

The Nature of God

Class 1 – Who is God

WHO IS GOD

The Bible tells us that nature reveals to us that there is a God. In Romans 1:20a Paul says *“since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made...”*. We are told in the Old Testament that *“the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork”* (Psalm 19:1).

QUESTION: How does nature reveal to us that there is a God?

But Paul specifically goes on in the same verse in Romans to say that it is not just that God exists, but that there are key characteristics of God that are revealed in nature. Paul says *“...even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:20b). Two things are mentioned here: God’s eternal power (i.e. the power of being God) and his Godhead nature.

QUESTION: How does nature reveal the eternal power of God?

THE GODHEAD

What is Godhead? The term is used in Colossians 1:9 to describe Jesus’ identity as God: *“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”*. Godhead refers to the broadest definition of God; Godhead means God as a multiplicity of persons. In Scriptures, God reveals Himself as a plurality from the beginning: *“God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.....”* (Genesis 1:26a). God cannot be referring to Himself and the angels, since man is uniquely revealed as being the image of God, verse 27. God is also revealed as a plurality in the beginning by the use of the name “Elohim”. Elohim is the word our Bibles translate as “God” in the Old Testament. Beginning in Genesis 1:1, this word is used of God 2,250 times. This word is Hebrew for "Gods", a plural form of God. God’s first identity then is a multiple person.

Now comes the more confusing point. God is multiple persons, but one God. Deuteronomy 6:4 declares that God is One, a declaration repeated in the New Testament (Mark 12:29). Paul declares that *“there is One God”* in 1 Timothy 2:5. How is God one and more than one at the same time? The answer is not perfectly understood, but perhaps Paul’s point that nature reveals this helps. In nature, matter is manifested in three states:

solid, liquid and gas. It is the same material/element, but it is manifested in three ways. In fact, these manifestations can exist side by side, as seen in a glass of ice water.

The Bible declares that Jesus is God (John 1:1). The Bible declares that the Spirit of God is God (John 4:24). Finally, the Bible declares that the Father is God (1 Peter 1:3).

QUESTION: Apart from God, what other beings exist? According to Hebrews 2:6-7, what is the ranking of beings?

Nature reveals matter in three states; we often point out that in Scripture God manifests Himself three ways. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible says God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1; so it makes sense that Scriptures say Jesus created all things (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2), the Spirit made all things (Psalm 104:30), and God the Father made all things (1 Corinthians 8:6). The word often used to describe God as three Persons and One is "Trinity", or "Tri-Unity", which means three-in-one.

QUESTION: Some may wonder if the Godhead are actually God appearing in different forms. What times in the Scripture are there when all three Persons appeared at the same time, confirming they are individuals and not merely different forms of one individual?

God says that man is made in the Godhead image. This suggests that we too are a singular and multiplicity of identity. The Bible says that we are flesh, soul and spirit; *"may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). We are told that our spirit and flesh often war against each other (Romans 8:9-12); we are told that only the Bible can distinguish the soul and spirit (Hebrews 4:12); we are told that without the spirit the flesh is dead (James 2:26). Each are us, but separate enough we can distinguish them separately.

QUESTION: How does our flesh, soul and spirit correspond to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

CONCLUSION

God is three Persons. We are made in that image. It is not easy to understand, but it is important that we accept it as true. "If you do not believe that I Am, you will die in your sins" – Jesus, John 8:24.

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Class 2 – Who is The Father

WHO IS JEHOVAH

In our last study we saw that the Bible reveals that God is not a singular personality, but multiple persons. Specifically, we saw that God was three persons, and at the same time one person. We used the word “Godhead” or “Trinity” to describe this condition. God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament this was not completely revealed. Instead, God revealed to Israel (His covenant nation) His special name: Jehovah. This name (in Hebrews pronounced “Yahweh”) literally means “I AM”, which God told Moses to reveal in Exodus 3:14. In the New Testament Jesus said that He was also “I AM” (John 8:58). We conclude that this name is the name of God as the Godhead.

