



Part 4 – Behold Your God (2)

Genesis 1

What we believe about God matters more than we can probably imagine. God did not give us an enormous book of Divinely inspired Scripture so that we could conclude that theology is not all that important or does not have much to do with our lives. We were made to know and love God. But

how can we know and love God if we do not know him according to his word? God has not left us ignorant about what he is like and he does not allow us to conceive of him in any way we prefer. Rather, beginning with the first words of the Bible, God begins to progressively reveal himself to his people. What an enormous privilege we have in being invited to know God!

As the first chapter of Genesis unfolds it becomes clear that there are great mysteries being revealed. By mystery, we do not mean something that cannot be understood or explained. Rather, mystery, in the sense that the Bible typically uses it, refers to something that is partially veiled early on and then more fully seen in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. This is certainly true as we consider the doctrine of God's triune nature. Our hope is bound to the truth that the salvation decreed by the Father, has been accomplished by the Son, and applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit.

The creation account also exposes us to the almighty power and goodness of God. The creation of the cosmos was a supernatural act of God's power. Not only that, as Genesis 1 states repeatedly, all of God's acts of creation were "good." This is so because God's very essence is goodness. He does all things well. Nothing God does is contrary to or inconsistent with his perfect goodness.

When we grow in our knowledge of God we are gaining far more than mere information. The knowledge of God is truth that changes us. Growing in the knowledge of God is to have our loves and priorities oriented toward him. It is to find comfort in our sorrows and hope in our dismay. It is to have our loneliness lightened and our joy deepened.

1. God is Triune

- Vv. 1-2; 26-27
- The doctrine of the Trinity brings together two necessary doctrines concerning God which seem to be mutually exclusive. On the one hand God is one. He is an indivisible unity. On the other hand, the Bible speaks of God as a plurality. So, according to the Bible there is only one God. And yet the Bible teaches that at the same time there are three Persons worthy of the name God. Namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equally and inseparably God. And yet Scripture reveals that these three Persons exist eternally as an inseparable essence.
- Certainly there is a great mystery to the doctrine of the Trinity. There is nothing else in all creation like the tri-unity of God. This is one of the reasons we must avoid trying to illustrate the Trinity. We cannot say, "The Trinity is like thus and such..." because in actuality it is not. God's tri-unity is not like anything else.
- It must also be acknowledged that the word "Trinity" is not used in the Bible. Various cults and other false religionists seize upon that fact to deny that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Trinity. But this is a case of the "Word / Concept Fallacy." However, the absence of a word does not negate the presence of the concept. The word "Trinity" was coined by the early church fathers to give a simple expression to what the Scriptures progressively reveal about the ineffable nature of God. Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 339-390) wrote beautifully of the praise worthy mystery of God's tri-unity:

"No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendor of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One. When I think of any One of the Three I think of Him as the Whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that One so as to attribute a greater greatness to

the Rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the Undivided Light.”

2. God is Almighty

Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.”

“I believe in God the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.” – The Apostle’s Creed

- The first words of Genesis offer a breathtaking glimpse into the almighty power of God. With a remarkable economy of words, we are told that God “created the heavens and the earth.” When one considers the unimaginable vastness and complexity of the cosmos contrasted with the ease of God in his acts of creation, one can only marvel at his might. God’s power is unlimited and therefore whatever God wills, He accomplishes. It is impossible for God to will a thing and yet not bring it to pass.
- The creation account in Genesis functioned in part as a polemic against the pagan creation myths embraced by the nations surrounding the Hebrews. The supposed power of the pagan deities is shown to be nothing compared to the omnipotence of God. Indeed, the very existence of the nation’s gods are directly undermined by the Genesis creation account.
- It is significant that God created light (1st day of creation) before he created the sun, moon, and stars (4th day of creation). This is significant in part because the highest god in the Egyptian pantheon was Ra, the sun god. Yet, God created the sun and the moon, which reflects the sun’s light, on the fourth day of creation (vv. 14-19). The heavenly luminaries are not gods. They are objects created by God. Not only that, the universe and the earth more specifically is not dependent upon sun, moon, and stars to provide light for God let light shine before he created any other secondary means to provide light. The same will be true in the age to come. Of the new creation we read in the Book of Revelation:

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. (21:22-25)

3. God is Good

“And God saw that it was good.” (vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever.” (Psalm 136:1)

- Beginning in verse 9 with the third day of creation God is described as separating the ocean from the dry land. Then in verse 10 we read the first of what will be another literary pattern in Genesis 1 – “And God saw that it was good.” Further into the 3rd creation day God caused vegetation to sprout upon the earth. Once again we see that clause at the end of verse 12: “And God saw that it was good.” That clause is repeated four additional times with the final repetition being qualified with the word “very.” Verse 31: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”
- God’s acts of creation are good because he is good. Like all of his attributes, God’s goodness is his essence. He does not merely do good things or possess goodness. God’s very essence is goodness. He does not conform to a standard of goodness outside himself. In other words, goodness is defined by God, not the other way around. Because God is undiluted and unqualified goodness, everything he does is, by definition, good. There is much more to God than his goodness. But he can never be less than good. All of God’s acts of providence are good. Every expression of his power is good. All his acts of mercy and judgement are good. Every movement of God’s sovereign rule over every individual life is good.
- We must remember that God does not conform to whatever standard of goodness we may prefer at any given moment. For instance, true goodness – God’s goodness – is not always expressed in his showing mercy. Likewise, goodness does not always mean that God will give us what we desire. God’s goodness is at times expressed in judgment. His goodness is at times expressed in saying no to his children.
- God’s goodness is seen most supremely in his gracious redemption of sinners. In the wreckage of his sin, God covers the man and woman’s shame through the shedding of innocent blood. This remarkable act set the pattern for how he would redeem his fallen people; a promise made in Genesis 3:15 and perfectly fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is an extraordinary thought: In putting forth the Son as a sacrifice for sin God treated his people, for a time, with greater goodness than he did his only begotten Son. Let us never doubt the goodness of a God “who spared not his own Son but gave him up for us all” (Romans 8:32).