

The Nature of God

The record in Acts 17 tells us when the apostle Paul came to the city of Athens he was moved in seeing the city given to idolatry. He disputed with the people throughout the city, on the street corners and in the marketplace. Certain philosophers heard him and brought him to Mars Hill. It was here that men spent their time at nothing else except to tell or hear some new thing. Paul began his discourse by observing that they were very religious and worshipped many gods. He was interested in revealing unto them the nature of the true God in contrast to false gods – to declare unto them the “unknown God.”

This God, he said, “made the world and all things therein” (vs. 24). Here he declares that God is the first cause. He is the Maker of all things. This answered all those who were saying that matter was eternal. This answered all who were trying to attribute the world to the work of many gods. Not only is God the first cause but examine also the power of God. He is Lord of heaven and earth. When you consider the powers within this universe and that God is its Maker, then you begin to understand and appreciate a little bit of the power of God. “Ah, Lord God, behold Thou has made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee” (Jeremiah 32:17).

God dwells not in temples made with hands. The true God is not one to be observed solely in nature. He is not limited to this material world. Certainly His existence is evidenced in the things that do appear (Romans 1:20-21), but one must understand that the Creator is separate from the created. With this argument Paul was also answering Pantheism which says God and universe are one. God is not this material universe, not merely a man. Man is similar to God, but they are not identical. Man is not God, nor is God only a man. Some had evidently made this mistake (Romans 1:23-25), for they were trying to make God in man’s image instead of man in the image of God. God is not stationary. He is not limited to a single given locality. Man-made gods may be found in these temples of men but the true God is everywhere.

The nature of God is such that he is not waited upon with gifts of men. God needs nothing. “For of Him and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever.” (Romans 11:36). God is not nourished by men. He does not depend upon men for happiness. “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.” (Psalm 50:10-12). God is the Giver of all things. He is the Giver of life. He is the Source of life, Sustainer of life, and the Provider of all things necessary for life. Man depends upon God for every breath he breathes. No, God does not depend upon man, but man does need God.

The nature of God is such that he is to be sought. No man is forced to recognize the God that made him. We may, if we so choose, deny the existence of God. But should we choose to seek after him we have the assurance that He can be found. Men are without excuse for not finding God. “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Romans 1:20-21). God did not leave Himself without witness. “Nevertheless, He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our heart with food and gladness.” (Acts 14:17). David tells us that there is really nowhere one can go from the presence of God (Psalm 139:7-10). He is a God both at hand and afar off (Jeremiah 23:23, 24). He is not far from every one of us, and we may feel after Him, as if to actually touch, and handle. Thus Paul says, this is a God that one comes to know distinctively and certainly.

Another thing that reveals to us the nature of God is the fact that we are His offspring. Man is more than matter, more than vegetable, and more than animal. Man was made in the image of God. God is not gold, silver or stone; God is not a piece of matter shaped by the hands of men. We are like God. You recognize the will and intelligence of man. Then you must understand that God also possesses these attributes.

The nature of the true God is such that He calls men to obedience. Some people today scoff at the idea of

obedience. Paul said, I reveal unto you Jehovah God, the One who made the worlds – dwells not in temples of men – not a god of stone but living and intelligent. This God demands obedience. There was a time that He winked at ignorance but now commands all men to repent. Obedience is demanded of all men. It is no longer limited to one people of the earth. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15, 16). “Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

This is the God that will judge the world. He will judge the world in righteousness, according to the strict principles of justice and the law. The judgment of God will be just. The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be rewarded.

This was the nature of God as Paul revealed Him to the Athenians and this is the nature of God today.

By Thomas Bunting