QUESTION: Why would God use the name “I AM”?

But there is an interesting occurrence with this name in the New Testament. It is used over 5,500 times in the Old Testament, but not once in the New Testament? Why not? We can conclude that God desires us to have a different relationship with Him than Israel. In the Old Testament there are very, very few times God is called Father by the Israelites. But in the New Testament this is the identity God takes with us.

QUESTION: How is God letting us call Him Father better than the name Jehovah?

QUESTION: What caused the change to Father in the New Testament?

THE FATHER

The New Testament gives us a considerable amount to think about when it comes to God as being our Father. First of all, we know that our relationship with God as our Father is because of the work of Jesus to bring us to Him. The term used in the New Testament is adoption (Ephesians 1:5). We are told that God’s love permits us to call Him Father (1 John 3:1). As well, our obedience to Him is required (John 1:12). If you call God your Father, you have a special relationship that has both special benefits (the inheritance of God) and special obligations (to behave as children of God).

QUESTION: What does it mean to be adopted by God?

QUESTION: What does it mean to behave as children of God?

What are some of the characteristics or distinctions that separate the Father from the Son and the Spirit? Jesus the Son submits to the Father (John 5:30). The Holy Spirit of God submits to the Father and then when Jesus was given all authority, to Jesus (John 15:26). But there is no statement about the Father submitting. We conclude that this indicates that the Father is the originator or source of all authority (1 Peter 1:1-2, Galatians 1:4). Another way to say this is that the Father creates the will of God, the Son executes the will of God, and the Spirit reveals the will of God.

QUESTION: How does Jesus carry out the will of the Father?

QUESTION: How does the Holy Spirit reveal the will of the Father?

QUESTION: How did the Spirit come to be sent by the authority of Jesus?

Another characteristic of the Father is that He is unseen as Himself. There are repeated passages in the Scriptures that speak of God not being seen (Exodus 33:20, John 1:18, 1 John 4:12). We conclude that having seen Jesus, and having seen the Holy Spirit, the unseen nature of God is that of the Father. But Jesus said that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father (John 14:9).

Perhaps the best attribute of the Father is the one mentioned earlier, that is, the love of the Father. There are numerous passages that discuss the love of the Father towards us, a love that existed "*while we were yet sinners*" (Romans 5:8). Perhaps not all of us had Fathers who loved us properly; however, we all know what that love should be like.

QUESTION: How would you describe the ideal father's love?

QUESTION: 1 John 2:15 – How can you know the love of the Father is in you?

ENGAGING THE FATHER

It is important to see the distinction in the Father as it is He to whom we are to pray. Jesus said "*And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you*" (John 16:23). Throughout the New Testament prayers were addressed to the Father in the name of the Son; this is our model of prayer.

QUESTION: What does it mean to pray to the Father in the name of the Son?

CONCLUSION

God the Father is the source of all authority. He is the source of love and is the one to whom we pray through the Son.

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Class 3 – Who is The Son

THE SON OF GOD

We have seen that God as three persons and one person is Jehovah. We have also discussed how God is a Father, the originator and authorizer of all things. The next way we look at God is as God the Son, the Son of God. The Old Testament does not totally reveal the triune (three-in-one) nature of God. There is a prophecy of a specific Son who would also be God Himself in Isaiah 7:14, and this Son is called Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor, and Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6 (see illustration on page 3).

When Jesus of Nazareth came to earth, the first one to call Him the Son of God was the angel who announced Him to Mary in Luke 1:35. Next it was Satan and his demons (Matt. 4:3, Mark 3:11, Luke 4:3). Next it was John the Baptist who identified Him as the Son of God (John 1:34). Soon after Jesus began His ministry His apostles (Nathanael in John 1:34, Peter in Matt. 16:16) and others began to see that He was the Son of God, not by His own claims but because “*My Father who is in heaven*” revealed it through Him. Finally, it was Jesus’ enemies who confirmed He was the Son of God and then condemned Him to death for it (Luke 22:70-71).

QUESTION: Why might Jesus not tell everyone He was the Son of God plainly?

