

Is God Real To You? He Can Be!

At this time there is a major revolt against the established Christian church and its beliefs.

One reason for this is the strong desire for reality, if we cannot see, touch, smell, hear something it cannot be real, it cannot exist.

For a physical human being this is a fair comment.

Most of what we call real in our life can be seen, heard, smelt or touched.

But God does **not** always operate in the physical world in a way that we can experience Him through our physical senses.

The question is, how can God become real in a physical world in which I live?

Let God Himself answer this question in His Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible.

Hebrews 1:1-3 [Message Bible] “... *God has been addressing our ancestors in different ways for centuries. **Recently He spoke to us directly through His Son** [Jesus Christ]. *By His Son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the Son at the end. The Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God’s nature. He [God’s Son Jesus Christ] holds everything together by what He says – powerful words!*”*

This Jesus Christ spent just over three years with a small group of men and women. During that time through a continued close relationship with Jesus Christ, they acknowledged that He was the very Son of God, **not** just another great teacher.

It was by what they collectively heard and saw, miracles and perfect wisdom, that they came to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Matthew 16:13-16 [NIV] “*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”*”

The term “*Son of Man*” was the title that Jesus Christ used most of the time when referring to Himself.

Just before Jesus Christ ended His brief life as a human being, He was telling His disciples of His imminent departure and death.

John 14:5-11 [NIV] “*Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “**I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.**” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”*”

If we desire God the Father to be real to us we have to look at the life of Jesus Christ His Son and read His recorded teaching.

This Jesus Christ the Son of God does **not** have to be far from us today.

Christ is **not** just a man who lived and died some 2,000 years ago, we can know Him today.

We can experience His lifestyle and His personality today and every day of our life.

How can Jesus be so real to us as He was to His disciples over 2,000 years ago?

John 14:15-20 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

Here we have a promise that we can claim for Jesus Christ the Son of God to become real for us.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, becomes real to us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The “*Spirit of truth*” mentioned in the above scripture is one of the titles of the Holy Spirit.

This is **the only way** in which God can become real to us at this time in history.

In response to this statement you may say “*why should I make any effort to experience this reality of the Creator God?*”

During His physical life on earth Jesus Christ said some rather startling things about Himself and our relationship with Him.

Matthew 7:21-23 [NIV] *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Certain phrases in this statement of Jesus Christ need to be explained, I will do this by using scripture itself.

“Kingdom of Heaven” – what does this mean and why should we desire to be part of it?

Let us return to the original reason why human beings experience life.

Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV] *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our **image**, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own **image**, in the **image** of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

Here we see the original purpose in God’s mind for the creation of human beings. We are created in the “*image*” of God Himself.

The Hebrew word translated “*image*” implies a “*shadow*” **not** the real product, but often we can recognise the real object by its shadow.

I’m a father and I have a son, often people look at him and say it is like looking at a younger version of myself.

How is this true?

My son is **not** me but like a shadow he is recognisable as my child.

What God is saying in this statement is I have decided to have children who will look like me but cannot ever be me because I am God and they will be humans whom I have created.

God is **not** limited in any way, He is all powerful, all wise and spirit, so the number of children He can have is **not** limited.

What then is a “kingdom”?

Is it not a family of people who have grown large in number!

“*on that day*” [Matthew 7:22] – what does this mean?

The day is **not** named, but in context it is referring to the day when people will or will not enter into the created family of God, a day of judgement.

When is this day of judgement?

Matthew 25:31-46 [NIV] “*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

This day of judgement was spoken of by the judge Himself, Jesus Christ the Son of Man.

“*I never knew you*” [Matthew 7:23] – what does this mean?

We can understand this by looking at other scriptures where the same Greek word “*ginōskō*” indicating a relationship between the person knowing and the object or person known, is used.

Matthew 1:25 [NIV] “*But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*”

Here an intimate sexual union is indicated.

Luke 1:34 [NIV] “*How will this be,*” Mary asked the angel, “*since I am a virgin?*”

Mary, the mother of Jesus the Son of Man and Son of God was a virgin until her union with the Holy Spirit that caused her to become pregnant.

What Christ was saying to these people, some of whom had been very active in their religious life, I have **not** had an intimate relationship with you.

A spiritual intimate relationship through the Holy Spirit that Christ sent to live with us at all times.

Notice the very intimate language that Jesus Christ uses when talking to His disciples [those listening to Him and following what He commands].

John 14:7 [NIV] *“If you really **knew** me, you would **know** my Father as well. From now on, you do **know** him and have seen him.”*

The Greek word “*ginōskō*” is used throughout this verse.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

Eternal life is an evermore intimate relationship with our Creator Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:7-9 [NIV] *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the **Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the **saints**.) Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

An intimate relationship with the Lamb [Jesus Christ – see **John 1:29, 36**] is the future for all Christians [saints].

Saints – Greek “*hagiōs*” meaning pure, blameless, consecrated.

This status can only describe those who have been cleansed by the sacrifice of their Saviour Jesus Christ and been credited with some of His righteousness.

John 15:3 [NIV] *“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”*

What word was this? A promise made by Christ.

John 3:16-17 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but **to save the world through him.**”*

Saved from what?

