

Coram Deo: Before the Face of God

Discovering Our Identity: Who is God? Who am I?

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1. Eternal God & Created Humans

Genesis 1; John 1:1-18

1.1 Theology: God

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen 1:1)

“In the beginning God...” What does the word “God” evoke?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” (A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*)

Nicene Creed: We/I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

1.1.1 Creator

1. Creator: What was
2. Creation: What came to be

1.1.2 Father

Primary role of a father: to love his son.

The Father has always had a Son, see esp. John:

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)
- the only Son (4× John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18): only begotten (KJV, NASB), only (ESV), one and only (NIV)
- The Son is “at the Father’s side” (ESV), “in the bosom of the Father” (NASB), “in closest relationship with the Father” (NIV; John 1:18)
- The Father loves the Son (John 3:35; 5:20), indeed has done so since before the creation of the world (John 17:24). The Son shared the Father’s glory before the world began (John 17:5). The Son is in the Father and the Father in him; the Son and the Father are one (John 17:21-22).

The Father’s approval:

- baptism: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11)
- transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” (9:7)

Creed: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Coram Deo: in God’s presence; before the face of God. The Son is *coram Deo*.

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1.1.3 Triune God

Spirit: And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

Implications:

1. God is relational: Father, Son and Spirit; *perichoresis*.
2. God is love (1 John 4: 8, 16). 3 components: lover, beloved, love.
3. God is satisfied

1.2 Cosmology: the World

Starting with a formless and empty entity of water and darkness, God forms and fills an ordered cosmos. God the Father creates through the Son and Spirit, his two hands (Irenaeus).

1. God did not need to create the world; it's an expression of his love
2. God likes the world: it was good/very good
3. creation is distinct from God
4. physicality is good

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula. (C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* #9)

1.3 Anthropology: Humanity

Pinnacle of a 3-tier creation: inanimate objects, living creatures, humanity.
In the image of God: to be God's presence in the world.

Pope Francis: encyclical *Laudato si*, on care for our common home, issued 2015.06.18.

1.4 Coram Deo: Reflection Time

Questions

1. What do you think of God? Can you think of him as Father?
2. What do you think God thinks of you?
3. What does the word "father" evoke? Did and do you experience a father's love?

2. Holy God & Sinful People

Exodus 32–34

2.1 The Book of Exodus

Salvation → Ethics → Worship

1. Salvation (1–19): departure from Egypt
 - a. Confrontation with Pharaoh: “Let my people go, that they may serve/worship me” (7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3)
 - b. Arrival at Sinai: “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself... you shall be my treasured possession...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (19:4-6)
2. Ethics (20–24): living as God’s people
 - a. “I am the LORD your God...you shall not...you shall not...you shall not...you shall...” (20–23)
 - b. “Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules” (24:3)
 - c. “And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient’” (24:7)
3. Worship (25–40): *Coram Deo*, in God’s presence
 - a. Tabernacle: “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst” (25:8)
 - b. Blueprints: “Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and all of its furniture, so you shall make it” (25:9)

2.2 The Golden Calf (Exodus 32–34)

Sin: Idolatry (32)

1. The LORD’s response (9-10)
 - a. problem: a stiff-necked people
 - b. solution: wipe them out and start again with Moses
2. Moses’ request (11-13)
 - a. remember: your covenant with Abraham
 - b. relent: change your mind

Marching Orders (33)

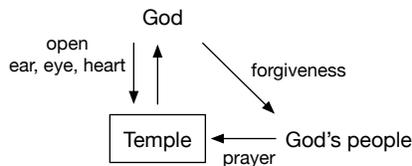
1. The LORD’s command: time to leave Sinai for the Land (1-3)
 - a. problem: a stiff-necked people (33:3)
 - b. solution: I won’t go with you (33:3): a “disastrous word” (4)
2. Moses’ request:
 - a. “please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight” (33:12)
 - b. “please show me your glory” (33:18)

Renewal (34)

1. The LORD’s self-declaration
 - a. proclaimed the name of the LORD: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” (34:6-7)
2. Moses’ response
 - a. worship (8)
 - b. request (9)
 - i. problem: a stiff-necked people
 - ii. solution: please come with us, forgive us, and make us your own

2.3 Result

1. covenant renewal and new tablets (34:10-28)
2. tabernacle erected (40):
 - a. “This Moses did; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did” (16)
 - b. “...as the Lord had commanded Moses” (19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32)
 - c. “ So Moses finished the work” (33)
3. the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (34-38)
4. sacrificial system: “And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven” (Lev 4:35)
5. Temple:
 - a. conduit to God’s ears, eyes and heart: “my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place...My eyes and my heart will be there for all time” (2 Chr 7:15-16; cf. 6:20, 40)
 - b. the prayer: “listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive” (2 Chr 6:21)



2.4 Israel’s Use of this Understanding of God

1. Moses’s intercession after Israel’s rebellion following the report of the 12 spies (Num 14:17-19)
2. Jonah’s offense that God forgave the enemy (Jonah 4)
3. Micah: Israel’s only hope (Mic 7:18-20)

2.5 Coram Deo

1. Does God change his mind?
2. Forgiveness
I find that when I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality (unless I watch myself very carefully) asking Him to do something quite different. I am asking Him not to forgive me but to excuse me. But there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing... If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites... we shall go away imagining that we have repented and been forgiven when all that has really happened is that we have satisfied ourselves with our own excuses. They may be very bad excuses; we are all too easily satisfied about ourselves... All the real excusing He will do. What we have got to take to Him is the inexcusable bit, the sin... To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. (C.S. Lewis, “On Forgiveness”)

3. Loving Father & Adopted Sons/Daughters

Acts & Epistles

3.1 Good News

News: something has happened as a result of which the world is a different place.

