

How Do We See the Father?

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[0 : 01] Let's turn for a short time to John 14 and tonight we're going to look with God's help at verses 8 and 9. John 14 reading at verse 8.

Philip said to him, Lord show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus said to him, have I been so long with you and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Three-dimensional printing is now fairly widespread compared to a few years ago. Three-dimensional printing is not something I know very much about, but instead of having a printer that just prints out a sheet of paper with some print on it, a three-dimensional printer will actually form an object, various kinds of objects, and in fact in industry some very large objects from a three-dimensional image in the computer.

That is transmitted through a special printer which uses different substances like plastic or polymers and then it produces the exact object that was in fact stored in a graphic in the computer.

And ladies, you can even have 3D printed shoes. Design them yourself, print them out, and there you have them. You don't need to go to the shops at all.

[1 : 27] And that is becoming very widespread. And although some of them are extremely expensive, many of them have come down in price so that they're almost at, well, they're at the stage where people could have them in a domestic sense as well.

And I think recently, if I'm not mistaken, I remember hearing that the space station, which is occupied most of the time at least as it orbits the Earth, that the crew there had printed out a spanner that they needed, a spanner or something like that, they needed to fix something on board where it had been designed on a computer on Earth in a 3D image that's then transmitted through to them and through the 3D printer, the thing was actually there and then produced for them to be able to use it.

Now, that's great technology, fantastic technology. The reason I'm mentioning it is that what you get exactly, what you get on the 3D image in your computer, you can turn it around on your screen, you can see different sides to it, whatever it is you're designing, that's then transmitted to the printer and if everything's set up all right, the final product is an exact replica of what you had inside your printer image.

Why am I saying that and introducing these verses? Well, because that's essentially what Jesus was saying here about himself. It's an illustration of what Jesus said here about himself in relation to the Father.

Whosoever has seen me has seen the Father. Christ himself, the person of Jesus Christ in our nature, as he was there speaking to Philip, was in fact, if you like, the 3D printout in a spiritual sense of the Father.

[3 : 14] That was Philip's question. Show us the Father or statement. Show us the Father and that will be enough. That will suffice us. And that's when Jesus said to him, Whosoever has seen me has seen the Father.

What you see in me is what you get in the Father. What I am as you see me is what is in the Father too. There is nothing less of God in Jesus Christ than there is in the Father.

There is nothing more of God in the Father than there was or is in Jesus Christ as he spoke these words to the disciples. Now that itself of course is profound. That itself brings us into the very depths of God himself and of the Trinity that God is.

But it is in John's presentation of it such an important aspect of what God has done and God has revealed in Jesus Christ for our benefit.

One of the great questions, and it's a question that's ongoing, is Who was Jesus Christ? Of course you and I would put it slightly differently.

[4 : 22] Who is Jesus Christ? He still continues to exist as we understand of course from the scripture, from our own experience. But that's the great question. That's a great question asking, human beings ask themselves, Well who am I?

What's my identity? Where did I come from? Where did human beings come from? Why do they exist? What's the purpose of human life? And really you can take all of these important as they are and say, Well they're really questions that have to be brought to this question.

Who is Jesus Christ? What is he about? And we saw that of course when we some time ago went through the Gospel of Luke, that question as Luke repeats it through the Gospel.

But let's look firstly at Philip's request here, because there's more to it really than meets the eye, especially the way that John presents this in this intensely spiritual Gospel that's so full of teaching about the Lord and about life in him.

Philip's request, and then we'll look at Christ's response. Philip's request really is, Lord show us the Father and it is enough for us. Now you can sympathize with Philip, and indeed with the other disciples at that time.

[5 : 33] You can easily find fault with him, certainly. Why hadn't he made more of Jesus than he had at this point? He had seen many things, with Jesus doing many things.

He had heard many things from him. And indeed when you go to Jesus' response, there is an element of rebuke in it, in the way that he says, Have I been so long with you, Philip?

You still do not know me? There is an element there of finding fault with Philip for still coming so short of understanding who Jesus was. But then would we have been any better?

Just think of Philip at that moment and the other disciples. There's still no cross, actually, in their experience. There's still, there's no resurrection. There's been no ascension.

There's no written New Testament. There's no coming of the Holy Spirit, as came at Pentecost, to infill them, to do what John here himself says, to lead them into the truth.

