

A Person, Not a Proposition

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by Matt Peery

When most of us think of God we think of propositions we hold to be true about God. We think along the same lines the western world has been thinking for around 2400 years, beginning with the Greeks.

This western way of thinking is personified in the Bible in people like Pontius Pilate and Doubting Thomas. In John 18:38 Pilate asks Jesus, “What is truth?” This is the classic western question, and is the father of all the questions we typically ask: “How is this tasked to be accomplished?” “How can this product be sold?” “What is the best way to travel to that town?” To answer these questions we analyze and problem-solve using logic. And we learn a great deal through this way of thinking.

But when it comes to Jesus, “What is truth?” is the wrong question. The way we typically think, while greatly helping us understand much about our world, can actually hinder us in knowing God.

The question the Bible asks is: “Who is truth?” The Bible tells us that before there was something, there was someone: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us that our world is not just made up of objects we can know facts about, but also beings, persons, who we can personally know.

God is not an object, a thing to be analyzed the way we analyze an equation. No, God is a being with a character, and a will. God is a subject who makes himself known, and allows himself to be known. And it is only in being personally known by God, and personally knowing God through the redemption of Christ, that we have God’s salvation.

We were, at the most fundamental level, created not to analyze but to love and be loved – to love God and be loved by God. At our core we are not just “rational animals” as Aristotle claimed. We are persons created by God to live in communion with God.

In John 14 there is a dialogue between Jesus and Doubting Thomas. Thomas would have been a great scientist. Thomas refuses to believe anything until he has analyzed the evidence, the proof. Jesus says that his followers know where he is going. Yet, Thomas asks, “How can we know the way?” Thomas thinks like an engineer. He needs a map, a blue print, an equation.

Jesus responds in John 14:6 by saying, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Jesus answers Thomas’ and Pilate’s “what” question with a “who” response. Namely, Himself. Donald Bloesch said, “The object of our faith is not a propositional formula but the living, redeeming God incarnate Jesus Christ, attested of in Holy Scripture.”

While it is necessary to know and understand the gospel before one believes, our salvation is not knowing facts. Our salvation is not in knowing that Jesus is the Son of God. James 2:19 says even the demons know this and shudder. Our salvation is in the new life we have in our intimate communion with the Father, in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.