

“The Word Became Flesh”

John 1:14

Dr. Jerry Nelson

Exodus 40:17-35 (excerpts)

“So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year. When Moses set up the tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, inserted the crossbars and set up the posts. Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering over the tent, as the LORD commanded him.

He took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it. Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the Testimony, as the LORD commanded him...

He set the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it burnt offerings and grain offerings, as the LORD commanded him...

Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Read John 1:1-14

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children

of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

May God bless the reading and hearing of his word!

A couple of years ago the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals managed to make itself quite unpopular.

It ruled that the phrase "under God" in our national pledge was unconstitutional; it set off howls of protest.

You might say, "It should have set off a protest, everyone knows there's a God."

"How **do** you know there is a God and what do you know about him?"

Again you say, "Well, everyone knows there's a God."

You certainly don't mean that everyone **admits** that there is a God because not everyone believes in God.

But if you mean everyone **ought** to know there is a God you are right.

The Bible declares in Romans 1:18-21 People "suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

God says, creation itself - the universe, the world and all that is in it – clearly indicates the existence of God – "What may be known about God is plain to them"

God is the one who has made himself known in part, "Because God has made it plain to them."

But God says, people "suppress" or refuse the truth.

So you are right, everyone **ought** to know there is a God but they don't because they refuse to.

But if they did admit that there is a God, **what about him** could they know?

The Bible says they could know about his “eternal power and divine nature”.

They could know that God exists and that he is all-powerful.

Is that all they can know about God?

In Romans 2 it says they can also know they are guilty of sin.”

Romans 2:15 “...the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness...”

Again it is God who is, in part, making himself known; that there is a God-established standard of right and wrong that everyone knows and we fail to meet that standard.

So then, by creation and conscience what can we know about God?

We can know that God exists, that he is all-powerful and that we are guilty of breaking his laws.

If that is the sum of our knowledge of God, it is not a very happy total – God is powerful and we are guilty.

Is that all you know about God?

You say, “No, I know that God is love, that he forgives, that he has a will for our lives and that we can have a relationship with him.”

How do you know those truths about God?

You can’t discern them from creation or conscience.

And you reply, “I learned them from the Bible.”

And you are correct.

But I want to give your answer a little more precision – an important clarification.

We have already established that everything we know about God has been at God’s initiative.

God gave us the universe that declares his divinity and power.

God gave us consciences that declare his standard and our failure to meet that standard.

And if we are going to know anything else about God, it must be because God chooses to reveal himself to us.
We can only know what God reveals about himself.

Listen to what God says about **how** else he reveals himself:

Hebrews 1:1-3 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us **by his Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

It is true that God has revealed something of himself through creation and conscience.

God has revealed more of himself through the prophets (meaning the OT Scriptures).

But according to this text what is the supreme revelation of God?

How is God most fully revealed to us?

How do we know God best?

"...in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..."

We know God the Father by knowing God the Son, Jesus.

The Apostle John said it this way:

John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The word "glory" speaks of the self-revelation of God, God's presence.

In Jesus, God reveals himself to us.

The Apostle Paul said it this way:

2 Corinthians 4:5-6 "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord... For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

The knowledge of the glory of God, the self-revelation of God, is in Jesus.

In the Gospel of John we find this exchange:

John 14:8-11 "Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." "Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

To know the Son is to know the Father.

Now here is the corollary, **if you don't know Jesus, you don't know God.**

You may know **some** things about God from creation, conscience and the OT Scriptures **but you can't know God as he truly is without knowing Jesus** because Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."

No other revelation even comes close to that.

And you may know some things **about** God from creation, conscience and Scripture but you can't know God as in having a relationship with God without knowing Jesus.

Jesus said it this way:

John 14:6-7 "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Earlier I suggested that you would say you know more about God than what creation and conscience can teach you.

If I asked you **how** you know more, I suggested you would say you know **from Scripture.**

I also said that while that answer is correct it needs clarification.

Because the more precise and very important answer is that **we know God by knowing Jesus.**

"Wait a minute," you say, "you're splitting hairs."

Knowing God through the Bible and knowing God through Jesus – aren't they really the same thing?"
And I say, "Not fully the same thing."

You don't have a relationship with God by believing that God exists or even by believing the Bible is true.

Our **relationship is not with the Bible** but with the Jesus of the Bible.

And the Bible is the God-ordained means whereby we learn about and come to know Jesus.

The New Testament bears witness **to Jesus**.

John wrote, John 20:30-31 "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."

