

## WHO IS GOD? WHO AM I?

I miss Peter! He's been dead for what? A dozen years? I can see the Aegean Sea from my cozy island cave. Patmos, I live on the Isle of Patmos. It's a simple life. Peter would have loved it. In his boat, gliding over the waves, full of life, chasing fish...like he did on the Sea Galilee, but that was what? Maybe fifty years ago?

Peter and I...best friends. Grew up in the same neighborhood, played together as small children, even worked together as young men in my father's fishing business. And then, Jesus. He came along, we walked off the job. Peter and I left our livelihoods and families to follow Jesus. For about three years, until his crucifixion and resurrection. The following three and a half decades, we shared the gospel with anybody who would listen. Then, Peter was killed. My best friend...gone.

Paul? He was my good friend, too. Not best friend, but a good friend. So different from Peter. Intellectual city boy, that Paul. Different, but still so much alike. Tough. Neither would back down. And, convinced they were right, no matter the subject. Paul's been gone for about a dozen years, too. Killed, about the same time as Peter, in the same place, Rome.

Peter, Paul and I spent countless hours talking about God, talking about Jesus. We learned so much from each other, but it was clear we related to God in slightly different ways. Look at our writings in the New Testament. Peter wrote First and Second Peter, and influenced Mark's writing of his gospel. Paul wrote thirteen books...from Romans to Philemon.

I wrote five: the Gospel of John; First, Second, and Third John; and, Revelation. I had the advantage of writing my books many years after their writings. I didn't need to repeat what they wrote, and I had plenty of time to think of things that needed to be said in different ways for new audiences.

What continually astounded us, and caused us to write so much about... was what God does and his characteristics. Maybe you are like that. When you think of God, do you

think of his creating everything, how he is so powerful, how he saves us because of his great love for us?

We wrote little about who God is! You see, to us, Jesus had made "Who God is" very clear...very...simple. Who is God? Let's start at the beginning. No, let's start before the beginning...in eternity past. Before time, before matter, before anything...<sup>1</sup>God existed as spirit, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three spirits.

Father is good, he is love, and an infinitely good Father. It's who he is. The Father loves his Son.<sup>2</sup> And vice versa.

It's like this: the Son really loves and honors the Father, and the Father loves and honors the Son. They have this beautiful relationship where the Father, the one who loves, and the Son, the one who is loved. And the Holy Spirit is in this relationship, too - the Spirit loves and honors the Father, and helps the Son to honor and please the Father even more.

They each have their own unique identity and personality. But they're so close and so unified that they're one, they are in each other. They love each other perfectly and completely. It's amazing, really.

They have names, Father-Son-Spirit, they are "Who" not "what". My writings tell of Son coming to earth in the human form of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> On earth Jesus obeys and glorifies Father. Since his ascension, Jesus sits at the right hand of Father.<sup>4</sup>

In my writings, the word "God" usually refers to God the Father, but sometimes to Father-Son-Spirit as one. A little confusing for you, I suspect, but not for us. To us, God was "God the Father", and God was "Father-Son-Spirit," three in one.

Who is God? He is pure, powerful, love. Outward flowing love who takes great joy in family relationship.

So, now, who am I? This isn't a big leap. His child, of course! I make this clear in my writings over and over...we are God's children! Children whom he loves! His Family! God constantly beckons us to a deeper relationship with him, and with his family.

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:1-2, etc

<sup>2</sup> John 5:20, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 2:9

<sup>4</sup> Mark 16:19, etc.

Why do you go to church? Do you try to do the right things, be a good person? Why? When you get down to it, I think many would answer the question with: because they want to go to Heaven. Actually, in most cases, they just don't want to go to hell. If you get consumed about what will happen to you when you die, you forget to think about why you are living.

Let's talk about life. Jesus tells us that God is a better father than any earthly father, that he gives better gifts than any earthly father.<sup>5</sup> What is the ultimate gift he gives us? Life! Life now and life later. Physical life now and eternal life for all eternity. This is a major theme in my writings. God gives life to his children, full life, overflowing with love.

I want to tie this together with one of my favorite lines out of the gospel I wrote. John Chapter 17 Verse 3, "Now this eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." The very definition of eternal life is having an intimate relationship with God, truly knowing him. Knowing him as your good, good father.

There aren't a lot advantages to getting old, but one is that you tend to live a simple life and simplify your thoughts to the very basics. So, I'll leave you with a simple summary of my five books: God is Father, Son, Spirit. I am God's child whom he loves. He gives me life by having intimate relationship with me. He wants me to love him more than anything else, including myself.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 7:9-12