

Lesson

6

Separating Facts from Myths

MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

We are going to study the nature and character of the Godhead - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We will then see how God, in His divine wisdom, decided to make Man in His own image - spirit, soul and body - and after His own likeness.

From the opening pages of Scripture an indisputable fact is established about the character and nature of God, and of His creation. God's eternal truth is established. Namely that we are created in His image, and after His likeness. Once such an important biblical truth is embraced it is relatively easy to see the flaws in the eastern religious viewpoint and "New Age" mythology, which declares that we are all "gods", that we can become part of some central cosmic "oneness", or get more than one shot at becoming divine through a process popularly known as "reincarnation". This insidious and erroneous assertion has stealthily crept into every level of Western thinking - mostly during our lifetime. Such distortions of truth have infiltrated our society so deeply, and especially our secular education system, that new Christians are often confused about what truth is. The Bible teaches that God is truth. Jesus says:

"I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE" (John 4:6)

John 4:24 declares we are to worship the Father in "**SPIRIT** and **TRUTH**".

With a view to the pervasive influences mentioned above it would be good to remember these two simple, but profound, summary biblical statements:

- ◆ **There is a God** - an individual, intelligent and personal being; and
- ◆ **You are not Him** - you were created by Him, as was everything else

"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" (John 1:1-3)

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14)

The Trinity and Unity of God

Christians worship one God, who reveals Himself to mankind in three ways:

The Father - The head and authority figure to whom Jesus himself submitted during his earthly walk, and continually referred to as He taught His disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:9), how to know God (Matthew 11:27), and from where His authority came (Matthew 28:18).

The Lord Jesus Christ - The earthly manifestation of God, the Word become flesh (John 1:1-3,14). He referred to himself as being one with the Father (John 10:29), and was the only one who could come down and truly pay the price required for forgiveness of sin (John 17:1-5,24; Acts 2:36).

The Holy Spirit - The active agent of the Godhead in the earth today. He is our counsellor (John 14:26), leading us into all truth. We receive power (Acts 1:8) as He comes upon us, and He is responsible for the distribution of various gifts (1 Cor 12:11). Salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:21,22 & 5:5).

The Concept of Trinity

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, have been together from the beginning, and work in perfect harmony with one another. The name we use when addressing them collectively is the Godhead, or *“Trinity”*.

The concept of the Trinity is often a bit of a mystery to our finite and limited minds. We try to reduce God to our understanding, and put Him into boxes we can comprehend, yet He still escapes our unenlightened understanding.

Each member of the Godhead has a task to perform, and cannot be separated from the other. They are always one, communicating and working out the perfect purposes of God.

However, by submitting to the Holy Spirit, and searching the Scriptures in the simplicity of our faith, we are better able to comprehend the wonderful personality of God and, by revelation, even the Trinity begins to make sense.

MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE

In order to better understand the triune nature of God, we must go back to the beginning, to the book of Genesis, and take a close look at the creation of the very first man - **ADAM** (Genesis 2:7). According to the Genesis account in Gen 1:26-28, on the sixth day God made man in His own image.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen 1:26-28)

This doesn’t mean that we all look the same, or that God looks exactly as we do, because physically that is not the case. God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and our likeness to Him is more spiritual than it is physical. However, it does mean that just as God is one person in three parts, each part working in harmony with the other, and each making one perfect whole, so are we. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 describes what we call the tri-partite nature of man:

**MAN is Primarily a SPIRIT
He Possesses a SOUL
He Lives in a BODY**

Man is collectively made up of three parts - *spirit, soul* and *body*. Each important, each in harmony with the others, yet collectively we are one person, not three. When we see ourselves as created in the image of God, and we understand how we are put together, we can then understand more about the triune nature of the Godhead. Our soul is also tri-partite - being made up of our mind, our will and our emotions.

When God said, *“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule...” (Gen 1:26)*, He was making a statement of such significance that few have truly grasped its depth and meaning.

We are made in God’s image and likeness. We are not gods, or anything remotely resembling the concepts of a god as some would believe. God is God, we are not Him, but we are created by Him, and we were made in His likeness.

The Spirit of Man

As God is creative, we are creative. As God is spiritual, we are spiritual. As God functions in faith, we must function in faith, etc. If we take every thought captive (2 Cor 10:5), and learn to tune out the world's corruption, refusing the temptation to be conformed to its image (Rom 12:2), there is no limit to what God can accomplish through you and me - no limit whatsoever.

Proverbs 20:27 says that, *"the lamp of the Lord searches out the spirit of man"*. God dwells in our spirit. It is the innermost part of man's being, and is the part of our nature which gives us God-consciousness.

