

Meeting With Christ

Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pastor Eric Chang

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I WILL MANIFEST MYSELF (1)

John 14:21

In discussing the existence of God with non-believers, there are typical questions that can be expected. ‘Prove to me that God exists. Where is God now? Show me that He is real. How can I believe in someone that I don’t see?’ These are certainly fair questions but as we know, they are not necessarily easy to answer. It is not like showing a building to a person. We can understand a non-believer when he asks this type of questions. But when it comes from a disciple, it can be somewhat puzzling. Take for example John 14.

Show us the Father

John 14 begins with a question by the apostle Philip, a strange question for a disciple. In v. 8, Philip said, *Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied*. We feel like saying to Philip, ‘What! Philip, you have spent all these years with Jesus, and now you ask this question!!! You should have come to realize that Jesus is God in human form. He is the visible image of what God is like.’ Perhaps Philip was hoping to have a spectacular sight of God where he would meet the Lord face to face, much like some great men of God had done in the past. Men like Jacob (Genesis 28:12ff), Moses (Exodus 3:1ff), Joshua 5:13ff), Gideon (Judges 6:21ff), Elijah (1Kings 19:4ff), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1ff), or Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1ff).

But regardless of his expectation, I would like you to notice the depth and the sincerity of Philip’s question. ‘Our heart just desires to be able to know God. Show us God the Father and we will be content.’ That was a very touching question indeed. And I think it is a question that should be in the heart of any Christian who is serious about his faith.

The Lord’s reply is this. V. 9: *Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”* Jesus was somewhat disappointed that Philip failed to see what he was asking for. The answer to his question was standing in front of him, but he did not have the spiritual perception to see it. However, far from brushing aside Philip’s question, Jesus began a very long discourse, a discourse that will stop only in chapter 16. We can say that it took three chapters to answer Philip’s question. This shows how important that question was to the Lord Jesus.

Show us the Father, Philip requested. You know, any genuine Christian should have, burning in his heart, this longing to know God in a manner that is so vivid that he can really say, ‘I have seen my Lord.’ Think about a man like Job. That desire was described at the climax of the book of Job. After going through all the trials, at the very end, Job was able to say, *My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you* (Job 42:5). ‘Once I had heard about you. Now I have seen with my eyes

that you are the living God. Now I perceive the reality of your presence.’ Job believed in God. He loved God very much before all those trials happened to him. But somehow these trials changed him. They gave him a new experience of God, an experience that was much deeper than what he had known before.

The apostle Paul expresses the same thought in these words in 2Timothy 1:12: *I know whom I have believed.* ‘I know the person in whom I put my trust.’ You cannot say those words unless you have a deep experience of God. ‘I met God on the road to Damascus. And since then, I met him many times. That is why I say ‘I know whom I have believed.’’ That was Paul’s experience of God.

You may be a Christian who earnestly loves God, but can you say like Job, ‘Now I have seen God?’ ‘Before I have heard of you with my ears. And what I heard was enough to make me love you a lot. But now, through this experience of you, I have seen you with my own eyes.’ Or, can you say like Paul, ‘I am not ashamed of my sufferings here in prison, for I know whom I have believed.’

You will see me

When Philip asked, ‘Show us the Father,’ Jesus felt his longing, and he met his longing. Let’s read John 14:18-19.

John 14:18. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. (‘I will not disappoint you. I know your longing. I will not leave you desolate.’)

14:19. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also.

Notice those words. ‘But you will see me.’ Philip asked, ‘Show me the Father.’ And Jesus said, ‘You will see me. The world will not see me. In a little while, I will be crucified and the world will not see me anymore. But you will see me, after my resurrection.’ Then v. 20.

John 14:20. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

I am in my Father. ‘I am united to the Father. The Father is united to me. I am united to you. Therefore you are united to the Father.’ How does this come about, this union with God the Father, through Christ? It happens at baptism. *He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*, Paul writes in 1Corinthians 6:17. Baptism indicates this very thing. At baptism, we have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, and we become one spirit with Him. And being one spirit with Jesus, we are also one spirit with God the Father. Then v. 21.

John 14:21. He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

I would like you to pay a special attention to the word ‘manifest.’ ‘I will manifest myself.’ This is really the key word of our lesson. The word ‘manifest’ means ‘to make something or someone visible.’ ‘I will manifest myself’ means ‘you will see me.’ ‘I will manifest myself, not to the world, but to the person who has kept my commandments. This person will see me.’ Judas then asked this question. V. 22.

John 14:22. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"

Jesus will not manifest himself to the unbelievers. Faith must precede the experience of Christ. We are saved by faith. If Jesus manifested himself before the actual faith, then we don’t need faith anymore. Faith first. Then the substantiation of that faith, by the manifestation of Christ. That is the order. Jesus will not manifest himself to the world. The world will not know him because they have

rejected him. Luke 16:31 tells us that for a hardened heart, even a resurrection from the dead will not lead to belief (*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead*). But to those who have his commandments and keep them, He will manifest himself to them. V. 23.

