

# God the Father

## *Revealed through the Son*

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**J**ust before He left this world the Lord Jesus Christ gave a warning to His disciples: ***“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me”*** (John 16:2,3). These words bear solemn witness to the fact that it is not enough just to believe that there is one God. Necessary it is, but of itself completely inadequate. How fearfully blind were they of whom the Lord Jesus warned, although they were Monotheists of the strictest sort. Significant, too, is the fact that the root cause of their blindness and bitter opposition to the truth of God was that ***“they have not known the Father, nor Me”***. The only real knowledge of God which is able to lead men into pathways which are according to His will and bring them into alignment with Himself is that which owns the relationships which subsist within the Godhead and the true Divine Glory of the Son. There can be no adequate understanding of God save through the perfect revelation of the Father given in and through the Person of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. ***“No man hath***

**seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him**" (John 1:18).

Whatever vague and indefinite ideas of God as Father may have existed in Old Testament times, the real unfolding of the glorious truth awaited the incarnation of the Son of God. **"No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him"** (Matt. 11:27 R.V.). **"If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him ... he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"** (John 14:7,9).

The only true and sufficient knowledge of God is that of the Father revealed in the Son. Hence we read in 1Corinthians 8:6, **"To us there is but one God, the Father"**. When the Son of God came to this scene, He came as the One perfectly subject in everything to His Father's will. The words which He spoke were the Father's words; the works which He accomplished were the works of the Father who was acting in and through Him (John 14:10); in everything, He did not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. Thus He became **"to us"** the perfect representation of His Father, while His own distinct Divine Personality remains unknown because unrevealed (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22). May we say without being misunderstood that the only God we know is the only God who has been revealed to us, namely the Father as made known to us in the Son. In this sense there is **"to us"**, i.e. to the inhabitants of earth generally, but, in particular, to Christians who alone have received the knowledge of the Father in the Son, **"one God, the Father"**, and this One is revealed as the great Source of all things, and as the End to which our whole lives should tend.

Because of the manner in which God has revealed Himself to us, we read in John 4:23, **"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."** We worship what we know. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, having declared to us the Father's name, leads the praises of His people to His God and Father (Heb. 2:12). Through Him also we

have access unto the Father by one Spirit (Eph. 2:18). Christ is the sole means of our approach to God and in worship pre-eminently we approach Him as God. **"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all"** (1Tim. 2:5,6). Men cannot draw near to God without a mediator who can **"lay his hand upon us both"** (Job 9:33), and the only Mediator who can do this is the One who became man for this very purpose, Christ Jesus. For this reason in all our approach to God, He takes the place of Mediator, bringing us to the Father. We cannot approach the Son through the Father, but we can approach the Father through the Son, by reason of His incarnation and sacrificial work. Thus both in God's reaching out to man in revelation and in man's approach to God in spiritual exercise, Christ is the intermediary. So it is that **"true worshippers ... worship the Father"**. Under the control of Christ, God's High Priest, we enter the heavenly sanctuary and there in the holiest we present our sacrifice of praise to God continually, giving thanks to (or confessing, cf. Rom. 15:9) His name (Heb. 13:15), offering **"spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"** (1Pet. 2:5).

This by no means suggests that either the Son or the Holy Spirit are personally inferior to the Father and less worthy of worship, for Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One in the glory of the Godhead; it is simply a matter of the way in which God has chosen to come out to man and to bring man to Himself, and of the relationships which the Equal Divine Persons have assumed One to Another for the outworking of the eternal purpose of divine grace in relation to man and his world in redemption.

And so there is another aspect of the matter of 1Corinthians 8:6. The Father alone has remained in the POSITION of absolute Godhood. While necessarily retaining Their essential Deity, in order to accomplish this purpose of grace, the Son, and apparently (though little is said of this) the Holy Spirit have voluntarily subjected Themselves to the Father (Phil. 2:5-7; John 14:26; 15:26). So the Son, although essentially one with the Father, declares Him to be officially "greater" than Himself, inasmuch as the Father sent Him and gave Him

commandment (John 14:28). For this reason the Father is frequently referred to simply as "God", and is sometimes so designated, seemingly in distinction from the Son, particularly where the Son's subject or intermediary position or offices as Man are prominent in the context. It is a matter of relative position or office, and in no wise touches the truth of the absolute and essential Godhood of both the Son and the Spirit.

Obviously 1Corinthians 8:6 and Ephesians 4:4-6 can no more be thought of as denials of the Godhood of the Son and the Holy Spirit, than denials of the Lordship of the Father. For this latter see, for example, Matthew 11:25; Acts 4:24. However it is one thing to say what a verse does not mean, and quite another to say what it does mean! We have attempted the latter course here.

