



## **JESUS SHALL REIGN**

04 October 2009

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You know, I'm the kind of guy that likes to consider things on a philosophical level. I like puzzling with concepts, discussing their ramifications, debating their validity, questioning the assumptions that are behind the conversation.

Maybe that comes from 24 years of consecutive schooling without a break. Maybe I'm just wired that way. Nevertheless, I'm a guy that likes to think in the abstract.

I sometimes catch myself doing that with God, too. Or Love. Or sharing the gospel. Beautiful things, to be sure. And I love to dwell on them, to talk about them, to bat them around like a kitten's ball of yarn. I think God, Love, and the Gospel are the most vitally important things a person can know about.

But you know, sometimes talking about a thing is a way of keeping it at arms length. As it turns out, Love Theory only takes you so far in learning about Love. Doctrine will only get you so far in getting to know God.

The one thing I am learning over the course of my life, is that God is not theoretical. That is probably not a shock to most of you, but hear me out. If God was a theory, it would be enough to talk about him, to do some mental experiments, to diagram and catalogue and prescribe a set of rational rules and mandates as to what He is and what He can do.

God, however, is not theoretical. He is not a concept, and he is anything but abstract. He is at the center of reality – nothing is more real, concrete, and tangible than He. And if you are nodding right now because you know these things to be true, do you know them with your brain only or your heart as well?

The one true God is different than all the other made up gods that ever were in this: He is perfect and in all ways above us, but he chooses to dirty his hands, to adopt our weak nature, and to forsake the glory He deserves. And that is why we love him.

See made-up gods go one of two ways. Either they are as messed up, petty, and vain as people are, or they are so high above humanity that mankind cannot touch them. Look at Greek gods; they were cruel and self-absorbed and generally regarded man as their playthings. On the other hand, some people think of gods as unreachable – busy with god-things. This would be, perhaps, how an agnostic or a deist would think of God.

Not so with our God. He is perfect. He has no character flaws, no need of attention or entertainment. But he is intimately concerned with your life. He cares about the things that even your closest friends get tired of hearing about. He doesn't tire of hearing your stories. This is the God who keeps a tally of the hairs on your head.

But even that illustration, though it demonstrates God's attention, would be trivial if it stood on its own. My point is that you are no more an intellectual premise to Him than He is to you. He doesn't simply rest upon intimate knowledge of you that He has by virtue of His godhood. He wore your shoes. He walked the same ground that you walk, and he walks beside you even still.

That is what the author of Hebrews is making such a fuss about. I love this section of scripture, because you can kind of hear the people to whom he's writing bickering with each other. High-theology stuff about how God can't be a man and Angels are higher than people and God is higher than angels and therefore God can't be below angels...

This is talk of God in the abstract. But in our reading today, we see God in the concrete. God so great he can bear the weight of utter humiliation. God so compassionate, he'd take on your pain and heartache, just so that you know he understands what you're feeling. What God is like that?

Think of some of the difficult times in your life. Have you ever mourned the loss of a friend? Jesus wept at Lazarus's grave. Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend? Jesus was. Have you ever been rejected and mocked? Have you ever gone without food? Have you ever wrestled with demons? God, our God, has been through it. He knows, he understands, and he cares.

Jesus calls us friend, and more than that, brothers and sister under the same Father. That's what his time on earth was for. That's why he had to die. That was the point of everything Jesus did. He did it so that you – you personally – could be in His family.

I don't often think of Jesus as my brother. King? Sure. Savior? Absolutely. But brother? The idea is almost embarrassing. How could I – as messed up and goofy and inconsiderate as I am – ever be called Jesus' brother?

That's the point though, isn't it? I mean, if I'm Jesus brother that doesn't really tell you about how great I am. I don't live up to that, and I certainly don't deserve it. And I think, mostly, when people look at me and him, they don't much see a resemblance. I think I might stick out a bit in the family photos. But He never treats me that way. He was never too cool for me. And he when he talks, he talks about stuff I don't really understand, but he always has a way of bringing it down to my level.

I love that I don't have an abstract God. I have a God who is real, and present, and who is never embarrassed or ashamed of me.