



## Seeing a World of Difference

Lesson 15

by

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## Jesus Joins One and Two

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*“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”*  
—Paul, Ephesians 2:14-16

## Jesus Joins One and Two

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The God of Twoism, who is Jesus’ God and Father, is intriguing, but you can’t have the Twoist God without Jesus, and you can’t have Jesus without the Twoist God. They are inextricably entwined. No religious leader in history compares to Jesus. They are all flawed. Buddha abandoned his wife and children for personal enlightenment. Mohammed kept child brides. Moses was kept from entering the Promised Land. But not a word of scandal has ever been associated with Jesus. This is not because the Bible sugarcoats its heroes. Scripture ruthlessly exposes King David as an adulterer and a murderer. It records King Solomon’s idolatry, although his rule was the high point of the glory of Israel. Jesus’ disciples would not have broken with Jewish historical honesty had they found flaws in Jesus. But there were none, as Pilate and the Roman soldiers recognized at his death.

### Jesus the Person

The only “flaw” found in Jesus was the claim he made that would have merited stoning, had it not been true: “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In saying this (as C. S. Lewis and others have noted), Jesus is proven to be one of three things: a nut-case, a charlatan or God in the flesh. Jesus is the ultimate truth-speaker, and this is a claim greater than any religious teacher has ever made. Jesus announces that he alone constitutes a direct, unique, understandable, personal expression of the wholly other, transcendent God, the God who in his essence is wrapped in unapproachable mystery. The New Testament backs up his outlandish claim. The founders of Christianity were willingly executed for believing that Jesus was the unique human expression of God, the Creator. Paul says that Jesus is “the [visible] image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) and that before the incarnation, he shared “the form of God,” and had “equality with God” (Philippians 2:6). The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus bears “the exact imprint of God’s nature” and, together with the Father and the Spirit, as the eternal Son, created the world (Hebrews 1:3,10). The apostle John, a close, intimate friend of the earthly Jesus, states clearly and unequivocally that, as the eternal Son before creation, Jesus was God and together with the Father created the cosmos (John 1:1-2).

We need to pause for a moment and take in what this means. The early followers of Jesus were not Oneists. A Oneist might say that Jesus was divine like everyone else, or that he was a very special

human guru with an inside line to God. The apostles, however, were all convinced Twoists, who confessed the Creator God to be majestically other than any created being. In accordance with the Old Testament rule, they considered idolatrous any image drawn from created reality to represent God. Yet they call this real flesh-and-blood man the “very image of God.” This is the deepest mystery of any religion. In Jesus, and in him alone, the Creator and the creature are brought together in one person.

## God Became Man

The ultimate pagan declaration is “Man becomes God,” but the Christian declaration is: “God became Man.” Some religions portray divine men or gods appearing as humans, but they are all expressions of Oneism, a system in which the gods are part of the world and the world is part of God. The Incarnation is a stupendous miracle and an impenetrable mystery. This is the only place where the Creator and the creature are mysteriously joined in the same person—“without confusion,” as the early **Church Fathers** affirmed. When Jesus says that “no one has seen the Father except he who is from God” (John 6:46), he is referring to the transcendent God the Father, and to himself, the Son. Later in the Gospel Jesus says: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) because “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). His opponents understood that Jesus was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:17). Jesus is also described as “the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14) whose rightful place for all eternity is “at the Father’s side” (John 1:18). The two incompatible realities rush towards each other, and meet in the peaceful, willing womb of an underage, unwed mother. This had never happened before and will never happen again. The Creator inexplicably, yet truly, becomes a creature—not to make humans divine, but to reconcile a holy God and sinful humanity by wiping out the guilt of sin for those who believe. Jesus knows that the Father sent him to do this: “I know the Father [and] I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15).

