

(Radical Jesus) 1 Introduction

by Glenn Meldrum

The speaker explores the concept of 'radical' as it relates to Jesus and His teachings, and discusses the limitations of human understanding and the importance of revealed truth in seeking to know God.

Duration: 24:33

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:15

Topics: "Radical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of a spiritual revolution and its impact on society. He uses the example of the 1904 Welch revival to illustrate how a spiritual awakening can bring about significant changes politically and economically. The revival started with small prayer meetings but quickly spread, leading to crowded churches and the conversion of a hundred thousand outsiders. As a result, drunkenness decreased, crime diminished, and many taverns went bankrupt. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the person and work of Jesus and aims to inspire listeners to become radicals who can turn the world upside down, just like the apostle Paul.

Transcript

This message by Glenn Meldrum was originally produced by In His Presence Ministries for the Radical Truth Podcast. You can listen and subscribe to the Radical Truth Podcast by going to www.ihpministry.com You are welcome to reproduce this message for free distribution. This message is part of a series entitled, The Radical Jesus.

Thank you for joining the study today. We are beginning a new study that will take us three to six months to finish, depending on how fast we go through it. The series we are doing comes out of the most recent book I wrote that is titled, The Radical Jesus.

So that will also be the name of this teaching series. Before we can immerse ourselves in the study of The Radical Jesus, I need to lay out some opening thoughts of this study. So the goal of today's podcast is to begin laying out some necessary thoughts so we can get into the meat of this study.

I want you to know where we are basically going in these lessons, and to clarify a few statements so that I am not misunderstood. First I want to define the word radical in a general sense, and then express how I will use the word in this series. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines the word as going to the root or origin, as in making a radical difference.

Or thoroughgoing or extreme, especially as regards change from accepted or traditional norms, as in a radical change in the policy of a company. It can also mean favoring drastic political, economic, or social reforms, as in radical ideas. Then you have the idea of a person who holds or follows strong convictions or extreme principles.

These people are often called extremists. Another use of the word has to do with a person who advocates political, economic, and social reforms by direct and often uncompromising methods. One way we can understand the definition and use the word is by looking at its synonyms.

Some of the synonyms of radical are basic, essential, original, innate, and ingrained. Then there are complete, unqualified, thorough, drastic, excessive, immoderate, and even violent. The words radical, extreme, and fanatical denote that which is beyond moderation or even to excess in opinion, belief, or action.

The word radical emphasizes the idea of going to the root of a matter, and this often seems immoderate in its thoroughness or completeness, such as radical ideas or radical change or reforms. Then you have the word extreme, which applies to excessively biased ideas, intemperate conduct, and repressive legislation, such as the use of extreme measures. The word fanatical is applied to a person who has extravagant views, especially in matters of religion and morality, and often takes a violent direction.

The thesis of this series is simple. Jesus was and is absolutely radical, and I will support this thesis throughout this study. It is important to understand that I am using the word radical in a very positive sense, not in a negative way.

Though Jesus was radical, he was not a fanatic. He was extreme, but only because of who he is in comparison to who we are. Jesus was extreme because we are so far from what we were created to be that when we see perfect and infinite goodness, we are thoroughly terrified by it.

Jesus came into the world with a very purposeful agenda. He came to bring a spiritual and moral revolution, to literally change the world by transforming people. He did not come into this world to leave the world unchanged.

Any way you look at it, to bring radical change to a world determined to continue in the practice of sin will take a very radical work. Gerhard Lohfink said it this way, It is true that Jesus never called for a political revolutionary transformation of Jewish society. Yet the repentance which he demanded as a consequence of his preaching of the reign of God sought to ignite within the people of God a movement in comparison to which the normal type of revolution is insignificant.

Jesus came into this world to bring a revolution, but not the kind that this world advances, which are violent, bloody, filled with hate, bigotry, greed, lust, and the love of power. There is nothing similar between Jesus and Islam or any other religion of the world. Jesus stands unique, apart, separate, distinct from all of mankind.

When I use the word radical to describe Jesus and the kingdom of God he came to establish, we must understand that the word is making reference to that which is otherworldly or heavenly. For this reason, we can use Webster's definition that radical means going to the root or origin, because Jesus will not uphold the status quo, but is out to take us back to the origin of mankind before sin entered the world. In the Garden of Eden, mankind had unbroken fellowship with God, because sin had not yet entered the

world and severed that relationship.

