

What we can learn about God

LECTURE 1

Life changing revelation as God reveals Himself to mankind – and you!

Session Topics:

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| 2. The Being of God who is – | 6 |
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| Decreed will, Perceived will, God's sovereignty and The predestination question. | |
| 5. The Work of God in Creation through – | 10 |
| Creation and Preservation. | |

Outcomes:

After completing this session you should be able to -

Explain and describe the being of the Godhead, His attributes and will, applying aspects to your own life and purpose.

Objectives:

- **Describe**
God better through understanding the meaning of His names, His being and attributes of the Godhead.
- **Walk in faith**
because you know more about God's unchangeable loving character and goodness.
- **Obeys God's will**
as you prioritise His purposes on the earth and in your life.
- **Realise more of God's greatness**
as you perceive His sovereign character and works you will be able to express yourself in worship and testimony.

You are about to start the most exciting journey of your life. This is the first lecture of many that will give you a better understanding of God. “Why do we need to do this?” you may ask.

To learn about God we turn to the letter that God wrote to us – His written Word, the Scriptures, the Bible. There is supernatural power in the hearing (or reading) of the Word of God. It imparts faith to us. It changes us. It washes us clean.

Learning
about God
will radically
change your
life

Romans 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

*To learn about God
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Bible.*

This quoted verse may already stir a question in your heart: “What exactly is **faith**?” or “What does it do for me?”. These questions will be answered for you as you study through the course and especially as you deal with the lectures in the books titled **Faith 1** and **Faith 2**, which are both part of the **Discipleship Training Course** [DTC].

There is another opportunity to learn about God: that is by looking at the work of His hands. It is by hearing His voice in our hearts. If anybody therefore says that God can only be known by those who have access to a Bible, then they are confronted by the following verses:

Romans 1:20 *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*

Romans 2:15 *[The Gentiles] who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.*



Since we know that God will speak in a unique way to individuals in the heart or conscience, we can concentrate our studies on the revelation from God that is the same for all of us – through His written **Word**. Under the following five headings of this lecture we will have a very quick overview of this knowledge that we can have of God.

God reveals
himself to all
mankind

A deeper study of this matter would follow in a more systematic study which is also called **Theology**. This would be of interest to the final year student who aims to go into the ministry of the gospel (or in short just “the ministry”).

1. Words used for God

How can we understand the word “**God**”? As we grow up we are constantly taught by what other people say and do. Consequently, we learn to write this word with a capital letter. Reverence is built into us regarding God and we are taught not to use this word and other names of God in a light-hearted manner (in vain).

Whenever we want to know more about the intricacies of a word or concept, we need to have a good look at what the word meant in the original language or in connection with other words with which it was used.

Some words are made up of several smaller or shorter words. It is like a tree having a thick trunk supported by a number of roots. We can investigate the root meanings of a word by looking at the words that make it up or from where

it came. James Strong gave numbers to all the words in the Hebrew O.T. and Greek N.T. Using these numbers you can find the root words and root meaning of the words.

A number of Hebrew words are translated as "God" in our Bible. These Hebrew words all have a different meaning. Here are some of them:

1.1 El and Elohim

EL comes from a word that indicates might or strength. When it is used of God, we have the meaning "Almighty", to indicate totality or completeness of might or strength. Elohim is the plural form of El, just as seraph (angel) becomes seraphim. This plural word is mostly used for God in the Old Testament. However, this is not translated as "Gods", since the plural form in Hebrew can also indicate intensification or enlargement of an idea expressed through the singular.

This teaches us how inexhaustible the fullness of the Godhead is and to what extent the life of God overflows in all its aspects.

Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heaven and the earth.*

The third year student will get an overview or introduction to Hebrew and Greek in which the Bible was originally written.

Word studies
extend our
horizons of
knowledge
and insight

1.2 Yahweh

This word is often written as Jehovah (we will look at the possible origin of this name in Introduction to Hebrew – PTC). This is the personal name of God as revealed to Moses and through him to Israel. They were not allowed to speak out this name because of the strict **interpretation** they gave to the fourth commandment:

Exodus 20:7 *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*

(The third year student who prepares himself for preaching as part of his ministry of the gospel will learn **The Art of Interpretation** of the Scriptures. It is important to know how to read every verse in context – reading the verses or passages before and after. This is a very simplistic definition of the term "context".)

