

Introducing God

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

What is most important is **not** what we might say at any given time nor what we might do but what concept we have of what God is like.

The most revealing thing about any church denomination is their idea of God.

What comes into our mind as the answer to the question “*What is God like?*” predicts our spiritual future.

John 1:1 [NIV] “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”

Thought and speech are God’s Gift to creatures made in His Image, mankind, and cannot exist apart from God, The Word.

What sets man far apart from created animals is speech and thought, these are God-like characteristics, imparted by the spirit in man.

Job 32:8 [NIV] “*But it is **the spirit in a man**, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.*”

1 Corinthians 2:11 [NIV] “*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*”

Our concept of God may be buried under the conventional religious notions, and our life-long duty is to extract ourselves from the burden of tradition.

John 4:23 [NIV] “*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.*”

To worship God as He desires us to worship Him, the spirit [the Holy Spirit] and truth [God’s Word – **John 17:17**] must come together equally as one.

Too often one church denomination will emphasise one or the other. The more orthodox denominations will emphasise the word and give less importance or even shun spiritual manifestations.

Another more charismatic denomination will emphasise spiritual manifestations and give little affirmation to the scriptures which the Holy Spirit desires to lead us to understand.

John 14:26 [NIV] “*But the Counsellor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things** and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*”

To worship and love God as we are commanded demands our understanding of the true concept of the spiritual God we worship.

John 4:22-24 [Living Bible] “*For it is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship, **is our worship spiritual and real**? Do we have the Holy Spirit’s help? For God is Spirit, and we must have His help to worship as we should. The Father wants this kind of worship from us.*”

Low views of God can destroy the gospel message for all who hold them.

The one sin that God places first and foremost is that of idolatry, which is basically libel on His character.

The idolatrous mind assumes God to be something other than what He is. In itself a monstrous sin substituting for the True God one made after our own likeness, conceived out of our own thoughts not The Word [mind] of God.

Psalm 50:21 [NIV] *“...you thought I was altogether like you...”*

God is confronting the wicked man with this statement.

“But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face.”

The essence of idolatry is entertaining thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.

Romans 1:21 [NIV] *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true.

When the lofty concept of God declines in The Church then her worship and moral standards decline along with it.

It is our obligation as part of that Church, the Body of Christ on earth, to purify and elevate the concept we have of God until it is worthy of Him.

What is God like?

In our attempt to answer this question we start with a dilemma !

We have to acknowledge that it **cannot** be answered fully for God is **not** exactly like anything or anybody.

Spirit-inspired men have constantly expressed the great strain answering this question puts on thought and language.

Isaiah 55:8 [NIV] *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.”*

When the Holy Spirit wants to acquaint us with something that lies beyond the field of our knowledge, He tells us that this thing is like something we already know, but He is always careful to phrase His description so as to save us from literalism.

When seeking to describe what God is like we are looking at something which has no language to describe, so the Holy Spirit uses the language of resemblance.

Ezekiel 1:13 [NIV] *“The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it.”*

We gather from this language a very real but entirely alien scene to anything we know on earth.

When the scripture states that man was made in the image of God, we dare not add to this statement and make it mean exact image.

To think of a creature and its Creator as alike is to rob God of most of His attributes and reduce Him to the status of a creature, one created.

As we try to imagine what God is like we must of necessity use that which is **not** God as the raw material for our limited minds to work on.

Therefore whatever we visualise God to be, He is not. For we have constructed our image out of what He has made and what He has made is not God.

Isaiah 64:8 [NIV] *“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.”*

Our visual image is no more God than the clay on the potter’s wheel is the potter !

Job 11:7-9 [NIV] *“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens – what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave – what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.”*

Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms.

If what we visualise God to be He is not, how then shall we think of Him ?

And how shall we be held accountable to know what cannot be known ?

Matthew 11:27 [NIV] *“All things have been committed to me by my Father. **No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**”*

Here is the simple answer, through Jesus Christ.

In Christ and by Christ, God effects complete self-disclosure, although He shows Himself not to reason but to faith and love.

Faith is the pathway of knowledge.

Love is the pathway of experience.

God came to us in the incarnation, He became flesh and dwelt among us.

God in the Atonement reconciled us to Him.

It is by faith and love we enter God’s presence and come to know Him.

What is God like?

If by that question we mean *“What is God like in Himself?”* there is no answer to be found in human thought or language.

If by that question we mean *“What has God disclosed about Himself that we can comprehend?”* then I believe there is a full and satisfying answer.

For while the essential nature of God is incomprehensible. He in condescending love for His created children has by revelation declared certain things to be true about Himself.

What do we mean by attribute?

Simply, whatever may be correctly ascribed to God, what God has revealed as being true of Himself, that we can conceive with our limited human intellect.

God being infinite must possess attributes about which we can know nothing.

To our questions about Him, God has provided answers – not all the answers, but enough to satisfy our intellect.

These answers God has provided in three ways:

- (a) Creation itself;
- (b) The Holy Scriptures;
- (c) The Person of His Son.

Although God in this threefold revelation has provided answers to our questions concerning Himself, these answers only come to those who are spiritually prepared to receive them, through prayer, meditation on His Word and earnest and well-disciplined labour.

