

Jesus: I Know You. Who Are You?

Thomas Robinson, March 20, 2011

John 14:1-11 Jesus converses with his disciples:

¹ "Let not your hearts be troubled. **Believe in God; believe also in me.** ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that **where I am you may be also.** ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going."

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

⁶ Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had **known me**, you would have **known my Father also.** From now on you **do know him and have seen him.**"

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, **show us the Father**, and it is enough for us."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "**Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that **I am in the Father and the Father is in me**, or else believe on account of the works themselves."

Colossians 1:15-23 The Identity of Jesus Christ

¹⁵ He is the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation.

¹⁶ For by **him all things were created**,
in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities –
all things were **created through him and for him.**

¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that **in everything he might be preeminent.**

¹⁹ For in him **all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**,
²⁰ and through him to **reconcile to himself all things**,
whether on earth or in heaven,
making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² **he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death**, in order to present you **holy and blameless** and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the **faith**, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the **hope** of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Hebrews 2:14-18

¹⁴ Since therefore **the children share in flesh and blood**, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that **through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death**, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to **lifelong slavery.** ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to **be made like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because **he himself has suffered** when tempted (put to the test), he is able to help those who are being tempted (tested).

The Very Human Jesus

In knowing Jesus, the four Gospels are foundational. Jesus' humanity is a given. (The four emphasize Jesus as human far more than later apocryphal gospels.) All Jesus' disciples knew him as a man who ate, got tired, walked the roads, slept, laughed, got angry, etc. They saw Jesus go through times of testing, trial, temptation. They were daily with him. They began following him because they thought he was a remarkable man. They hoped he would become a great man, anointed king, to drive out their oppressors, restore Israel. Everyone could understand that: Jesus, a man with charismatic presence, striking teachings, able to help people in amazing ways, tremendous political/religious potential. People had problems when he seemed to step out of that pattern. (Forgive sins, etc.).

The Miracle of Humanity

All the Gospels tell the story of a slow discovery. Gradually, reluctantly, with many missteps, the disciples were confronted by the realization that they had joined someone who was a man but also far more. Not a demi-god or superman. He was the presence of the One God among them. They knew him on one level. But he was an utter surprise. They resisted Jesus' identity. It went against their expectations/instincts as monotheists. Jn 14 tells of the last evening before Jesus' death. Only Jesus' death & resurrection broke through their prior beliefs about what was possible, opening a new transforming reality. Jesus' humanity was very real but also the great miracle. God had come among us, revealed his face/glory/faithfulness/love in Jesus. God must be seen through Jesus' life, death, resurrection. That's the heart of the Gospel, the continuation/fulfillment of Israel's story. What Jesus did in his loving service, suffering, death were the mighty acts of God for all.

Since the 18th cent. some have said modern people cannot believe in miracles. Christianity must get rid of the supernatural and keep Jesus as inspiring teacher/great man like other religious leaders. But without the great miracle of God in Jesus there is no power/reality in Christian faith, just a great mistake. (Weakness seen in secularized western churches.) But the miracle of Jesus' humanity continues powerful in the world of the third millennium.

Seeing God Through Jesus

After Jesus' death and astonishing resurrection, the disciples realized that they were only beginning to know a living Lord who continued with them in memory and ongoing life. They remembered Jesus' teachings that earlier baffled them and now rang with power. He is the complete human in the image of God, but on an unimagined level: the creator who becomes one of his own creatures. When we see his self-giving love, we see the core identity behind all aspects of creation and the purpose toward which creation exists. But more, in his connection to believers, he allows humans to become a part of him, his body, sharing in his very life (Holy Spirit), not because of their goodness but by his power. They saw the importance of his "*flesh and blood*," to identify with our weakness and suffering and be able to set us free from our fearful enslavement to death (Heb 2). The creator of life entered death, symbolic center of all destruction, brokenness, sickness, sin, alienation, violence, corruption. He brought the fullness of God into the opposite of God in order to create reconciliation and life out of death – peace in his divine/human death.

Seeing Ourselves Through Jesus

Because of Jesus' identity, his actions have both cosmic and personal impact. He changes the story of humanity and our story. We can have hope not vulnerable to our own weakness. He reconciles us to God by sharing our body of flesh and giving us God's own life. He gives us hope that allows us to be steadfast and stable, believing, trusting in who he is.