

Attributes of God 2 – His Relationship with Man

Reading: Genesis 1:26 “.... *Let Us make man in Our image* ¹.....”

Introduction:

This is the second lesson in the series, “Attributes of God”. In the first lesson, we saw that God is Spirit. Although we can see the result of His handiwork in both the physical creation around us, and the effect that He has on the lives of those who turn to Him, He, Himself is invisible. He does not have a physical form that we can see and touch. Being a Spirit, He lives in the spiritual realm, called heaven, which pre-existed our physical universe, and which will remain for eternity long after this physical universe is taken away.

We also saw that His kingdom, otherwise known as the church, is a spiritual kingdom. Its focus is on the heart and the mind, rather than merely outward appearances, and that we as members of that kingdom need to change on the “inside”, so that we become more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, our attitudes and our actions.

In this lesson, we will be looking at God’s relationship with mankind, and what our attitude should be towards Him in response.

LESSON

1) Man was a special part of God’s creation

In **Genesis 1**, we read of the process that God used to create this universe and all that is in it. On the first day, while the earth was still without form, God created the light to separate the day from the night (vs.**2-5**). On the second day, He separated the waters to create a space between the two, a space called the heavens (or sky), so that there were waters above and waters below (vs.**6-8**). Then, on the third day, He gathered together the waters which were below the sky into one place so that dry land appeared. He then covered the land with grass, plants and trees (vs.**9-13**).

On the fourth day, God created the sun and moon, and all the stars that fill the universe (vs.**14-19**), and on the next day, He filled the sky with birds and the ocean with all kinds of fish and sea creatures (vs.**20-23**). And then we come to the sixth day. God started by creating all the animals and the things that creep along the ground, and saw that it was good. (vs.**24-25**).

But God wasn’t quite finished yet. He was about to create something special; something that was going to be very different from all of the other living creatures that He had created so far. He said;

“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (vs.**26**)

Notice that there are two key differences here between man and the rest of creation. Firstly, man was to be created in God’s image. No other creature had this attribute. And secondly, man would have dominion (or rule) over the earth.

¹ All biblical quotes are from the New King James Version Bible.

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When we say that man was created in the image of God, it does not mean that we physically look like God, for we saw in the previous lesson that God is Spirit (**John 4:24**). Being a Spirit, He does not have flesh and bones (**Luke 24:39b**). Rather, it means that we have some qualities or attributes that are similar to what God has. For example;

a) We are spiritual

God is Spirit (**John 4:24**). We too have a spirit (**1 Corinthians 2:11a**), given to us by God (**Zechariah 12:1**). While we live here on earth, we have a physical body. But we also have an inward part, our spiritual nature. **2 Corinthians 4:16** makes a clear distinction between the physical and the spiritual. The physical body slowly perishes as we grow older. But our inward person, the spiritual, is renewed as we strive to live faithfully to God.

b) We have the ability to reason and come to logical decisions

God is able to review the facts that exist and make a logical decision based on those facts. For example, in **Genesis 9:1**, God had given Noah the command to “... *be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.*” In other words, He wanted the descendants of Noah to multiply and spread out over the earth. But we see in **Genesis 11:4** that Noah’s descendants did not want to do that and they tried to take steps to prevent it. God investigated what they were up to (vs.5), came to a logical conclusion based on the evidence (vs.6) and took the appropriate action (vs.7-9).

We too have the ability to reason. In **Isaiah 1:18**, we read;

“*“Come now, and let us reason together.” says the Lord.*”

God expects us to use our power of reasoning to come to logical conclusions about serving Him. In the book of **Acts**, we read of Paul *reasoning* from the scriptures with the Jews and Greeks in order to convince them to become Christians (**Acts 17:2-3; 18:4**).

c) We are “creative”

God is creative (**Genesis 1:1**). We have just seen in the first part of this lesson that God created the heavens and the universe. Mankind, too, is creative in the sense that he can make things that never existed before (e.g. **Genesis 4:21-22**). While some of the animal kingdom can do wonderful things, such as beavers building dams, or birds building nests, they are still doing (by instinct) what they have always done.