Peter's first sermon:

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it... ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.” (Acts 2:22-24, 32-33; cf. 3:13-15, 17-19)

What has happened?

3.1.1 Jesus Christ, the Son

1. Incarnation: the Word who was became flesh (John 1:14), became human like us, “Jesus of Nazareth, a man.”
2. Suffering & Death: God died! put to death by rebellious humanity
3. Resurrection & Ascension
 - a. death has no power over innocent blood
 - b. the Son returned to the Father's presence: *coram Deo*. He came from the Father's embrace and returned to the Father's side, where the Father gazes on him with pleasure. The Son communes with the Father.
 - c. Jesus, the risen Christ, is the first human in God's full presence: *coram Deo*. He is our high priest in the true sanctuary; he is our liturgist, the true worshiper.
 - d. Jesus is installed as Lord and King

This is good news for Jesus, but why is it good news for us?

The world is different for Jesus, but how is it different for us?

3.1.2 The Spirit

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off.” (Acts 2:38-39)

The promise

1. forgiveness of sins
2. gift of the Spirit

New identity: “in Christ”

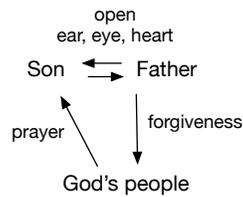
1. participation in Christ: put off the old self, put on Christ
2. new creation: “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17); being renewed into the true image
3. restored/conformed into the true image
4. adoption: sons of the Father (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:6); Christ is “bringing many sons to glory” (Heb 2:10)

We pray: Our Father (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). We pray to our Father in Jesus' name.

We bless and glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3).

We participate with the Son in the Father through the Spirit.

Coram Deo: Discovering our Identity



He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. (Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, #8)

...the Enemy also wants to detach men from themselves, but in a different way. Remember, always, that He really likes the little vermin, and sets an absurd value on the distinctness of every one of them. When He talks of their losing their selves, He means only abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever. (*Screwtape Letters* #13)

3.2 Coram Deo: Reflection Time

Questions:

1. Do you think of Jesus as your elder brother, the one who has gone before?
2. Do you see yourself as a son or daughter of the Father?
3. Do you see yourself as God's presence in the world?

4. Proud Father & Glorified Sons/Daughters

Rev 21:1-8

4.1 A New Creation (21:1)

4.2 New Jerusalem (21:2-4)

1. What John *saw*: city
2. What John *heard*: its meaning

4.3 The Father's Welcome (21:5-8)

Final declarations:

1. "It is done!" (6)
2. "I will be his God and he will be my son" (7)

We will survive the gaze of God: *coram Deo*

1. his gaze on us: approval. The Father stands at the finish line to welcome his sons and daughters home.
2. our gaze on him: the Beatific Vision (22:4)

How God thinks of us is not only more important [than how we think of God], but infinitely more important... It is written that we shall "stand before" Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can scarcely sustain. But so it is. (Lewis, "The Weight of Glory")

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you say it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare... There are no *ordinary* people. (Lewis, "The Weight of Glory")

Now while they were thus drawing towards the Gate, behold a company of the Heavenly Host came out to meet them. There came out also at this time, several of the King's Trumpeters, clothed in white and shining Raiment, who with melodious noises, and loud, made even the heavens to echo with their sound. These Trumpeters saluted the pilgrims with ten thousand welcomes from the world, with shouting and sound of trumpet, signifying how welcome they were into their company, and with what gladness they came to meet them. Now when they came to the Gate, the pilgrims each handed in their Certificate, which they had received in the beginning; these therefore were carried into the King, who, when he had read them, said, 'Where are the pilgrims [people]?' To whom it was answered, 'They are standing outside the Gate.' The King then commanded to open the Gate.

Now I saw in my dream, that these pilgrims went in at the gate; and as they entered they were transfigured, and they had Raiment put on that shone like gold. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the City rang again for joy, and it was said within, 'Enter ye into the joy of our Lord'. (Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*; City of Gold, Arrival at the City)

5. Communion: Participation

Two aspects:

5.1 Remembrance

5.2 Participation/Communion

sharing in the Son's relationship with the Father through the Spirit.

the Son is *coram Deo*.

through the Spirit we participate in that relationship since we are in Christ; we are *coram Deo*.

6. Creeds etc.

6.1 Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Trinity Hymnal

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried:
He descended into hell;
The third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
The holy Catholick Church;
The Communion of Saints;
The Forgiveness of sins;
The Resurrection of the body,
And the Life everlasting. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer 1662

6.2 The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
Who for us and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried;
and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.
and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets;
and we believe in one catholic and apostolic church;
we acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins;
and we look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Trinity Hymnal

Coram Deo: Discovering our Identity

6.3 Coram Deo

Moment by moment, grace after grace
Openly, honestly before Your loving face.
Living before You, day after day
All of my life embraced in Your holy gaze
Coram Deo, Coram Deo
All of my life embraced in Your holy gaze

Kevin Twit, Alex Alzamora, Roger Severino © 1995 Kevin Twit Music

6.4 The Grace

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship (*koinonia*, participation) of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor 13:14)