

LESSON SEVEN

GREAT BIBLE THEMES

OUR BEST PICTURE OF GOD

We trust that your study of the nature of the Creator has been helpful and inspirational in giving you much food for thought. You recognize that our study can not be complete, but it should serve as an introduction to these great Bible topics that should challenge our most careful study and best thinking. They are really vital to life in its fullest meaning.

In our study so far we have noticed that God is all-powerful, all wise, and always present. We have also noticed His eternal nature and His immutability. We have noticed such moral characteristics as His holiness, His righteousness, His mercy and His grief when His people do wrong. We have further noticed that "God is love", and that He is a jealous God who longs for our worship and service. But do these give us a complete picture of the Heavenly Father? We hope these studies have been helpful, but we believe the study for today will be the most helpful of all in understanding the true nature of God. We wonder if you will agree with us after you have finished this lesson.

Notice the following questions carefully. They give an outline of our study for today:

1. Is there any one best way for us to gain a clear conception of the nature of God? If so, why is it the best way? What do we gain from it?

2. What is the attitude of God toward the sinful? Is He anxious to punish man for his sins?
3. What is God's attitude toward those who continually oppose him?
4. Can an all-wise and all-powerful Creator be interested in each individual among the millions of earth?
5. How much does God love us, or to what extent would He go to help?

LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

We have suggested before that one of the chief purposes of the Bible is to reveal God to us. In it the Creator tries to make himself known. The greatest revelation of God, however, is to be found in the life of Jesus on the earth. You may recall the record given in Matthew 1:23 which speaks of the virgin birth of Christ and gives the significance of his name. "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, _____." Does this mean that Jesus was really God in the flesh? With this question in mind let us look to John 14:7-11. Let us notice first, however, that this chapter records part of Christ's farewell discourse to His apostles who had been His very close associates for three years or more. They had been with Him when He had performed His great miracles, and had continually sat at His feet to hear His great lessons. Now, let us notice the reference, "If ye had known me, you should have known _____ also; and from henceforth ye _____ him, and have _____ him. Philip (who was one of the apostles) saith unto him, Lord, shew us the _____, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen

_____ ; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am _____ and the _____? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of _____: but the _____ that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the _____, and the _____ in _____; or else believe me for the very works sake." Let us notice this reference rather carefully. Philip asked Jesus to show them the _____. Jesus seemed surprised that he should ask such a question and declared that those who had seen him had also seen the _____. Jesus was in the Father and the Father was in him. This unity of the Father and the Son is clearly taught in many places in the Bible.

This idea is brought out in the writings of Paul in Colossians 1:15. Here Jesus is said to be, ". . . the _____ of the invisible." In Hebrews 1:3 the statement is made, "Who (Jesus) being the brightness of his (God's) glory, and the _____ His _____." Notice Jesus was the _____, the _____ and the _____. No wonder He was given a name that meant "_____." The message He gave was God's message, His thoughts were God's thoughts, His attitudes toward all the problems of life were not His own but those of God the Father. Would this mean that in our study of the nature of God we can come to know about Him by studying the life of Christ? If we could find Christ's attitude toward sin, would this help us to understand God's attitude? Could we study the characteristics of Christ and thereby get a clear idea of God? The answer to these

questions is clearly "Yes". This opens up a new field of thought which is our study for today.

What was the attitude of Jesus toward the downtrodden, and the sinful? This attitude is revealed in the fact that he associated with publicans and sinners. You may recall that this was contrary to the practice of the Jewish people. When Jesus did so they criticized Him very severely. On one occasion Matthew (who is also called Levi) prepared a feast for Jesus. Notice how the Jewish leaders criticized Jesus attending for it and how He answered their criticism. Mark 2:15-17, "And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many _____ and _____ sat also together with _____ and his disciples; for there were many, and they followed him. And when the _____ and the _____ saw him eat with _____ and _____, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with _____ and _____. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I _____ not to call the _____, but _____ to _____."

Throughout his life on earth he continued to associate with those who were classed by their fellowmen as sinners. He saw their greater need and did what he could for them. Does this help us to understand God's attitude toward the sinful of all time? Is He a God of vengeance who delights in sending punishment upon the _____, or is he not willing that _____ but that all should come to _____."

The enemies of Jesus were bitterly opposed to him. They accused him of being in league with the devil. They listened very carefully to all he taught and did hoping to find something against

him. Jesus came to bless them, but they refused to hear his teaching. What was his attitude toward them? Notice this is revealed to us in the statement made concerning those who would not believe in him. Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy _____ together, even as a _____
_____, and ye _____."
In our last lesson we noticed that God is grieved when people do wrong. God loved them in spite of their rebellion against Him. Let us notice again this same attitude toward those who were in the very act of nailing him to the cross. Luke 23:34, "Then said Jesus, Father, _____; for they know not what they do." Do you think that the child that thought of God as a being who watched her closely to punish her when she did wrong had the proper conception of God? Would she have received this idea if she had studied about the attitude of Jesus toward the erring and sinful of his time? Was such an attitude on the part of the child unfortunate? Was her conception of the very nature of God far from correct?