John 14:23. Jesus answered him, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.'

Jesus says that He manifests himself only to those who have already taken the step of loving him. But He says more than that. 'You say you want to see the Father? I will do something better than that for you. Listen to this. My Father and I, we will come and make our home with you.'

Here Jesus makes the promise that though He is returning to His Father (v. 12), there would not be any separation from him for his disciples. The Holy Spirit will come and dwell in the heart of every believer, the home that Jesus talks about in v. 23. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul refers to this home and says, *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* The presence of the Holy Spirit in the disciple allows the disciple to have constant access to the Father and to Jesus.

I will manifest myself: the resurrection

I would like now to talk about the historical context of this claim 'I will manifest myself.' When the Lord Jesus says to his disciples, 'You will see me. I will manifest myself to you,' He is of course referring to the resurrection event.

That was the question that the disciples asked Jesus. John 16:16-19.

*John 16:16. A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me.
17 Some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"
18 They said, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he means."
19 Jesus knew what they wanted to ask him; so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'?"*

Then Jesus explained to them what He meant.

John 16:20. Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

'The world will rejoice, but you will weep. There will be tears on your face because the one in whom you trusted, the one whom you have committed to follow all these years, you will see him hanging on a Roman cross, dying slowly. Suddenly, all your hopes will vanish. And you will begin to say to yourselves, 'What have we done? We have given up our lives to follow Jesus. And now, He is dying!' The world will be happy that I am gone. Your heart will be broken. But in a little while, you will see me again. I will rise from the dead. And the joy that you will feel when you see me again, nobody will take it away from you.' You see that in the context of this passage, when Jesus said, 'I will manifest myself,' He was talking about his resurrection.

Notice also this important point. Jesus told His disciples that they are going to see him with their eyes, their physical eyes. There is an emphasis on the fact that they are going to see him in the flesh when He has risen from the dead. Why this emphasis? Jesus wanted to make sure that there will be absolutely no doubt in their mind that He is alive. He did not say, 'Take it by faith. You are going to see me on the cross. You are going to see me in the tomb. And you will never see me again. Just

take it by faith that I am going to be alive. You don't need to see me physically. Just take it by faith.' No, Jesus wanted them to know that they will see him after the resurrection.

The claim of the resurrection repeated

This point is so important to the Lord Jesus that in the gospel of Matthew alone, He repeats it five times. Let's look at those five occurrences.

- Matthew 16:21: *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and **on the third day be raised.***
- Matthew 17:9: *And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is **raised from the dead.**"*
- Matthew 17:22-23: *As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and **he will be raised on the third day.**"*
- Matthew 20:18-19: *"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be **raised on the third day.**"*
- Matthew 26:31-32. *Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after **I am raised up**, I will go before you to Galilee."*

We notice that on three occasions, Jesus specified how long they would have to wait. 'A little while.' What little while? Three days. Exactly three days (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19).

Jesus was very specific about his resurrection. He did not want to leave us in the dark. 'In a short time, you will not see me anymore. I am going to be dead. But three days after my death, you will see me again. I will manifest myself to you.' And in Matthew 26:32, He asked them specifically to go to Galilee to meet him there.

It can be verified

The resurrection is central to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Jesus makes everything depend on it – everything. And for this reason, He talked about it in such a way that everything He said about the resurrection can be verified.

I had this thought the other day. Suppose I played the role of Jesus. I claim to be the Messiah and I go around saying that I am the savior of the world. Would I dare to say that I will die soon, and three days later, you will see me alive again? I would not say that because it can easily be checked. I know I will not come back to life. I am just a mortal being, like anyone else. It would be safer for me to say that I will rise again in ... 100 years because everybody hearing me now will be dead in 100 years. Nobody will be alive to verify if I told the truth.

Jesus said, 'In three days, I will be resurrected.' In making such a claim, He gives the possibility to his hearers to verify whether He is telling the truth or not. He was saying to his disciples, 'Everything that I have proclaimed to you, you will soon be able to verify the truth of my words.'

He even told them the manner of his death. In John 12:32-33, He said, *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show by what death he was to die.* Dying by being lifted up from the ground. There is only one way you can be lifted up. It is when you get hung up. And crucifixion was the form of hanging that took place at that time for a criminal

condemned to death. No one can predict how he or she is going to die. I cannot tell the time nor the manner of my death. Yet, Jesus could say, 'I will die very soon. And the way I am going to die is by being crucified on a cross. But I will tell you more. In three days, I will rise again. And you will see me after my resurrection.' How will people verify that He is alive? 'I will manifest myself. You will see me.'

In our next lesson, we will see why Jesus' resurrection could not be refuted by his enemies.