

The Human Face of God (part one)
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

“This is why planet earth is of the highest importance simply because He has visited it; He is working out His Plan upon it.” J.B. Phillips

Were you one of the millions of Canadians who attended church or some Christian celebration over Christmas? Let us attempt to discover why so many people were drawn toward someone who moved into our neighbourhood some 2000 years ago.

How can a mighty, creative God reveal himself to finite persons like you and me? But, God need not be remote or unreal because he has already taken the initiative to reveal himself to us in three wonderful ways – through Nature, through the Bible’s written revelation, and supremely, through Jesus Christ.

Who is this Jesus? Few, if any, now question that a person bearing this name once lived upon this earth. The words “Jesus Christ” combine a proper name and a title. “Jesus,” the name of the historical figure, lived in Palestine during the first century A.D. The word “Christ” comes from the Greek “Christos,” meaning “Anointed one;” the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah. “He is what God means by man and He is what man means by God!” J. S. Whale

Because of Christ’s coming we never need to doubt God’s desire to have close contact with us. Jesus gave up heaven and deliberately handicapped himself to share fully in our human condition. He knew hunger, thirst, weariness, rejection, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted “ (Hebrews 2:18). Experiencing all the aspects of our humanity, he fully understands and sympathizes with us. He invites us to come to receive grace to help in time of need.

As we look at the life of Christ, here on earth, we see a story of apparent failure. He did some very risky things such as:

Confronting the religious leaders of his day, mincing no words.

He spent great amounts of time with so-called second-class citizens – lepers, the disabled, Samaritans.

He was furious when he saw his father’s house turn into a noisy marketplace.

He encouraged children to come to his side at a time when Judea was hardly a child centred society.

He was rebuked because his attitude toward women brought them freedom, respect and dignity.

Of his followers, one denied him, one betrayed him, they all forsook him and fled.

He was rejected by his own people and ended up on a cross suffering the most shameful and painful of all deaths.

It would be hard to imagine a more complete and utter failure than that.

But now as James Allen Francis has expressed clearly, “When we look back and try to sum up his influence: All the armies that ever marched, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned are absolutely picayune in their influence on mankind compared with that ONE SOLITARY LIFE.”

*“We are not a lost planet wandering hopelessly in space.
Rather, we are a ‘Visited Planet’ with a glorious future”*