Here is another question which may baffle the minds of many. Can a God who is all-powerful and all-wise have any personal interest in any one individual who is just one among the millions of the earth, and possibly a very insignificant one at that? This question has been answered to some extent in this and previous lessons, but let us look to the life of Jesus for our answer, remembering that he was "God with us". In the 15th chapter of Luke, we have three stories that Jesus gave to show the value of the individual who was just one among many. The first story he told was of a man who had _____ sheep, but when he

counted them only _____ were safe in the sheepfold. The shepherd was not satisfied for even _____ to be gone, so he goes after the _____ that was lost until he found it. Verse seven gives the application of the story. "I say unto you, that likewise _____ be in _____ over _____, more than over _____ and _____ who need no repentance."

The next story is given in verse eight through ten. Is the point to this second one the same as to the first? Some of us who have known this point for years may just take it for granted without realizing that there are many philosophies in the world today that do not consider the worth of the individual, but which may exalt the state, or nation, or the dictator at the expense of many individuals. What did it mean to Hitler to know that it would cost the lives of millions of people to make the German state supreme, as he thought he could do? We should be devoutly thankful to God for the Christian emphasis upon the value of the individual, even though the one may be very insignificant in so far as world events are concerned.

Christ's purpose in coming is given in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to _____ and to _____ that which was _____." Does this picture Jesus as a "seeking Christ" in search of the lost? In the ninth chapter of John we have the story of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight. His neighbors were made to marvel at the fact that he was able to see. They sent word to the Jewish leaders who were set and determined to oppose Jesus in every possible way. This man was brought before them to explain how he was made to see. They wanted him to declare that Jesus was not from God, and

when he refused to do so, they became angry with him and cast him out. Notice verse 35. "Jesus _____ that they had cast him out; and _____, he said unto him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?'" Do the words you have written in the blanks in this verse mean that Jesus, who knew about the difficulties of this man, searched him out to find him? Since Jesus was "God with us", would this mean that the all-wise, all-powerful Creator of our universe is interested in seeking out those who need His help? Do you feel that we are coming to a better understanding of God by this type of study?

Here is another question that is answered by our approach to the study of the nature of God. We find the answer in the life of Jesus. God seeks the very best for each of his followers, but to what extent would He go in order to be a blessing to us? To what extent did Jesus go to make the blessings of Christianity available to all? In order to get the attitude of the Lord in this respect, we should recall his prayer in Gethsemane. This prayer was offered very late one night when he knew that he would die on the cross within the next twelve to eighteen hours. Three times he prayed. (Matthew 26:39), ". . . O my Father, if it be possible, _____; nevertheless not as _____, but as _____." Does this show to what extent he would go to be a blessing to us? We should also notice that he gave his life willingly when he could have defended himself. See Matthew 26:53, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently _____?" Does this show

that Christ could have called upon God for help, but instead he was willing to give his life to make possible the blessings of God?

Would God continue to give all things needful to us? See Romans 8:32, "He that _____, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely _____?"

TEST

1. Christ came to earth to: (a) seek and save the righteous, (b) mingle only with the rich, (c) seek and save the lost, (d) associate only with the disciples of John. _____
2. When Jesus was crucified, he prayed to God to: (a) take vengeance upon his tormentors, (b) forgive them, (c) save him, (d) let him not suffer pain. _____
3. God thinks in terms of nations, not in terms of individuals. (True or False) _____
4. One of the best ways to get a clear idea of God is to see what Jesus said and did. (True or False) _____
5. Christ was called Emmanuel. It means: (a) God with us, (b) Son of God, (c) wholly of a human nature, (d) deceiver. _____
6. Did Jesus ever say that those who had seen him had seen God? (Yes or No) _____
7. By studying the characteristics of Christ we could never get an idea of God. (True or False) _____
8. Jesus (was, was not) the image of God. _____
9. Is the individual of importance to God? (Yes or No) _____
10. What demonstrates the fact that God shall freely give us all things? (a) He gave the name Emmanuel to Christ, (b) He

sent John the Baptist, (c) The fact that we need many things, (d) He spared not his own Son, but let him be crucified. _____

Score: 10 points for each correct answer

Correct answers to questions in lesson number 6:

1. (is not)
2. (b)
3. (d)
4. (c)
5. (false)
6. (false)
7. (true)
8. (false)
9. (a)
10. (c)

List below others who wish to take this course.