But mankind can also adapt what has been previously made and further develop the idea. For example, someone invented the steam engine, and then someone else built on that technology and used it to make the locomotive to drive trains. Mankind’s creative ability can be seen in the arts and advances in all kinds of technologies throughout the centuries.

d) We have emotions and the ability to forgive

God is not a stoic, cold, emotionless being. He can be angry (**1 Kings 11:9**), He can be pleased (**Colossians 1:10**). He can show mercy (**Ephesians 2:4**), and He can show His wrath (**Exodus 32:10**). He can condemn (**James 5:9**), and He can forgive (**1 John 1:9**).

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We also have the ability to express all of these emotions and qualities, although we are cautioned about our wrath (**James 1:19-20**) and being judgemental (**James 4:11**).

Mankind was indeed created in the image of God. There is nothing found in the scriptures, or in life itself, that suggests that anything in the animal kingdom was created this way. Truly, man holds a special place in the work of God.

2) God's special care for Man

Having created us, God hasn't then simply "left us to it". He cares for us (**1 Peter 5:7**) and provides the things we need, both physically and spiritually.

a) His physical care

God provides the physical things required for all of His creation (**Psalm 136:25**). He sends the sunshine and the rain – not just for the righteous, but for everybody (**Matthew 5:45**). He sends us the fruitful seasons (**Acts 14:17**). From the very beginning of creation, He has provided food for man (**Genesis 1:29-30; 9:3**). Food and clothing are the basic essentials of life for mankind (**1 Timothy 6:8**), and God provides us with both of these things (**Matthew 6:31-33**).

But while this physical care is important, our spiritual well-being is what is most important, because it is our souls, not our temporary physical bodies, which are accountable to God (**Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 9:27**).

b) His spiritual care

God has always been concerned for the spiritual welfare of mankind, and has shown this care in various ways. Let me briefly list just five of them.

(i) Spiritual guidance

From the very beginning, He gave commands to protect mankind spiritually (**Genesis 2:16-17**). He has always, in one form or another, provided spiritual guidance to keep mankind in a right relationship with Him (**Hebrews 1:1-2**). His Word not only teaches us how to live, but also teaches us about Himself. Jesus came to show us what God is like – to manifest Him to us – so that we can get to know Him and be like Him (**Matthew 5:48; John 1:18; 14:7-10; 17:3**).

(ii) Forgiveness of sins

The greatest sign of His spiritual care was in the sacrifice of His only Son to enable us to have forgiveness of sins (**Romans 5:8**). We all sin (**Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10**), and it is sin that causes us to be lost (**Romans 6:23a**). It is only the blood of Jesus, along with God's grace, that makes us spiritually clean and pure (**Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:1-4**). We don't deserve it, but God shows His care for us by forgiving us of our sins.

(iii) Protection with temptations

God protects us from temptations that are beyond our ability to handle. In **1 Corinthians 10:13**, we read;

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,”

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God does not “wrap us up in cotton wool”, because the trials in this life are a means to spiritual growth (**Hebrews 12:4-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7**). But He does ensure that we are not exposed to temptations that are beyond our ability to resist.

(iv) **The avenue of prayer**

God provides us with the avenue of prayer. He encourages us to bring our cares and concerns to Him (**Philippians 4:6; Matthew 6:5-13; 7:7-11**), and He hears the prayers of the humble and the righteous (**Luke 18:10-14; 1 Peter 3:12**).

But of course prayers are not restricted to just requests for help. They are also a means for us to express our thanks and praise to God for all that He does for us (**Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**).

(v) **His constant presence**

Finally, we have this promise from God that He will never leave us nor forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5**). We can and may become faithless, but God will always remain faithful (**2 Timothy 2:13**).

There are other passages that we could consider, such as **Romans 8:28-39**, which talks about all things working for good to those who love Him. But what we have looked at so far clearly demonstrates that God has our welfare at heart, particularly our spiritual welfare, for He doesn't want anyone to be lost eternally (**2 Peter 3:9**).

Given that mankind has a special place in God's creation, and that He has gone to great lengths to look after us, what should our attitude towards Him be in return?

3) Our response to God

Despite the evidence for the existence of God, many in this world choose to reject Him (**Romans 1:20-23**). But what about us? Will we be like most of the world and serve mainly ourselves and not the living God? Will we be ungrateful for all that God has done and continues to do for us?

Consider these words and actions of David from **Psalms 63:1-8** and make them your own;

¹ *O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.*

² *So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.*

³ *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.*

⁴ *Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.*

⁵ *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.*

⁶ *When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.*

⁷ *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.*

⁸ *My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.*