# The Glory of the Messiah 06

## Introduction

Matthew 11:25-30

This is an incredible statement of Jesus: ‘no-one knows the Son except the Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him’. In this statement, Jesus sets up a virtuous circle with only one breakout point. Essentially, he tells us that the relationship between him and the Father is exclusive unless, He, Jesus, enables us to have access to that relationship. If Jesus was just a man, this is incredibly arrogant. If Jesus was truly divine, we have an incredible privilege in being given access to relationship with the Father and the Son through Jesus.

In the remainder of this session we will explore this notion.

## Context

In order to give some context to this statement, we need to go back to the beginning of Matthew 10. At the start of that chapter, Jesus gathers the disciples to him and prepares them for mission. He instructs them about all that they would meet on the road and how to handle it. If they were accepted they were to bless the town that received them; if they were rejected they were to shake the dust off their shoes for any town that rejected them. They were given authority to preach, heal the sick and cast out demons. They were also told that it was not going to be an easy road and this would prove their discipleship.

Having sent them out, Jesus went on a private preaching tour of Galilee. Whilst he was travelling, John the Baptist’s disciples came to him to question him because he had not fulfilled John’s expectations of what a Messiah should be, and Jesus gave tribute to John. Next, Jesus denounced all the cities that had rejected him and his message, especially those where great miracles had been seen.

Having said all of this to the crowds who were listening to him, he then made this profound statement about his relationship with the Father and its implications. It flows directly out of the mission he sent the disciples on and his personal mission around the towns in Galilee. It is the heart of his invitation of the gospel call to all.

The passage ends with Jesus; call for all who are heavy laden to come to him and take on his yoke. Ultimately, this is a call for them to become his disciples, in contrast to the heavy yoke borne by the disciples of the Pharisees. All of this centres on Jesus’ statement concerning his relationship with the Father. Let us unpack this.

## The Father

On one side of the relationship, we have the Father, whom Jesus states is completely unknowable: ‘Nobody knows the Father except the Son’. Let us think about that for a moment. Jesus is saying that knowledge of almighty God is actually impossible. People may think they know God but they don’t.

Some say of other religions, ‘don’t we all worship the same God?” Or, “Isn’t the Muslim God the same as ours”. If we are to take the words of Jesus seriously, then we must give an emphatic ‘no’ to this question. There are not many ways to know God. There is only one way, and that is through Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me’ (John 14:6). Even Jews cannot truly know God because they have rejected the means through which God can be known - through his son. They may go through their rituals but that will not bring them any closer to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who chose to reveal himself to the Patriarchs.

Sometimes I think we make our God too small, and in doing so, we dishonour him. Karl Barth presents God as completely other than humanity. He is so far above and beyond us that we cannot possibly know him or understand him. He is so much beyond our understanding that even the expressions we give to what he is like are mere shadows of the reality.

Many have tried to document the attributes of God and it is wonderful to study and meditate upon these, but the reality is that they only express an infinitesimal element concerning what God is really like. We can study the Bible and see him at work, and from this we can determine something of his character. In his dealings with Israel, we can see his love, his patience, etc. In the Ten Commandments, we can see something of his ethics. However, we cannot know God through any of these things. We merely gain some knowledge about him.

God is so much beyond our human experience that to perceive of him is more than is possible for us mere mortals. Great minds sit and postulate about the existence or otherwise of God, and yet it is like, to quote Crocodile Dundee, “two fleas arguing over who owns the dog”.

Psalm 2 gives us the Divine perspective. [Read Psalm 2]. God sits in heaven and laughs at the postulations of men. In response, he has established his Son as King over all. This brings us back to where we started. Even though God is completely unknowable to us, he has chosen to reveal himself to us through his son.

If we want to know what God is like, we just have to look at Jesus. As Jesus himself said when asked by Philip to “show us the Father”, “He who was seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus reveals to us all that the Father is like. G. Walter Hansenin, wrote in Christianity Today:

“I am spellbound by the intensity of Jesus' emotions: not a twinge of pity, but heartbroken compassion; not a passing irritation, but terrifying anger; not a silent tear, but groans of anguish; not a weak smile, but ecstatic celebration. Jesus' emotions are like a mountain river cascading with clear water. My emotions are more like a muddy foam or a feeble trickle.”

In all of this, Jesus expresses the character of God: his hatred of sin and hypocrisy, his love of the downtrodden, has compassion for the hurting, his determination in the face of death. All of this expresses the heart of the Father. The more we consider the person of Jesus, the more we will see what God is like.

