

John 14:7-11 – “Knowing God”

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Intro: Do we not long to see God? Isn't it a natural desire of the believing heart to want to fix our eyes upon the Holy One? We long for sensory confirmation of the reality of all we believe by faith, do we not? If we could only see Him, we think, all our doubts would be cast aside. But is it true? Jesus said, no, there is a better way.

Proposition: Seeing is not believing; believing is seeing.

Three movements: (v.7) Christ's Union with His Father; (vv.8-9) Philip's Request and Jesus' Answer; (vv.10-11) Knowing God through Belief.

(v.7) Christ's Union with His Father – Over the course of His ministry, Jesus had insisted on numerous occasions that He and His Father were one. This had been so plainly stated on a recent occasion that the Jews had taken up stones to stone Him (cf. John 10:20-33). Nevertheless, His disciples still did not understand what He meant. Now that He was on the point of finishing His earthly ministry and going back to the Father, the matter of their understanding rightly what He meant was becoming urgent. In verse seven, He opened the subject again, saying, **John 14:7 - 7** *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.*” When Jesus said, *“If you had known me...”* the language He used meant, *“If you had known me through experience.”* What He meant was, *“If through what you have witnessed me say and do for the past three and a half years, you had come to realize who I am, you would know my Father also.”* What the disciples had heard and seen of Jesus clearly should have led them to the conclusion that He was God. They had watched Him multiply bread and fish. Who can do that but God? They had seen Him open the eyes of the blind. Who but the One who made the eye can restore sight? They had witnessed Him open deaf ears, cast out demons, teach like no man ever taught, and even raise the dead to life again. Who but God could possibly do these things? The disciples had concluded that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, but evidently they were still in doubt as to His deity. So Jesus now said plainly, *“To know me is to know the Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.”* What did Jesus mean by this? Here, He was once again revealing His oneness with His Father. In order to understand rightly what He meant by this, we need to think together about the doctrine of the Trinity.

- Jesus did not mean that He and the Father were the same person. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that each member of the Godhead is a unique person. The Father is neither the Son nor the Spirit, the Son is neither the Father nor the Spirit, and the Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Each person stands as a person on His own. Nevertheless, the three persons together exist in a mystical union of oneness. Somehow, the three are one God, though they remain three distinct persons. For this reason we are careful not to confound the members of the Trinity in our communication. To do that is an ancient heresy called “modalism.” Modalism teaches that there is one God, but He dresses up in three different outfits: sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, sometimes as the Spirit,

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depending on who He’s talking to and what He wants to communicate. That is not what Jesus had in mind when He said, “I and my Father are one.”

- How, then should we think about the Trinity’s union? A good explanation comes from looking at the doctrine of marriage established in **Genesis 2:24 - 24** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* When a man and woman marry (and marriage is only between one man and one woman) two individuals are mystically joined by God into “one flesh,” one human unit. The man does not cease to be the man and the woman does not cease to be the woman: Adam is still Adam and Eve is still Eve. You wouldn’t call Adam, “Eve,” nor would you address Eve as “Adam.” The distinctions of personality still remain, but nevertheless there is a union between the two that is established by God and not to be broken by man. In what does this union consist? From the moment of marriage the man and the woman become inseparably united in consecration to the same ends; oneness of mind, purpose and life. They do not share one body, but they do share one heart, mind and will (at least this was true before sin entered in). The two are one in the eyes of God and man; but they are still “two” as well. In just this same way, the members of the Trinity are distinct, yet united in perfect oneness. They are one in wisdom, power, possessions, mercy, righteousness and justice. They are glorious; there is no jealousy among them; they are perfectly one in every way. Yet they are still three distinct persons.
- The Scripture preserves the lines of distinction between the Father and the Son. A few examples will suffice: **Colossians 1:15 - 15** *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* **Colossians 2:9 - 9** *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.* **Hebrews 1:3 - 3** *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.* Notice that each of these verses preserves the uniqueness of Jesus, while affirming that He is the exact image of His Father without being the Father Himself. The Scripture makes this distinction and we should be careful to honor that distinction in our thinking and speaking of the members of the Trinity.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus is the exact image of the invisible God.