The part of Webster's definition that states that a radical can be a person who advocates political, economic, and social reforms by direct and often uncompromising methods is only partially true. Jesus did not come into this world to make a bloody revolution, and anybody that claims to be a Christian that advocates such ideologies is not following Christ or his teaching. People like to justify violence by somehow claiming they have some kind of affinity with Jesus, but that is not why he came into the world, nor how he acted when he walked on this planet.

It is true that he came to disturb, reform, and transform the social and religious order of the day, but violence never had anything to do with it. Jesus was out to transform society by transforming people. When a spiritual revolution sweeps a land, then you will find great change that takes place politically and economically.

To help illustrate what I am saying, let me give you an overview of the 1904 Welch Revival that was written by Dr. J. Edwin Orr. The revival began with prayer meetings of less than 20 intercessors. When it burst its bounds, the churches of Wales were crowded for more than two years.

A hundred thousand outsiders were converted and added to the churches, the vast majority remaining true to the end. Drunkenness was immediately cut in half, and many taverns went bankrupt. Crime was so diminished that judges were presented with white gloves signifying there were no cases of murder, assault, rape, or robbery or the like to consider.

The police became unemployed in many districts. Stoppages occurred in coal mines, not due to unpleasantness between management and workers, but because so many foul-mouthed miners became converted and stopped using foul language that the horses and mules which hauled the coal trucks in the mines could no longer understand what was being said to them, and transportation ground to a halt. The idea that radical means extreme does not apply to Jesus or those who are true followers of him, because he brought back to this world what was normal in the beginning, and is only radical because mankind has fallen so far from its original standard.

Steve Gallagher said it correctly when he wrote in the foreword of my book, Jesus is so glorious, so awe-inspiring, so altogether other, that the only human word which can begin to adequately describe him is radical. And this is the very thing believers need to see today, Jesus Christ as he actually is in all his glory. So every time I use the word radical to describe Jesus, do not make a comparison to radical Islam, or radical Hinduism, or the radical homosexual movement, because Jesus is infinitely the opposite of them.

Or when I use the word radical or its synonyms to describe genuine followers of Jesus, then do not throw them into the same category as the groups I just mentioned. Biblical Christianity stands absolutely distinct and separate from the world, and all of its religions, philosophies, ideologies, politics, and economics, because the one who founded the true faith has no equal in this world, not among gods, men, and angels, for there is no god but the Lord Jesus, nor could there ever be another. Now I want to take a few moments to make an honest confession.

When someone needs their car fixed, they want a qualified person to work on it. If you need heart surgery, you would not go to your auto mechanic and ask him to do the procedure, because you conclude that since he is extremely capable of fixing cars, maybe he could fix your heart. If you take a college course,

you expect that the professor will know more about the subject than you do.

And because someone writes a book, we commonly think that he or she must be extremely knowledgeable on the subject. The problem is that I am not an authority on God, and I do not know much about what I am talking about. But please don't shut the podcast off yet.

I have a master's degree in theology, church history, and philosophy, but that does not mean I really know what I am talking about. Actually, before I earned my master's degree, I thought I had a pretty good handle on theology. But as I dug deeper into God's Word in a formal seminary setting, I began to see just how ignorant I was, and how little I really knew.

As I was writing the book, *The Radical Jesus*, I was freshly confronted with how little I know about this Jesus, whom I claim to know as my Lord and Savior. Here is what I can say with confidence. I was once lost in trespasses and sin, but Jesus found me more than 40 years ago.

I know God both experientially and intellectually. I know He is real, and that He loves me both experientially and intellectually, because I see this throughout the Word of God and have known His loving voice and touch. God is real, and He makes Himself known to those who hunger and thirst to know Him.

But because I know God and am known by God, does not mean I fully know Him, or am able to know Him to any great degree. Here is the problem that the entire human race faces. How can mere mortals be an expert on an infinite being? It is impossible.

So I do not claim to be an expert on the subject of God, just a disciple striving to grow in a living practical knowledge of the one and only God. What I can say about this study on the radical Jesus is that it is an honest investigation into the person and work of Jesus. Because I passionately want to know Christ, I long for others to know Him better.

In this study, we will take an honest, straightforward look at Jesus, and what we will find has the potential to be revolutionary to our lives and faith. So I am convinced that what we will see is an absolutely radical Savior God that is beyond anything we could ever imagine. This is what my podcast, *Radical Truth*, is all about.

