

## **Part II: The Doctrine of God and Creation**

### ***Chapter IV: The Essential Nature of God***

#### **1. The Knowledge of God**

The possibility of knowing God has been denied on several grounds. But while it is true that man can never fully comprehend God, it does not follow that he can have no knowledge of Him at all. He can know Him only in part, but nevertheless with a knowledge which is real and true. This is possible because God has revealed Himself. Left to his own resources, man would never have been able to discover nor to know Him.

Our knowledge of God is twofold. Man has an inborn knowledge of God. This does not merely mean that, in virtue of his creation in the image of God, he has a natural capacity to know God. Neither does it imply that man at birth brings a certain knowledge of God with him into the world. It simply means that under normal conditions a certain knowledge of God naturally develops in man. This knowledge is, of course, of a very general nature.

But in addition to this inborn knowledge of God man also acquires knowledge of Him by learning from God's general and special revelation. This is not obtained without efforts on man's part, but is the result of his conscious and sustained pursuit of knowledge. While this knowledge is possible only because man is born with the capacity to know God, it carries him far beyond the limits of the inborn knowledge of God.

#### **2. The Knowledge of God as Known from Special Revelation**

While it is not possible to define God, it is possible to give a general description of His being. It is perhaps best to describe Him as a pure Spirit of infinite perfections. The description involves the following elements:

a. God is a pure Spirit. The Bible contains no definition of God. The nearest approach to it is found in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit." This means that He is essentially spirit, and that all the qualities which belong to the perfect idea of spirit are necessarily found in Him. The fact that He is pure spirit excludes the idea that He has a body of some kind and is in any way visible to the physical eye. b. God is personal. The fact that God is spirit also involves His personality. A spirit is an intelligent and moral being, and when we ascribe personality to God, we mean exactly that He is a reasonable Being, capable of determining the course of His life. At present many deny the personality of God and simply conceive of Him as an impersonal force or power. However, the God of the Bible is certainly a personal God, a God with whom men can converse, whom they can trust, who enters into their experiences, who helps them in their difficulties, and who fills their hearts with joy and gladness. Moreover, He revealed Himself in a personal form in Jesus Christ.

c. God is infinitely perfect. God is distinguished from all His creatures by infinite perfection. His being and virtues are free from all limitations and imperfections. He is not only boundless and limitless, but also stands out above all His creatures in moral perfection and in glorious majesty. The children of Israel sang of the greatness of God after they passed through the Red Sea: "Who is like unto Thee, Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Ex. 15:11. Some philosophers of the present day speak of God as "finite, developing, struggling, suffering, sharing with man his defeats and victory."

d. God and His perfections are one. Simplicity is one of the fundamental characteristics of God. This means that He is not composed of different parts, and also that His being and attributes are one. It may be said that God's perfections are God Himself as He has revealed Himself to man. They are simply so many manifestations of the divine Being. Hence the Bible says that God is truth, life, light, love, righteousness, and so on.

**To memorize. Passages proving:**

a. That God can be known:

1 John 5:20. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."

John 17:3. "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

b. That God is n Spirit:

John 4:24. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

1 Tim. 6:16. "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

c. That God is personal:

Mal. 2:10. "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?"

John 14:9b. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?"

d. That God is infinite in perfection:

Ex. 15:11. "Who is like unto Thee, Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Ps. 147:5. "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite."

### **For Further Study:**

a. Do not the following passages teach that we cannot know God? Job 11:7; 26:14; 36:26.

b. If God is a spirit and has no body, how do you explain the following passages? Ps. 4:6; 17:2; 18:6, 8, 9; 31:5; 44:3; 47:8; 48:10, and many others.

c. How do the following passages testify to the personality of God? Gen. 1:1; Deut. 1:34, 35;; 1 Kings 8:23-26; Job 38:1; Ps. 21:7; 50:6; 103:3-5; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:1.

**Questions for Review:**

1. In what sense is God knowable and in what sense unknowable?
2. What is the difference between inborn and acquired knowledge of God?
3. Is it possible to define God? How would you describe Him?
4. What is involved in God's spirituality?
5. What do we mean when we speak of God as a personality?
6. What proof have WE for the personality of God?
7. What do we mean when we speak of the infinity of God?
8. How are the being of God and His perfections related?