QUESTION: How did the Father reveal that Jesus was the Son of God?

QUESTION: According to John 5:18 why did the Jews believe that Jesus saying God was His Father blasphemous?

GOD IN THE FLESH

The term “Son of God” is used to describe both men (Gen. 6:2) and angels (Job 2:1). But with Jesus this is different; He is the “*Only Begotten*” (John 1:14,18, 3:16, 18, 1 John 4:9). The word “*begotten*” is in Greek “*monogenes*”; in that word we see “*mono*”, alone or only, and “*genes*”, from which we get the word “*genes*”. Some might say it means “one of a kind”, or “only one of that nature”. Jesus is the Father’s True Son of the same nature. Jesus is God’s “natural” Son.

Paul tells us that the great mystery of godliness is that “*God was manifested in the flesh*” (1 Tim. 3:16). Jesus is God; within Him the totality of God is present, as Paul declares when he says “*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (Col. 2:9). This is in agreement with Isaiah 9:6, when all of the Godhead names appear associated with the Son of promise.

Scriptures want this fact established clearly for us: Jesus IS God. He is called God (John 1:1, 20:28); He is the Creator of all things (John 1:3, Heb. 1:2, Col. 1:16). He had power that only God had (Mark 2:5-7, Mark 4:39-41, Matt. 9:4). He is worshipped as God (Matt. 14:33). He even identified Himself as Jehovah (John 8:58).

- QUESTION: How does men or angels worshiping Jesus demonstrate He is God?
- QUESTION: Per Mark 2:5-7, how did Jesus demonstrate He was God?
- QUESTION: Per Mark 4:39-41, how did Jesus demonstrate He was God?
- QUESTION: Per Matthew 9:4, how did Jesus demonstrate He was God?
- QUESTION: What are other indications of the Divinity of Jesus?

100% GOD, 100% MAN

We can see clearly that Jesus was completely God. But it is important that we also know that Jesus was completely a man too. He is called “Son of Man” as well as “Son of God” in Scriptures. He had the entire nature of God, but also the nature of man. *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim. 2:5). He was born of a woman, born under the Law (Gal. 4:4). He came in the form of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). He bled, suffered and died as a man.

Knowing Jesus was completely a man is as important as knowing Jesus is completely God for many reasons. First, it is ONLY by being both that Jesus can be a perfect mediator between God and man (Job 9:32-33). The Hebrew writer says it well: *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15). Second, it is ONLY by being human that God can affect the biggest changes in our relationship. Consider these issues, and how Jesus being God in the flesh resolves these things:

God is a jealous God - Exodus 20:5	Jesus satisfies God’s jealousy - Romans 5:10
God is a just judge - Psalm 7:11	Jesus excuses us from judgment - John 5:24
God does not relent - Job 9:13	Jesus satisfies God’s Anger - Hebrews 8:12
God does not hear sinners - John 9:31	Thru Jesus we are heard by God - John 16:23

Perhaps the most important thing Jesus does by being God in the flesh is that by being in the flesh God might be able to die; in dying, Jesus allows for a new covenant to be installed (Rom. 7:1-3, Heb. 9:16). Jesus needed to be God in order to end the prior covenants, and needed to be man in order to die. The perfect plan.

- QUESTION: How does being God and man make Jesus a perfect mediator?
- QUESTION: How does being human permit God to show us mercy?
- QUESTION: How was the temptation of Jesus a testimony of His humanity?
- QUESTION: What are other indications of the humanity of Jesus?

CONCLUSION

God the Son, Jesus the Christ, is the operative power of God. Jesus accomplished the Divine purpose and is now empowered with all authority. Through Him we have knowledge of and access to the Father’s love.

- QUESTION: Where was Jesus in the Old Testament?

Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah prophesied that within The Messiah (The Christ), the whole of the Godhead would be present. Isaiah identified the Messiah with four names: Prince of Peace (the Son of God), Eternal Father (God the Father), Wonderful Counselor (The Holy Spirit), and Mighty God (God as One).