[6 : 31] So you can sympathize with Philip, despite the fact that Jesus undoubtedly found some fault in him. You and I would certainly not have done any better in these circumstances than really to ask the same question.

So there is a lack there. There's a failure on Philip's part. He hasn't really grasped at all, indeed, neither of the other disciples. He hasn't grasped much at all of Christ's significance as to who he is, and especially who he is in relation to God and to his own divinity.

But there's more than just a lacking there. There's also, in the words of Philip, deep down in the words of Philip, there is, we believe, an expression of a longing. Not just a lack, but a longing.

Show us the Father, Lord, and it is enough for us. Because that really essentially takes you deep into the longings of a human soul. A human soul that longs for certain things, and that distorted longing that is in the human soul sometimes looks to very much the wrong things for that longing to be fulfilled.

And there are three things, at least, that we can mention in regard to that that would come across from this sort of longing that Philip had here to have the Father shown to him, and that would suffice, that would satisfy him.

[7 : 55] There is a longing in our souls to be loved, to be wanted. And while it is, as we said, while it's something that is directed to the wrong things, to the wrong people, to the wrong sources, as we try to look for that longing to be fulfilled, there is, on the part of every human being, however distorted and however much it's expressed in the wrong way, there is a longing to be loved.

When you think about it, human beings were created in perfect fellowship with God. And once that fellowship was broken off the way it was, through our fault, through our sin, through our disobedience, through the imposition by God of that penalty that he himself had warned of, that disruption of fellowship with God, that separation from God, once that had taken place, then into our human soul came this longing, this absence that now existed there.

Instead of perfect fellowship with God, and all that went along with that perfect fellowship of God, there is this absence and there is this longing for it to be returned.

Not necessarily now looking to God for it, but still the longing itself is there. And we cannot bring ourselves to create that satisfaction in being loved.

You see, we're made not just to love, we are made to be loved as well. There's a sense in us that wants to be loved and there's a sense there's something in us that is satisfied in the knowledge that we are being loved.

[9 : 40] When you enter into a relationship of love with someone else, it's not simply that you think of yourself as satisfied in giving love to that person. You're also satisfied in knowing that that person loves you.

That your desire to be loved by them, that longing that you have that they will indeed say that they do love you, that's something that spiritually exists in our soul even though we are separated from and disrupted in our relationship with God through sin.

And when you think of Philip's statement, Philip's expression and request, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us, John really is building into that this great longing in the human heart for being loved, for being wanted, for being under the love of someone greater than themselves.

And that's only met fully in the love of God himself. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

And that's why you can never have this sense of longing to be loved fulfilled in terms of mere human love however good it might be, however consistent it might be.

[11 : 07] you can only have it fulfilled by coming to know God and to know the love of God and to come to the assurance that you are loved in the highest sense and in the ultimate sense in the love of God himself.

Nothing else will satisfy you tonight in the longing of your soul to be loved and to be wanted short of knowing that you are loved by God.

Short of knowing that God has expressed his love for you in what has already been seen and is seen as we'll see in a minute in Jesus Christ. Christ really himself if you like is the expression of God to his people saying I do love you.

I'm here to fulfill this longing in your heart for this relationship to be restored where your longing to be loved reaches fulfillment in me.

There shall longing secondly for satisfaction for satisfaction or rest. Our soul is not at peace in our disrupted relationship with God.

[12 : 22] There are many ways in which people persuade themselves you and I would have persuaded ourselves at one time that we had plenty of peace that we were at peace with other people that we didn't want anything else but the sense of peace that we had yet deep down in our soul were not at peace.

Things still annoy us things still come to us that really ask us so many questions that we find impossible to answer and frustrate us and in fact when we follow the teaching of scripture there are only two alternatives as to how we come to be fully satisfied or at rest in our souls or at peace.

It's either the world and its material things the things of time things of sense the things within the confines of this world as we refer to it this world itself and everything that's in it in terms of material and money and all of these issues it's either that or it's Jesus Christ that's one or the other you can't actually think of any category that's not in one or the other can you?

