

The Son Declares the Father

by W.E. Best

Jesus Christ is the unchangeable and eternal Son of God, who reveals the Father and redeems the sinner.

Scripture: Exodus 3:14, John 1:1, John 8:58-59, John 10:30, John 14:9, John 17:24, Acts 5:20, 2 Corinthians 4:3, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "Divine Nature", "Eternal Son"

Description

W.E. Best delves into the profound revelation of Jesus Christ claiming the incommunicable name 'I Amos,' signifying His unchangeable essence and everlasting duration as God, distinct from earthly change. The Jews misunderstood His pre-existence as a claim to Deity, blinded by religious traditions. Best emphasizes that the gospel of John unveils Christ's eternal being and divine nature, portraying Him as the Eternal Son of God, distinct from the first three gospels that present Jesus Christ. He highlights Christ's role in revealing the Father, His eternal existence, equality with the Father, and being the image of the invisible Godhead.

Transcript

Jesus Christ claims the incommunicable name-I Am (Ex. 3:14; John 8:58). The name signifies unchangeable essence and everlasting duration. Change is written on everything earthly; Christ is unchangeable (Heb. 13:8), for He is God. The statement, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), has no reference to Christ's coming into existence before Abraham. He never came into being. The Jews understood this to be a claim to Deity, and they took up stones to stone the Chief Corner Stone (Eph. 2:20; John 8:59) for blasphemy. They knew that the title I Am referred to Deity, but they were blinded by their religious traditions to the fact of Christ's Deity. Paul said, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3,4). The unsaved do not know Christ as God, but the saved do. Our Savior claims pre-existence; He unveils the fact of Eternal Being, for there is no mention of His beginning or ending. Theos, the Greek word for God, is used in reference to Father (John 6:27), Son (Heb. 1:8), and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:4).

The gospel of John has been called the bosom of Christ because it reveals the heart of Christ. Christ came from the heart of God to the heart of man. He said, "I came from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28). As God said to Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Ex.

19:4), so John portrays Christ bearing the elect of God upon the wings of sovereign grace into the presence of the Father Himself. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory..." (John 17:24). John 16:28 gives a perfect outline to the entire gospel of John. The apostle pictures Jesus Christ: (1) Coming from the Father for His incarnation (1:1-18); (2) Coming into the world for our salvation (1:19-11:57); (3) Leaving the world for our sanctification (12-17); and (4) Going to the Father for our glorification (18-21). The first three gospels are a presentation of Jesus Christ; the gospel of John is an interpretation-it proves that Christ is the Eternal Son of God.

The aim of the incarnation was to reveal the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." God had spoken by the prophets in a piece-meal manner. He had a Word to spell; the Word was His own name. Christ coming from the Father, spelled the name out in such absolute perfection as to need no one else to speak. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." (Heb. 1:1,2). He has spoken once and twice (Ps. 62:11); a third time He will not speak. We must not look for any additional revelation since there is nothing more to seek in the perfect revelation of truth. Christ is the substance of the types and shadows of the Old Testament. He leaves nothing before the heart of the worshiper but His own glorious person, truth incarnate.

Jesus Christ is the Eternal Logos. He was not from the beginning; He already was in the beginning. He was not only with God; He was God. No exegetical jugglery can hide the force of the truth contained in John 1:1. As a word may be distinguished from the thought it expresses (for the two are not identical), so can the second person of the Godhead be distinguished from the first. There cannot be a word apart from the thought behind it; neither an apprehension of the existence of "God" and the "Word" without one another. They are distinguishable but inseparable.

The Son of God has the same substance as the Father-"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Christ did not hesitate to place Himself first. He was not speaking as a subordinate, but an equal. The word one is not a reference to a single unit in the exact mathematical sense, but one in the sense of a compound unit-a unity which involves plurality. See (Gen. 2:24; 11:6; 41:1,5,25; 1 Kings 22:13; Neh. 8:1; John 17:22; Acts 4:32; 1 Cor. 3:8; Eph. 2:14; and 1 John 5:7). Two people (husband and wife) constitute one flesh; Paul the planter and Apollos the waterer are one; Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ; believers are described as being of one heart and one soul. When Christ said, "My Father," He spoke from the standpoint of His absolute Deity. Thus, "...my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28) contemplates Christ as Mediator-the position of subjection to the will of the Father. There is priority of position but never inferiority of nature. The statement, "I and my Father," affirms the unity of nature of essence-one in every divine perfection. There is not one perfection to be found in the first person of the Godhead that does not exist in the second. This annihilates the concept of peccability. "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:15).

