

**Jesus:
The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

**Part XII
Jesus as a Symbol (cont.)**

Jesus is of great importance as a symbol within our dream. Since we are symbols that represent separation, hatred, murder, guilt, and death, we need a correction symbol within the dream that represents the opposite of what we have made real for ourselves. Jesus is that answer and that symbol for us. We will look at a number of passages in the Course later which beautifully express this idea. But first we will begin with the poem I mentioned earlier called "A Jesus Prayer" (*The Gifts of God*, pp.82-83), a wonderful poem that Helen wrote. Before I read it, let me make a couple of comments.

The core thought in the ego system is the thought of differences, which logically follows from the thought of separation. It is important enough that I want to discuss it here. The original thought that began the whole dream was that God and His Son were not only separate, but they were different—God had something that the Son did not have. From that perception, the Son believed he had to compensate for the lack by stealing from God what he felt was lacking in himself. That was the origin of the dream. And the fear of God's retaliation for our attack then led to the need for a defense—the making of the world and the body. At that point we were off and running—that is how the world of time and space began.

The idea of differences is also the key theme in understanding how special relationships operate. The initial idea is that I am different from you, I am lacking, and you have what I want. The principle of scarcity always leads to the principle of deprivation. Therefore, if I lack something, it must be because you have deprived me of it. This means that if I feel that you have something I do not have, my ego tells me the reason for the inequality is that you have stolen from me what is rightfully mine. That is why I no longer have it, which justifies my stealing it back from you. And again, we are off and running, now on the individual rather than the collective level. That basic dynamic characterizes all of our interactions and relationships in the world.

Any time I perceive a difference between myself and someone else, I must hate the person who is perceived as different. That cannot be avoided within the ego system. If I perceive you as different from me, it is because you have something I lack. And I hate you because the fact that you have it means you took it from me. That is how the ego thought system works, and there are no exceptions. So it is imperative—and this is another one of the major themes in this workshop—that we not see Jesus as truly different from us. Obviously, within the dream he *is* different from us. But once we see Jesus as different and that difference becomes an important reality for us, we must hate him. And we hate him because he has what we lack, and we understand where he got it: he *took* it from us.

So the world had to murder Jesus and his message, and the Roman Catholic Church has to symbolically murder him every single day at mass as an attempt to get what he has so we can have it. It is extremely important to understand that when we talk about Jesus, we are talking about a symbol. And we must be equally clear about what this symbol represents. If Jesus represents the correction for ourselves and our thought system of separation and differences, then he must represent the thought of unity and love that is our true reality. So to see Jesus as different from us, and to make that difference reality misses the whole point. To emphasize the historical Jesus and how his life was different misses the whole point. To discuss *what* made Jesus different from us, and to analyze his person, his personality, and his history, questioning when he knew who he was and how he came to know it, etc., *is* to make him different.

Jesus is emphasizing to us in the Course the same thing he was emphasizing when he was here: what he is, we are also. And so our prayer is to become like him. As I mentioned at the beginning of the workshop, the purpose of any good teacher is to make himself obsolete. That is Jesus' purpose. He is a symbol who represents for us Who we truly are. We do not want anything from him. Rather we want to grow up to become like him. That is extremely important. When I ask him to do things for me—a theme that we will come back to later—I obviously believe he has something I do not have. He has a magical power, and he will do something for me that I cannot do for myself. I must hate him for that. It is impossible to love anyone whom I perceive as unequal. That is extremely important. What distinguishes a holy relationship from a special one is the recognition of our equality. I cannot love you if I perceive you as having something I do not have. I can only love someone who reflects back to me the same love and truth that I already have. I can only love what is alike—I cannot love what is different.

Jesus makes the point right at the beginning of the text (T-1.II.3) that the experience of awe in relationship to him is inappropriate. Awe is only appropriate when we are in the presence of someone who is not our equal, and that can only be God. Jesus does speak about being entitled to our obedience, respect, and devotion as an elder brother who has only our best interests at heart. That comes from a perception that he is helping us become what he is—so we are not different.

We want to pray to Jesus, not that he do things for us, but that we accept the love that he reflects back to us. The love, the truth, the holiness that he is, is simply a mirror. If we look through the proper eyes, the same love, purity, and holiness that are in us will shine back unto us. That is Jesus' purpose—to remind us of Who we are.

We are now going to read "A Jesus Prayer," a wonderful poem that expresses the hope and the prayer that we will become what he is and remember Who we are. As we read it, you may want to think of yourself saying these words to Jesus—that is how the poem is written. The first person in the poem is ourselves—this is a prayer that we say to him. The prayer is that we will become like him, again, not that he will do things for us—not that he will save us from our terror, not that he will give us trivial things, like parking spaces or good health or \$100,000, all of which are trivial when we compare them to the peace of God. Our prayer is that we become like him, which means it is really a prayer to ourselves. Jesus cannot make us like him, because we already *are* like him. We are the ones who made ourselves different, at least in our perception—therefore we are the ones who have to change that. This poem, then, is our introduction to what we will be discussing next—what Jesus' role really is and how important he is for us in that role. The poem is from the book of Helen's poetry called *The Gifts of God*. These poems were inspired. Helen's experience was that they were dictated to her the way the Course

was. However, she always felt that somehow her voice was intermingled with Jesus' in a way that was not the case with the Course—that she had a part in their writing.

