

Chapter 3

CHARACTER OF GOD 1 *INTRODUCTION TO JESUS*

- I. God desires to reveal Himself to man. He makes Himself known by revelation. The Bible shows God revealing Himself to man as a redemptive God who purposes to redeem man and to restore the broken relationship between God and man.
 - A. God has progressively revealed Himself in various ways through the ages. The Bible is full of accounts of the different ways God has revealed Himself and His qualities and characteristics.
 - 1. God has revealed Himself in His creation as a Creator, a God of order, a God of variety, and a God of abundance. (Romans 1:20)
 - 2. God has revealed Himself by His acts of Power. Both the Old and New Testaments contain many accounts of God's power and might. He demonstrates His power over nature and over nations.
 - 3. God has revealed Himself through His Word, the Bible. The Bible reveals many aspects of God's nature and character through the names He has revealed for Himself and the way He has dealt with man to redeem and restore.
 - 4. God has revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. God's greatest revelation of Himself came when He sent His Son Jesus to live among us as a man who participated in the human condition and fully understands our weakness. (Galatians 4:4)
 - B. The Lord Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's Progressive Revelation. Paul explained to the Colossian church that God's fullness was manifested in Jesus Christ. Everything of God and His nature that could be shown and demonstrated was displayed in the life and character and ministry of Jesus. (Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:15-19; Colossians 2:2-3, 9)
- II. Who is Jesus Christ? There are many questions about the identity and nature of Jesus Christ that need to be answered if we are to be able to know Him and know how He relates to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.
 - A. Jesus is a Greek name which means the same as the Hebrew name Joshua: "God Saves," or "God is Salvation." The name Jesus was a very common name among the Jews at the time Jesus was born, just as the name John or Michael are common names in the English-speaking world today. That is why Jesus is often referred to as Jesus of Nazareth or as Jesus (the) Christ.
 - B. The Bible refers to Jesus by many names and titles or descriptions. Each of the names or descriptions the Bible gives to Jesus helps us to understand something about Him and His uniqueness:

1. **Jesus is the Son of God.** Jesus is different from any other person ever born on earth. His Father is divine (He was conceived by the Holy Spirit), His mother human (Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her womb). (See account in Luke 1:26-38) (Matthew 3:17; John 1:1-14; Colossians 2:9)
2. **Jesus is the Son of Man.** Jesus lived His life on earth subject to the experiences and limitations of humanity. He experienced pain, sorrow, hunger, thirst, weariness, temptation. He is able to truly understand us. (Matthew 4:1; Hebrews 4:15)
3. **Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.** Messiah means Anointed or Anointed One. The Hebrew word Messiah means the same as the Greek word Christ. For centuries the Jewish people had been looking for the coming of a Messiah or deliverer who would save them from oppression. Many Old Testament prophecies directly or implicitly point to the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. Details of His birth, His life, and His death are all predicted in prophecy. Matthew's Gospel especially emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus' life. The Jews were not actually sure if they were looking for one Messiah or two, because the prophecies spoke of a Suffering Messiah and a Triumphant King. Only Jesus could have fulfilled it all in one person. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Some prophecies about Messiah's coming:

- ❖ Virgin birth in Bethlehem (Isaiah and Micah)
- ❖ Escape to and return from Egypt (Hosea)
- ❖ Raised in Nazareth, Galilee (Isaiah)
- ❖ Nature and type of ministry (Isaiah)
- ❖ Entering Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah)
- ❖ Betrayal price 30 pieces of silver used to purchase potter's field (Zechariah)
- ❖ Wounds in hands, feet, side. Guards gambling over His clothing (Psalms)

4. **Jesus is the Savior of the world.** Paul's writing in the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus didn't only come to be the Messiah or deliverer of the Jews, but that He is the Savior of all who believe in Him whether they are Jews or Gentiles. (John 3:16-18; Romans 1:1-5,16)
 5. **Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.** Because Jesus has fulfilled all of God's promises of the Messiah of the Jews and the Savior and Lord of the Gentiles, God has exalted Him above all. (Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11)
- C. Where was Jesus or who was Jesus before He was born in Bethlehem? (Daniel 3:25; John 8:58; John 17:5)
1. The "Being" who became Jesus Christ existed before the creation of the world. He is literally God in flesh, or God become man. The word for this is Incarnation.
 2. John refers to Him as "The Word" (Logos) and states that He was with God in the beginning and He was God, creating the universe.
 3. These are truths that Paul refers to as "mysteries," which simply means truths that are known by revelation rather than reason. (Ephesians 1:9-10; 1 Timothy 3:16)

- III. As we come to know Jesus Christ by learning what the Bible says about Him, our goal is to not only know about Him but to come to know Him personally.
- A. It is only through the revelation of Jesus Christ and through knowing Him personally by faith that we can know God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
1. The Bible teaches us that God has revealed Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons or personalities in one. This is called the doctrine of the Trinity, or Tri-unity of God.
 2. One way to illustrate the Tri-unity of God is by considering the three-fold nature of water. Water is normally a liquid but if it is heated it becomes a gas or vapor which we call steam. If water is cooled it becomes ice, a solid. In each of its three states water has very different characteristics, but it remains exactly the same chemical composition, H₂O.
 3. Another way to illustrate the three-in-one nature of God is the illustration of relationships. One person can be a Son, a Father, and a Husband or a Daughter, a Mother, and a Wife.
 4. The Bible speaks of praying and baptizing in the name of The Lord Jesus Christ and the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no conflict in this if we see that the names correspond to each other as follows: LORD = Father, JESUS = Son, CHRIST = Holy Spirit.
- B. God who has progressively revealed Himself to man throughout the ages has now revealed Himself in Jesus Christ in order that:
1. We can know Him personally. God desires the relationship that was broken by sin to be restored so that we know Him and He knows us.
 2. He can complete His work of redeeming us from sin and death. The Old Testament laws and commandments show us our sin and our need for God. The New Testament revelation of God's grace through Jesus Christ opens the way for sin to be forgiven and for grace to enable us to live for God.
 3. We can be conformed to His image. It is God's intention that through knowing Jesus Christ, we will be changed by His grace and take on His nature and character. In knowing Him we can receive the power to become like Him.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 3 Character of God 1: Introduction to Jesus

1. God has revealed Himself in many ways: In His creation, by His acts of power, through His word, and finally through His Son, Jesus Christ. How do you think Jesus reveals the nature and character of God? What are the key things we learn about God through Jesus Christ?
2. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Son of Man. The doctrine of Christ states that He is fully God and fully man. How does this make Jesus Christ unique? Why is it important that He be both God and man? How is that possible?