

JESUS AND GENDER
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As a follower of Christ it is important for me to know how Jesus saw the Gender of God. Instead of forming beliefs based upon the theories of this Age and the musings of various social philosophers, I want to know how Jesus saw God. It seems that as a Christian, it is not my duty to justify the beliefs of Christ, but to emulate them. Therefore, what Jesus believed about God and his relationship to God is of great importance in understanding God and my relationship to God. Although I bring a male perspective because of both my sex and my gender, I believe that the same concerns relate both to the Christian woman and females as it does to me.

Let me preface my study by saying that I am a father of both sons and daughters. I do not have a special love of sons over daughters or daughters over sons. In short, both sons and daughters are my children. They both take my name until they choose for some reason to change it. They both share in an inheritance. Unlike ancient times, that inheritance is in essence equal and does not depend upon whether they are sons or daughters. I feel love for both equally although that love may manifest itself differently depending upon their individuality.

In my study, I look at Jesus and try to see how he envisioned God and the gender of God.

As I study Scripture, I find that Jesus had a clear view of his own sexuality and gender and God's gender as well. He knew from an early age that God was his father and that he was God's son.

Even as a 12 year old, Jesus knew that God was his "father." God was not abstract or a general nebulous cloud without gender. In the second chapter of Luke we find that Jesus as a twelve year old accompanied his family on their annual trip to Jerusalem on Passover. As the family and friends from Nazareth in the first day are returning to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph discover that Jesus was not with them and return to Jerusalem seeking him. After three days they find him listening and discussing items with the teachers in the temple listening to them and asking the teachers questions. When his parents chide him for being missing, Jesus answers in Luke 2:49: "Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" At the age when Jewish males join the congregation (Bar Mitzvah), Jesus is aware of whom his father is. He does not confuse his real father with Joseph but instead knows that he has a relationship with God and he puts that relationship within a father-son context.

That father-son relationship between Jesus the son and God the father was pronounced even before the birth of Jesus. Gabriel had announced to Mary that she would have a son who would be the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32) and that he would be called the son of God (Luke 1:35).

Jesus saw his relationship to God as that of a son to a loving father. We will deal with the views of God's gender by Jesus shortly. However, I believe we should begin with how did God see his relationship to Jesus. I believe that God Himself validated Jesus' view of the son-father relationship. At the beginning

of Jesus' ministry, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. John recognized the father-son relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. John said at John 3:35-36:

The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

At the baptism of Jesus, John saw the Holy Spirit fall like a dove "And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."" (Matt. 3:17). In short, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry the relationship of Jesus as the Son of God was acknowledged by God Himself.

At the latter part of Jesus' ministry, the father-son relationship was confirmed again by God upon the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus met with Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the Prophets). When Peter piped up and recommended three Tabernacles be built to memorialize the occasion, God Himself interrupted Peter and said the following:

When he (Peter) was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

In short God Himself again confirmed His relationship with the "the only begotten Son." (John 3:16). Other accounts of what transpired on the Mount of Transfiguration can be found at Luke 9:35, Mark 9:7 and 2 Peter 1:17.

I believe the Father-Son relationship was also confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the assumption of Jesus into heaven.

In fact the whole underpinning of the concept of the Trinity consisting of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is nestled in the concept of a loving relationship between the Father God and the Son Jesus Christ. The desire for equality is not enough to shipwreck the concept of the Trinity. In my opinion, it was the very desire for equality which resulted not only in the Fall of Satan but in the Fall of man who desired to be equal to God. Today's push by feminist theologians to destroy the father-son concept in Scripture will not be productive as long as there are people who are willing to be obedient to God's word and Scripture. Rewriting Scripture to achieve equality or to modernize Christianity to accept the normal goals and ideas of this world and age will ultimately fail.

Jesus clearly saw his relationship with God to be that of son to father. This is seen very clear when Jesus' disciples ask him to teach them to pray. He begins the model prayer by addressing God as "Our Father who art in heaven." (Matt. 6:9).

Jesus had no difficulties in dealing with God's gender as a father or his own gender as a son. Some of the Scriptures showing how Jesus saw himself and God are the following:

- Jesus as the Son of Man came down from heaven. (Jn. 3:13; 5:27; 8:28).
- Jesus was the only begotten (unique) son. (Jn. 3:16,17).
- Jesus saw God as his Father (Jn. 5:17-23).

- Jesus imitated his Father (Jn. 5:19-23).
- Jesus was sent by the Father and in the name of the Father (Jn. 5:36, 43)
- Jesus was sealed by the Father and was in the image of the Father (Jn. 6:37).
- Jesus came from the Father (Jn.8:42; 16:28).
- Jesus came to do the will of the Father (Jn. 6:38).
- Jesus had seen the Father (Jn. 6:46).
- Jesus was sent to mankind by his Father (Jn. 7:28-29).
- Jesus saw himself as pleasing the Father (Jn. 8:55).
- Jesus honored the Father (Jn. 8:49).
- Jesus saw himself as honored by the Father (Jn. 8:55).
- The good works that Jesus did were done in the Father's name (Jn. 10:25, 31, 37).
- Jesus only spoke what the Father told him to speak (Jn. 12:49).
- Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father (Jn. 14:9)
- Jesus was in the Father and the Father was in him (Jn. 14:10).

Jesus not only saw God as a male but he also saw the Holy Spirit as having the same gender as the Father. Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would proceed from the Father and that "He will testify of me." (Jn. 15:26). He also referred to the Holy Spirit as being a "Helper" and said "I will send Him to you. (Jn. 16:7). In Jn. 14:17, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as being The Spirit of Truth and said "you know Him for He dwells with you and will be within you."

In summation, Jesus did not wrestle with the gender of God. He saw the gender of God and the gender of the Holy Spirit as being male. On the other hand he saw the people of God as being the Bride of Christ and female. Jesus did his first miracle at a wedding and gave examples of the Bridegroom ("Himself") coming for the Bride and sitting down at a wedding feast (Matt. 25:10; John 3:29; Rev. 19:7; 21:2,9; 22:17).

As a follower of Christ I want to think of God as Jesus did. I want to pray like Jesus did. I want to be a child of a loving father. I do not think of myself as a male child of a loving father but simply as a child of a loving father. As a follower of Christ I will not rewrite history or theology to make myself or others comfortable. Instead I remind people that God is a loving Father and that he loves all of his children equally regardless of whether they are male or female. God sees the soul not the sex. In Jesus "... there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

In our next study, we will look into Scripture and see how Jesus dealt with some of the individual women he encountered in the New Testament.