



God Is Just Like Jesus

What is God like? For those of us who believe that God is somehow at the foundation of existence, meaning, and self-understanding, it's an all-important question. So how shall we answer? Our options are endless. Human inquiry into the divine has produced a vast pantheon of gods—from Ares to Zeus.

Of course, the Christian will have an instinct to look to the Bible for the definition of God. I understand this instinct and in one sense it is correct; but it may not yield as clear an answer as we think. Even while speaking of the "God of the Bible" we can cobble together whatever vision of God we choose from its disparate images.

Even if we restrict our inquiry into the nature of God to the Bible, we are likely to find just the kind of God that we want to find.

If we want a God of peace, he's there. If we want a God of war, he's there. If we want a compassionate God, he's there. If we want a vindictive God, he's there. If we want a God demanding blood sacrifice, he's there. If we want a God abolishing blood sacrifice, he's there.

Sometimes the Bible is like a Rorschach test—it reveals more about the reader than the eternal I AM.

How are we to discover God as God is? As a Christian, pastor and preacher, I recommend that we look to Jesus for our answer to the question.

What if God is like Jesus? Jesus audaciously made this claim: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." What if that claim is true? Ah, that is the good news! God is like Jesus! This is Christianity.

As Christians we worship Christ, not the Bible. The Bible is the inspired witness to the true Word of God who is Jesus. *What the Bible does infallibly is take us on a journey that culminates with Christ—but it is Christ who fully reveals God.*

The revelation of God could not be contained in a book, but it could be

contained in a human life—the life of Jesus Christ.

God is like Jesus.

Jesus is the Message of God. Jesus is what God has to say. Jesus is the full and faithful witness to how God is to be understood.

Jesus didn't come to save us from God (as some deplorable theories would lead us to believe)—Jesus came to reveal God as savior. Jesus didn't come to enable God to love us—Jesus came to reveal God as love.

Jesus didn't come to reconcile God to the world—Jesus came to reconcile the world to God. If Jesus' life is the definition of God, the defining moment of Jesus' life is the cross.

God is not like Caiaphas needing a scapegoat to take the blame. God is not like Pilate requiring an execution to satisfy justice. God is like Jesus, absorbing, forgiving and taking away the sins of the world.

A return to the revelation that God is revealed in Christ could not be more timely. Western Christianity is in a crisis. It can no longer retain credibility and be transmitted to succeeding generations on the authority of tradition alone. Critical questions are being asked and Christianity must gain its adherents based on its own merits.

Fortunately Christianity is up to the task. But not just any Christianity; the Christianity up to the task is the Christianity grounded in the confession that Jesus is the icon of the invisible God.

I am in full sympathy with those who find a "Sinners In the Hands of An Angry God" Christianity repellent and in need of being jettisoned. I too have pitched the theologies of an angry, retributive deity back into the dark sea of paganism.

The good news is that buried under centuries of misconstrued Christianity there is a beautiful gospel just waiting to be discovered.

Let the journey begin. □

Excerpted from the foreword to *A More Christlike God*, by Senior Editor Brad Jersak.