

Making the Invisible God Visible

By Bob Young

Primary text: Col. 1:15-18

Secondary texts: 1 Pet. 1:8-9, 2 Cor. 4:16-18

Introduction

God's solution to the problem of invisibility is that he sent his word into the world. First, he sent Jesus into the world, second, he has given to the world his inspired word, and third he is sending the church into the world, to love one another and demonstrate his presence and reality. The church cannot proclaim his love with any degree of integrity if we cannot exhibit that love in our own lives.

I. God sent Jesus, his living word, into the world.

Consider the living word and its power over the written word. The written word is powerful only because it bears witness to the living word, what God's word has accomplished in this world through God's power.

God spoke the world into existence with his word.

God's word of blessing or cursing stands firm.

God's word does not return to him void.

God's ultimate revelation of himself was in the Word/Logos. He is rationality, reason, what makes sense of everything else.

II. God provided his written word, the Bible, for the world.

2 Tim. 3:16-17 speaks of the God-breathed word, powerful, able to do God's will. See also James 1:20-21; Acts 20:32.

Interestingly, for many accepting the Bible as the foundation and guide for Christian faith and living is one of the great challenges of faith. Many wish for something else to prop up or reinforce what they believe. This explains in part the increasing emphasis in our world on experience, feelings, additional revelation, even lost books of the Bible. The apparent need is something real, either concrete and visible or at least personally experienced, that can serve as verification. Is the source of this felt need that the Bible has been weighed and found wanting? I think not. It is rather because faith is difficult. Accepting the invisible is not easy. Faith is challenging, often weak or barely present, without the presence of something material or real to verify that faith.

Perhaps we need to spend more time thinking again about the internal evidences of Scripture that make certain that the Bible is the word of God. We need not expect another word or another sign to supplement the word more certain, the inspired Word, which is complete, in need of neither addition nor subtraction, perfectly able to equip God's people for maturity.

Ironically, the very thing God gave us as a source and foundation of faith—the word of God (Rom. 10:17) is discarded in pursuit of something much less certain—shrouds, shrines, and statues.

An AP report illustrates the point. "When the border patrol agents spotted a body in the Rio Grande, they launched a rescue mission. But the supposed victim turned out to

be a life-size fiberglass statue of Jesus. Now the faithful are flocking to the Eagle Pass police station to view the figure. One woman told the San Antonio Express-News that it's a sign that Christ is alive and with us." Isn't it interesting that even better than the word of God in the mind of this woman is a floating piece of fiberglass? Why does she need more than the promise of God himself in his word? If one wanted more than God's written promise, why would a floating piece of fiberglass be considered a sign more certain?

III. God continues to send his word into the world through his people, the second incarnation of his word, his body, his power.

This is our calling, this is our purpose. This is the impotence of lives that do not reflect the communication and revelation of God. We are sent as light, we are sent as witness.

The invisibility of God is a great problem for faith. The same problem challenges us today as for Thomas in John 20, especially for young people brought up on the scientific method.

When the apostle Thomas saw the resurrected Jesus and exclaimed, My Lord and My God, Jesus said, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:28-29). If God wishes to bless me when my faith is not dependent upon seeing the physical body of Jesus with my own eyes, why would I seek a man-made image? Is such any less than a form of idolatry, or at least iconography? I don't need to see the physical body of Jesus with my own eyes to believe, and seeing such should have little effect in strengthening my faith. Why? Because God has spoken. God has spoken in Jesus, in his written word, and in the lives of his people.

Conclusion

The exhibition of that love is the mission of the church, and we must continually work toward that goal, Eph. 4:12ff. We must have the mind and spirit of Jesus to develop a healthy body responsive to the head. This kind of healthy church builds spiritually healthy members who increase the health of the body, the church. God calls us to know that love through the gospel, respond to that love in obedient imitation of Jesus Christ, beginning in our immersion, and continuing in our holiness in an unholy world, and culminating in our influence through the message and life we live. We are love in an unloving world, we are hope in a world without hope, we are life in a world of death, we are truth in a world of lies, we are the presence of Jesus, with the power of Jesus.