

Why God sent Jesus

Part 2 – Discovering from Jesus that God is a relationship

In two prayers of Jesus recorded in the New Testament, it was of huge importance to Jesus that we know God sent him:

- 1) **John 11:41-42** “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here that **they may believe that you sent me**” (when Lazarus was resurrected).
- 2) **John 17:3, 8, 21, 23, 25** “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, **whom you have sent** (3)...**They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me** (8)...May they also be in us so that **the world may believe that you have sent me** (21)...May they be brought to complete unity **to let the world know that you sent me** (23)...Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and **they know that you have sent me** (25)”

But why was it so important to Jesus that we believe God sent him? There’s a clue in both prayers. In the resurrection of Lazarus, for instance, when Jesus prayed “I *said this* for the benefit of the people standing here,” the clue is back in **verse 40** - “*Then Jesus said, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’*” No wonder it was important that we know God sent him, because he came as a living demonstration of God’s glory.

It was the same point in his other prayer too, in **John 17**, where he states in **verse 4**, “I have **brought you glory** on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” This is what Jesus lived for and what God sent him for, to display and demonstrate God in his glory. So what was this “glory” people were meant to see?

Again, there’s a clue in both prayers. In the case of Lazarus, the clue begins in **John 11:26**, when Jesus asks Martha, “**whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe that?**” and Martha says in reply: “**Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.**”

Martha uses the term “Son of God” to describe Jesus, which to her meant the promised Messiah, the one “who was to come.” But Jesus expands that term dramatically when he prays in **verse 41**, “**Father, I thank you that you have heard me.**” He talks directly to God as **his Father**. So “Son of God” meant more than the Messiah; it literally meant God’s Son. What people were seeing and hearing in Jesus, then, was God as **Father and Son**. God was, in fact, a **relationship**.

And in **John 17**, we see that relationship actually *described* as God's glory in **verse 22**, when Jesus prays "I have given them the glory that you gave me, **that they may be one as we are one.**" The glory of God, therefore, is **the relationship of utter oneness that Jesus and the Father share.**

It's the glory Jesus looked forward to receiving *back in full* when he prayed in **verse 5**, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with **the glory I had with you before the world began.**" Jesus had given up that glorious relationship he'd always had with the Father to become a human being. As a baby, for instance, Jesus' relationship with his Father was hugely reduced. His understanding of God as his Father grew as he got older, yes, but never to the level he'd enjoyed before being human.

After he ascended, though, his relationship with the Father was restored in full, and his dearest wish now is that **WE can see that glory** too, **verse 24**: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me **because you loved me** before the creation of the world." And what a glory it must be - coming from the Father who has always loved him.

We get a glimpse of that glory now, though, when Jesus prays to his Father and yells "Come out!" to Lazarus in **John 11:43**. He prayed that way, notice, "for the benefit of the people standing there," **verse 42**, "that they may believe that **you sent me.**" The benefit to the people was knowing who sent Jesus. It was his Father.

And why was that important? Because it revealed their relationship as Father and Son. And why was that important? Because it's the Father's plan for all human beings **to share that glorious relationship they have with us** – that we may be one as they are one.

In the resurrection of Lazarus people saw God as Father and Son together. They obviously didn't grasp the significance of it then, but they would later. By the time John gets round to writing **I John 5:13**, the significance is very clear: "I write these things to you **who believe in the name of the Son of God** so that you may know that you have eternal life."

There it is again, that crucial first step that Martha understood, that Jesus is the Son of God, but now it's attached to actually knowing you've got eternal life as well. How do the two connect? In knowing what eternal life is, first of all, **John 17:3**, it's "knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent." You've got eternal life when you know who God is. And who is God? The one who sent Jesus, who also happens to be his Son. So eternal life is knowing that God is a relationship of Father and Son, which God sent his Son to reveal to us because sharing their relationship is what he created us for. And people who understood that and believed it found themselves actually experiencing it. What God had sent his Son for was a reality.

Experiencing that relationship IS eternal life, though. It's eternal life for God and it's eternal life for us. It's the glory that the Father and Son enjoyed together before the creation of our world, the glory Jesus now enjoys again with the Father since his ascension, and the glory they're now sharing with us. And if we understand all this already and believe it, **we've got eternal life already**, because we're already beginning to experience it.

So when Jesus prays in **John 17:11**, "**Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one,**" we know exactly what Jesus was getting at, because:

- 1) First of all, we know the name the Father gave him - Jesus was, and always has been, the "Son of God."
- 2) And we know *why* the Father gave him that name - because the glory of God is the relationship they share, and have always shared, as Father and Son.
- 3) And we know why God sent Jesus to reveal their relationship - because God wants to share it with us.
- 4) And we know why God wants to share it with us - because that glorious relationship they share IS eternal life. It always has been for them, and now it can be for us.

Can we see why it was so important to Jesus that we understand why God sent him? It was to reveal all four of these points so we can start EXPERIENCING our eternal life now. But that's exactly what Jesus told Martha, that "**whoever lives and believes in me will never die,**" **John 11:26**. Believe in Jesus being the Son of God and we know we have eternal life already. How? We're already experiencing it!

