

The Sure Word Bible Studies

Lesson 3

What is God Really Like?

We have learned that the Bible is God's Word and therein is the truth we can depend upon. We have also learned that Satan has deceived us about God. The good news is that God has answered the lies of Satan by sending His Son to reveal His true character and to show us that God really wants us to be His friends. In this lesson we will look to the Bible to get a better understanding of what God is really like.

Throughout Genesis chapter one, "God" is translated from the Old Testament Hebrew word "elohim," which means "gods," plural.

The concept of God being more than one person is seen throughout the Bible beginning with the creation story.

Genesis 1:26 *"Then God (The Hebrew is Elohim, "gods," plural) said, "let us (plural) make man in our (plural) image according to our likeness"*

In the New Testament we find evidence of three persons who make up the Trinity, or Godhead.

John 14:26 *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit (one person), whom the Father (two persons) will send in My name (Christ, three persons), He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."*

The three persons of the Godhead have taken specific "roles" in order that we human beings, though unable to see God, can understand and relate to Him and His activities.

We speak of the three persons of the Godhead as the "first" "second" and "third" person as a means of distinguishing them

from one another and in no way to assign them positions of rank as they are all equal.

The Father is the first person – He has taken the role of the Almighty God. He is understood as being seated on the heavenly throne. He is in total control of the entire universe. Nothing happens without His knowledge and permission and He remains on the throne continually.

I Corinthians 8:6 *"Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live."*

Ephesians 4:6 *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

The Son is the second person – His role is to be understood as the embodiment or the express image of the Father God.

Hebrews 1:1 - 5 *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"?"*

The Son is the One who lives among God's creatures that they can better understand what God is really like. The Son once lived and walked among the angels and later He came to earth and lived and walked among men. He is "Emmanuel," which means, "God with us."

The Father is continually on the throne. The Son is the *"express image"* an embodiment of the Father God. Then the Bible says God is also omni-present, that is, everywhere at once. We are able to comprehend this truth through the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

Even though God has all power, He prefers to use the power of the truth spoken to the human heart softly in love. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord"* (Zechariah 4:6). This is the role of the Holy Spirit.

While the Father continually reigns on the throne of the universe, the Son is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary (later lesson) and the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts and minds of men and women throughout the world.

Even though the three members of the Godhead have taken these different roles, they are yet the same. Note the words of Jesus in the following text -

John 14:8 - 9 "Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Jesus said if you have seen me you have seen the Father. The same as saying, if you've seen Jesus you've seen God, they are the same. Jesus then added -

John 14:15,16 *"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever"*

Jesus said *"another Helper"* – the Greek word is *"allos"* which means *"another of the same kind."* In other words Jesus said, *"I am just like the Father, and the Spirit is just like Me – We are all the same!"* All three persons of the Godhead are fully, equally, and eternally God!

If they are all the same, that means that they all love us in the same way and are all working together for our salvation. This is the Father's plan, carried out by the Son, impressed on our hearts by the Spirit, and witnessed by the angels.

Wherever you see the title "Father" or "Son" or "Holy Spirit," you can replace it with the word or title of "God." But no one word or name can describe the Infinite and Almighty God - therefore He is known by many names -

Isaiah 9:6 "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Note in this verse all the names listed for God apply to the Son, just as to the other members of the Trinity. In the following texts, we see the Son in His role as Creator.

John 1:1 *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."*

Verse 14 *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Ephesians 3:9 *"and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ."*

Colossians 1:16 - 18 *"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and*

in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church,"

The Son fulfills a significant role in relation to this world; Not only is He the Creator as confirmed in the previous passages, He is also the Lord God of the Old Testament as well as the Lord Jesus in the New. Read carefully the following passage:

Nehemiah 9:6 - 15 *"You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You. You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham; You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him To give the land of the Canaanites, The Hittites, the Amorites, The Perizzites, the Jebusites, And the Girgashites-- To give it to his descendants. You have performed Your words, For You are righteous. You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, And heard their cry by the Red Sea. You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, Against all his servants, And against all the people of his land. For You knew that they acted proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day. And You divided the sea before them, So that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; And their persecutors You threw into the deep, As a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, And by night with a pillar of fire, To give them light on the road Which they should travel. "You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant. You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, And told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them."*

According to this passage the Son is the member of the Godhead through whom God created the earth. He is the One who led the

Israelites through the wilderness and gave the law on Mt Sinai. He is the Lord God in the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus Christ in the New. That's what Peter had in mind when he said -

Acts 4:10 - 12 *"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

And Paul in **I Timothy 2:5** *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"*

There is *"One mediator (intermediary or connector) between God and man."* It's not the Father – He remains on the throne. It's not the Holy Spirit – He's the Helper living in our heart. The mediator is the Son. He is the link between heaven and earth; this has always been His role. We can't go up to heaven to God – God must come down to us, and the Son did that as Creator and Savior. Christ is Savior in the Old and New Testaments!

Some picture Jesus pleading with the Father to forgive us. But if the Son has to plead with the Father on our behalf before He will forgive – then they are divided, they are not one! Two statements from Jesus should clear this up –

John 10:30 *"I and My Father are one."*

John 16:26,27 *"In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you."*

Jesus came to show us that God the Father loves us just as much, is just as kind and tender, just as loving and compassionate, merciful and forgiving as Jesus.