If you are not confounded, you should be. This is mystery on steroids. Just as the Bible juxtaposes our human will and God’s divine will without explanation, so it juxtaposes the two natures of Jesus—human and divine. Everything the human Jesus is and does has eternal and all-powerful effects. He controls the winds and the waves, heals sickness with a word, sees into the heart of each person he meets, loves men and women alike with all his heart yet without a hint of impropriety or sexual sin. He takes on a raging spiritual battle with the devil after a forty-day fast, and touches with compassion those who approach him—even those who are considered unclean. To know Jesus when he was on earth was to be utterly changed.

## The Death of Jesus

The Christian gospel of salvation is unique in world religions precisely because of Twoism. The hopes of Oneism are fulfilled by Jesus in the truth of Twoism. Since there are two circles, and there is alienation between those circles because of the sin of the human creature, the only hope of salvation is for God by his great wisdom and justice to reconcile the two. Only in Twoism do divine

condescension and grace have deeply moving significance. In the logic of Oneism, if we are part of divine nature we condescend to save ourselves, which is nonsense. Only Jesus is the creature who is also Creator, human and yet divine. Only in Twoism do we have objective redemption and genuine forgiveness that so strikingly affect the human conscience and bring definitive release to the guilt-stricken soul.

### The Resurrection of Jesus: A Mind-Blowing Future

Twoism holds great mystery, but it is not fantasy. The gospel is more like a police novel than romantic religious poetry. The great mystery is not attained through physically-stimulated altered states of consciousness but through a dead body that disappeared from a well-guarded tomb. The answer to this “Who dunnit” meets the deepest longing of the human soul.

The Oneist version of the resurrection is easy. It was spiritual. This objection is not new. The ancient **Gnostics** taught it. Thomas Jefferson believed it. In Jefferson’s *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, he removed all references to the miracles and to the divine nature of Jesus from the New Testament. His book ends with these words: “There they laid Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.” Since the body has no ultimate meaning, it is sloughed off in order to liberate eternal spirit. Who cares what happened to the body? Maybe it decomposed in a forgotten corner. Maybe the disciples stole it.

But this is not a satisfying answer. Inquiring minds do care! You wouldn’t want your Agatha Christie novel to explain the crime with a “who cares?” To deal with Jesus, you have to account for the empty tomb, for the disappearance of a body placed there just a few days before, for the fact that the tomb was guarded by soldiers and blocked by a massive stone. With no explanation, the dead body of Jesus went missing. Hundreds of witnesses saw him alive after that, and many of these were willing later to be killed rather than deny what they saw.

They gave their lives for their testimony regarding the truth of the resurrection since, for over a month, they lived with the resurrected Jesus. The physical resurrection of Jesus is not a footnote in the origins of Christianity. It is not the intriguing conundrum of a religious suspense novel. If that is all there were to the life of Jesus, Christianity would be a delusional misrepresentation of the truth. Christianity states baldly that Jesus rose from the dead. On the truth of this startling claim it stands or falls. As Paul put it, “If Christ be not raised, our faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

The resurrection of Jesus is the one documented, visible, historical event in the whole of human history that describes an occurrence as stupendous as God’s original Big Bang.<sup>i</sup> It is the Big Re-Bang. Following the creation of matter, it is the re-giving of new life to the hopelessly dead matter of a human corpse. No human being was around to witness creation (as God reminded Job), but scores

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<sup>i</sup> I use this term only to represent the power of the original creation by God, not in an atheistic, evolutionary scientific sense.

of people witnessed this miracle, which had never been done before, and has never been done since. The risen Jesus appeared to believers, which was why some *became* believers. Like the original creation of the cosmos, everyone saw the physical effects—the empty tomb.

