

January 29, 2023

The story of REALITY: JESUS 4-Face to Face with GOD

Colossians 2:9 (NIV) For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

How is it possible that “a man” made others believe he was God?

- According to verifiable history, the Jesus movement exploded shortly after his crucifixion.
- You cannot dismiss the movement by dismissing the Bible.
- The movement was a phenomenon before the New Testament documentation was completed. (The New Testament was written between the years ca. AD 48 (Galatians) to ca. AD 90 (Revelation)).

What happened? RECAP

Christianity is about something that happened. Something that happened to Jesus of Nazareth AND something that happened through Jesus of Nazareth.

What happened would not have made sense had God not prepared it so well in advance.

So, let's begin with an Overview of God's preparation. As it turns out “THE STORY of REALITY is a unified story throughout history. God gave us a way to see this in history. He included **promises** and **predictions** at earlier points in time, and then brought about fulfillments of these at later points in time. And this was recorded over time and written down by over 40 writers in ancient documents, weaving one united story over the course of 1500 years! The Bible is quite a book.

Before you say... But I don't believe the Bible, or why should I believe the Bible. Please consider the point I mentioned earlier. The part about

Jesus was not even written down yet, when what happened changed the world. All of the fulfillments of these ancient promise, predictions, and explanations, were written long before what happened happened. Then it happened, and a movement exploded. The New Covenant documents flowed exactly as the Old Covenant documents did. These were records of what happened, along with more predictions about what is to come because of it.

So, let's review what's been covered in this series The Story of REALITY which began in October of 2022, and we will celebrate The Story of REALITY: FINALE in Next Month (February 2023...with maybe an event in March, it isn't scheduled yet).

What happened? REVIEW

- Jesus was the fulfillment of the promises to ABRAHAM, as THE promised DESCENDENT through whom all nations would be blessed. **(2000 BC) (Genesis)**
 - Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise to MOSES that there would be a prophet coming like him **(1500 BC) (Exodus)**
 - The significance of this has to do with promises about the Promised land and being a kingdom.
- God established a Nation and a Kingdom in the PROMISED LAND as promised to ABRAHAM. God carefully instructed MOSES to construct a designated place for God's rescuing presence. He was to design it according to God's plans: this designed place, or tent, called the "tabernacle" was where God created a space on earth where Heaven and EARTH unite. This is the rescue plan after the disaster which expelled ADAM and EVE from EDEN, which was the perfect place where heaven and earth was already united and it was very good.
- Creating this on earth space of God's presence was only STAGE ONE of the RESCUE plan. The Old Covenant stage to teach people about God's character, His holiness, and what to do about your sins so that a relationship with a HOLY and ALMIGHTY God is made possible.

- The entire Jewish law is about this. The law was given not as a means of achieving holiness, or walking blameless before God, but maintaining a relationship with God through the OLD COVENANT provision of GRACE for when they were NOT blameless.
- Even the Jewish heroes were not blameless as is clearly recorded—NOT ABRAHAM, the patriarch, NOT MOSES, the priest and mediator, NOT DAVID the KING, all of whom received promises about the coming blameless one—JESUS.
- Sometimes the promises take symbolic form, as when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son (a test of faith he did not need to carry out) that pointed forward to how GOD HIMSELF would provide a sacrifice.
 - The OLD COVENANT through the tabernacle temple was the first stage fulfillment of the promise that God would provide a sacrifice.
 - The first stage itself was symbolic and pointed forward to a greater REALTY that makes the rescue operation work to unite HEAVEN and EARTH again through Jesus.

John 1:14 (CSB) The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

I. Who was Jesus?

There are two important things you need to know about Jesus... Who Jesus was, and What Jesus came to do.

A. The man of HISTORY

Why should I believe the Gospels? We don't have to close our eyes and try to believe, we can look at actual history, the actual realities to discover evidence that demands a verdict (as Josh McDowell so apply put it).

In the ancient world, unlike our world, almost no one got his “fifteen minutes of fame” recorded by anyone. Why is it then that there were so many mentions regarding Jesus from such a wide variety of sources (Pliny, Tacitus, Lucian, Josephus, to name a few) in ancient history?

Jesus of Nazareth was a real person who made a profound impact on history, and secular historians know this!!

As it turns out, there is no good reason for any doubt that Jesus was anyone different than the man as described and recorded by the Gospels. The Gospel writers were not telling tales, but were reporting their personal encounters with Jesus.

1 John 1:1 (NIV) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

Luke 1:1–4 (NIV) Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Jesus was truly human and truly God!

Irony: The first heresy about Jesus was not that he was not God, the first heresy was that he was not a man.

1 John 4:2 (NIV) This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

2 John 7 (NIV) I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Jesus was truly a man of history ...

B. Who credibly CLAIMED to be GOD

Jesus was truly human, yet, he says things no human being is allowed to say from the typical Jewish perspective. Jews were deeply steeped in a correctly monotheistic belief system where the biggest temptation was to follow the ways of polytheistic pagan cultures around them.

NEVERTHELESS:

- He said he is the source of LIVING WATER for the thirsty.
- He said he is “THE BREAD of LIFE” for the hungry.
- He said “*whoever lives by believing in me will never die.*” (John 11:26)
- He said, “*Before Abraham was born, I am.*” (John 8:58)
- He said, “*He who sees me, sees the One who sent Me.*” (John 12:45)
- He said, “*I and the Father are One*” (John 10:30).
- He said, “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*” (John 14:9)
- He said, “*He who believes in the Son is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already*” (John 3:18)
- Jesus said to people, Your sins are forgiven (he said this to people he doesn’t know, or just met in a new town), almost as if when they sinned, it was Jesus himself that they had wronged.
- He said that the future final judgment falls to him.

[In the Gospels] The Jesus who emerges is thoroughly believable as a figure of history, even though the more we look at him, the more we feel once more that we may be staring into the sun.

– N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian* (p. 99).

II. What Jesus came to do.

This isn't just a story. This is the story about a REALITY in two spheres, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly! Jesus the man of history is the one to bring these two kingdoms back together in unity, working together in harmony like in the Garden of Eden, only better.

How did he do this? Through his voluntary sacrificial death, and his victorious Resurrection making it possible to remove our sins, and resurrect us to new life through the gift of His Spirit regenerating and filling our Spirit, soul, and body.

This isn't about simply being forgiven and waiting till we go to heaven. This is about experiencing that Kingdom by his grace NOW! This is about a love relationship face to face with God through Jesus, and empowered by His Spirit.

...present-tense blessedness for needy people can only be possible as we are given a new sight of the grace of God making every blessing available on street level.

—Roy Hession, “Be Filled Now” p. 33

...no man can know God except in the face of Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:6), it is also true that no man can see that face and acknowledge Him as Lord except by the revelation of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

—Roy Hession, “Be Filled Now” p. 34

The Story of Reality-JESUS
(Week 4)
Face to Face with GOD

SMALL TALK

1. What are some things that people put their trust in that will ultimately fail them?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read John 14:6.** What I AM statement do we have here? What does Jesus mean by it? How might this be offensive to some?
3. **Read John 10:1-21b.** What are the two I AM statements here? What is the significance of them?
4. **Read Colossians 1:15-23 and Hebrews 10:8-12.** What kind of sacrifice did we need in order to be made holy once and for all?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. How are you doing when it comes to spending time being face to face with God? What impact does it have on you when you spend time with Him compared with when you don't?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

6. Talk through some things you can do this week to spend intentional time being face to face with God. Be specific (when, where, how, etc.)