Elohim is the generic or general term for God. The word Yahweh is rendered "**Lord**" as is used twice in this verse. This is the Name of the living God of Biblical revelation. The root is a word meaning independent and underived existence. When Moses saw the burning bush whose flame came from nowhere and which did not feed on the bush for its burning, he was given a practical object lesson before God even spoke.

Exodus 3:2 *And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.*

Exodus 3:14 *And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

God Himself explains His Name here: The faithfulness and unchangeableness of God Who is [was/will be] the same in every aspect:

– **yesterday – today – forever –**



Yahweh is the same God who spoke to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see also Gen 15:7; 28:13; Ex 3:15), but now makes Himself known more personally. If we know God's Name, we can understand more fully Who He is. (There will be more teaching about this in the subject "**The Name of Jesus**".)

The eternal
God changes
not

Exodus 6:3 *"I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I was not known to them."*

1.3 Adonay

Again we find a plural form of a word as a name for God. The root meaning of this word is "ruler" or "master", used to signify submission to the person who is addressed in this way. Translated, it is "Lord" or, in its stronger form, "Lord of Lords".

Deut. 10:17 *"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe."*

Joshua 3:11 *"Behold, the ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan."*

This name gives the idea of authority, control, supremacy or dominion. Being made in the image of God, we as believers also have a measure of God-given authority. (You will learn about this in "**Believer's Authority**".)

The Name "Adonay" was always pronounced whenever the reader came across the personal Name "Yahweh", so as to avoid speaking out this Name.

2. The Being of God

We will never fully grasp or understand the essence (basic quality, nature or substance) of God. But we can look at ourselves as beings made by Him in His image, and look at the similarities and contrasts, to arrive at some understanding. Scripture will obviously be our main source of this knowledge.

Genesis 1:27 *"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

Look at the subtle change: 'him' and 'them'. Man or mankind (not as in 'woman') was made in the image of God. The fact that they were made male and female was not according to that image – that was a further adjustment to progeny. Likewise sin does not originate with God. Many such contrasts can be noted.

God is the
one who
is entirely
different

2.1 God is Spirit

Acts 17:29 *"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising."*

John 1:18 *"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."*

John 4:24 *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Jesus told this to the woman at the well in Samaria and we could not have more clarity about this. God is Spirit. What does this mean? It means that He is pure Spirit – not complex in the sense that He is made up of parts. He is without a body or a physical presence that can be seen by bodily senses.

2.2 God is Personal

Have you ever thought what it is that makes you a person? It is not just the fact that you have a name and that you live. What makes you a person is the fact that you think and that you want.

- ◆ God is a Personal Spirit
- ◆ God is rational (thinks and can reason)
- ◆ God is self conscious (aware of Himself)
- ◆ God is intelligent (understands, is wise, knows)
- ◆ God is a moral agent (acts and inspires right-doing)

God is the source and the supreme perfection of these

Job 23:13 *"But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does."*

Job 15:8 *"Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?"*

2.3 God is Infinite Spirit

God has no boundaries or limitations, whether conceivable or not. Let us look at this in three areas or realms.

- ◆ Time
- ◆ Space
- ◆ Universe

1 Timothy 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*



■ Eternity

When we speak of His infinitude regarding **time**, we refer to **eternity**. God is eternal. This does not only mean that He has and will exist beyond the boundaries of time, but also that He does not experience time as we do. He is not bound by time.

Psalms 90:2 *Before the mountains were brought forth, or You had formed [gave birth to] the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

2Peter 3:8 *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

■ Omnipresence

When we speak of His infinitude regarding **space**, we refer to His **omnipresence**.

Genesis 28:16 *Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."*

Psalms 139:7 *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

Jeremiah 23:23 *"Am I a God near at hand," says the LORD, "And not a God afar off?"*

The word "omni" means all. God is in all places at the same time because He is not bound or limited by space, or the so-called "space frame".

■ Transcendence

When we speak of His infinitude regarding the **Universe** we refer to His **transcendence**. This means that He is not part of (is detached from) the creation – that which he made. He literally "steps over" or is exalted to a higher plane altogether.

Isaiah 40:18 *To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?*



God is an independent self-existing being

■ Immanence

God is not only exalted (lifted up high), He also has an all pervading presence within His creation, whether organic or inorganic. Acting outwards from within, He is able to move from the centre of every atom or the origin of thought, life and feeling – causing and effecting continuous cycles of movement and growth. He cares for everything and everyone.

