

## *The Unseen God*



The verses of the Bible and the Quran all speak of the same God, the one and only God, the First and Last (Q 57:3), who created Heaven and Earth and formed the world we see today in six days. The Gospels and the Quran also both describe God as an unseen God (Q 2: 3, 67:12), an invisible, infinite, eternal God which we cannot see. An absolute God which *“vision perceives Him not”* (Q 6:103).

Christian and Islamic doctrines do differ, but the verses of the Bible and the Quran describe the same God and the same Messiah. And while misleading commentaries and false doctrines can distort the proper interpretation of all Scripture, the Quran helps us to better understand both the Bible and the unseen nature of God. The Quran does not focus on the prophet Mohammad but concentrates on Jesus and his mother and confirms Jesus to be the Messiah, our Lord and the true Son of God.

Knowing that an infinite God cannot, and will never be seen, helps us to better understand the eternal nature of his Son and helps us to discern why we cannot count God or divide him into three persons. Such doctrines only confuse both believers and non-believers.

The Quran and the Bible both describe the same God. A God who is:

**Omnipotence** – all powerful, the all mighty, making all things possible (Matt 19:26), sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrew 1:3, Q 46:33).

**Omniscience** - all-knowing (Ps. 139:1-4, Q 2:115), who knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), and “*acquainted with all things*” (Q 6:103). “*Who knew me before I was born*” (Jeremiah 1:5).

**Omnipresence** – all present. God is everywhere, all places in heaven and earth, in darkness and in light (Ps.39:7-12), God is near (Jeremiah 23:23-24, Q 2:115).

**Omnificent** - infinite. Unlimited in power, knowledge and presence. God is greater than his creation; his glory is above the heavens (Psalm 113:4). “*Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You*” (2 Chronicles 2:6, 1 Kings 8:27)

The physical universe is vast and immense and beyond our understanding, yet God is greater than his creation. The universe appears to be expanding, yet still **finite**, while God is **infinite**. God fills the heavens and earth (Jeremiah 23:24), and cannot be measured or counted. He is the First and Last, with no beginning and no end.

## No one has seen God



The infinite, invisible, unseen God has declared, *"You cannot see my face, for no man shall see me and live"* (Exodus 33:20).

Adam heard God speak to him and heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden, but he did not see God. Abraham saw visions of God and angels (Genesis. 12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1), and Jacob wrestled with an angel (Genesis 32:22-32), yet God continued to remain unseen. Even when Moses heard God speaking from the midst of the fire, Moses saw no form (Deuteronomy 4:12).

Many of the prophets of Israel saw visions of God. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel all saw a vision of the God of Israel standing on a paved sapphire stone (Exodus 24:10). Solomon (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2; 11:9), Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19-22), Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-5), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26-28), Amos (Amos 7:7). Daniel saw a vision of the ancient of Days clothed in white (Daniel 7:9), and the disciple John (Rev. 5:1-8) also saw God in visions. Yet despite God appearing as an angel and in clouds of smoke, in fire, and in dreams and visions, John declared, *"No man hath seen God at any time"* John 1:18

Job had marvelled that God could pass-by undetected. (Job 9:11), and John continued to echo the words that *"No man hath seen God at any time"* John 6:46, 1 John 4:12.

Paul also wrote, *"He alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light. No one has ever seen Him, nor can anyone see Him"*. 1 Timothy 6:16

Jesus reminded the unbelieving Pharisees they have never heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form (John 5:37). The Quran also reminds us that God remains eternally unseen. Even when the living and the dead are resurrected to new life, we will not see the invisible God. The Quran says: *"nor can they perceive when they are raised."* Q 27:65

## Why we cannot see God.

The Bible continuing speaks of the invisible, infinite, intangible, unseen God yet Paul wrote, the invisible qualities of God are visible, *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen”* (Romans 1:20).

This statement could be viewed as a contradiction, but Paul was only rephrasing Jesus’ words. Jesus used a metaphor to describe how the invisible spirit of God is manifest when he compared the wind with the spirit; both cannot be seen but make themselves known. The invisible qualities of God become manifest through their interaction with creation. Some of these invisible qualities of God are seen in his nature, for God is described as Life, Love, Light and Spirit, all of which cannot be seen.

God is **Life**. God gives life to all living (Deuteronomy 30:20, Nehemiah 9:6, Q 2:28), yet we cannot see life. We can only look for the signs of life. We look for signs to distinguish the sleeping from the unconscious and the living from the dead. We look for movement, listen for breathing or feel for a heartbeat. We see signs of life but cannot see life.

God is **Love** (1 John 4:8), but love is invisible. We can see signs of love; we listen for the language of love and may notice the offspring or the fruit of love but cannot see Love.

God is **Light** (Psalm 27:1, 1 John 1:5, Q 24:35), but again, we cannot see light. We see neither infrared, ultraviolet light, X-rays nor visible light. Visible light makes God’s creation visible, but it remains invisible to our eyes. We see neither light nor reflected light. What we observe is the interaction of light with an object. We see light beams in clouds of water vapour, dust and smoke, but in space where there is no matter, we only see darkness.

God is **Spirit** and we are to worship him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Our spirit comes from God and returns to God when we die (Ecclesiastes 12:7, Acts 7:59). But we cannot see Spirit.

We cannot see spirit or light or love or light; instead, what we see, is the interaction of the unseen with the physical world.

We do not know where the wind comes from or where it goes but the wind can exert great force, blowing the leaves and moving trees and boats and creating swirling clouds of dust. We neither see or hear the wind; what we do see and hear is the interaction of the wind with God’s creation.