Can you? anything that you think of that satisfies you other than Christ well it belongs to this world it belongs to the things of time it belongs to the things of sense things which are temporary things which are going to be left behind when we leave this world ourselves and one of the best places to see that is actually in Psalm 17 when you come to read through Psalm 17 you'll find that it's David's take on the wicked that are around him on some of the features and characteristics of the life of the wicked or the lifestyle of the wicked and he's crying out to God in this respect he's quite persuaded that God has tried him that he's visited him by night that he's tested him and he's purposed in his mouth that he will not transgress he's avoided the ways of the violent his steps have held fast to the paths of God my feet have not slipped and then he says keep me as the apple of your eye from the wicked who do me violence my deadly enemies who surround me they close their hearts to pity with their mouths they speak arrogantly they have now surrounded our steps they set their eyes to cast us to the ground arise oh Lord confront him subdue him the men of this world whose portion is in this life now he's coming to the climax of the psalm their portion is in this life he says you fill their womb with treasure they are satisfied with children and they leave their abundance to their infants can't carry it with them doesn't give them satisfaction it's not lasting the last verse is an absolutely dynamic alternative and contrast as for me you see how he's putting himself there standing out against everyone that he's been describing around him of the wicked of the godless of the ungodly as for me

I shall behold your face in righteousness when I awake and he's looking there beyond the things of this world it's really a reference to life beyond death when I awake which the new testament develops of course more into resurrection and our understanding of it and its details about resurrection when I awake I shall be satisfied with your likeness now we come back to Philip's question Lord show us the father and it is enough for us human beings have a longing for satisfaction a longing for peace a longing for rest in their souls and Psalm 17 and all the other passages of the Bible tell us that longing can never be fulfilled by anything in this world by anything that we can produce ourselves not even by the highest human attainments and that's why rest and satisfaction is in knowing the father and why it's important that we hear what Jesus saying whoever has seen me has seen the father there's your satisfaction there's where the longings of your heart are met in terms of rest and satisfaction and peace somebody a very successful businessman became a

[17 : 08] Christian and had spent years building up his business and building up a fortune in terms of finance and personal fortune and so on and he was asked having achieved all of this he was asked what would he now say reflecting on his life and what he had achieved this is how he put it the dream of reality by the reality he meant dreaming of these riches dreaming of having all of these things that he now had in plenty of the luxury goods that the world could give him that's the reality he meant he said dreaming of the reality was much better than the reality of the dream dreaming of the reality was much better than the reality of the dream there was a measure of satisfaction and both of course dreaming of this reality of riches and having everything he needed in monetary terms and material terms it felt good felt good to have the dream and especially as the dream progressed more and more into reality it felt even better but when he reached the reality when he got to that stage when he had everything the reality then felt not so good as the dream it's the opposite with your hope of eternal life and with what you already know of satisfaction in Christ of the father that takes care of you that you see in

Christ it's the very opposite of these words the dream of reality was better than the reality of the dream well you can put it around this way the hope of the reality is nothing like as good as the reality of the hope will be it's good to have the hope there's a measure of satisfaction having the hope of satisfaction in heaven perfectly but it's not going to be as good the hope you now have it's not going to feel as good as the reality of it when it's fulfilled in heaven it'll outdo the dream if you like of the hope towards it we long for satisfaction we need satisfaction we need our souls to be at rest we need peace internally and Jesus is the answer to it thirdly there's a longing for ultimate security one of the big longings in human life a longing for ultimate security people in this life in this world tonight don't have any security at all some of them some of them are looking over their shoulder as to whether or not they're next to be killed and there are many

Christians among them but every human soul has a longing for ultimate security and of course we're very used to the idea in our day that tries to reach that ultimate security by dismissing God by dismissing God altogether out of the picture of the reckoning by putting God out of the thinking altogether that thinks how can I have ultimate security how can I really be secure and atheistic or humanistic philosophy will say well the first thing you do is you get rid of your Bible the first thing you do is you get rid of God the idea of God because it doesn't exist and if you want security you have to fabricate it yourself security is the atheist or humanist will tell you is really finding something by your own achievements by your own philosophy your own approach to life and when you go for it and reach it and achieve it then you've got security you've achieved it you've made it but no it doesn't work that way does it because it forgets one thing that's very important let me just illustrate it again there was a judge at one time another