The Old Testament bears witness **to Jesus**.

After his resurrection Jesus was with two of his disciples.

Luke 24:27 "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

To know God we must know Jesus and to know Jesus we must know the Jesus of the Bible.

I have taken time to emphasize the relationship of Jesus with the Bible because there is a temptation today to seek Jesus in other places, particularly to seek him in our own thoughts and experiences.

People will speak of some dream or vision or some thought that came to them about Jesus and go so far as to suggest such thoughts can actually teach us about Jesus.

People will have an experience and claim the experience teaches us about Jesus.

Several years ago, as I recall it, Billy Graham was asked on a morning television show, how he knows Jesus is alive.

Graham said he knows because he talked with Jesus that morning.

I think I know what Graham was trying to communicate about the personal nature of a relationship with Jesus and with that I would agree, but he and I don't know that Jesus is alive because we talked to him this morning.

We know he's alive because the authoritative Word of God declares it to be true.

It can only be subjectively experienced because it is objectively true.

There is a lot of anecdotal and subjective evidence supporting the reality of Jesus **but only the Scriptures** are the God-ordained, objective witness to the reality of Jesus' person and work.

In our rush to be current, relevant, contemporary, or fresh, we may think there is new knowledge of Christ that is to be discovered by seeking him within or by seeking him in places other than the Bible.

But remember we have a great propensity to being deceived and particularly to self-deception.

The only true knowledge of God, of Jesus, is that which he has made known.

The Spirit-inspired witness of the scriptures must guide our study of Jesus; we want to know Christ as **he** has made himself known.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is God-breathed..."

The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:20-21 "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

The Bible alone is our authoritative source for knowledge of Jesus.

Author Douglas Webster comments, "Submitting to Christ as he is revealed in Scripture by the power of the Holy Spirit is very different from speculating on a Christology acceptable to modern thought..."

Unless we affirm that our perspective of Jesus does not originate in the will of man but through the revelation of God”, we will not be seeing the real Jesus. (Webster A Passion for Christ 27)

“I am concerned that...Jesus may be defined by a popular mentality which substitutes emotion for theology and exchanges positive feelings for biblical content. When the Scripture...no longer shapes the meaning and significance of Jesus, then ... people use his name for their own ends and identify Jesus with **their** cause, instead of becoming identified with Jesus and **his** cause.” (Webster 67)

To know God we must know Jesus and to know Jesus we must know Jesus as he is revealed on the pages of Scripture.

The uniqueness of the Christian faith is that Jesus was not only a man, not only a good man, not only a prophet, not only a special prophet but that he was God in human flesh – “Emmanuel” - God with us.

The greatness of Confucius or Mohammed does not rest on their being more than men, but Jesus’ greatness does. (Webster 106)

So much depends on this, that we must know, “Is Jesus God?”

I want to go back to that word “glory” that I spoke of earlier.

As the Apostle John said it, “We have seen his glory.”

When Jesus was on earth he did not have one of those luminescent halos above him like you see in medieval paintings.

In fact, Jesus’ glory was not perceived by everyone.

The miraculous signs Jesus did were not an unshielded display of glory.

But only those with eyes of faith could see the glory.

(Carson John 130)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote:

“Earth (is) crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries

The only way to see Jesus' glory was to watch him with eyes of faith.
And so it is imperative that we look at him, watch him, and study him.

In just the last couple of minutes I want you to see Jesus in the two paramount experiences of his earthly life.

Look at him as he goes to the cross.

He did not go as a martyr but as a self-giving sacrifice.

Jesus engineered his own death in every detail.

And as he approached it, here is what he said:

John 12:23;13:31 "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.... Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him."

Jesus is saying that in his very death he is revealing who he is.

Jesus showed his deity most in his death for the sins of his people.

Romans 5:7-8 "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

That kind of love is truly divine.

Is Jesus God?

And the supreme manifestation of his deity is in his resurrection.

Listen to the witness of one who had been with him for three years, saw him die, knew where he was buried and then saw him alive.

John 20:24-29

"Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "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."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and

stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Yes, Jesus is God.

It is no wonder the disciples bowed before him.

No wonder they sometimes cowered in fear when they saw his awesome power.

No wonder it changed their lives, and ours, forever.

And is it true? And is it true?
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A baby in an ox's stall?
The maker of the stars and sea
Become a child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissueed fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single truth compare
That God was man in Palestine
That baby is the Lord Divine!

"Christmas" by John Betjeman