Those who are familiar with Scripture will be aware of the frequent use of the father-son relationship in figurative ways. Because parental authority was firmly established in Bible lands, "Father" became a term of affectionate respect in many spheres. A teacher would be called "father", while his pupils would be "sons" (2Kings 2:3,12). A master and his servants might employ the same terms (2Kings 5:13). The leaders of the nation were designated "fathers" (e.g. Ezra 8:29). Also because a father provided for his children and counselled them in difficulties, "father" is used in the sense of benefactor or counsellor (See Gen. 45:8; Judges 17:10; 18:19; Job 29:16). In the few passages which refer to God as "Father" in the Old Testament the same general senses are in the mind of the writer. They speak of God as the One who cares for and guides His people, and also as the Creator, He who gives life to the individual and who has formed the nation, in a figurative sense giving it birth (Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4,19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10). When we come to the New Testament, however, the Fatherhood of God becomes one of the pre-eminent doctrines.

The frequent figurative use of "father" in the Scripture should preserve us from the folly of pressing a literal and even physical sense in every case. It is absolutely essential to appreciate, for example, that the term "Father", as referring to Divine Relationships, implies neither antecedence of Being nor superiority of Person.

It is fatal to argue that because this is so in human relationships then it must also be so in Divine Relationships. When human matters are attributed to God, their precise significance and the extent of their application must be learned from the Scriptures, and certainly the Scriptures teach neither of these things. In fact they most clearly teach the very reverse.

In Hebrews Ch. 7 we are told of Melchisedec that inasmuch as he was (as far as the record of Scriptures goes) **“without father, without mother, without descent (genealogy), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life”**, he was **“made like unto the Son of God”** (v3). Now what is said here cannot refer to Christ in His manhood, for as man He had a mother, genealogy and beginning of days, so that “without father” cannot refer to the fact that at His incarnation He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and had no earthly father. The phrase must, as all the other phrases must, refer to Him as **“the Son of God”**. Yet as the Son of God He calls God His Father in a sense or senses completely different from the norm in human spheres.

In the literal, natural, human sense the Son of God is “without father”, that is to say, His being is not derived from another, He was not literally begotten of anyone, there never was a time when He began to be. In other words He is eternal, underived, and self-existent.

The terms Father and Son when employed to set forth the Divine Relationship within the Godhead teach us at least three lessons. The first is community of nature i.e. the Son is possessed of the same Divine Essence as the Father (e.g. John 5:18; 10:33,36), the second is the bond of Divine Love which unites the Father and the Son (John 3:35; 14:31), and the third is the bond of intimacy, sympathy and perfect understanding (John 5:20; Matt. 11:27; John 10:30).

In addition to the Relationship within the Godhead, the term “Father” is used in the New Testament to denote a relationship between God and men. Despite widely held views to the contrary, God is never said to be the Father of all men, nor are all men called the children of God in the New Testament. God is the Creator of all men, and all men are in this sense **“the offspring of**

**God”** (Acts 17:29), but when certain unbelievers among the Jews, in speaking to the Lord Jesus, claimed God as their Father, He promptly rejected their claims, and declared their true parentage; they were the children of the devil (John 8:41-44).

The truth of the matter is plainly presented in John 1:12,13 R.V. That all men are not the children of God by natural birth is evident because:

1. It is a right or privilege bestowed by the Lord Jesus (not an inheritance of natural birth) by which,
2. They “become” children of God (they are not already that by natural birth) .
3. They are those who are willing to receive Him, believing on His name (believers only, not the whole race), and are thus,
4. BORN OF GOD (not of earthly parents).

Only in accepting Christ by personal faith are men **“born of God”**, **“born again”** (John 3:3), and thus brought into the place of children before God, being thereby enabled in truth and fitness to address Him as “Father”. Even the very youngest believer, the most recent convert, has **“known the Father”** (1John 2:13) i.e. has come, by the new birth, to know God as Father, being a babe or infant in His family; while the Spirit of God who has come to indwell the believer, bears joint-witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

It remains to be said that these two uses of the term “Father” are vitally different and must never be confused. Never did the Son of God, even when speaking to born-again souls, include Himself in their relationship to God and speak of “Our Father”. His Sonship, His Relationship is unique. He is **“the only-begotten** (i.e. unique) **Son”** of the Father. Our relationship indicates that by the new birth we have received divine life, but His Relationship indicates that He possesses essentially the Divine Being, Godhood.

See how He distinguished between the two relationships when in resurrection He spoke to Mary of “My Father”, connecting, yet carefully distinguishing between, **“My Father and your Father”**, and not speaking of “Our Father” (John 20:17).