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

All we can earn from our sinful life is eternal death.

For us to avoid the deserved eternal death we have to seek a close relationship with our Creator God.

Job was a very wise, wealthy and God-fearing man.

In his wisdom writings, Job asks a very pertinent question:

Job 9:1-2 [Jerusalem Bible] *“... how can anyone claim to be upright [righteous] before God? Anyone trying to argue matters with Him could not give Him one answer in a thousand.”*

Job then proceeds to describe God’s power and wisdom by looking at God’s physical creation around him.

The conclusion is that by our own strength and wisdom this is an impossible task.

It was **not only** Job who came to this conclusion, God made a covenant [agreement] with a whole nation to prove this point.

This is called the Old Covenant and is described in some of the books of the Old Testament section of God's Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible.

This covenant was centred around a list of commandments and judgement statutes that God gave to ancient Israel, as recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The people for their part agreed to keep these laws and God agreed to provide for all their physical needs and protect them from their enemies.

God Himself likened this to a marriage agreement.

God the husband provided and protected, Israel, the wife obeyed her husband.

God kept His side of the agreement over many generations but Israel failed totally to obey God.

They found it an impossible task to obey in their own strength and turned their back on the Creator God and worshipped gods made out of wood and metal.

As Job said, no-one could even claim to be right with the Creator God by keeping His commands and statutes.

What is the answer to this problem?

How can weak humans ever be righteous before God and be saved from eternal death?

Job answered his own question.

Job 9:32-35 [NIV] *"He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. **If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.**"*

What was needed was a mediator who was human as well as God.

Job 19:25-27 [NIV] *"**I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes, I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**"*

Job was looking forward in time to the coming of this Man/God who would redeem [pay the cost of his freedom from death].

This God/Man would be Jesus Christ and His death would do two things.

Acts 20:28 [Jerusalem Bible] *"Be on your guard for yourselves [addressed to God's true ministers] and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the Church of God which He [God the Father] **bought** [redeemed from the slavery of sin] **with the blood** [sacrifice] **of His own Son** [Jesus Christ]."*

Purchased us from our slavery to sin.

Jesus Christ as Creator and sustainer of all that exists or will ever exist is far more valuable than all humans who will ever live.

So His death can be a substitute for the sin generated death of all human beings.

Christ's death also accomplished something else.

It ended the marriage type covenant with ancient Israel so He could make a new marriage type covenant with all Christians [see Revelation 19:7-9].

Paul explains how this New Covenant that Christ introduced to His disciples, just before He sacrificed His Holy life, would answer Job's question.

Romans 3:21 [NIV] *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."*

This righteousness was going to come from God, **not** our vain attempt to keep the law and statutes of the Old Covenant [marriage agreement].

How do we receive this righteousness from God?

Romans 3:22 [NIV] *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,"*

By our faith and trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Saviour and our Redeemer from "death row".

Romans 4:3 [NIV] *"What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Paul uses the example of Abraham who is called the "father of the faithful" [**Romans 4:16**].

Abraham believed the promises that God made by faith when there was **no** physical evidence of them being fulfilled.

That faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.

Romans 4:23-25 [NIV] *"The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."*

This same crediting of God's own righteousness can also be ours if we have faith in the promises that Jesus Christ made in person and the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to make as He revealed the truth of good news that Jesus Christ brought to us as part of the New [marriage style] Covenant that Christ died to ratify [make binding].

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"*

All humanity has failed to attain this glorious righteousness of God, failed to obey their part of the Old marriage Covenant.

We have all sinned [Greek "hamarīanō" – missed the mark or goal] failed to keep the commands and statutes.

Romans 3:24-25 [NIV] *"and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished,"*

"Grace" is God the Father's undeserved love for us His potential children.

"Atonement" [Greek "hilasmōs"] signifies an expiation, a means whereby sin is not only atoned for [covered] but is remitted [paid for].

Under the Old Covenant once a year God's High Priest entered into the "*Holy of holies*", this was the Day of Atonement [a statute]. He did this on behalf of the whole nation who could **not** enter into God's presence, and have an intimate personal relationship with Him.

This action of the physical high priest merely covered [atoned] for the sins committed by the nation.

They were **not** remitted – paid for.

All the people who sinned at that time in history had to wait for the coming of Jesus Christ and the New [agreement] Covenant to have their sins paid for.

Matthew 27:50-53 [NIV] *“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.”*

At the moment of Christ's death the curtain that cut off all people from the Holy of holies [God's presence] was torn in two giving us all access to God's presence through the death of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Note the symbolic resurrection of all who had died before Christ's sacrifice had been made, the hope of Abraham, Job and all who looked forward in faith to the promised Messiah [anointed saviour].

Matthew 27:54 [NIV] *“When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”*

Even the **non-Israelite** [Jew] the Roman Centurion was convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

Are you?

Do you wish to take full advantage of this good news of what God has done for all human beings through Jesus Christ the only being who will ever be a God/Man, the perfect mediator between us and our Creator?

Jesus Christ the only being who can bring us into a relationship of worship and love with our Creator God.

Jesus Christ the only way we can “*know*” God, and for Him to become “*real*” to us.