



PARACLETE

ADVOCATING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Volume 7, Issue 4

August 2024

The Image of the Invisible God

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

The apostle Paul told the Colossian Christians that Jesus “*is the image of the invisible God*” (1:15). Later in the same letter he expanded the meaning of that: “*For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form*” (2:9).

The apostle John identified a significant problem about God: **no one has ever seen Him!** But John also provided the solution to the problem: Jesus – the “*One and Only*” (NIV), the “*begotten God*” (NASB), the “*divine and only Son*” (Phillips) – “*has made Him known*” (John 1:18).

As a result, whatever attributes you attribute to the Father, you must also find in the Son – different in person but the same in essence. He is “*the image of God*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). What evidence supports that?

Grace and Truth Came Through Jesus Christ

Two significant attributes are often used to describe God in the Old Testament: lovingkindness and faithfulness (Psalm 100:5). The Bible says these endure forever and continue through all generations. Lovingkindness consists of “love” plus “goodness” which is equivalent to the concept of “**grace**” in the New



Let the Children Come to Me, by an unknown author, from the Swedish National Museum in Stockholm (public domain).



The creation of light, as depicted in this woodcut, ca. 1866, by Gustave Doré (public domain).

Testament. Faithfulness is often translated interchangeably with “**truthfulness.**”

If Jesus is the image (essence) of God, then He, too, should be characterized by those two attributes. Indeed, when the Holy Spirit revealed the Word [Jesus] to the apostle John in his Gospel, He spoke of Jesus as “*full of grace and truth*” (1:14). He stated even further, while “*the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came [were realized – NASB] through Jesus Christ*” (v. 17, NIV).

Grace (lovingkindness) and truth (faithfulness), the attributes of the Father, were present in Jesus, the image of God. This agrees with the truth of His claim, “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30). “One” cannot mean “the same person” (that would violate the grammar) and cannot mean “agrees with” because there would be no offense to justify the attempt to stone Him to death for saying this. The Greek grammar and the Jews’ reaction made clear that He meant “essence,” the image of God.

continued on page 2



FaithSearch International exists to extend the Gospel with evidence to all peoples everywhere. *FaithSearch* International is not denominationally affiliated.

FOR REFLECTION

Understanding the Essence of “Wokeism”

By Dr. Don Bierle, President

Recently I have noticed several current views within our culture which stand opposed to God and His revelation to us. For example, alleging there are many genders is a rejection of God’s creation



of humanity in His image as “*male and female,*” as revealed in Genesis 1:27. An ideological refusal to bear children by some rejects God’s command to “*be fruitful and multiply*” (v. 28). God’s institution of marriage and family as being between a man and a woman (2:24); the sanctity of life as opposed to abortion as a right and on demand (Psalm 139:13-16); and the rejection of any “*authority-figure*” except self – all appear to me to be a rebellion against God, His character, and what He has revealed.

My reflection was recently confirmed in an article in the *Christian Research Journal*. I make no claim to have expertise regarding contemporary wokeism. Because Mering’s article is quite extensive, I thought it best to just quote the author’s enlightening conclusion.

- “In the attack on authority, it is God’s Fatherhood that is reimagined as our ultimate oppressor.”
- “What is rejected – the person, reason, and authority – are the three characteristics of the Logos Himself [“*Word*” in John 1:1]. The Logos is the mind of God, communicated in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the author of and authority over all. It is He who is the ultimate target of the woke revolt.”

continued on page 2

Image of the Invisible God

continued from page 1

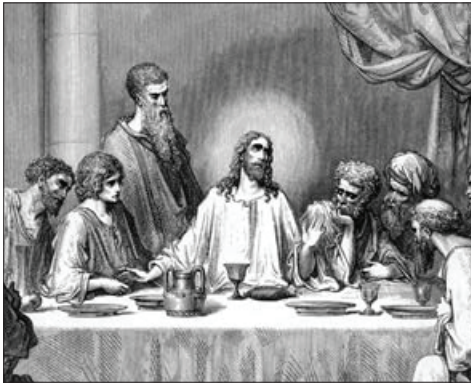
Knowing the Future

Another distinctive divine attribute is revealed in God's challenge to the false idols (Isaiah 41:21-23, NIV):

'Present your case,' says the Lord... 'Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen... declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods.'