## If God were visible, we would be blind

Like Job, we also marvel at the invisible God, but our inability to see God does not mean he is far from us. God is not separate from us, nor is he hiding from us.

Job said, the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind is in his hand (Job 12:10). The Scriptures say the earth is filled with his glory (Isaiah 6:3, Psalm 72:19).

An infinite God cannot distance himself from us, nor can we distance ourselves from God.

The apostle Paul said God is not far from every one of us. In him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:27-28).

We exist in God as a goldfish exists in a bowl of water. In the same way that the fish lives its life in the water, we also exist and live our lives within an unseen infinite God. A fish might see other creatures in the water, or notice air bubbles or rocks or plants, but it does not see the water which gives it life. For a fish to see the water in which it swims, it must exit or separate itself from the water, but to do so means death.

The spirit of God in which we exist is like the invisible water that gives the fish its life. But if the water or the spirit were visible, then all of us would exist in a cloud, hidden from sight. Meaning we would be blind in a pool of darkness.

To view an object and to see its form, we must first separate ourselves from what we wish to see. But it is impossible to take ourselves outside of God, even if we could, we would die.

Consider too how the size of an object also determined the distance it is viewed.

To see a pearl and admire its size and shape we bring it close to our eyes, but the larger the object, the further away we hold it. A book might be held at an arms-length but a larger object such as a house or even a mountain is admired at a greater distance. The distance we step away to gain the best view, is proportional to the size of the object.

So, to see an infinite God, to see God's face, whose eyes and lips and nose would be infinite in size, would require that we stand an infinite distance away. An impossible task since we cannot distance ourselves at all from God. God is life (Deuteronomy 30:20), and Man cannot see God and live (Exodus 33:20).

## My Lord and my God

When Thomas' touched the wounds of the risen Jesus and declared, *"My Lord and my God"* (John 20:28), he was not declaring Jesus to be God. The context of Thomas' words was not in response to a question about who Jesus was. Instead, it was a question of whether Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. When Thomas, touched Jesus he realised that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. His response recognised that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, and the King who had ridden into Jerusalem, and therefore worthy to be called Lord. Thomas' declaration also echoed Jesus' previous teachings. Jesus had said, *"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once."* John 13:31-32

Thomas was simply declaring what the Scriptures and Gospels writer have continually declared, which was, Jesus was a man filled with the Holy Spirit. God was in him, and he was in God.

Jesus was and remained Man. He was the first-born of the dead. The Branch spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.

Jesus was born the Son of God. He died as the son of God and was raised as the Son of God who sits at the right hand of the father. Jesus, our King and Lord, a man filled with the Holy Spirit, in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Colossians 1:19, 2:9, 2 Corinthians 5:19).

## How do we see God?

Despite remaining unseen, the invisible God wants to be known and has made himself known. God invites us to come into a relationship with Him, to know Him and to trust him. God has spoken through the prophets and has performed great signs and miracles and has shown visions and dreams of what is to come. God has given us his word has fulfilled his promises he has made.

Man is created in the image of the infinite God and his children continue to work as we are transformed into his likeness. Angels though are not created in God's image, nor are they made in God's likeness. Angels can take on the form of man and can speak with both Man and God, but angels cannot empathise with our suffering and do not have compassion for our troubles. When the angel replied to Joshua's question, he declared he was neither for, nor against him (Joshua 5:14).

While Jesus reaffirmed that, *"no one had seen God,"* he also stated that it is possible to see the Father. Jesus tells us *"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father"* John 14:9.

Jesus did not declare that he was God but continually declared himself to be the Son, both the son of Man and the Son of God. Jesus is the finite physical image of the invisible, unseen infinite God (Colossians 1:15). Jesus never declared himself to be God but said to the Pharisees: *"You have never heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form"* John 5:37. The Pharisees had not seen the infinite God, nor could recognise the face of God in Jesus because they were not *"of God"*. Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* John 10:27.

*"And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."* Isaiah 11:2

*"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release from darkness to the prisoners"* Isaiah 61:1

*We cannot see the infinite, but we can see the finite. Believers who see the Son will see the father. The face of God will be the face of Jesus.*

*"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is **of God**, he hath seen the Father."* John 6:46

Jesus tells his sheep, those who are *"of God"*, that they have seen and will see God. *"And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."* Revelation 22:4

## Conclusion

To call Jesus God is meaningless for we are all called Gods (Psalm 82:6, John 10:34). God is Spirit and our Spirit comes from God and returns to God when we die. Our physical bodies decay leaving only our soul and spirit.

When Believers are raised to eternal life, they will not see three Gods or three persons. We will not see the infinite God. but as the Quran says, we will meet him (Q 84:6). The Quran reminds us that we are to seek the countenance of Allah (Q 76:9), yet we will not see God as an angel. The Quran reminds us that when Jesus comes on the Last Day, all will be, *"looking at their Lord"* (Q 75:23).

We shall look on the face of Jesus and see the face of God (Q 92:20, John 14:9). *Praise your Lord [Jesus] when you arise, (Q 52:48), for all things perish except his own face (Q 28:88). Seek the face of your Lord [Jesus] (Q 92:20) or ask yourself 'which of the favours of your Lord will you deny (Q 55:25).*

In Jesus, we will see the finite image of the infinite God and it will be the face of the Son and the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Prophet Isaiah did not say the Son would **be** God but declared that the child who is born would be **called** "Mighty God".

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".* Isaiah 9:6