Jesus Christ is as eternal as the Father. He is the brightness of God's glory (Heb. 1:3). The brightness issuing from the sun is of the same nature as the sun. Brightness cannot be separated from the sun, nor can Christ be separated from the Father. The brightness, though from the sun, is not the sun itself; Jesus Christ; though from the Father, is not the Father. "Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42). As the glory of the sun is the brightness, so the glory of the Father is Christ. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). "For

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). As the light which the sun gives the world is by this brightness, so the light which the Father gives the world is by Christ. Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father..."(John 14:9). Jesus Christ, therefore, is the brightness of God's glory; He is greater than all the sparks and flickering candles (the prophets) that preceded His incarnation. The Saviour is such brightness that He is incapable of eclipsing the Father's glory.

The Son of God is equal with the Father. Christ is the very impress of God's substance. "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). The Greek word for express image means exact expression. All that God is, in His nature and character, is expressed absolutely and perfectly by the incarnate Son. As to the Son's firm impressions of the Father's character, He is greater than all the vanishing shadows under the law.

Was not Adam made in the image of God? If Adam, who was a peccable person, was made in the image of God; then, what about Christ being the image of God? How can an image of something be the thing of which it is the figure? The answer is not difficult to the Christian. Adam was a type of Christ, as incarnate, who only is the express image of His Father's person and the likeness of His excellent glory. The things in Adam were of a created substance, but those in Christ were uncreated.

The Son of God is the image of the Father's glory as the incarnate Son. His Godhead was not an image. His works were infinitely perfect by virtue of His Godhead, and this divine perfection was revealed in the flesh. When an image is looked upon, another is seen. Thus, the person and work of Christ manifest the perfection and glory of the Father. Philip asked Christ to manifest the Father, and the Lord Jesus replied, "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father" (John 14:9). The Father, therefore, must be seen by us through the Son in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells (Col. 2:9).

How can Christ be the image of the invisible Godhead? The Deity of Christ is as invisible as the Father; but being clothed with flesh, God's works can be seen. Christ presents the excellency of the Father in figure.

Indwelling is not identity. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). A demon may dwell within a man (Luke 11:26), but that does not make the demon the man nor the man the demon. Jesus Christ is in the believer (John 15:4; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; Rev. 3:20), but that does not make Christ the believer. We are in Christ (Eph. 1:6); however, that does not make believers christs. As the Father must be distinct from the Son who is in Him, so the Son must be distinct from the Father in whom He is. The Father and the Son, though of one and the same nature, cannot be one and the same person. The doctrine Christ preached was not of Himself as a man, but of the Father who dwelt in Him.

Man could never know the Father apart from Jesus Christ. Abel, Noah, Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints knew God, but they did not know Him as Father. Here is where we need to distinguish names and titles: (1) The name of Patriarch is Almighty; (2) The covenant name is Jehovah; and (3) The relationship name is Father. The relationship name of Father is a revelation by Jesus Christ. Observe the number of times the word Father is found in John 14.

Jesus Christ came into the world not only to reveal the Father but to redeem the sinner. He came not, as the president of our country would go into a disaster area, to look upon the poor helpless victims; but to redeem the victims of depravity whom the Father gave Him in the covenant of redemption. Christ came not to redeem by appointed methods, but by Himself. He came not to stand by and prescribe, but to minister and provide the means of salvation. The Savior came not only to provide salvation, but to be that salvation (1 Pet. 1:18,19; Rev. 1:5).

After the Savior finished the work of redemption, He ascended to the Father to represent the saints in their sanctification. Believers, having been positionally set apart by regeneration, stand in need of experimental sanctification. Sanctification is not something Jesus Christ gives believers, it is Himself in Christians. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"(1 Cor. 1:30). God's method is for His men to "...go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). When "all the words of this life" are preached, they will include salvation, holiness, and all the other truths related to life. This is the reason Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

The Savior returned to the Father for the believer's glorification. Christ said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Christians have been called unto eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Thess. 2:12); they are prepared for eternal glory (Rom. 9:23; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:16,17); and they shall be brought unto eternal glory (Heb. 2:10). Our destiny therefore is glory. Glory is generally understood to be fame, fortune, and pleasure-things extraordinary and rare. All this, however, is but a dim shadow of what God means by glory; yet, out of the shadow, we may obtain a little inkling of what the substance must be. "When he (Christ) shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thess. 1:10). Christians have an incomprehensible fortune; they are of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Only Christians know true pleasure; their pleasure is God's pleasure, for God works in them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The Psalmist said, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

(Taken from W.E. Best's book The Impeccable Christ.)

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