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ”.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus! Or as Paul says in Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God”. The word used for ‘image’ there is the word *eikon* which means something that doesn’t just resemble that which it is representing, but also has within it the same essence of what it is representing. In other words, Jesus doesn’t just represent God, he is God in human form. The Divine Logos is within him and is expressed through a human body. He never ceased to be one with the Father: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Of course, the response of Jesus’ audience to this statement in John 10 was to pick up stones to stone him as they knew exactly what he was claiming. Jesus once more eluded their grasp.

## The Son

The other part of this statement is that ‘no one knows the Son except the Father’. In other words, the identity of Jesus was hidden in the knowledge of God. In effect Jesus is saying, ‘Only God is big enough to comprehend me; only God is wise enough to understand me…’[[1]](#footnote-1) Again, if this is not true, it is extreme arrogance on the part of Jesus. Jesus’ claim was immense.

The mutual relationship Jesus claimed between himself and God was unique. It is the forerunner of his claim to be the Messiah. It is on the basis of his sonship that he came as God’s representative, God in human form, to bring humanity back into relationship with its creator. It is as the divine logos that he can reveal the Father to us.

But what flows out of this knowledge? It is all that proceeds in the rest of the passage.

## Come to me all who are weary

This promise begins in v.27 where Jesus says, ‘all things have been handed over to me by my Father’. Jesus is claiming that he has the authority from God to act as the mediator between humanity and God and to bring God’s salvation to the earth. He is acting in totality as God’s representative, and there is nothing that God has not handed over to Jesus to execute. On this basis, he declares:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

As mentioned earlier when you became a disciple of a Pharisee, you took his yoke upon you. In other words, you were bound to his teaching and his interpretation of the Law. This placed a heavy burden upon such Pharisee disciples, since they were seeking to attain righteousness through absolute obedience to this teaching. As Jesus said of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:4:

“They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.”

Relationship with God was never supposed to be about strict obedience to the Law. It always flowed out of the love of God and the grace of God. Even the choosing of Israel was an act of grace. In Deuteronomy 7:5-8, God declared to Israel that he chose them, not because they were the greatest, but because they were the least, and because he loved them.

Jesus, reverses the religion of the Pharisees that had made relationship with God unattainable. Instead he declares that it is open to all, especially the weary and heavy-laden. This is both specific and general. In this, Jesus is opening the door to those who had been striving to achieve righteousness through the Law, but he is also opening up the kingdom to all! With this statement, the national restrictions on access to the knowledge of God no longer apply.

It doesn’t matter who you are, where you are from, what you’ve done or what your background is, you are welcome to come to Jesus and find rest. All that is required is that you yoke yourself to Jesus.

What does this mean? It means that you commit to be his disciple and to ‘learn’ of him. It is not the burden of the Law that we are now yoked to but the teaching of Jesus. Such discipleship flows out of the character of God – ‘gentle and humble of heart’.

In this statement, Jesus is once more drawing upon two passages from the songs of the servant in Isaiah.

Firstly, Isaiah 50:4 [Read]. In this passage, it is the Messianic servant who has the word that will sustain the weary. Why? Because he himself is a disciple of God, who is totally committed to him. Day after day, his ear is open to hear from God so that he can then impart the word of life to his hearers. This is how Jesus lived and acted when upon the earth. So should we. A disciple is someone who is listening to God and doing as he bids.

Secondly, Isaiah 55:1-5 [Read]. In that chapter, once more, the call goes out for all to come and receive sustenance from God. The result is that a new nation will be formed in response to the call (v.5). It is in response to the call of God through his servant that this new nation is constituted. This new nation is the church which is made up of people from all tribes and tongues and peoples and nations. Membership of this new nation is not through national descent, or obedience to the Law, but simply in response to the invitation to come.

That invitation is still there. All who have need, all who are weary, all who are hungry, can come to God and be satisfied. All of this is possible because God, in the person of Jesus came to earth to make the way to himself open. And by knowing Jesus, by responding to his invitation, we can know God. We can come into relationship with the incomprehensible. We can come to know the unknowable, and we can find rest for our souls.

## Conclusion

When we consider Jesus, we have to consider him in his humanity, but always, we must remember that in the background is his divinity, because he is the perfect expression of the Father who came to earth to make him known.

1. Peter Lewis, *The Glory of Christ* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. 78 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)