

- *The Journey Men - Table Talk*
September 14th, 2018

“On a spring morning in about the year 33 C.E., three men were executed by the Roman authorities in Judea.”¹ At the request of the Hebrew temple hierarchy, the governor Pontius Pilate hanged the three publicly outside the western gate of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Two of the three, of whom the world has little memory, were terrorists. The third we profess to be the divine agent of the only true God - the Lord of the Hebrew covenant. It is what we profess that magnifies this execution. This event and its climactic finality at sunrise on the first day of the next week shook all of human history as its accompanying earthquake (at the time of the death of Jesus) and its Sunday morning aftershock (at the moment of resurrection) shook ancient Jerusalem.²

To the Romans the death of Jesus of Nazareth was but one execution among thousands deemed necessary to bring former autonomous peoples into submissive unity to the new world order. Jesus is condemned and hanged as “**King of the Jews.**”³ This of course met with strong resistance from the temple rulers. Caesar’s authority was not the issue for the religious priests and learned teachers who were assembled under Joseph Caiaphas. For them the issue was theological rather than political. This man claimed to be the Son of God.⁴ The defining of orthodoxy and the issue of what and who Jesus was became the reason for their zeal. The priests could embrace a foreign monarch but not God as defined in Jesus. They found it easy to cry, “**We have no king but Caesar,**”⁵ but could not embrace the truth that the God of their ancestors was revealing himself in this Jesus of Nazareth. To do so would call for the reorientation of all of their theological convictions. They were able to comprehend that Jesus was a threat to the temple system and to religion, as they had known it.⁶ The issue for them was a crisis of doctrine and, in that, a crisis of life meaning and established order.

The death of Jesus on the cross at Golgotha was a meeting place of theological conflict and world politic. For Christians the revelation of God in Jesus is the culmination of all Israeli covenant and goals. In Christ the church defines the ancient Hebrew descendants of Abraham and the prophets and interprets their message.⁷ In the crucifixion is found the final act of incarnation and ultimate revelation and fulfillment of Divine redemption. Therefore any teaching, which purports to be Christian theology, must be an explanation and proclamation of the great God-event. If God is to be known he must be understood in the dying and rising of Jesus. The core of all we call Christian thought must be brought both to ponder that historic moment and to harmonize with that moment - not simply as a historical event but for the content and meaning of the Divine revelation - for doctrine and creed.

I wrote these words ten years ago for the Donelson Bible men’s group. Later I published it for Olivet Nazarene University (along with 20 pages of exploration of the God revealed in Christ. Truly - the entire Gospel of John is an “exegesis” of God. God is being revealed - but what is that God like?

¹ P. 1, E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Picture of Jesus*, The Penguin Press, 1993

² Matthew 27:54; 28:2 [All references are taken from the Revised Standard Version Bible, 2nd edition 1971]

³ John 19:9-21

⁴ John 19:7

⁵ John 19:15

⁶ John 11:48

⁷ Matthew 5:17

^{RSV} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

^{BGT} John 1:18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατό

^{NRS} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

^{NET} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known.

^{NAU} John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

^{ESV} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

^{NLT} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

^{CSB} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son— the One who is at the Father's side— He has revealed Him.

^{KJV} John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

^{NJB} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

^{ASV} John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

^{MIT} John 1:18 God has never been seen by anyone. God divulged himself in the one uniquely born, the one embraced by the father.

^{NIV} John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only,, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

^{NKJ} John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

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