us in reality. The coming of Jesus Christ removes the darkness. The coming of Jesus Christ removes the questions. The coming of Jesus Christ removes the ignorance. Here in Jesus Christ we both know God and see God.

Here in these words all the skepticism of the agnostics and the denials of the atheists are invalidated. God is known, God is seen, in Jesus Christ.

But still Philip misses the point, as millions since have missed it, and many in the contemporary church still miss it: 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.'

The power of Jesus' words has passed right over him. So incredible, so unexpected, is the incarnation that has taken place in the coming of the Son of God to earth in the conception, birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth, that Philip does not realise what Jesus is saying.

To Jesus the surprising thing is Philip's failure to understand: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?'

For three years Philip had lived with Jesus, hearing his teaching, witnessing the miracles. Both of these were adequate indicators of the true identity of Jesus. (See John 5:36; 6:63,64; 10:25,38; 12:47-49). Certainly, the disciples have understood far more than the general crowds; and Peter has spoken for them in his confession 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!'

But the impact and the implications of that confession have not yet hit them. They do not yet realise the immensity of what is going on here.

Jesus hammers it home: 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.'

Now we must understand that Jesus is **not** here making a pantheistic New Age statement, in which he is god because all is one and all is god. If this were true then you and I, and every thing on the earth could make this same claim.

Nor is he speaking as one who thinks that every believer is a reduplication or incarnation of God, as taught by some current pseudo-christian televangelists and writers.

The claim Jesus makes here is unique and radical. It is a claim only he can make. It is a claim that goes beyond all human thought and expectation. In some ways we could say it is the essence of the Gospel. More demanding than the cross. More significant than the cross. If we fail to understand Jesus here, then we cannot rightly understand the cross and the resurrection. If we fail to believe Jesus here, then the cross can do nothing for us, for the cross mediates life and forgiveness only to those who believe.

Anyone who has seen Jesus, has seen the Father.

Here in Jesus Christ the Father is known. If we do not recognise the Father here, if we do not see God here, then we do not know him. If we do not recognise him here, then we will not see him anywhere. If we do not believe that in seeing Jesus we see God, then the god we believe in is not God; it is but a figment of our individual or corporate imaginations. Non-existent. Powerless. (Refer back to 'Who is Jesus? John's Answer: Part One).

The true, the only God reveals himself in his Son, Jesus Christ. Anyone who has seen Jesus, **has** seen the Father. So certain is this, so evident, so unavoidable, so unquestionable, that Jesus asks: 'How can you say 'Show us the Father?' Those who see and know Jesus Christ need have no more questions about God. No more 'Who is God?' 'What is God like?' 'What does he do?' 'What does he say?' 'What does he require of me?' No-one ever again needs to ask even one question. All we need to do is to look at Jesus Christ. Here all the questions about God that have ever been asked and ever will be asked are answered. Standing face to face with Jesus Christ, we see the Father.

## ***THE MYSTERY OF INCARNATION - 'I AM IN THE FATHER ... THE FATHER IS IN ME': John 14:10,11***

Jesus is incredulous that after three years Philip has not yet grasped this truth. How can Philip, having **seen** Jesus, still have his darkness, his ignorance, his doubts, his questions? How can he still ask 'Show us the Father'? Repeatedly Jesus has told them in **words** and shown them in **works** that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. The Father has revealed himself in the Son. The Son has revealed the Father. When the Son spoke he spoke the words of the Father. When the Son worked it was the Father working. When the Son worked it was God, the Father, doing his normal divine thing; it was God, the Father, living in the human life of the Son.

Jesus clearly considers this unique, mutual indwelling as keenly significant. As we saw in John 10:36-39 the Jews realised that when Jesus said 'the Father is in me, and I in the Father' he was claiming deity, he was claiming equality with God. Here in John 14:10 and 11, where Jesus is anxious to get this truth firmly fixed in the disciples' minds before his crucifixion, he states it twice, first with his surprised question 'Don't you believe ... .' and then with his 'Believe me when I say ... '

If they didn't yet believe it, if they couldn't bring themselves to believe it simply on the basis of Jesus' **words** , then, he says, 'at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.' The things that Jesus did (and the Greek word is the usual word for 'work') form the bottom line for belief. What he did proves that he is who he claims. His works validate his words. Both leave no option: he is the Son of God. As the Scripture says 'God was manifest in the flesh' (1 Timothy 3:16, KJV). Paul's comment on this is 'Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great!'