Those religions that don't accept Jesus as God, as One with the Father, have a difficult time understanding God's true character. They usually focus on God's wrath and judgment they see in the Old Testament. God the Father is thus understood as arbitrary, rigid and severe. As a result they also become rigid and severe! This is the picture of God that motivates the terrorists!

But since we now understand the Old Testament God is the Son, we might ask, "How could Christ Jesus do some of those harsh things we read about in the Old Testament?" Hebrews 13:8 says "*Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.*" That's true, God never changes – but people do. Note the following text.

Hebrews 8:7,8 *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because **finding fault with them**, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel"*

"Finding fault with them" – Again, God doesn't change, but people do! In the days of Moses, God could not have sent Jesus to preach the Sermon on the Mount to those hard hearted, rebellious people he led out of Egypt. They weren't ready to hear things like "*love your enemies and do good to them.*" They would not have listened to a God like that. God had to do some drastic things to reach them. But thankfully God understands the nature of men and meets them where they are and leads them no faster than they are able to follow.

That may be the reason the Bible rarely mentions Satan in the Old Testament. There the name "*Satan*" is found in only 15 verses of 4 books. The New Testament is some better, but there "*Satan*" is only mentioned in only 34 verses of 12 books. In fact, in the 31,173 verses in the entire Bible - the word "*Satan*" is found in only 49. All the biblical references to Satan under all his various names only add up little over a hundred.

But on the other hand, the name "*God*" is found in 3,876 verses, and "*Lord*" in 6,668 verses of the Bible. It is clear the Lord is

much more interested in revealing Himself than His adversary, Satan.

One Bible scholar wrote this thoughtful comment –

“When we talk of Satan’s strength, he fastens his power more firmly upon us. When we talk of the power of God, Satan is driven back. As we draw near to God, he draws near to us.”

(E.G. White, Youth’s Instructor)

Rather than studying Satan, God wants us to think and talk about Him and thus become more like him and less like the devil.

II Corinthians 3:18 *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

It is a basic law of life, that by beholding we are changed into the same image of that which we admire and revere. If we love and focus on the world, we will become more worldly, but if we love and focus on Jesus, we will become more like Jesus!

But in the book of Genesis we find a drastic loss of the knowledge of God. The descendants of Jacob (Israel) migrated to Egypt where they became enslaved for hundreds of years. When the time came for Moses to deliver the Israelites, their spiritual condition was very poor. Many of them had forgotten the God who had revealed Himself to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ancient Israel came out of bondage contaminated with the pagan gods of Egypt and they gave Moses a difficult time. God called them *“stiff-necked.”* The Hebrew word is *“qasheh,”* meaning: hard, cruel, severe, obstinate or hard headed.

The pagan gods seemed very real to them and they were always on the verge of deserting the *“new”* God of Moses for the old familiar gods of Egypt. To tell them about Satan and his power would only put them in danger of worshipping Satan in addition to the pagan gods. So the first step that God asked His people to take

as they traveled in the wilderness was simply - *“Have no Gods before me - worship the one God who brought you out of Egypt”* (Ex. 20:2,3). The knowledge about the existence of Satan would have to come later when their faith in the true God was more stable.

And because the ancients were unaware of the existence of Satan, God himself took the blame for both good and evil. Note what the Lord said -

Isaiah 45:6,7 *“That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and **create** darkness: I make peace, and **create evil**: I the LORD do all these things.”* (KJV)

Because we have all the scriptures from which to learn about God, we know that God does not create evil. But God was meeting the Israelites where they were in hopes that once they came to see that He was the true God and there really is no other, then, they would be willing to listen and follow Him only. We can see this in the story of Job.

Job 2:1 - 10 *“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown*

of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

Who brought all the evil calamities upon Job? Who smote him with boils? Satan. But who got the blame? God. Why? Because they were unaware of Satan's existence and God did not see it wise to tell them about Satan knowing some of them would have worshipped Satan as another pagan god.

Therefore in the minds of people in Bible times, if a woman was barren, it was because God had closed her womb. If a woman had a baby, God had opened her womb. If a nation came up against another nation – God sent them. If a man dies – God killed him. A good example of this is in the story of the death of King Saul.

I Chronicles 10:3 - 5 *"The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died."*

This clearly indicates that Saul killed himself by falling on his sword. But note what is said a few verses later -

Verse 13 - 14 *"So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse."*

This is another apparent contradiction which we must think through to a logical conclusion. Did God kill King Saul, or did the King commit suicide? Saul clearly killed himself by falling on his sword, but as we noted, in the minds of many of the writers of scripture, what God allowed God is responsible for, good or bad, and they wrote it that way as we see in this story.

The Old Testament nation of Israel, though many were “*stiff-necked*” they were the only people in the entire world who acknowledged God at all – they were all He had! And because many of them were rebellious and hard headed, God had to do some harsh things or else lose the entire human race and God loved us too much for that.

It is a mistake to think that the way God reacted in the “emergency situations” of those days is the way He is all the time; to think that that it is His nature to be wrathful and judgmental. But just as a loving parent has to do some difficult things at times in order to discipline a child, though they hate doing it, their goal is always for the good of the child. God hated doing those harsh things as well, but they had to be done for the overall good. But the Bible records that when the time was right God sent His Son to clear all these things up.

Galatians 4:4 *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,"*

John 3:16,17 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

Jesus shows us exactly what God is like in a way that everyone, both young and old can understand. That is what we all need to see and we see it perfectly in Jesus. And this is why it is so important to study the life and teachings of Jesus. So that one day it will be said of us, *"as He is so are we in this world."* (I John 4:17)