An effort to seek and to know as much as is humanly possible about this radical Jesus, who is Almighty God, and then to live out this truth to the fullest. In the following weeks and months to come, as we dig into the person and work of this radical Jesus, I promise you that I will strive to simply teach what the Scriptures plainly reveal, and to share how such truths are to be lived out on a daily basis. I tremble at this responsibility because there is nothing more dangerous than to err on eternal realities, so I want to present the truth about Jesus in as pure a form as possible.

The ambition of my life as an evangelist, preacher, and teacher is to help make radicals that will turn the world upside down like Paul the Apostle did nearly 2,000 years ago. With all that said, how do finite people explain an infinite being? Talk about an impossible mission. Right from the beginning, we are intellectually handicapped.

Our finiteness and frailty is not a mystery to God, as David said in Psalms 103. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows how we are formed.

He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass. He flourishes like a flower of the field.

The wind blows over it and it is gone, and his place remembers it no more. Because God knows our innate frailty and limitedness, He has revealed Himself to us in a way that we can grasp without degrading who He is. Though God is an infinite mystery, He has made Himself discoverable to a certain degree.

Theologians have tried to explain God, and at times they help. At other times, they have been a major hindrance to the common man's search for God. There are some words that they use that can help us in our pursuit to know God as fully as we are able, so I am going to use some theological words to describe Him.

First, God is ineffable, which means that He is incapable of being described with words. If we could speak with the language of angels, we would still woefully lack the ability to describe this infinite God to any great detail. By the sheer aspect that the Lord is infinite, there is not a single finite creature that could fully know or adequately describe Him.

Every language of created beings will miserably fail to define and describe the person and nature of God. This means that all human language is actually degrading to the majesty of God, for He is infinitely beyond all language. Yet He has revealed Himself to us with words and ideas that we can understand.

Think of it as a father speaks to a toddler in ways that the little tight can comprehend. The Lord has given us great and high words in which we can strive to understand Him, but He expects us to comprehend how inadequate our words are in comparison to the infinite wonders of His person and attributes. Next, the Lord is incomprehensible, which tells us that He is impossible to understand because He is beyond human intellect.

God has told us that He is incomprehensible. This comes out powerfully in the book of Job. In chapter 5, verse 9, and in chapter 9, verse 10, we read, He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

Then in chapter 11, 7, Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? With poetic beauty we find in Job 26, 14, and these are but the outer fringe of His works, how faint the whisper we hear of Him! Who then can understand the thunder of His power? Job 36, 26 reads, How great is our God beyond our understanding! The number of His years is past finding out. Then in Job 37, 5, we are told, God's voice thunders in marvelous ways. He does great things beyond our understanding.

Solomon wrote of the wonder of this God in Ecclesiastes 3, 11, He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. Here we are told that God has set eternity in our hearts, which is the reason why we desire to live forever and to know God.

From the beginning of mankind, God integrated this desire into our very nature, but the fall has twisted it. Though we have this yearning for eternal things, we are still virtually ignorant of what God has done and what God is doing. This thought is in the New Testament as well, such as Romans 11, 33, Since God is incomprehensible, it does not mean that He is irrational or illogical.

He can be known. It means that it is impossible for any created being to exhaustively comprehend God. But it does not mean that He is unknowable.

Jeremiah 9, verses 23 and 24 explains this. We see in these two verses that the wisdom of man is foolishness and that the greatest knowledge available to mankind is to know God. The prophet Hosea worded it with poetic beauty.

So here is a God that is incomprehensible yet knowable. God is incomprehensible to us for three primary reasons. First, we are limited by the finite capacity of our minds.

The Infinite Creator will always be infinitely above all His creatures. This is a capacity issue. To a newborn baby, the life of daddy is incomprehensible because she cannot understand the concept of work, money, and paying bills, much less the bigger issues of economics, politics, and war.

Yet with her limited understanding, she is able to know and love mom and dad in a limited way. The second reason why God is incomprehensible to us is due to the limitations caused by our sinful minds that have a terrible time understanding spiritual truths. This is a moral issue, not a capacity issue.

By nature, we are rebels against the truth. John chapter 3 tells us that we naturally love darkness rather than light. We are also told in 2 Corinthians 4, the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

We also have to understand the truth of Romans 128. Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done. Because people refuse to seek after God and to turn from their sin, their minds are given over to greater depravity, which further blinds their minds to the truth about God.