We are still left with a mystery, but it is not a mystery of darkness, ignorance and confusion. It is not a mystery in which we still must ask 'Who is God? What is God like?' It a mystery of awe and wonder. It is a mystery in which we fall on our knees in surprised amazement, and, in adoration and incredulous praise, our only questions are 'How could you do it, Lord?' and 'How could you do it for **me** ?'

The God of love has come down  
Into a stable bare,  
And clothed himself with human flesh  
In that new baby there.  
So small. So weak.  
How can it be  
That here we see  
Eternity?

## ***THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT - A FURTHER INDICATION OF CHRIST'S DEITY: JOHN 14:15-16:33***

Through the rest of John 14, and in chapters 15 and 16, Jesus speaks of his return to his Father and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Both of these assume his deity. Only he who came from the Father can **return** to the Father; only he who is God can send the Spirit of God. There is in these three chapters such a close relationship between the three - Father, Son and Spirit - that each is spoken of in the same terms as the others.

Consider Jesus' references to the coming of the Spirit:

- the Father will give you another Counsellor (14:16)
- I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you (14:18)
- you will see me (14:19)
- I will show myself to those who love me (14:21)
- My Father and I will come to him and make our home with him (14:23)
- the Father will send the Holy Spirit in my name (14:26)
- I am coming back to you (14:28)
- I will send the Counsellor from the Father (15:26)
- I will send him to you (16:7)
- after a little while you will see me (16:16)

These references tell us:

### **[1] The Father sends the Spirit and the Son sends the Spirit.**

In one statement (15:26) Jesus says that he will send the Counsellor 'from the Father' and further states that this Counsellor is 'the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father'. Here we see Jesus claiming for himself the authority to send the Spirit of God to his followers. Clearly in all of these verses relating to the sending of the Holy Spirit, Jesus displays a knowledge of himself as equal and intimate with God the Father.

### **[2] The coming of the Spirit is the coming of the Father and the Son.**

Some Bible teachers limit Christ's "I will come to you" to his resurrection appearances; others include the second coming. But the occurrence of this promise several times in this section where Christ is specifically and deliberately teaching about the coming of the Holy Spirit, including 14:23 where Jesus says that both he **and** his Father will come to those who love him, indicates that the coming of Christ in the coming of the Spirit is also included in his meaning.

[There is more than one mystery contained in these concepts. Not only do we have the mystery we are focusing on in these 'Who is Jesus?' studies, the mystery of the God incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; we have here also the mystery of the Trinity; and further, we have the mystery of the indwelling of the believer by the Holy Spirit, which, as the above verses show, is the indwelling of the Father and the Son in the believer.

It is not the purpose of these studies to discuss these additional mysteries. Yet their presence reinforces the claims to full deity that Jesus has made throughout John's gospel. In these passages Jesus is not arguing with the Pharisees in urgent debate; he is not striving to validate his absolute claims. Nor is he trying to establish confidence in his disciples that he really is who he claims. He is speaking naturally and freely, his conversation automatically assuming the existence of his unique relationship with the Father and his unique identity. Because he is who he is, he **knows** that he, together with the Father, will send the Spirit; he **knows** that it is just as much **him** sending the Spirit as it is the Father; he **knows** that when the Spirit comes it is **him** coming, and it is also the Father coming.

Such is his unity and identity with the Father, such is the fullness of his deity, that what one does the other does, what one is the other is. Christ holds no reduction of deity either in himself or in the Spirit. It is the Son who came to earth, but in that coming we see the Father. It is the Spirit who comes to indwell the believer, but in that coming the Father and the Son come to us. A true understanding of the full deity of Christ and a true understanding of the coming of the Spirit go hand in hand. Any reduction or denial of the first, reduces or denies the second.]

## **'FATHER' - THE PRAYER OF THE SON OF GOD: JOHN 17**

In Christ's prayer in John 17 we are given glimpses of the unique relationship between the Son and the Father.

Addressing God as 'Father' Jesus prays:

### **[1] 'Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you' (verse 1).**

Jesus' prayer here is not 'you do this for me so that I can do that for you'. Rather his prayer is grounded in the basic unity between himself and his Father: if **he** is glorified, the Father is automatically glorified. This recalls his teaching in John 5:23: 'He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.' When we behold the glory of the Son we are beholding the glory of God the Father.

