

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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The Question

There is one question found in scripture that could be called one of the most profound questions anyone born of Adam's race could ask. Actually, it is not so much the question as it is the answer to the question that is so profound.

About 2,000 years ago, on one occasion, seven men wouldn't venture to ask the question, and on another occasion, one man had no choice but to ask the question. So, what is the question? It is: ***Who are You, Lord?***

The first time this question came up was after Jesus had been resurrected but had not ascended back to His Father in glory for the last time. According to the record, seven of Jesus' disciples, led by Peter and John, went fishing. What else were they to do? Their Master was gone, so they returned to their trade. As recorded in John 21, Jesus appeared to the fishermen as they tried, but failed, to catch anything until Jesus showed up on the shore and told them where to cast their nets. As the story goes, they caught 153 fish, all the while not knowing it was the Master. It took the discerning heart of the disciple whom Jesus loved, John, to know it was the Lord. However, it seems that Jesus was not entirely recognizable by His appearance. In other words, they could not look at Him and know it was Him. Interestingly, John wrote that **none of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord** (John 21.12). The word *ventured* means they did not dare to ask Him the question.

The second time this question was asked, it came from Saul, a zealous Pharisee who was bent on persecuting and destroying the Way. One day, he headed toward Damascus seeking out followers of Jesus when he, blinded, suddenly met the glorified and exalted Christ. The story is well-known, but here is the heart of it:

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9.3-6 NASB)

As he was blinded by this encounter, unlike the seven disciples, Saul was compelled to ask the question, and the profound answer came immediately: ***"I am Jesus!"*** On the road to Damascus, Saul (the old creation man) who became Paul (the new creation man) had his whole religious world turned upside down. The very One he was persecuting was the very One he thought he was serving in persecuting the Way. His whole life was upended in the blinding of the eye, and he was never the same the rest of his life as he came to see his old life and his own righteousness as rubbish. He considered himself the least of the apostles, as one untimely born (a miscarriage, or aborted one). And yet, by the grace of God, Paul was given the highest and greatest revelation to answer the question: *Who are You, Lord?* By his own testimony, Paul wrote that he was given revelation **to complete the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and generations** (Colossians 1.25-26). The revelation given to Paul had not been revealed to any of the ancient prophets; consequently, Paul called it a mystery or secret hidden but now revealed. There are many aspects to this mystery involving the nations and the Jews that throw off the shackles of a religious system that kept the nations subservient to the ancient nation of Israel. This mystery broke down all the dividing lines of mankind; all the barriers that kept mankind from discovering God and coming into His presence relationally. As great as this part of the mystery is, to me, this is not the greatest part. These things come under the heading of what Jesus did, but what is greatest is who He is. *Who are You, Lord?* The answer to this question is the highest revelation given to Paul; nothing exceeds it. So, what is it? The answer is discovered in Paul's letter to the Colossians, in particular chapter 1, verses 13-20. In these verses, we discover who Jesus truly is.

He is the Son of God's love. First and foremost, Jesus is the Son of God the Father. The very essence of God is love, and Jesus is the object and manifestation of that love; thus, He is the Son of God's love. The *Mitchell New Testament* presents alternate renderings of the phrase *the Son of God's love*: *The Son which is His love*; *the Son who has the characteristics and qualities of His accepting love*; and ***the Son whose origin is love***. (Colossians 1.13)

He is the exact likeness or image of the invisible God. He is the radiance of God's glory. In Him dwells all the fullness of Deity in bodily form, meaning He is the visible manifestation of the invisible (unseen) God who is Spirit. The whole fullness of God, all the essence and nature of God, dwells in the Son of God. There is nothing lacking in Him in relation to Deity. The Son exactly and perfectly mirrors His Father. (Colossians 1.15; 2.9)

He precedes all things as the Firstborn of all creation. The Son was in God the Father before there was creation or the universe as we know it; as the Son of God, He precedes all things in the realm of physical matter, meaning nothing in the realm of the physical universe or creation existed prior to Him. But there is much more, for Paul was given the unique revelation that Jesus is the Firstborn of all creation. As the first of creation, He has all the rights of inheritance and authority of the Firstborn Son. There were no sons before Him. But there is even more, for the term *firstborn* implies that the Son was birthed from the Father. We can only speculate, but it appears that part of God was birthed out of the Spirit and took on material form, that is, took on a material body that embodies both the Spirit realm and the newly created physical realm that was to become *the creation*, which is the universe (or, space), as we know it. (Colossians 1.15, 17).

Out from the midst of God came a part of God that we are told is Son, meaning there is a familial relationship of Father and Son. The word *Son*, without the definite article, is purposely used to highlight the thought that a concept emerged from God called *Son*. There is some precedence for this, for Hebrews 1.2 could be translated as ***God ... has spoken to us in Son***. Most translations insert various words such as *a Son*, *the Son*, or *the person of the Son*, with these extra words in *italics*, meaning they are not in the original language. Jesus is *the Son* and *the Son* is the Firstborn, etc., but He is representative of a much greater thought in relation to God and the creation that speaks of God as Father in relation to creation as Son. **Creation is all about Sonship.**

Paul expresses this thought of *out from* or *out of* in 1 Corinthians 8.6: **There is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him** (CLV). All are out from God, meaning even His Son came out from Him. As one commentator puts it: **God is the Source and Object of all; Christ is the Channel of all. All is sourced in God the Father; all is channeled through the Son.**

We can only imagine the beauty and magnificence of the moment the Son came out from God who is His Father. In this capacity, *Son* became something entirely new. **Son came forth from the midst of Father as Creation itself. Like a seed that contains the tree and its fruit, the Son came forth as the Seed of God, the Seed of Creation that embodied the uncreated Spirit of God and the new realm of matter that came forth from God.**

He is the Creator of all things. In Him (the Son), through Him, and for Him were created all things. (Colossians 1.16; Revelation 4.11) This is another of Paul's great revelations. All things, that is, the ALL (*ta panta*), were not only created *by* Him and *for* Him but, most importantly, *in* Him. When asked how the universe or creation began, the most profound answer is that it began *in* God's Son, the One we call *Jesus* or *the Christ (Anointed One) of God*. Everything that came forth into the material realm came forth from Him.

He upholds all things by the power of His Word. In Him, all things have been permanently placed or hold together in union with Him. He makes all things one unit for the accomplishment of God's purpose. All of creation is His responsibility and, as such, He holds it all together by His Word that will not return to Him void or be powerless by any measure. He will gather all things together as one unit so that His Father may be All in all. (Colossians 1.17)

There is so much more to the answer of who Jesus is. For more on this glorious subject, please see article #65 (March 2017) titled *Who Are You, Lord?* <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art65.pdf>