(vv.8-9) Philip’s Request and Jesus’ Answer – When Jesus finished speaking in verse seven, he invited Philip’s response found in verse eight. Jesus said, “*From now on you do know [the Father] and have seen him.*”¹ Philip’s immediate response was, **John 14:8 - 8** “*Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.*” What Philip no doubt had in mind was a “theophany.” In the Old Testament there were certain occasions when God manifested Himself to someone for a special purpose. Think of Abraham’s meeting with God before the destruction of Sodom; Jacob wrestling with God at Peniel; Samson’s parents receiving a visit from God who announced that Samson would be born. And of course the classic is God appearing to Moses in Exodus 34. None of these people

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 14:7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

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actually saw God, for we are told in **Exodus 33:20** that God said to Moses, **20** *“You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”* But in some way, God manifested Himself to these people and Philip likely is asking Jesus for a similar theophany. He is saying, “Show us the Father that kind of way, Jesus. If you’ll show us the Father like that, all of our doubts will disappear. If we can see Him with our senses, we’ll really believe with our hearts. That will be enough to secure our faith in you forever!” Though Jesus invited Philip’s reaction, and doubtless knew it was coming, still He seems hurt by Philip’s request: **John 14:9 - 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’?”* Jesus was saying to Philip, “Philip! You’ve had what you are asking for constantly with you for the past three and a half years! Why do you still not understand?” What Jesus wanted Philip and us to see is that Philip’s whole understanding of what faith consists of is a mistake. Philip believes that seeing will cause him to believe. “Seeing is believing” says the blind, unbelieving world. Unfortunately, so say a number of Jesus’ untaught followers. “If we could just have a vision; see You with our eyes! If You would just speak to us audibly; whisper in our ears! If only You’d let us reach out and touch Your nail scared hands; then we could really be sure. Our faith would really become strong! We’d really trust you whole heartedly if we could only experience you with our five senses!” But that is not true. If it were true, Philip would not have been asking for more than he already had with Jesus. If seeing were believing, what need would Philip have for more than he already had? And what about you and me? What hope would we have, now that Jesus has ascended back into the Father’s presence? And what about the unbelievers of Jesus own day? If seeing God with one’s eyes were enough to save, wouldn’t the Pharisees, Scribes and Chief Priests have believed as well?

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Merely seeing Jesus with our senses will never produce a knowledge of God sufficient to save.

(vv.10-11) Knowing God through Belief – Jesus now moved the conversation to the point He was anxious to make: “Seeing is not believing; believing is seeing.” Notice how Jesus departed from the earlier emphasis on “knowing” and “seeing” in verses 7-9 and now draws our attention to “believing” in verses 10 and 11: **John 14:10–11 - 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.* Three times in these two verses Jesus points us toward the priority of belief. What does He mean? “You’ll know God, when you believe the word He has spoken through me; you’ll see God when you believe the work He has done through me.” Our faith will not be increased by visions, voices or other sensory manifestations. It is simple belief, simple trust alone that brings us all we need for a strong, robust faith in Christ. When we commit ourselves to what He has said to us in His word; when we entrust ourselves to what He has done for us on the cross; then we have all we need to follow Him to His Father’s house. For this reason, Jesus said, **11** *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account*

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of the works themselves. He was saying to Philip and to us, “It’s enough to trust my words alone; but if you can’t manage that, at least put your faith in me because of the miracles the Father has done through me!”

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Believing what He has said is enough; trusting what He has done is enough. Believing is seeing.

[APPLICATION] How can we use what we’ve seen tonight?

Just this: we need to be settled in our minds and hearts that Jesus is God. There is no hope of salvation for any of us if Jesus was merely a man and not also fully divine. Merrell Tenney helps us understand:

No material image or likeness can adequately depict God. Only a person can give knowledge of him since personality cannot be represented by an impersonal object. Furthermore, if a personality must be employed to represent God, that personality cannot be less than God and do him justice, nor can it be so far above humanity that it cannot communicate God perfectly to men. For this reason John says that “the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1:18). The way Jesus made known the character and reality of the Father was by his words and works. The truth of God filled Jesus’ words; the power of God produced his works.²

These truths must be received through believing – committing ourselves whole heartedly to what God has spoken to us through Jesus, His Son, and to what God has done for us in Jesus His Son.

Conclusion: Do we not long to see God? In Jesus Christ, God’s Son, we now “*do know Him and have seen Him.*” We see Him through the eyes of faith, simply trusting His word, and believing in His work on the cross for us. No further seeing is needed. In these simple gifts we have all we need.

² Tenney, M. C. (1981). [John](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts* (Vol. 9, p. 145). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.