

The Father as Seen in Scripture

Discovering the Wonders of Our God

The Lord told Moses that no one could see Him and live. Fortunately, it seems that God is able to break His own rules, or else He meant something by this one that we don't fully understand. The truth is that many people have seen God "face to face" with no negative side effects. These close encounters with our heavenly Father give us tantalizing pictures of the One who sits on the Throne.

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.
Exodus 33:11 ESV

"But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."
Exodus 33:20 ESV

Lost Vision; False Images

If you were the Invisible Man you would need someone to speak up for you, right? Imagine how it is with God the Father. Under ordinary conditions we can't see, taste, touch, smell or hear Him. He lives in a realm beyond all of our senses, almost beyond our imagination. Try to sketch what He looks like and you might draw a blank. He's invisible! Well, not exactly. It is we who are blind.

The Fall into sin cast a veil over all our eyes. We lost the Vision of God whose Image we were eternally meant to bear, cherished in the very center of our hearts. Jesus has come to restore that lost Vision and recover our lost relationship with His Father and ours. But in the meantime, there has been plenty of opportunity for the deceiver to sow false images into the void.



Of the many misconceptions about God the Father out there, two have proven to be especially beguiling (and damaging) in our day: the idea of God as an angry judge and that of God as a disembodied spirit, a non-personal "force." Both make it difficult to love God in any meaningful way, which is His primary command to us. Worse, they make it hard to draw close: How can you "cozy up" to a God that you fear is angry with you? Better to stay at a safe distance! Or who seems soulless and devoid of personality? Might as well try to embrace the wind!

A misguided reading of scripture feeds these false images; a balanced understanding of the gospel utterly destroys them. Just as the Lord cast down the false image (idol) of Dagon before the Ark in the day of the Judges, so now He desires to cast down all false images of the Father that have crept into our hearts. See [The Father's Love](#) for help defeating the first false image; keep reading for help with the second.



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Regaining Our Sight

Jesus said flat out that He came to reveal the Father and seemed shocked at the Last Supper that His disciples failed to pick up on that part of His assignment. For us Jesus immediately begins revealing the Father through our faith-conversion. We learn from the gospel that against all fearful expectation to the contrary, God doesn't hate us or want to punish us; He actually loves us and sent Jesus to the rescue. We begin to "see" the Father by looking at the cross for it is there that we see the unimaginable love which led God to punish His own Son in our place.

As we grow in the Lord, His Word is there to open our spiritual eyes to see the Father's Hand upon our life, guiding us through circumstances and working all things for our good. Most revealing of all is the Person of Jesus. The more we behold Him by faith, the more we gain eyes to see that He and the Father are One. The Father is just like Jesus!

But is He "embodied" as Jesus is? Does He have personality as Jesus does? Will we see Him? Can we see Him? It is at this point that even seasoned Christians stumble. Many scriptures declare that God cannot be seen. God, Himself, told Moses that "no one can see me and live." Those who know these scriptures are sometimes stopped dead in their tracks. Is this where the trail ends? Bereft of vision? Unable to embrace?

To make any headway with these mind-numbing questions, we will have to knock down two commonplace myths: the myth of the Father as a spiritual "force" and the myth that He cannot be seen.

Myth 1: A Spiritual "Force"

When Jesus said that God is Spirit, He could not have meant the limitations which we ordinarily place upon that term, for Jesus is Himself God and therefore fully Spirit. Certainly, God the Father doesn't have a physical body—for Jesus alone took on our flesh—but that doesn't mean that He lacks spiritual form and substance which can be seen (as we will see in the next section). The difficulty for us here is what is meant by spirit. I suspect that our unconscious thought about God as spirit tends to summon up images of invisible forces and intangible associations. We are, after all, creatures of our culture.

The ancients didn't suffer from our cultural limitations. They lived in an imaginative universe populated with exotic pantheons of celestial beings, positively overflowing with personality (and attitude). They had their own errors, obviously, but they wouldn't have had any trouble understanding spirit as meaning "spirited" in the sense of lively and full of life! Our universe, on the other hand, is as devoid of the personal as it is of life—nothing we know of as life can live in interstellar space. It is filled instead with invisible fields of impersonal forces: electrical, nuclear, gravitational, magnetic, radioactive, etc.