Only through God's grace can we overcome our moral repugnance to the truth and to righteousness and to our addiction to sin and rebellion. The third reason why God is incomprehensible is that we are limited by revelation. This is very important for us to understand.

1 Timothy 6, 15 and 16 proclaims, The blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal, who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and might forever. Amen. Paul gave us this very practical warning in 1 Corinthians 4, 6, Do not go beyond what is written.

We have been given the parameters of God's word, and we must stay in the safety of revealed truth. To venture outside of clearly revealed truth is extremely dangerous and leads to deception and heresies and not to some Gnostic mystery knowledge. One author made a very good point when he said, The constraints of revelation are given in order to restrain man's depraved lust to make gods of himself.

Men that rightly know God understand their limitations, as David told us in Psalms 131. Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. Neither do I exercise myself in great matters or in things too high for me.

Then in Psalms 139, David said, Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain to it. We are to passionately seek after God, but are also to stay within the safety of revealed truth so that we do not stray into lies and illusions or outright deceptions instigated by the devil.

The next theological word I want to look at is that the Lord is inscrutable, which denotes that he is incapable of being investigated since he is an infinite mystery. The idea behind God being inscrutable does not mean that we are forbidden to seek to know the Lord through the investigation of his word and through prayer. It simply means that he is beyond our reach or ability to investigate him beyond what

revealed truth has given us.

You cannot take God into a chemistry lab to learn what he is made of because he is beyond the human ability to investigate in such a manner. Paul said it most eloquently in Romans 11.33, O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that he should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.

Amen. God will always be an infinite mystery because his creatures only have the capacity to know and understand him to a certain degree. This is something that in recent years I have come to love about God and become comfortable with in its concept.

He is an infinite mystery that I can seek to know more and more yet never come to an end of. It is like the discovery of DNA. DNA existed before it was ever discovered, therefore it was a mystery.

The men that discovered it thought that its discovery would be the death of religion. What really happened is that with the discovery of DNA came hundreds of more mysteries they never knew existed. Throughout all eternity the redeemed will have the privilege of seeking to know God in a greater way.

And with each new dimension of God that we learn we will find a thousand more mysteries that we never knew existed. This is the wonder and excitement of eternal life with this God who is inscrutable. The Lord is also inexplicable, which means that he is incapable of being accounted for or explained.

This aspect of the nature of God gives us humans a whole lot of trouble. We want answers. We want to know where God came from.

We want to know why he does the things that he does and says the things that he says. To our frustration he does not submit to our interrogations nor will he submit to our obsession with wanting answers for everything about life and everything that happens in life. When men forsake the revealed truth found in God's word they are left to invent fanciful hypotheses about the existence of man and creation.

God's nature is so far above and beyond ours that we cannot comprehend his existence and our brains bleed when we try to grasp that God is infinite and has no beginning and end. Here again we find that God is an infinite mystery and that he is not obligated to explain to man who he is or what he does. What he has revealed about himself to us is all we need to have a genuine relationship with him.

And what he has given us would take a lifetime to learn and then we would still not come close to knowing all that we could know about him as revealed in his word. He has not withheld from us one thing that is for our benefit in growing in this faith or obtaining eternal life. Paul told us in Philippians 4, 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What Paul is teaching here is that God and all he offers us mortals literally transcends or goes beyond all human understanding. The peace that he offers us is so great and otherworldly that we cannot even grasp it. That God would offer the rebel race of mankind who are sinners by nature and by choice the means by which we could make peace with him is absolutely mind-blowing.

Let me quote Paul again, this time out of Ephesians 3, 16-19 Here is love that surpasses human knowledge yet God welcomes us to seek it out to experience the wonder of the fullness of Christ. That

Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith is an absolutely astounding gift. Now if this is not radical, then we have no idea what that word means.

All these dimensions of God indicate that the Almighty is infinitely beyond the understanding of finite men and angels. There are mysteries about Jesus that we do not even know exist. And of those mysteries that we do know about we will never fully understand even in the world to come.

Honest Christians that are passionately seeking to know Christ readily admit how ignorant they are about him. Jesus is the ultimate radical. No one even comes close because no one can compare to the living God that became man so he could rescue a world in rebellion against him.

It is like the psalmist declared, who is like the Lord our God, the one who sits enthroned on high.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27987.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/glenn-meldrum/radical-jesus-1-introduction/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net