To know the risen Jesus, who is now with the Father, is still to be utterly changed. His perfect life is our claim to righteousness, and his death is our claim to the forgiveness of the Father. That death is the efficacious and definitive solution to cosmic and personal evil. His human life and physical resurrection guarantee the future physical life of the cosmos. The resurrection didn't occur just to give us a good news story, however. Jesus' body was raised because it is a part of God's good creation. God will not allow His "holy one to see corruption" (Acts 2:27). Death and evil will not triumph over Jesus, whose dead body will "put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). The mortal body of Jesus is changed by a miraculous act of God, an act so stunning its only equivalent is the first creation, when God spoke the physical cosmos into being. Can God do this? Surely he can, since this is the same God, the Creator, who now reaches to his creation as the Savior. If you have been looking for the New Man in Marxism or Oneist spirituality, turn your eyes rather to Jesus. He's your New Man. He is called the "Last Adam," but also the "first among many brothers." What is true of Jesus is true of the New Adamic humanity that Jesus is raising up for the New Heavens and Earth, and it can be true for you.

### A Last Word of Hope from Romans

You may think such a triumphant picture does not fit with a phrase that shows up over and over in the text we've examined (Romans 1:18–32). That phrase is "God gave them over." These words make God seem vindictive, delighting in "giving over" sinners to their chosen sins, so they get what they deserve. But a surprise awaits you: God does give over rebellious creatures to their sinful preferences, be it their lusts, their dishonorable passions or their debased mind. When he gives them over to their sin, they end up in idol worship, autonomous thinking, and deviant sexual practice. But this is not God's final word on the subject. What Paul says in Romans 1 must be understood in light of what he writes in Romans 8:32: "God did not spare his own Son." God's people cry for deliverance: "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations" (Joel 2:17). God hears that cry and spares sinners, but the only reason he can justly spare sinners is because he did not spare his own Son. To understand Paul's statement, it is helpful to read what God says to Abraham: "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld [or spared] your son, your only son, from me" (Genesis 22:12). God stayed Abraham's hand at the last minute, but Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son. Isaac's life could not have atoned for the sins of the world, and God provided a ram as a substitute for the boy. The Abraham story is one of many that prepare us to understand the cross of Jesus. What Abraham did not have to do, God did. Here is a glimpse into the deeply personal mystery of the triune God that human beings cannot fathom. We can only behold it in awe—God did not spare his own Son. This is one of the clearest statements, both of the Trinity and of God's personhood in the whole of biblical literature. It declares that between the persons of

the Trinity there is, at the very least, a depth of “personal” love that far outstrips the tender passion Abraham had for his long-awaited and well-loved son, Isaac. In the flesh, the Son dies for our sins, and this act, says Paul, is the ultimate expression of God’s love (Romans 5:8). In other words, God’s personal love for sinners is “commended” or “proved” by the death of the Son. The larger context of the book of Romans makes this clear.

“For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7–8). Later Paul also says, “God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). The verb translated “gave up” is the same one used in Romans 1:24, 26 and 28 where God “gave up” sinners to their sins. We know what the verb means because of a text from the eighth century BC: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” [literally “gave him up to our sins,” as in Romans 4:25] (Isaiah 53:6). The sins that we gladly embrace, for which we are judged, are placed by God on his sinless Son, who, as a sacrificial offering, takes God’s judgment against sinners upon himself in their place. This produces people of whom Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians: the unrighteous, the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers and swindlers. Yet these “have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God” and they “will inherit the kingdom of God to enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb forever.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11; Revelation 19:9).

No one is excluded, unless they turn their back on the offer of Jesus and prefer the foul flavor of their sins.

### A Voice from the Twentieth Century

In the 1920s, a young Christian leader and scholar, **J. Gresham Machen**, professor at Princeton Seminary, saw the collapse of gospel faithfulness in the churches of his day. Determined liberals and seemingly well-meaning evangelicals were denying the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Many were swept up in a movement of “Christian unity” that rejected the transcendence of God, the deity of Christ, his virgin birth, the necessity of Christ’s substitutionary atonement for sin, his physical resurrection, and a fully trustworthy Bible. Machen saw, when many did not, that even “minor” compromises over doctrine would end in an epic clash for the survival of gospel truth. In a courageous book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, published in 1923, he described the issues as a choice between paganism and Christianity. Though he was charged with bigotry and intolerance, his analysis has proven right, as the present state of the mainline Presbyterian Church USA, of which he was a member, now shows.

