

Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Knowing God Means Knowing the Character of God!

For a few moments let us consider a number of ways that knowing the attributes of God impacts our life as a Christian.

First the way to "see" God is to come to know Him through a study of His character as revealed in the Scriptures. *No man can see God and live* (Exodus 33:20). *No man has seen God at any time* (John 1:18). Men have "seen" God partially at various times when He has appeared in various Theophanies in the OT (see Exodus 24:9-11; 33:17--34:7; human or angel sometimes not explained; Isaiah 6:5, vision).

In every instance when God manifested Himself visibly to men, there is only a partial revelation of His glory, for man could no more look upon the full display of God's splendor than one can look directly into the sun.

Even in the incarnation of our Lord, who manifested the Father to men (see John 1:18; 14:8-9; Heb. 1:1-3), the full revelation of His glory was "veiled" with only an occasional glimpse of that glory, such as at His transfiguration (see Matt. 17:1-8).

It was not the physical appearance of our Lord which impressed men. Indeed, we know absolutely nothing about our Lord's physical appearance, other than it was not particularly appealing or attractive so men might not be drawn to him on the basis of His appearance alone (see Isaiah 53:2).

We are among those who have not "seen" our Lord physically so our grasp of the nature of God as revealed through Jesus Christ must be limited to what the Scriptures teach concerning His character. In the final analysis, we can "see" and **know God** only through the Scriptures as they reveal His character to us. (John 20:29-31; 1 Peter 1:8).

Secondly the character of God is the basis and standard for all human morality. The final verse of Judges reads: *In those days there was no king in Israel;*

everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

One might think the solution to this dilemma was a human king, but it was not. The kind of "king" Israel wanted was in effect an idol. They wanted a king whom they could see, a man who would go before them into battle. They wanted a king like all the other nations (see Deut. 17:14-17). When the people approached Samuel and demanded to have a king, God indicated they really were rejecting Him as their king: And they said to him, "*Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.*"

But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "*Give us a king to judge us.*" And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "*Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them*" (1 Sam. 8:5-7).

Thus when the Israelites demanded a human king, they were rejecting God as their king. **When the Book of Judges informs us the Israelites had no king, it means the nation did not acknowledge and serve God as their King** (Exodus 15:18; Psalm 10:16; 29:10). And in rejection of God as King men set the standard for their own conduct; every man then "*does what is right in his own eyes.*"

God gave the Law to the nation Israel after He became their "King" at the Exodus (Exodus 15:18). He demonstrated His power and sovereignty, even over Pharaoh. And as Israel's "King," God set down the constitution for the kingdom He was setting out to establish. The laws God set down at Mount Sinai were those which proceeded from His own character. God said to His people, "*Be ye holy, for I am Holy*" (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; see 1 Peter 1:16).

Is it any wonder "every man does what is right in his own eyes" today? Is it so difficult to explain why our culture rejects and abhors the thought of moral absolutes? Do we wonder why the church has become so wishy-washy about morality? The Bible tells us why. We have ceased to ponder and appreciate the

moral perfection of God. And once our view of the holiness of God is diminished, our moral values decline proportionately. A solid understanding of the character of God will establish and under gird one's morality. **Need to remember a basic principle and that is that our conduct is directly related to our view of who God is!**

Third, a failure to think rightly about God is the sin of idolatry, and it leads to countless other sins. A.W. Tozer rightly identifies the mistaken or distorted views of God as idolatry: "Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him." Thinking wrongly of God is idolatry and is demeaning to Him because it always views God as being other than He is. (always less than He is) But this idolatrous evil of thinking wrongly about God is also the root of many other evils.

Thinking wrongly about God leads to sin. Tozer adds: I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God. i.e. understanding of God. Wrong thoughts about God were the root of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 3, the character of God is first demeaned by Satan in his conversation with Eve. By Satan's devious question and answer tactics, God is portrayed as a liar ("Has God said...?" vs:1), ("You surely shall not die!" vs:4). Based upon the assumption that God was less than He first seemed to be, Eve chose to act independently of God, and she and her husband thus disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden fruit. The conclusion then is that an inadequate or distorted view of God is at the root of many sins.

Fourthly knowing God intimately is our calling and destiny, our future hope, our great privilege and blessing, and thus it should be our great ambition. (Jer. 9:23,24)

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Cor. 13:12).

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10).

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see

Him just as He is (1 John 3:2). What a great promise, knowing that we shall see Him, that is, really see Him as He is in all of His glory!

Fifth, a study of the attributes of God is the basis for our enjoyment of God and our spiritual growth. A personal relationship with God requires that we know God personally, as a Person, who He is. The attributes of God are descriptions of various aspects of the character of God, and it is through the knowledge of His characteristics that we come to intimately know and enjoy God as a Person. By faith in Jesus Christ, we have been saved so "we might become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

We have become a part of the church, the body of Christ, in this relationship we are growing up "to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). We have a hope that one day we will see Him in all His glory exactly as He is, at the rapture, this great hope motivates us to purify ourselves, just as He is pure. [1 Jn 3:2-3]

Sixth, the attributes of God are foundational to our faith and hope. Knowing the character of God assures us that He can and will do all that He purposes and promises. **Faith in God is trusting in God, and His attributes are the basis for that trust because He is able and willing to do all that He has promised.**

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Heb.10:23).

And without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right (1 Peter 4:19).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Seventh, a study of the attributes of God enhances our worship. We worship God for who He is. The attributes of God are a description of who He is. When God is worshiped in the Bible, He is worshiped in response to His attributes. He is worshiped as the eternal One: *And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, [is] THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME" (Revelation 4:8).*

Especially in the Psalms we find the worship of God linked to an acknowledgment of His attributes: *I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High (Psalms 7:17).*