

Lesson 1

Why We Must Think Right about God

In the twentieth century the hidden person of the Trinity is God the Father. The result of this is that the Church has lost a high concept of the majesty of God. The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low as to be utterly unworthy of thinking worshipping men.

The inadequate views of God held almost universally among Christians are the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere in Christian circles. The decline of the knowledge of the Holy One has brought on our present troubles. A rediscovery of the majesty of God will go a long way toward curing the spiritual maladies in the modern day Church.

Men have lost a sense of awe for God which affects their ability to rightly worship Him. Modern Christianity is not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate the majesty of a sovereign God. The words, ***“Be still and know that I am God”*** mean next to nothing to the indifferent, self-confident worshipper in the twentieth century.

The foundation of all true knowledge of God must be a clear mental apprehension of His perfections. An unknown God can neither be trusted, served nor worshipped. Therefore, in this series of messages on the person of God we will seek to answer the question, “What is God like?” and this study will be designed so as to teach us to worship the true God of heaven and earth.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The question, “What is God?” takes for granted that there is a God. The belief in God’s essence is the basis for all religious worship.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Heb. 11:6)

The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God. It assumes that His existence is a reality. God is an assumed fact in the Christian Faith. While the Bible does say that God is revealed in nature and in man’s conscience, it also declares that the ultimate truth of the real God is specially revealed in the Holy Bible, the infallible written Word of God.

The Scriptures say, ***“The fool says in his heart, There is no God.”*** (Psa. 14:1) God is a reality and only a fool would deny it. Since God is for real, He can be known in a personal way and the Bible declares this over and over again. The true people of God can and do encounter the living God and rest their lives on Him.

“For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end..” (Psa. 48:14)

THE EXPLANATION OF GOD IS IMPOSSIBLE

As soon as we ask the question, “What is God like?” we have a perplexity. If we mean by the question, “What is God like in Himself?” there is no answer, for God in His perfect essence is incomprehensible. No creature on earth or in heaven will ever completely understand who God is because God is infinite and to Him there is no end. Charles Wesley in this poem tried to communicate the impossibility of explaining God:

*“Sovereign Father, heavenly King,
Thee we now presume to sing;
Glad Thine attributes confess
Glorious all, and numberless.”*

If, however, when we ask the question, “What is God like?” we mean, “What has God revealed about Himself in the Bible that the spiritually enlightened reason can comprehend?” then there is an answer which is rich and satisfying. God, in the Scriptures, has made a special revelation of Himself, and He has disclosed enough information about Himself to cause men to stand in awe of Him with adoration.

“Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.”
(Job 22:21)

“This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD , who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD .” (Jer. 9:23-24)

THE EXPOSING OF WRONG CONCEPTS OF GOD

The God of contemporary Christianity is really not the God of the Scriptures at all. In actuality, He is not much superior to the gods of ancient Greece and Rome. In fact, He may be inferior to them in that He is made so weak and helpless while at least they had some power. Man, because he is human, wants to make God like a man. One of the great tragedies of modern Christianity is that many sincere people still have a Sunday school mentality about God. Our problem is essentially the same problem Martin Luther had with Erasmus, a humanist in that day. In a letter to Erasmus, Luther said, “Your thoughts of God are too human.”

Some of the concepts of God people today hold are:

1. God is a "sugar daddy," that is, He is thought to be a benevolent, good being, who helps men out when they are in trouble, and He is always obligated to do so. Yet this does not match with Scripture:

"And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Ex. 33:19)

2. God is an old man, that is, He is viewed as being an ancient person with a long beard who sits around heaven playing a harp. God is presented as old fashioned and totally irrelevant for the Atomic Age. Yet, this does not match with Scripture either:

"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.?" (2 Chron. 20:6)

3. God is a buddy, that is, He is viewed as a person's bosom buddy who goes through life with him and helps him out when He can. Sometimes He is referred to as the "man upstairs." Yet, this again does not match with Scripture:

"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me." (Isa. 46:9)

4. God is a sentimentalist, that is, He is so loving, weak, meek and mild that He would never judge or harm anyone. Yet this concept also does not match with Scripture:

"See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever, when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me." (Deut. 32:39-41)

In actuality, wrong concepts of God are the result of a wrong understanding of Scripture. There is only one true God and He is the God of the Bible.

