

Lesson # I -- The Pattern and Authority for Our Study

Introduction

- A. Where do we begin in our search for an understanding of ourselves?
- B. Happily the Christian has a source of information that far surpasses what may be gained through a contemplation of himself and the human race.
- C. It was John Calvin (1509-1564) who said:

It is plain that no man can arrive at the true knowledge of himself, without having first contemplated the divine character, and then descended to the consideration of his own. (Institutes, Book I, Chp I)

- D. Because we have been created by God in His image (Lesson # 2), the pattern of our thinking and study of ourselves must always be that of the person of our Creator.
- E. However, this study is not based on what we may imagine in some mystical way who and what God is -- but must be rooted in the revelation that God has given us -- of Himself. While God in His person is our pattern, it is the Word of God that is our authority.

I. The Pattern for our Thinking: The True and Living God.

- A. God is a Person, in fact three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. God is not an abstract idea -- He exists as person.
  - 2. God thinks, feels, makes decisions, has worth, has rights, and has character. (When we say God is unchangeable we refer to His character and decrees)
  - 3. God speaks of Himself as being grieved, quenched, angry, pleased, etc.
  - 4. God has the right to be recognized, respected, acknowledged, loved, worshipped, trusted, obeyed, honored, served, and praised.
  - 5. It is a terrible sin to ignore God -- not treat Him as a Person! Read Psalm 50:16-23.
  - 6. God, as a person, is the pattern for how we should consider ourselves. We have no right thinking of ourselves as a thing, or animal, or less than a person. While we will never be God (infinite) we are a person and have worth.
  - 7. List some of the ways in which we fail to treat God as Person.

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B. God is a Spiritual Person

1. By "spiritual" as applied to God, I mean the infinite fullness of all worth, virtue, and value. John 4:22-24
2. In particular "spiritual" would refer to the moral attributes of God.
  - a. God is the infinite fulness of holiness. Lev 11:44,45; I Peter 1:16
    - 1). Holiness means much more than not sinful. When God calls Himself holy (I Peter 1:16) He is referring to His absolute purity -- that He is righteous in all His ways.
    - 2). The holiness of God means that He can be trusted.
    - 3). The holiness of God is the basis for all human morality. To deny His existence and holiness leaves us with some form of Utilitarianism based on Pragmatism.
  - b. God is the infinite fulness of love. I John 4:7-21
    - 1). Love means that God recognizes us as persons, seeks to give us our rightful place in His life and plan, and that he does what is right toward us, sacrificially, for our good.
    - 2). The love of God means that He is compassionate and kind in all His ways.
    - 3). The denial of God's person and love leaves us without a basis for enduring relationships in life. In such a denial we are without true motivation and confined again to some form of Utilitarianism.
  - c. God is the infinite fulness of truth. John 14:6; Col 2:3; I John 1:5-8
    - 1). Truth means that God is the meaning of reality -- what is real is Who He is and what He has decreed. It means that He totally self-consistent and faithful to Himself in all His activity.
    - 2). His attribute of truth is the basis for all absolutes.
    - 3). To deny God and truth leaves us with relativity -- that there is no final right and wrong. Again we would have only Utilitarianism.
4. God -- as a spiritual person -- is our pattern of thinking as we try to understand ourselves. God made us like Himself. Therefore, the more holy, the more loving, the more truthful we are -- we are more of a genuine person and more like God. Acts 17:22-31

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C. God is a Spiritual Person of Great Worth and Ability.

1. Consider the greatness of God as Creator -- Gen 1:1-31.
2. Consider the greatness of God as Sovereign -- Eph 1:11.
3. Consider the greatness of God as Redeemer -- II Cor 5:19-21.
4. Consider the greatness of God as Savior -- Eph 2:4-22.
5. God -- as a spiritual person of great worth and ability is the pattern for how we should think of ourselves. While we have worth as a person, and given ability by God to produce valuable products in the Arts, Sciences, and all other human endeavors, our greatest worth and ability is in the area of the spiritual. (Lesson # 2).

II. The Authority for our Thinking: The Inspired Word of God.

A. The Bible is inspired -- II Tim 3:16,17

1. Inspiration should be recognized as plenary, verbal, infallible, and inerrant.
2. Because of inspiration the Word of God is personal, propositional, historical, once-for-all, and inscripturated.
3. All of our thinking, actions, and beliefs must be tested by and in harmony with the Word of God. Is 8:20; Luke 16:29-31
4. Every individual is responsible to accept the Bible as final authority, live in harmony with it, knowing we will be evaluated by its content. John 14:48; Acts 17:31; Heb 2:1-3; 10:28-31.

B. The Bible is the Word-basis for all belief, action, joy and comfort.

1. The Word of God is life giving. John 6:63; Heb 4:12
2. The Word of God does not change. Matt 24:35; John 10:35

Recommended Assignment (Preparation for the Next Lesson).

Monday: Read Gen 1:26-3:24. List at least four ways to show how God treated Adam and Eve as persons (having worth). \_\_\_\_\_

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Tuesday: Read Psalm 8. State how God treats men and women as important. \_\_\_\_\_

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Wednesday: Read Psalm 139. Write a list of how important a believer is to God.

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Thursday: Read Exodus 19:5,6; Deut 4:20; Isaiah 43:1-7,21; I Peter 2:5-9. State and explain what you consider the reason why God created us. \_\_\_\_\_

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Friday: Read Exodus 19:5,6; Deut 4:20; Isaiah 43:1-7,21; I Peter 2:5-9 again. What would you say is our most important characteristic (what kind of a person are we?). \_\_\_\_\_

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Saturday: Read Rom 3:10-23; 7:14-25; I Cor 6:9-11; Heb 10:10-14. Is the believer sinful or holy or both at the same time? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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