### **[2] 'This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent' (verse 3).**

Knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ is eternal life. Not one without the other, but both together. There are many who claim to know God, but without the knowledge of Jesus Christ **whom God has sent**, that knowledge is spurious. It is the incarnate Son of God who reveals the one true God. Let us note also that it is **knowing** this one true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, that **is** eternal life. To know God through Christ is eternal life. Eternal life is not something we possess apart from and distinct from God. Knowing him *is* life.

[For those who want to consider the implications of this statement of Christ : this statement indicates the gravity of the current reductions of the gospel, where eternal life is promised quite apart from any genuine knowledge of Jesus Christ. Such a promise is invalid and bears no similarity to the Biblical Gospel. Study the Gospel and the first letter of John in depth: you will notice that eternal life is inseparably linked with the *person* of Jesus Christ.]

### **[3] 'I have brought you glory ... ' (verse 4) 'I have revealed you ... ' (verse 6) 'I have made you known ... ' (verse 26)**

In these statements Jesus sums up his ministry: the ministry of making known the Father. The substitutionary, sin-bearing work of Christ on the cross only comes **after** he has revealed the Father. The primary need of mankind is to **know** God, to be saved from the dark blindness of ignorance of God; salvation from sin is secondary. Essential, but secondary. Without true knowledge of God there is no accurate knowledge of the gravity of sin and its effects because there is no accurate knowledge of God's holiness and sovereignty. The original sin (Genesis 3) involved at its heart rejection of the true knowledge of God and rebellion against his authority. While in his dying Christ undid the legal penalty of sin - separation from God, in his living he demonstrated before our eyes precisely and accurately who God is.

## **THE CONFESSION OF THOMAS - 'MY LORD AND MY GOD': JOHN 20:22-31**

Peter's confession in Matthew 16 - 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' - expressed the belief of his fellow disciples. It was a bold statement, cutting right across their traditional concepts, drawing condemnation if heard by the leaders of the Jews. To us, in our cross-cultural reading, it has little of its original impact. To them, so impossible was it, so unheard of, so unthought of, that Jesus said: 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven' (Matthew 16:17).

But this daring belief was shattered. The one they believed to be the Son of God was arrested, tried, condemned and crucified - without lifting a finger to stop it all. Where were his power and his glory? Where his claim to equality with God? What of his repeated statements about being the source of life? Death has taken him. Death has held him. He is, after all, just a man.

All of his claims are invalidated. They, the disciples, are mistaken. The Jews were right, after all.

So unexpected is the resurrection, so impossible, so massive in its implications, that Thomas, despite the witness of those who have seen the resurrected Jesus, declares 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it' (John 20:25).

He needs to know that what the others have seen is more than a ghostly apparition. Only a real flesh and blood body will convince him that the impossible has happened; only a body still bearing the evidence of its traumatic, savage death.

Then Jesus comes, a Jesus who has heard the agony of his disillusionment and disappointment. Into the locked room he comes and stands before Thomas. Ravaged hands outstretched. Robe pulled aside to reveal the gaping wound. A physical man, yet more than a man, saying to Thomas 'Stop doubting and believe.'

It was not just that Thomas disbelieved the resurrection. What he doubted, what he disbelieved, was everything that Jesus had claimed. Death had invalidated all that Jesus had said about himself. Death had proved him a liar and a fraud. Death had proved him a blasphemer. Just a man, claiming for himself the power and authority and honour of God.

Only a real resurrection could turn that around and authenticate everything Jesus had said. Only a real resurrection can validate his claims. As Paul tells us in Romans 1:4 Jesus was 'declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.'

Seeing the resurrected body of Jesus Thomas immediately realises the implications. His answer is precise and radical: 'My Lord and my God!' No more doubt. No more disbelief and disillusionment. Standing in the presence of the resurrected Jesus he knows that he stands in the presence of God.

It is to this belief that each of us is called by the Gospel. Jesus says to Thomas: 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' (John 20:29) The focus of belief is the **person** of Jesus Christ. The question we all must answer is: *who do you say that Jesus Christ is?* Is he just a man, whose death invalidated his claims? Or, is he the Son of God, equal with the Father, whose resurrection verified and validated everything he claimed himself to be? Our answer to these questions decides our eternal destiny.

John concludes his chapter with these words: 'Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**' (20:30,31). Here John tells us the purpose of this Gospel: to get us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and by that believing to have eternal life.

May our hearts not deceive us into delaying *our* answer to the question: 'Who is Jesus?'