But how do we know we're experiencing eternal life already? Because we're already experiencing *what eternal life IS*, the glorious relationship of the Father and Son. And how are we experiencing it? **1 John 5:14-15** - by "**the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know we have what we asked of him.**"

Does that ring a bell? It should, because this is exactly the relationship Jesus had with the Father at the resurrection of Lazarus, when he prayed, "**Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me,**" **John 11:41-42**. Jesus' relationship with the Father was so close that he knew he *already* had what he'd asked for. But that's exactly what's being offered to us, a relationship with the Father so close that "WE know we have what we asked of him," too. In other words, we can have the same relationship with the Father that Jesus had. But that's why God sent Jesus, to show us their relationship as Father and Son so that *we* can experience it too. We can be one as they are one, which we experience in its glorious reality in the Father answering our prayers just as he answered Jesus' prayers.

No wonder John writes later in **1 John 3:1-2**, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And this is what we are!” John has now grasped the reality of Jesus’ prayer in John 17 that we may be one as Jesus and the Father are one, sharing the same sonship Jesus has with the Father - because it’s happening to people already! They’re already experiencing being sons of the Father. How? **Verses 21-22**, “We have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask.” They’re discovering that God is a Father who loves answering *their* prayers too.

And it all begins with understanding why God sent Jesus, as John says in **1 John 1:2** - “The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us.” We know who the “eternal life which was with the Father” is; it’s God’s eternal Son. And the reason God’s eternal Son appeared as the human Jesus was **verse 3** - “So that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” The eternal Son came in person, sent by his Father, to **enable us to share in their fellowship**.

And this becomes the great claim of all Christians, that we “**have fellowship with him,**” **verse 6**. What a claim but, **1 John 2:5-6**, “this is **how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**” We know we’re in fellowship with God because we’re walking in the same fellowship with God that Jesus walked in. And we know how Jesus walked with God. It was simple: he walked in RELATIONSHIP with his Father. He was always conscious of his Father’s wishes, always sensitive to his will. He loved, honoured, obeyed and pleased his Father in everything he said and did. His Father was everything to him. No wonder the Father answered his prayers!

But this is exactly the kind of fellowship the Father’s offering us because “**if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him,**” **verse 5**. Put our Father’s will first, just as Jesus did, “**obeying his commands and doing what pleases him,**” **1 John 3:22**, and God makes our fellowship with him just as real. “**Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them,**” **verse 24**. Honouring the Father brings that kind of closeness, and it grows and grows to the point that “**Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement, because in this world we are like him,**” **1 John 4:17**. And we are like him because we are like his Son. We walk as Jesus walked, in the same loving relationship with the Father that he had. And with that kind of love “**there is no fear,**” **verse 18**. We know our relationship with God is secure.

But this is what God sent his Son for, **verse 15**: “**If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.**” God want us that close to him, so close that “**we know and rely on the love God has for us,**” **verse 16**. That’s how God would love us to live all day and every day, never for a moment thinking we are without his love, because that’s how Jesus lived. Jesus knew his Father loved him, always, and God wants to live that same relationship he has with his Son in us.

But HOW do we get to that point, of living in the same relationship with God that Jesus does? By “acknowledging Jesus is the Son of God,” sent by God to reveal himself as Father, because it’s the relationship that he and his Son share that he’s calling us to share too.

So HOW do we acknowledge Jesus is the Son of God? No problem; the Father does that for us, just as he did for Peter (Matthew 16:16-17). So how do we know he’s done it for us? Just our interest in this subject is proof enough, because why on earth would we be interested otherwise?! But it’s our interest in what God sent his Son FOR, to show us we can share in their relationship, that really proves God’s working with us, because in **1 John 3:24** “**this is how we know that he lives in us. We know it by the Spirit he gave us.**”

Now we see where the Spirit comes in, because it’s only by the Spirit that we understand all this. It’s the Spirit who enables us to understand the relationship we can have with God and the Spirit who makes it real. But that’s what the Spirit does, as we know from Romans 8:15-16 and Galatians 4:6. It’s the Spirit who nurtures our love for the Father so we can live in the same marvelous relationship with him that Jesus does.

Going back, then, to **John 17** and Jesus’ last recorded prayer, we see how important it was to him “**that the world may believe that you have sent me,**” **verse 21**. But how does the world believe God sent him? By understanding WHAT God sent him for. He came as God’s Son to display and demonstrate his amazing relationship with the Father, to show the kind of relationship the Father wishes to have with us, **verse 22**: “**I have given them the glory that you gave me.**” The glory God gave Jesus was the loving relationship they shared, and the reason Jesus came was to give that glory to us, so that we may be one as they are one.

But how does he bring a knowledge of that glory to the world today, since Jesus isn’t here in person to reveal and demonstrate it? He does it through his church. That’s why Jesus prayed “**May they also be in us,**” **verse 21**, and “**May they be brought to complete unity**” - “they” referring to us - because it’s in OUR relationship with God that “**the world knows you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me,**” **verse 23**.

How does the world come to believe God sent Jesus? Because of the Spirit creating the same relationship with the Father in us that Jesus has. And when people see that relationship we have with God, just as Martha saw the relationship Jesus had with God at the resurrection of Lazarus, that’s the first step to believing they can share that relationship too.

But this is what God sent Jesus for, and what Jesus now sends us for, **John 17:18**. It’s to show his glory, so that the whole world can share in it too.