Christian judge judge and he often had people to dinner of course in his house and he had a habit of asking this question or putting this poser if you like to his dinner guests he would say supposing you were in court wrongly accused of murder and you were found guilty or on the other hand supposing you were in court rightly accused of murder and you were found not guilty which of the two would you prefer to be rightly accused but found not guilty or to be wrongly accused and to be found guilty and sentenced and most of the guests would say well that one to be rightly accused but set free surely that's the one that's preferable and the judge said no you're forgetting one very important thing conscience you can be wrongly accused and found guilty and even sentenced to death but you've got a clean conscience you know you're right with

God but you can be rightly accused and found not guilty through some way or other not going to clear your conscience is it that's the big thing you see that we need an ultimate security we need something that will actually pacify our conscience that will purge our conscience that will come to put it at rest securely and finally and that's why you find in the likes of Hebrews and chapter 9 there are two verses in Hebrews chapter 9 when you take them together that really set out for us the real wonder and the brilliance of God the father through Christ providing us with that ultimate security Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 9 you remember they're talking about the animal sacrifices the old testament sacrifices which it says there in verse 9 these were symbolic according to this arrangement gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper these things themselves but he goes on to a few verses later on at verse 14 he's talking now about

[23 : 57] Christ how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God show us the father and it suffices us when you see the father you're able to see the way to a clean peaceful conscience when you see the father you're able to know satisfaction and rest for your soul when you see the father you're able to know what it is to be loved and you have a satisfaction from that itself that the longing of your heart to be loved is met in the fatherhood of God and it's displayed in Christ so there is Philip's request and how did Jesus respond well he put this question to him which we said was something of a rebuke a challenging question have I been so long with you Philip and you still do not know me and even though we did say that there were reasons why we feel sorry for him in a sense and why we would not have been any better the time still the question of

Jesus is a challenging one and it is a rebuke have I been with you so long and you still do not know me but then that's a question that Jesus is still asking many people we are praying tonight for people in the congregation our own congregation that still do not know the Lord people who come to listen to the gospel faithfully regularly many of them but Jesus is still asking this question have I been so long with you and you still do not know me and that's why when we pray for them as we apply this question to ourselves but as we pray for them we think of this we think of Jesus looking in upon their situation and Jesus as it were remonstrating them through the scriptures how long is it going to be until you come to know me how long must I go on with you until you come to know me but then we can put it to ourselves as well have I been so long with you and you still do not know me we all know the

Lord thankfully to some degree to some extent but none of us I'm sure will say that we know him to the extent we ought to know him have we made the most of all our advantages have we made the most of the privileges given us have we made or are we making the most of our time available to us to get to know him better is there something in our lives that's more important than actually getting to know more of the Lord and to know the Lord more and I have to put it to myself certainly tonight this very question that and see that Jesus is addressing it to me as well as surely as he is to you have I been so long with you and you still do not know me you still do not know me better than you do you still do not know me to the extent that you ought to and you acknowledge yourself so let's take let's take that question with us into our own experience into our own personal relation with the Lord as well and let's keep it behind our communion with him and our use of his word and our coming together in church fellowships or whatever because it's there to challenge us and it's there to keep reminding us that the Lord is with us so that we would actually come increasingly to know him and who he is and why he's significant but then he makes a profound statement whoever has seen me has seen the Father how then can you say show us the Father do you not believe that I am in the Father and the

Father is in me two things from that it's a very profound statement it takes us into the depth of that relationship between the Son and the Father which really is the depth of the Trinity itself and the Trinity here economically if you like which is the word theologians used to have for the Trinity in terms of the working out of our salvation and the different ways in which the persons of the Trinity related to each other for example the Father sending the Son the Son coming and being obedient to the Father and the work that he did on earth all of these things but two things that this shows it shows us first of all that Jesus was and indeed Jesus is God nobody could actually have said whoever has seen me has seen the Father but somebody who is equal to the Father in nature in substance it's an absolute identity of nature with the

Father that's required before anybody could say this and you know for people to actually tell us nowadays that the Gospels are just an invention of disciples who had come to know Jesus and were followers of him and were somewhat disappointed when he died or when he was put to death and that was the end of his cause but they reinvented things and they reinvented a resurrection from the dead and then they invented all of these teachings of Jesus or tried to actually put them into writing from what they remembered no human being certainly not a Jew was actually going to apply to any other mere human being such a thing which would ultimately be blasphemous if Jesus was not God whoever has seen me has seen the father Jesus is God and of course there you also say that not only an identity of nature but a harmony of will and a harmony of purpose

