

Lesson 1: Humankind and Our Unique Relationship To the Creator

- I. To fully understand our relationship to God, we have to go back to "The Beginning".
 - A. The very first verse in the very first book of the Bible, Gen 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"
 1. That single verse establishes three important Biblical principles:
 - a. Our physical universe has not always existed
 - b. The heavens and earth and everything in them came into being from an act of creation
 - c. The cause behind this creative act (effect) is an entity that is called God
 2. These principles are supported by New Testament Scripture as well. John 1:1-3 says, "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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."
 3. From the context of Gen 1 and John 1, it is abundantly clear that these verses are describing the absolute beginning of all physical things
 - a. This includes all space, matter and all associated forms of energy
 - b. Moreover, the terminology "In the beginning" establishes time itself as a created entity
 - c. This verse marks the start of a timeline that heretofore simply did not exist
 - 1) If you are finding this to be a difficult concept to grasp, don't feel too badly
 - 2) You are in very good company - for all of us struggle to understand the workings of God
 - 3) The fact is time only has meaning in the physical realm
 - 4) I would point out we define moving objects by how fast they travel
 - a) We say the speed of an object = (Distance traveled) over some measure of Time
 - b) For example, if I am driving my car at 50 mph, then it means I will travel 50 miles in one-hour time interval
 - c) Another way to say this is (Travel Time) = (Distance traveled) / Speed
 - 5) By this logic, we can see that time is defined by some mass moving in space - and this requires all three ingredients of matter, space and energy
 - d. So in discussing the creative acts whereby all things came into being, Gen 1 and John 1 are discussing the beginning defined by the creation of time itself
 4. This is a unique event - marking the origin of all that we now see and know.
 - B. Note that this conclusion also is confirmed by another Scripture taken from Heb 11:3, which reads, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."
 1. That verse tells us - the physical universe and everything in it were not just made out of visible things that were already present
 - a. In other words, our universe has not always existed
 - b. Rather, all things came into existence out of nothingness (ex nihilo creation)
 - c. And this all happened in response to the will and Word of God (fiat creation)

2. These facts reveal some important information about the Cause - God Himself
 - a. God is not and cannot be some incredible physical entity.
 - b. We know this because Heb 11:3 says the "what is seen was not made out of things which are visible"
 - c. Physical things did not come from some other physical thing - so what is God?
3. In John 4:24, Jesus told us what God actually is.
 - a. Jesus said that God is a Spirit.
 - b. Indeed, a more careful examination of Gen 1:2 confirms that assertion as the text says, "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters".
- C. Since everything came from God and God is Spirit, then this means all physical things came from another realm from something Spiritual
 1. So this spiritual realm of God must exist independently from and outside the bounds of our physical universe
 2. Hence, the Spirit of God encompasses and transcends the physical realm
 - a. God functions at a different level from a different domain
 - b. God supersedes all that we do and can know in every way
 3. This knowledge from the events of creation is the source of what little we are able to discern about the divine attributes of God; It tells us several things about God:
 - a. God is eternal - because He exists independently from time.
 - 1) Note in context, eternal does not mean a very long (infinite) time - this is a common misconception !
 - 2) Rather, eternity embraces the absence of time
 - 3) Since we have shown that time is a physical entity that had a beginning and since God existed "before" (outside of) time itself, then God must exist beyond time in this spiritual realm associated with eternity.
 - 4) The Bible acknowledges this concept in Ps 90:2, "Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."
 - 5) Expressed another way, one might say God is the one who exists independently from physical things and thereby independently from time itself
 - b. God is omnipresent - present everywhere
 - 1) There is no physical location in this universe beyond the reach of God
 - 2) This logically must be true for:
 - a) All physical things came out of the spiritual realm by the will of God
 - b) Therefore, God, as a spirit, functions in this spiritual realm which encompasses and transcends all that is physical
 - c) The Bible readily acknowledges this fact in Ps 139:7-10, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me."
 - c. God is omnipotent - that is, God is all-powerful.

- 1) Nine times in Gen 1, we read "Then God said" . . . and it was done.
 - 2) According to the will and power of God, the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that is in them came into being (Ex 20:11)
 - 3) This is why Jeremiah, the Prophet, said "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You" (Jer 32:17)
- d. God is omniscient - all knowing
- 1) All things being the product of His creative acts means that God, the Creator, must have planned and designed our entire universe and contents
 - a) This includes managing/executing the complexity of every detail and establishing and maintaining all natural laws that govern its behavior
 - b) Heb 1:3 says, "And He is the radiance of His Glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power . . . "
 - i) This passage tells us that the creation was executed through the Son of God
 - ii) And that He upholds and maintains all things - including, for example, all natural laws governing this universe
 - c) Col 1:17 similarly says, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together"
 - 2) This requires knowledge and power transcending the bounds of everything that has ever physically existed.
 - 3) It is little wonder that the Psalmist writes, "Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite". (Ps 147:5)
- D. By now it should be clear that we have no hope of ever fully understanding or comprehending the full essence of God - we have physical limitations
1. The best that we can do is acknowledge and appreciate all that He has done
 2. In fact, the way we define or identify God is through His role as the Creator.
- E. In preaching the Gospel Message to the Gentiles, this is exactly how the Apostle Paul introduced the Gentiles to the concept of God
1. Paul did so by identifying and defining God through His role as the one who created the Heavens and the earth
 2. When the people of Lystra attempted to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods, Paul confronted them saying: "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them" (Acts 14:15)
 3. Similarly, in preaching to those on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul began by saying: "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24-25)