THE EXACT CONCEPTS OF GOD PRODUCE RIGHT ACTIONS

Low concepts of God are a result of wrong concepts of the God of the Bible. The first thing a person must remember is that God is not at all like a man. Man is a creature and God is

Creator. He does not act or think like man and He is not motivated like man. Christians must realize that God is God and there is none other like Him. God's ways and thoughts are not like those of humans:

"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." (Isa. 46:9-10)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD." (Isa. 55:8-9)

Men want to make God less than a human. Men left to themselves try to reduce God to manageable terms. They want to use Him as a tool, or at least know where He is when they need Him. Men want a God that they can in some measure control. Man's problem is that he thinks God is like a man, for God said, ***"you thought I was altogether like you."*** (Psa 50:21)

One's concept of God determines what he is. Without a doubt the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is God. What a man believes about God determines how he thinks and acts; therefore, it is important that each Christian have a biblical concept of God. A person's real concept of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions, and it may take much probing before this false concept can be rooted out. The average person's concept of God is so decadent in this present age in which we live that it is degrading to man himself.

Christians can be actually guilty of idolatry and God hates idolatry. An idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness. It is possible to hold a concept of God that is not biblical and thus be guilty of idolatry. An idol of the mind is as offensive to God as an idol of the hand. For most men God is a figment of their depraved imagination, for they have a tendency to make God as they think He should be rather than letting Him tell them what He is. A.W. Pink says,

"The 'god' of this twentieth century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The 'god' who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences is the figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside of the pale of Christendom form 'gods' out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a 'god' out of their own carnal mind. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. A 'god' whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits nought but contempt."
(Attributes of God)

It is absolutely essential to have a right concept of God. Proper thoughts of God are not only basic to systematic theology, but to practical Christian living as well. Wrong concepts of God always bring collapse in doctrine and practical Christianity. Man must begin his theology

with God or he becomes guilty of humanistic thinking. Until he sees God high and lifted up he will never have a right understanding of sin or salvation. A.W. Tozer says,

"I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God." (The Knowledge of the Holy)

THE INESCAPABLE CONFLICT

The Christian view of god as found in the Bible is important, for it brings the Christian into direct conflict with all other philosophies and religions, which are more or less humanistic. The Christian view says that God is supremely important and all man's ideas must be adjusted to God. The humanistic view says that man is supremely important and God's ideas must be adjusted to man. Many religious people in our day are practicing humanists, and they think they are talking about God when in reality they are only talking about man in a loud voice. B. B. Warfield says,

"The 'problem of God' is to be solved for the twentieth century as for all that have preceded it, not by deifying man and abasing God in his presence, but by recognizing God to be indeed God and man to be the creation of His hands, whose chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." (Critical Reviews)

The Apostle Paul in Romans 11:36 sets forth a genuine Christian Theism: **"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!"** In other words, God is the source of all things, God is the means of all things, and God is the end of all things. The exact opposite of biblical Theism is Humanism which says, "Of man, and through man, and unto man, are all things: to whom be glory forever."

The conflict between Humanism and Biblical Theism is raging in our time. The issues are clearly being drawn, not only in secular, unbelieving circles but in professing Christian circles which are "shot through" with humanistic thinking. The issue is this: Shall God be God or shall man be God? The proponents of biblical Theism and historic Christianity say, "God shall be God and creatures will always be subject to the Creator!"

CONCLUSION

God is for real and He can be known in a personal way, but He can only be known as the Holy Spirit does a work in your life to remove the spiritual blindness from your mind.

You say, "How can I know God personally?" The Bible says, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is the mediator between God and man, and one comes to know and experience God through a personal relationship with Christ. Jesus Himself said, **"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me."**