Just a couple of other things before we read the poem. It begins with the line, "A Child, a Man and then a Spirit." These words are capitalized, as are all references to Jesus in Helen's poetry. In the Course, words associated with Jesus are not capitalized to emphasize the fact that he is like us. But in the poetry, Helen felt she had more of a license to capitalize as she wished. And her preference always was to capitalize words associated with Jesus. It is actually helpful in the poetry—otherwise it would not always be clear who the reference is. So the poem's opening words, "A Child, a Man, and then a Spirit," refer to the course of Jesus' human life here, and are capitalized.

Two stanzas later, the same words appear: "A child, a man and then a spirit." Now they are not capitalized, for they refer to us—that we want to become like Jesus and emulate him. Obviously, this does not mean imitating his life on the level of form, but rather wanting to have the same awareness of Christ's Love and Christ's Identity that Jesus had. The poem ends with the words, "As they look up let them not look on me, but only You," which is borrowed from the beautiful prayer of Cardinal Newman, a famous Catholic convert of the nineteenth century. Our prayer is that as people look on us, they will not see us, they will see only Jesus—we will become like him. Here then is the poem:

A Jesus Prayer

A Child, a Man and then a Spirit, come
In all Your loveliness. Unless You shine
Upon my life, it is a loss to You,
And what is loss to You is also mine.

I cannot calculate why I am here
Except for this: I know that I have come
To seek You here and find You. In Your life
You show the way to my eternal home.

A child, a man and then a spirit. So
I follow in the way You show to me
That I may come at last to be like You.
What but Your likeness would I want to be?

There is a silence where you speak to me
And give me words of love to say for You
To those You send to me. And I am blessed
Because in them I see You shining through.

There is no gratitude that I can give
For such a gift. The light around Your head
Must speak for me, for I am dumb beside
Your gentle hand with which my soul is led.

I take Your gift in holy hands, for You
Have blessed them with Your own. Come, brothers, see
How like to Christ am I, and I to you
Whom He has blessed and holds as one with me.

A perfect picture of what I can be
You show to me, that I might help renew
Your brothers' failing sight. As they look up
Let them not look on me, but only You.

Let me recapitulate briefly the key points that we have been discussing. When we fell asleep and began our dream of separation, in effect, we forgot Who we are. The memory of God, the memory of the Love of Christ—which is Who we are—is a Thought within our minds. In the Course, that Thought is referred to as the Holy Spirit. For whatever strange and insane reason, we chose to dismiss that Thought, not to pay any attention to it, and instead to identify with the other thought in our dream. And that was the thought that the separation is real. At that point, for all intents and purposes, we buried the memory of God, forgot Who we are, and assumed an identity that was not ours. That identity, in all of its development, is that of the ego thought system—of a separated and limited self, and of a body that reflects that. These are really symbols of that original thought of being separate from God, of being something other than Who we really are, since Who we are as Christ is that perfect unity of our Self with the Self of God—of the Mind of Christ with the Mind of God.

So the thought of being separate became expressed in symbolic terms in the thoughts of sin, guilt, and fear that we associate with the ego system, as well as with our physical and psychological being—what we call our body and our personal identity. All of these are symbols. The memory of God's Love is also in our minds—the Holy Spirit is present in our minds. Even though we have buried that Thought, it nonetheless is still there. And its Presence is experienced in any given moment that we choose to return to it. As we have seen, within the dream, and certainly within the part of the dream that is the western world, Jesus is the great symbol and manifestation of that Thought.

As I was pointing out earlier, we are also a symbol, except we are a symbol of the ego. Jesus is a symbol, but he is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he represents the exact opposite of what we have made real. So he becomes that memory of Love within our minds, now given form, that reminds us of Who we truly are. As I mentioned before the poem—and it is obvious in the poem—Jesus' function is simply to be the reminder of Who we are. We desperately need that, because we have forgotten.

To say that Jesus is a symbol is not to relegate him to an unimportant role. His role is absolutely central, which is why, as I mentioned already, his role in the Course is so clear. It is not hidden. The Course is not written in some kind of abstract language. It is written in a very personal language that is directly relevant to anyone who has grown up in the western world. Within this dream, for those of us who study the Course, he becomes "the way, the truth and the life" (T-6.I.10:3). He is not the *only* way, as a passage later in the Course makes clear (C-5.6). He is not the *only* way, but for us he is the way. And because we have made him part of the ego's negative symbolism, we have to forgive him, letting go of these negative symbols so that we can accept him as he is.

Jesus has nothing to do with what the Christian Churches or the Bible or Judaism have made of him. He totally transcends all of that. His reality is beyond all symbols. And so what he helps us do in the Course is undo all the old symbols and replace them with a new set of symbols that will finally lead us beyond all of them entirely. The symbols that the world has given Jesus have been symbols of the ego. Whether they have been symbols of special love or special hate, they have been the same, because they are based on a perception of him as different from everyone else. And those who want to perceive him as nonexistent are basically saying that *they* are nonexistent, too. Jesus is nonexistent, but only to the

degree that *we* are nonexistent. And since we all believe very much in our own existence, then his existence is just as real. He then becomes our way home.

By joining with Jesus, which is what we will be talking about at length later, we really are learning to join with our Self. Not the self that we call by name, but our true Self. Without his hand and his guidance, though, we could never do it. As Jesus explains in a passage I alluded to earlier in the workshop (T-27.VII.13:4), we do not go from nightmares to reality. We need an intermediate step—the happy dream—and Jesus is the great symbol of that happy dream.