- II. Given this background, we now can begin to appreciate the unique aspects of our human existence and our relationship to God, the Creator
- A. Being a part of His creation, we were endowed with a physical form
1. Gen 2:7 says, ". . . the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground . . ."
 2. These raw materials provided the ingredients for our fleshly bodies.
 3. But we know it is not the substance of our bodies or what they were made from that uniquely distinguishes us we know this because . . .
 - a. From that same ground sprang forth other things.
 - b. Gen 2:9 indicates that "out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food;"
 - c. In Gen 1:24, "Then God said 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind . . . ' " including the cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth
- B. It also is true that humankind was made to be a living, animated entity.
1. A continuation of Gen 2:7 reveals that God ". . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being"
 2. As fantastic as that is, being so different from the inanimate parts of our universe, this still is not our most distinguishing feature
 3. For other animated, animal life forms were created to fly above the earth, to swarm in the waters, and to creep and move across the planet (Gen 1:20-25)
- C. Actually, it is in Gen 1:27, that our destiny and heritage was sealed
1. In this passage, we learn that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."
 2. But what does it mean to be made in God's own image or own likeness as Gen 1:26 says?
- D. Given that we just defined God as the eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient being that willed the entire physical universe into existence, how is it possible for us to have been made like Him.
1. The answer to this question lies in understanding the full nature of Jesus Christ - born of a woman some 2000 years ago.
 2. In Phil 2:5-7, Paul tells the Christians in Philippi to "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."
 - a. Although the point of the text is to use the example of Jesus Christ to teach us a lesson in humility, Paul does so by revealing what took place in the birth of Jesus.
 - b. The Son of God spoken of as the Word in John chapter 1, a Spirit, equal to and known as God (just as are the Father and the Holy Spirit) - this Spirit of what is called the Son of God:
 - 1) Emptied Himself - relinquishing His spiritual form
 - 2) Took the form of a bond-servant
 - 3) And in so doing was made in the "likeness of men"

- c. In other words, a divine Spirit inhabited the physical body we know as Jesus
- d. In this process, a Spirit was said *to be made like men*
- E. With this background and description of terms, we now can understand what it means when Gen 1:26-27 say that Man was made in the image and likeness of God.
 - 1. This statement is the converse of what we read in Phil 2:7
 - 2. By that I mean, it is the same process in reverse.
 - a. Whereas in Jesus, a Spirit was given physical form
 - b. In Adam and Eve, a physical form was given a Spirit.
 - 3. I Cor 2:11 is another excellent Scripture acknowledging this dual nature of humankind - possessing both a physical body and a Spirit
 - I Cor 2:11 says "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God?"
 - 4. Furthermore, please note that among all life forms only man and woman were said to be made in the image of God
 - a. This is true of no animal or no other living thing
 - b. And this fact makes humankind unique among all God's creation
 - c. We alone possess a piece of God inside us - it is our Spirit
 - d. By possessing this dual nature, being both physical and spiritual beings, there is another profound implication
 - 1) While it is true that our physical life will one day end as we die and return to the dust of the ground according to Gen 3:19
 - 2) Our Spirit is eternal and will return to God (Ecc 12:7)
 - e. Having that common spiritual tie with our Creator is what provides the basis for an eternal relationship
 - f. And ultimately, this explains the great lengths to which God goes to preserve that relationship and fellowship with humankind
- F. The consequences of possessing a spirit seem profound - even in the physical realm.
 - 1. Genesis chapter 1 makes it clear that humankind was placed in an elevated position in the hierarchy of God's creation
 - 2. The earth and all things around it and in it were prepared as the environment and dwelling place for humankind - being the pinnacle of God's creation
 - 3. Moreover, by God's command and authority recorded in Gen 1:26, 28, humankind was commanded and empowered:
 - a. To populate the earth,
 - b. To subdue it and
 - c. To rule over all other living creatures.
 - 4. This required man to possess other distinguishing God-like characteristics
 - a. Intelligence: ability to think, plan, reason, make judgments
 - b. Appreciation for abstract concepts of beauty, love, responsibility
 - c. Emotions: caring, joy, happiness, remorse
- G. When it is all said and done, the inescapable conclusion is - you are unique among all the creation

1. For God made you that way through an inseparable spiritual bond to Him
2. You should always draw comfort from that fact
 - a. When the days are tough
 - b. When things are not going well
 - c. When you are feeling really beat up and trodden under foot by this world
 - d. No matter what anyone else may tell you or say about you
 - e. No matter how you may feel about yourself and your life
3. Always remember that you share a special relationship with the eternal Creator of this universe
 - a. You are never forgotten
 - b. God knows you so well as to have numbered the very hairs on your head (Matt 10:30)
- H. So in conclusion, if you take away only one thing from this lesson, let it be the fact that God wants you to know "You Are Special"
 1. No one can ever take that away from you.
 2. Moreover, that fact made you so important that the Son of God was willing to die for you.
 - a. Why so?
 - b. How can it be?
 3. We will discuss those things in the lessons to come
- I. But first, how can we learn more about these spiritual things?
 1. How can we discover the truth and know that we have it?
 2. That will be the subject of our next lesson.
 3. Please join me as we explore the source of all Truth.