Intriguingly, Machen is recognized by none other than **Harold Bloom**, one of the leading pagan thinkers of our day. Bloom was raised in a Jewish home, and became sterling Professor of Humanities at Yale University. He eventually became a Gnostic, announcing that he was “uncreated, as old as God.” He utterly renounced the Old Testament and the biblical notion of the Creator/creature distinction. If ever two men stood at opposite theological poles, it would be Bloom

and Machen. Bloom claimed to be God, whereas Machen defended God's absolute uniqueness and transcendence. Yet in 1992, Bloom said of Machen:

I have just read my way through [*Christianity and Liberalism*] with distaste and discomfort but with reluctant and growing admiration for Machen's mind. I have never seen a stronger case made for the argument that institutional Christianity must regard cultural liberalism as an enemy to faith.

Machen understood that the real conflict in the culture and the Church of his day was the importance of the doctrine of God's transcendence:

Liberalism has lost sight of the very centre and core of the Christian teaching... the awful transcendence of God. It is true, indeed, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without him. But he is immanent in the world not because he is identified with the world, but because he is the free Creator and upholder of it. Between the creature and the Creator a great gulf is fixed.

Machen's description fits the conflict we face today. Behind our culture's philosophical waffling is the same issue, which is just as vital for the twenty-first century as it was for the twentieth: Is Oneism or Twoism true? Is everything one, "as old as God," and divinely self-creating? Or is a "great gulf" fixed between the Creator and the creature?

## Your Choice

Oneism is everywhere, and though the winners may write history, they don't always get it right. Temporal success and large numbers are no guarantee of truth. True history is written by the only real winner—the One who conquered death and sin. Jesus writes history, which is, after all, his story!

The social power held by the newly victorious interfaith, multi-cultural liberals gives them no control of truth. Truth is not personal power, and each individual is responsible to make the right truth choice. Neither the progressive liberal nor the awed futurist can take the dentist's drill for you. The progressives cannot die in your place. For these ultimate questions, you are on your own. The Lie and the Truth have battled for all the ages, but you, alive right now, must decide between them for yourself and for your own life.

There is no compromise. Are you a Oneist or a Twoist? Will you seek meaning by plunging into the Oneist ocean? Or will you make a world of difference by respecting God's Twoist structures? Non-Christian readers: you may still be young and have a hard time thinking of your death. On the other hand, you may have entered the final stage of your life and are contemplating your past accomplishments, while perhaps dreading the unknown future. Jesus is your only hope. He is the unique champion of the Twoist faith, a faith that he believed to his last dying moment. He joins the hope of unity with the reality of personal identity. In that sense, he and he alone, joins Oneism with

Twoism, not by erasing the distinctions between creatures and their Creator, but by reconciling those creatures with the Creator. This man had not a cent to his name, but he revolutionized the world. He courageously spoke truth to power and also to his friends. Almost in the same breath he called Peter an angel *and* a demon, and yet spoke comfort and hope to notable scoundrels and innocent sufferers.

His life and faith make sense of the world around us. His death washes us clean. His resurrection gives us new life, and the hope of eternal life. Even though Jesus spent Easter vacation splayed out on a cross, being tortured to death, seemingly a total loser—we can look to him in hope, for one day every knee will bow to him. Every person will see him and agree that he is the Lord of the cosmos. That will be the best Easter Sunday ever! Because he, the innocent victim, stood in for us and bore our sin, we will one day share in his righteous rule. We will always remain creatures, but transformed creatures, fit to have fellowship with him forever. Because of Jesus, this utopian dream is not fantasy. It is a guaranteed promise, and incredibly good news. Jesus, by his life, death and resurrection, is the only figure in human history who can guarantee a God-produced physical/spiritual utopia. You, like others, can bet your life on it. With Jesus the odds are sure, for he will be there, as Scripture says: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

What will it be? Cheese or ice cream? The French truckers mentioned in the last lesson were free to leave the table without having either cheese or ice cream, but you must stay and choose—not between cheese and ice cream, but between the only courses on life’s menu: Oneism or Twoism. One tastes sweet, but is deadly poison. The other may seem hard to chew at first, but becomes sweeter and more nourishing the longer it is in your mouth. It offers an aroma of life, for now and for eternity. The Lie or the Truth—which will it be for you? It’s a choice that lasts for eternity.