From our spirit, we get our *conscience*. When we hear an "inner voice" telling us that something is not quite right, it is the part of our being that is linked into the spiritual dimension. This spiritual perception can be damaged, or seared (1 Timothy 4:2), by abuse or rebellion, but it is nevertheless the part of our make-up by which we get to understand "instinctively" the difference between right and wrong. We also gain whatever *intuition* we may have from our spirit.

When we receive Jesus into our hearts as our Saviour, we become 'born-again' (John 3:3-8). Our spirit is renewed and comes into unity with the Spirit of God. Although we have a spirit as unbelievers, for eternal purposes it is dormant and useless without the born-again experience. The Spirit of God bears witness with our (human) spirit (Romans 8:16), that we are the children of God.

The Soul of Man

Self dwells in the soul. It is where our personality - the inner, expressive part of our being - comes from. It is the source of our *mind*, *will* and *emotions* and is the part of our nature which gives us self-consciousness.

The soul is man's personality. It represents man, and expresses his individuality. With the soul we are able to *reason*, and through reason to understand the world around us. If reason is devoid of conscience, and separated from the spiritual truth upon which all understanding must be founded, then the end result is what we see in the world around us - the confusion and fear, poverty and pain, and the profusion of false religions and cults which search in vain for "truth" outside the confines of God's Word.

It is the soul's decision as to whether the spiritual or natural world reigns in a believer's life. This represents the *free-will nature* of man. The spirit is powerless to rule if the soul prevents it, and God has chosen to respect this. So, by our own choice we either serve God or reject Him; but we will ultimately partake of the fruit of whichever direction we choose to take - *"for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap"* (Gal 6:7).

It is the soul's task to preserve a right relationship between the spirit and the body: ie **the body is directed by the soul; the soul by the spirit; and the spirit by God**. The spirit cannot act upon the body directly, only through the soul.

The Body of Man

The senses dwell in the body - the vehicle through which our soul finds expression in the world. It is the outer and effective part of man's nature, and gives us world-consciousness.

Our body thirsts and hungers, has needs and desires, and must be cared for carefully if we are to enjoy full expression in life. The five physical senses, or God-given attributes, of *sight*, *hearing*, *touch*, *taste* and *smell* are integral parts of our body which enable us to *sense*, or *feel*, the world around us.

We can choose to care for, or abuse, our bodies. The Bible tells us that as Christians, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:17,18), and as such should be concerned about, and care for, God's dwelling place.

THE FALL OF MAN

Before the fall of man, his soul was governed by his spirit (not to be confused with the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead), and man was in perfect harmony with God.

After the fall (Genesis 3), man's spirit became separated from God and consequently "died". The "born-again" experience (John 3:3) brings about a "rebirth" of spirit, which brings man back into a proper relationship with God once more.

This is not to be confused with "rebirthing", encouraged and practised within the New Age movement. This teaching is not scripturally based, and does not put sinful man in touch with the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather encourages spiritual experiences strongly discouraged in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:9-14; John 14:6).

The "unregenerate" man, whose spirit is totally submerged in the soul life (which in turn is entirely influenced by the body's senses), is out of touch with his God-ordained inclination to be a spiritual person. Hence, he will often seek alternatives to truth as portrayed in God's Word. For example, the humanistic concept teaches that man has a dualistic nature (body and soul, without spirit). This is simply not true, and the bible strongly refutes this concept.

The cross, and the shed blood of Jesus Christ, is the **ONLY** way by which man can be saved. Unfortunately, there are still those who, in their rebellion and pride, prefer a counterfeit religious experience to the real thing. This, they will discover, places them right into Satan's evil hands.

God's redemptive plan is to release man from the curse of the fall, and transfer him into the kingdom of His Son, by regenerating his spirit with new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Proverbs 20:27, tells us that ***"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being"***.

The Spirit

It is important that the believer distinguishes the difference between his spirit and his soul. Without this discernment, he will remain ignorant of true communion in the Spirit with God, and mistake the voice of The Holy Spirit for his soul's thoughts and emotions. Our sensitivity to conscience, our spiritual perception, and our communion with God, are functions of the human spirit.

The Soul

The function of our soul, which finds expression in self-awareness or self-consciousness, is different from our spirit. The soul is the seat of our personality, intellect, thoughts, ideals, feelings - our ability to choose and to make decisions. It encompasses our mind, our emotions and our will.

The Body

Our bodies are inseparably linked to our spirit and soul, and are affected positively or negatively by the condition of the "inner" man. Diet, rest and exercise are not sufficient to totally guarantee a healthy, trouble-free life. God's command to the Israelites (Exodus 15:26 and Deuteronomy 7:15) makes this connection plain, and gives instructions on how to avoid the common diseases and sicknesses of the day. This same principle applies today (3 John 1:2). Serving God brings spirit, soul and body together in divine unity, much as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in perfect unity.