The claim of omniscience, knowing all things, including the future, is repeated in 42:9 NIV, *"See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."*

Jesus demonstrated that same prophetic attribute throughout His ministry. He told Peter to get their combined temple tax from a coin in the mouth of the first fish he would catch in the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 17:24-27). He predicted Peter's three denials (John 13:38) and His own crucifixion and resurrection (Mark 10:32-34). He prophesied the eventual destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:5-6).



Jesus addressed the disciples during the last supper, as depicted in this woodcut, ca. 1866, by Gustave Doré (public domain).

Jesus intentionally prophesied the future as evidence of who He is. In the Upper Room, the night of His arrest, he predicted several things and said to the eleven apostles, *"And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe"* (John 14:29). He even went a step further: *"From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He"* (13:19). The *"I am He"* is the memorial name of God – the **I AM** of Exodus 3:15. By demonstrating His knowledge of the future, Jesus assured His disciples that He is God.

A Personal Challenge

There is more apologetic evidence for Jesus' deity, but these are adequate to put forth a personal challenge to every person reading these words. Another of Jesus' prophecies is recorded in John 14:3, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:3).

He promised to prepare a place in heaven for some, for eternity. Are you in that number? Read John 6:40, 1 John 5:11-13, and Romans 10:8-10 to know. I pray that all our **FaithSearch** Friends, and many to whom we have shown the way, will be together in those prepared places!

Did You Know?

The "Devil's Drink"?

Legend has it that coffee originated in the Kingdom of Kefa (present day Ethiopia) in the tenth century B.C. Today's coffee gets its name from its southern Arabian roots (Yemen) from Sufi monks who cultivated the plants in the fifteenth century A.D.

At that time, coffee was so linked to Islam that some other religions banned it as the "devils drink." It was so controversial that the Pope was asked to weigh in. After receiving his approval, it spread rapidly, and coffee houses sprang up throughout Asia, Europe, and England in the sixteenth century. The seed from the coffee plant, *Coffea arabica*, eventually was called "Kahve" in Turkish, "Koffie" in Dutch, and finally



the English "coffee" in the sixteenth century. It was introduced into the U.S. in about 1700. Later in the eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson was alleged to say that coffee was "the favorite drink of the civilized world." Today, about eleven million tons of coffee beans are produced annually with Brazil being the top producer. Finland leads the world in per capita coffee consumption at 3-4 cups per person daily.

Source: "The Best Part of Waking Up," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Spring, 2024, p. 22. Also: Various Internet searches.

FOR REFLECTION

continued from page 1

- "But as with any attempt to triumph over God, the result is not power, but slavery – slavery to a politicized identity group, slavery to the insatiable tyranny of transgression, and ultimately slavery to authoritarianism."

The truth revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul then, is particularly relevant to the woke themes in our current culture:

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools... For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen (Romans 1:21-22, 25).

The answer to "wokeism" is not, however, political change, nor legalism, nor societal oppression. Rather, it comes from hearts changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, in response to the saving Gospel, resulting in obedience to God, and to the truth of His Word.

Sources: "Three Dogmas of Wokeism: The Path to Authoritarianism," Noelle Mering. *Christian Research Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 01/02, 2023, pp. 18-25. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, online edition, accessed 8/6/2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/woke>.

The **FaithSearch** Paraclete is published by **FaithSearch** International, an interdenominational, donor-supported, 501(c)(3) organization, based in Edina, MN, USA.

FaithSearch is a member in good standing of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