[30 : 10] John chapter 10 puts it so brilliantly there where he talks about the sheep that he's looking after as the good shepherd no one shall pluck them he says I give to them eternal life no one shall pluck them out of my hand my father who gave them to me is greater than all no one is able to pluck them out of my father's hand I and my father are one by which he means one in this purpose of looking after the sheep of having a flock of tending to them of giving them eternal life of keeping them secure they're absolutely at one there is nothing in the mind of the father contrary to the mind of the son there is nothing in the mind of the son incarnate here as a servant in this world as he now speaks these words to Philip there is nothing in the son even then as a servant that is contrary to or different in purpose to the mind and purpose and will of the father whoever has seen the father has seen me and of course that's

Jesus' own self consciousness a self consciousness as to who he was he had a center of consciousness as God he had a center of consciousness as human but he only had one self consciousness the consciousness of the person he was and that self consciousness is that he was conscious of being God fully absolutely with no restrictions other than what he placed on himself in regard to being a servant but nothing in terms of his nature as God or his authority as God he is one with the father and it shows then that Jesus was God that Jesus is God and that's where you get this wonderful mysterious divine fellowship built into that as well do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me

I don't know how to explain that it's a mystery it's beyond my reckoning and beyond you too probably it's something that takes us into the depths of interpersonal fellowship within the trinity that God is but it shows us that as they were looking at Jesus then they were looking at the father that's the second point not only does it show that Jesus was and Jesus is God but also it shows that the father was seen and is seen in Jesus there are times I'm sure if you know anything like myself or used to be more the case than is now perhaps when you might say to yourself I wish I could see more of the father I can see I can see something about Jesus I can see the description the gospels give him I can see him in his dealing with people I can see him in the way he's described as compassionate I can see him in the way miracles he did

I can see him in the regard he had for his disciples I can see his anger at times as he swept people out of the temple I can see all of these things I can understand these things of Jesus as he was in this human nature on earth but I just wish I could see more of the father well what Jesus is saying you're seeing him you're seeing him the mercy of Jesus the compassion of Jesus the power of Jesus the anger of Jesus the grace of Jesus the patience the patience of Jesus the care of Jesus when you see these you're seeing the father there's nothing different in the father to any of these there's nothing more of these in the father than there is in Jesus nothing less in Jesus than there is in the father of these great things mercy patience grace power and so on they are all there and that's why he was saying to

Philip whoever has seen me has seen the father and tonight if you have that point in mind that you wish you could actually see more of your father where do you go with that desire you don't go to your own spiritual adoption or childhood as a child of God you don't go to your relationship to the father to see more of the father for yourself you can get something of it there but that's not the first place you go to you don't go to your relationship with him to see how you pray to him to see how he speaks to you through scripture and to recognize the care that he has as a father for his children you don't go to any of these things first and foremost you go to the person of Christ and you say what do I find in Jesus what attributes do I see here what qualities are there to him and then you say now I'm seeing the father now I know what my father is like because whoever has seen the son whoever has seen

[35 : 53] Jesus has seen the father there is the answer that God has given us the provision for all the longings of our heart the longing to be loved the longing for satisfaction the longing for ultimate security they're all in the father as revealed to us in Jesus they are all in Jesus as he reveals to us the father and it shows us the deity of Christ that he is nothing less than God that all God's attributes and qualities are in him and it shows us the father as you see more and more of Jesus himself let's pray Lord our God we give thanks that you revealed yourself to us but that you did so in such an astounding way that you came into this world in the person of your son that you entered into our circumstances that you revealed yourself as the father of your people through the incarnation of your son

Lord we thank you that that revelation is something that we still come to understand more and more of we pray that our desire always will be that we will see more of the father and appreciate more of you as our father in heaven through the way in which you ministered to us by your son by your spirit we thank you Lord for all the rich and wonderful testimony that you have given us in your word as to who you are and your purpose in creating us and giving us life and we ask oh Lord that we may further our knowledge and our interest in you in a way that grows increasingly to be like you hear us now we pray for your glory's sake Amen