This strictly scientific view — correct in so far as material things are concerned—is what we've been raised on. The Biblical world view shatters this truncated version of reality, though it takes time for the truth to sink in and the realization to dawn that everything in our universe is somehow also alive: the very stones will praise Him, trees clap their hands, the stars sing, and all creation eagerly longs for us to emerge from our captivity. Most alive of all is our God. Where He sits upon His throne is not some black hole in space, but the blazing source of all light and life! Nothing about Him is hidden in darkness, only hidden from darkness.

Our God has emotion, intellect and will, not in any fallen way, but heightened by perfection and filled with glory. He who made us in His Image and gives life to each one of us, cannot be less than we are. Whatever it is that we mean by soul, personhood and personality, God is that and more. In Mere Christianity C. S. Lewis addressed this gap in our perceptions.

A good many people nowadays say, "I believe in a God, but not in a personal God." They feel that the mysterious something which is behind all other things must be more than a person. Now the Christians quite agree. But the Christians are the only people who offer any idea of what a being that is beyond personality could be like. All the other people, though they say that God is beyond personality, really think of Him as something impersonal: that is, as something less than personal.

Myth 2: Impossible to Be Seen

There seems to have been a belief held by the Israelites with an absolute certainty throughout the Old Testament period that if anyone saw God they would die. No doubt this is true—at one level. As sin-filled as we have become through the Fall, we would all perish, if we were to look upon the pure, undefiled glory of the Holy God without a covering. Even the angels around His throne cover their eyes—or at least some do. How much greater is our need! But the truth is we have a covering, making it possible for us to approach the throne of grace, not with fear and trembling, but with grace-empowered "boldness." Nothing less than the Blood of Jesus gives us direct access to the Father of Lights; nothing more is required.

From our vantage point we now know that Jesus has always been the Lamb slain from the "foundation of the world." In some mysterious way He has always been the Covering our sins and sin nature would require. Does this explain how God could have an angel carry a burning coal from the altar in heaven to purify Isaiah in His presence? Isaiah says that he "saw" the Lord enthroned in glory surrounded by angels who covered their faces, yet his face wasn't covered and he didn't die. Nevertheless, it was the Lord who said to Moses that "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." That should settle the issue, except that the scriptures also record that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." What are we to make of these apparent contradictions?

Sometimes (many times) it is wisest to bow before the mystery, rather than reach beyond revelation in a vain attempt to comprehend it. Our initial task was not to explain how it is that we can see God, but to demonstrate that our Father can definitely be seen, even by the likes of us! For that we have Moses and Isaiah as outstanding witnesses already cited. To them may be added the spectacular combined witness of Daniel in Babylon and John on Patmos. Both of these men in exile saw the same scene in heaven, although they lived five centuries apart. Not only that, but what they saw hasn't even taken place yet by earth time!

Unquestionably, Daniel and John saw the Father, because in both scenes Jesus enters from "offstage" and approaches the "one seated on the throne" (so that One isn't Jesus). Daniel and John saw it all and lived to tell about it. It makes fascinating reading though we could certainly wish that they had added more to their descriptions. What we do have, however, is enough to forever shatter both myths: that God is some kind of ethereal, nonpersonal "force" or a spiritual being who cannot be seen. Please take the time to look up the extended account in your Bible.

As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. Daniel 7:9 ESV

At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.
Revelation 4:2-3 ESV

More Divine Discoveries

Jesus Our Savior Jesus is the Hero of our story. In fact, all of history is His Story. Before the cross it tells us of humanity's fall and of God's ways of preparing us for the Savior to come. Then for a brief moment in time Jesus left His divine powers behind, took the plunge into earth's pain and darkness, and lived in our midst, becoming forever united to our humanity. At the cross He single-handedly redeemed us. After the cross and His ascension history reveals His slow, patient way of redeeming humanity through us. It is easy to miss it: easy to look at the world and not see a Creator; easy to look at our history and not see His Story. Seeing Him changes everything.

Holy Spirit Our Helper Jesus said He would not leave us comfortless and He hasn't! He is living in us through the Holy Spirit who is "sealed" to us a sign of our eternal destiny and as a present source of help and hope for any situation of need we may encounter. Because He is holy He shows us what doesn't belong in us (sin). Because He is wholly good He helps us in the most patient, loving ways imaginable as He works to lead us out of our darkness into the full Light of Christ. All the while He draws so little attention to Himself, you would hardly know He is there. Part of the "fun" is learning to recognize and acknowledge our incomparable Guest.

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Scriptures on "Seeing" the Father

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.
John 1:18 ESV

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 ES

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 ESV

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#).



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