Matthew 5:8 [NIV] *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”*

If we are to think accurately about the attributes of God, we must break ourselves of the habit of thinking of the Creator in the same way as we do the created.

A man is the sum of the traits that compose the whole.

Human character is not constant because the traits or qualities that constitute it are unstable, subject to influences from around or inside.

We can have a “*bad hair day*” to use modern terms, God cannot.

God exists in Himself and of Himself. His existence He owes to no-one.

His substance is indivisible, He has no parts but is single in His being.

An attribute, then, is not a part of God, it is how God is.

Love, for example, is not something God has and which may grow, diminish or cease to be; love is the way God is and when He loves, He is simply being Himself.

This is the same with all the other attributes He reveals to us.

1 Corinthians 2:11 [NIV] *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

Only to an equal could God communicate the mystery of His Godhead, and to think of God as having an equal is to fall into an intellectual absurdity.

I said that the path to the knowledge of God is faith.

The first attribute we are to discuss proves this totally.

God is a trinity

Our sincerest effort to grasp this incomprehensible mystery must remain futile.

Some people reject all they cannot explain, but every man lives by faith, the non-believer as well as the saint. The one faith in natural laws, the other by faith in God.

Every man throughout his entire life constantly accepts certain things without understanding.

We call it electricity. But what is it? Where does it come from? And where does it go? Science cannot answer.

We harness this mighty energy that rushes through our world, but still do not know what it is.

We cover our ignorance with high sounding words, for we are ashamed to wonder and afraid to whisper “*mystery*”.

What God declares, the believing heart confesses without the need of further proof.

Indeed, to seek proof is to admit doubt, and to obtain proof is to render faith superfluous.

Hebrews 11:6 [NIV] *“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.”*

That Christ died for me is incredulous, something impossible to believe without the gift of faith.

Ephesians 2:5-9 [NIV] *“...made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

That Christ rose from the dead is impossible in human terms and even more impossible is our own resurrection with Him.

The believing man does not ponder the Word and arrives at faith by a process of reasoning.

Nor does he seek confirmation of faith from philosophy or science.

Is this to dismiss scholarship as valueless in the sphere of revealed faith? By no means.

The scholar [theologian] has a vitally important task to guarantee the purity of the text.

To get as close as possible to the Word as originally given. But right there ends the theologian’s authority.

He must never sit in judgement upon what is written.

After the meaning is discovered, the meaning judges the theologian, never does he judge it.

Christ did not hesitate to use the plural form when speaking of Himself along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

John 14:23 [NIV] *“Jesus replied, If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

John 10:30 [NIV] *“I and the Father are one.”*

It is most important that we think of God as Trinity in Unity, not looking at it literally from the created human viewpoint where all things we see, touch, taste and hear have substance.

For God is not created and does not need or have substance that can be divided.

John 14:28 [NIV] *“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”*

How do we harmonise unity with this saying of Jesus?

Jesus is equal to His Father as touching His Godhead, but less than the Father as touching His Manhood.

To redeem mankind the Eternal Son did not have to leave the Godhead to walk among men as Jesus the man.

John 1:18 [NIV] *“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”*

Christ referred to Himself as the One and Only Son at the Father’s side at the same time as He spoke to men on earth.

John 3:13 [KJ] *“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”*

In heaven and earth at same time.

Two “persons” in two “places” at the same time.

This is only possible to God who is spirit and outside of time and space both created.

This is a mystery but not confusion unless we look at it from a created, human perspective.

When God took upon Himself the nature of man He did NOT degrade Himself.

God can never become less than Himself.

Philippians 2:5-8 [NIV] *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!**”*

Note Christ Jesus was still God.

This passage of scripture refers to an attitude of mind Jesus Christ had, not His status.

The dialogue involving the Father and the Son recorded in the scriptures must always be understood as being between the Eternal God and the *Man* Jesus Christ.

In the scriptures the three persons [a human term to attempt to explain God] are always shown to act as one in all the mighty works of God for mankind.

Creation:-

Father:- **Genesis 1:1** [NIV] *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Son:- **Colossians 1:16** [NIV] *“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”*

Holy Spirit:- **Psalms 104:30** [NIV] *“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”*

Incarnation:-

Luke 1:35 [NIV] *“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

All three persons of Godhead involved but only Son became flesh.

Baptism:-

Matthew 3:16-17 [NIV] *“As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*

Atonement:-

Hebrews 9:14 [NIV] *“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*

Resurrection:-

Father:- **Acts 2:32** [NIV] *“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”*

Son:- **John 10:17** [NIV] *“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -- only to take it up again.”*

Holy Spirit:- **Romans 1:4** [NIV] *“...and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Salvation:-

1 Peter 1:2 [NIV] *“...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”*

Indwelling:-

John 14:15-23 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever -- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus replied, If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

The doctrine of the Trinity is true.

The fact it cannot satisfactorily be explained in human terms shows that it could not have been imagined by humans.

God reveals this truth to be accepted in faith, as without such faith we cannot worship God in spirit and by doing so please Him.