Paul’s and the Bible’s command hangs in the air, demanding a response: “Choose this day whom you will serve” (see Joshua 24:15). Will you worship and serve, “the creation” or “the Creator?” It is up to you to decide—while the restaurant is still open and you still have the menu in your hands!

To the rising generation of Christians who may take this course, and to Christians generally, Paul asks you not to be conformed to this intimidating world, but, in detecting its Oneist blur, to discern the will of God through the clarity of holy living and transformed Twoist thinking. We must embrace the simple lucidity of Paul’s analysis, what this course calls Oneism or Twoism, and be agents of gospel clarity in a world of deadly, mind-numbing confusion. Paul’s coherent analysis will pull the blinders off your eyes and de-program the Oneist brainwashing you may have endured through high school and college. Let it open your imagination to render praise to God in music, poetry, art and science. Let it open your mouth to speak the wisdom of God in a world of foolish fantasy and fearful conformity.

Seeing what Romans 1 actually says, one top Christian law student wrote about the idea of Oneism and Twoism: “Absolutely amazing. I have never heard this way of perceiving reality or understanding the fight. I am encouraged...[to be] re-focused on the gospel...the dichotomy is

appalling and astoundingly clear.” After being shown the ancient text of Romans 1, another wrote that she had acquired “new categories and a framework for viewing the world which I had never thought of before.” Oneism will suck you into the Abyss, but the solid truth of Twoism is a rock on which to stand forever. It brings us into the light, changes our hearts and lights up our God-made minds.

There *is* a God-honoring way to worship, a holy way to behave, a right way to live out our sexuality. There *is* an effective discourse for evangelism through word and deed that meets the needs of the sinner. That is a message our imploding, self-absorbed world needs to hear. Binge drinking and hooking up will lead you only to despair. The transforming message of God’s grace will affect not only your life but that of your friends. The early Christians believed and understood. They knew the task required holy bodies and transformed minds, fired up by the truth of God’s grace and imbued by the love of Christ. Because of that love they cared little for popularity, social standing, or even their lives, which they laid down for the honor of Jesus and for the glory of God. If they could do this, so can we.

Believer or non-believer, let the truth of Twoism bring you to Jesus. Let his Twoist mind be in you, because he understood perfectly the Creator/creature distinction. He was the great teacher of the true nature of God. He lived Twoism in both realities. He was in the form of God, but, in condescending love, left his transcendent glory and humbled himself to death on a cross. This is the power of the gospel.

A fortune-teller had her office down a back street, close to Westminster Chapel in London, where **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** was pastor. Lloyd-Jones preached the Bible thoroughly and opposed liberalism in the Church. Those who heard this preacher sensed the power of God in his words and in his demeanor. One Sunday, having seen the crowds go by month after month, the fortune-teller decided to slip in the back of the church to see what was so attractive. At the end of the service, this expert in the occult arts bowed her knee to Jesus and declared: “What I heard and saw this morning was clean power.” The Lord is looking for holy, fired up, grace-filled minds, driven by clean power—sons and daughters who discern his will and bring sense to our imploding culture by speaking the message of God’s love to people who think they are god or who do not think at all. The apostle Paul has a word for you, because the task is not easy:

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm (Ephesians 6:11-13)

Like Luther, who said, “Here I stand, I can do no other,” will you not stand for Jesus in this difficult hour the way he stood for you? The prayer Paul requested that his fellow believers pray for him, in a pagan prison, is what Christians must pray for one another:

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Pray also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:19-20)

At truthXchange, we pray that this course will not only help you start *seeing* a world of difference between Oneism and Twoism, but that in the clean power of the Holy Spirit, you will also start *making* a world of difference.