Acts 17:28 *'... for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring'.*

Matthew 10:29,30 *Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

3. The Character of God

It is very exciting to investigate what the Bible tells us about the character of God because those things which we strive for, while being coached by the Holy Spirit, are found in God in their perfect form.

When we look at those qualities we can ascribe or "attribute" to the divine character of God, we realise that we cannot adequately express His Being by these attributes. Scripture gives us a close enough impression of what God is like.

Unlike men, God cannot be without His character. Men can lose all their good or bad qualities, but God is love, goodness, mercy, holy, justice, etc.. His attributes are integrally part of His being.

Romans 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

God's attributes can be classified as:

- ◆ Communicable
- ◆ Incommunicable

3.1 Communicable Attributes

These are qualities we can relate to. They can be communicated to man in some measure, however small. Let us list some:

- ◆ **Wisdom** Proverbs
- ◆ **Goodness** Psalm 107
- ◆ **Righteousness** Romans
- ◆ **Justice** Amos 5
- ◆ **Love** 1 John 3,4



Write a verse reference/s of these chapters behind each of these attributes.

The lectures on "**Christian Character**" will also be very interesting to you.

Deut. 32:4 *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.*

3.2 Incommunicable Attributes

These are those qualities of God found only in Him since they are perfections and have no analogy in human character:

- ◆ **Self Existence** (does not rely on the existence of others)
- ◆ **Immutability** (does not change)
- ◆ **Omniscience** (knows everything)
- ◆ **Omnipresent** (is above the limitation of space)
- ◆ **Omnipotent** (is able to do anything consistent with His being)
- ◆ **Eternity** (has no beginning or end, is not bound by time)

In the lectures on “**The Life of Adoration**”, we will deal with worship and its relation to these attributes of God.

4. The Will of God

This is an expression of His attribute of self-determination. He can act according to His unlimited eternal power and Godhead. We can also speak of the plan of God. The perfections that we already mentioned will keep him from doing anything that is not according to His nature or, as we sometimes say, “out of character”.

Again, we may distinguish between two kinds:

4.1 God’s decreed Will

Whatsoever God desires to come to pass – come what may – He decrees. He says and it is. God’s decreed will is always accomplished. He does not leave the outcome to someone else’s decision. Here God displays His sovereignty.

Nehemiah 9:6 *You alone are the LORD; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.*

Isaiah 55:11 *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

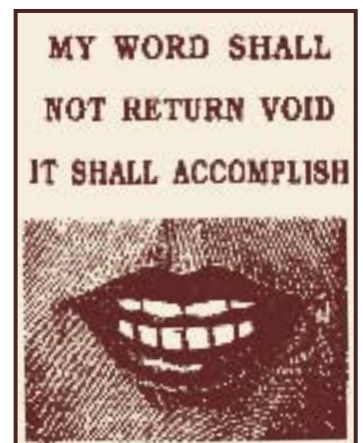
4.2 God’s perceived Will

“Perceive” means “to come to understand”. Usually, words are used to make someone understand what should be done – either spoken or written. The Bible is God’s written Word and Jesus is the Word that became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Apart from becoming our Saviour, He also was more than just God’s messenger. He was God’s only begotten Son – “God-with-us”.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John goes on to describe how the Word became flesh, dwelt amongst us and declared the Father to us. Jesus later said that if we love Him, we will obey His commandments. These commandments are the perceived will of God. We could decide at any time to be disobedient to God and not follow His perfect plan. In His Word (the Bible), God prescribes to His creatures how they are to behave and what their duties are. The perceived will of God is often disobeyed.



4.3 God’s Sovereignty

God has supreme and unrestricted power. The reason and final ground for all that exists and all that takes place is in God. He either:

- ◆ causes it to come to pass or
- ◆ allows it to happen.

Sin came into the world through Satan's fall and temptation of man by God's permissive will.

Characteristics of God's Will

- ◆ Backed by infinite wisdom and holiness
- ◆ Operates graciously and kindly
- ◆ Acts unconditionally (is not dependent)
- ◆ Aims at God's own glory to be manifested

4.4 The Predestination Question

The Calvinists and Armenianists take opposite positions regarding this hotly debated question: "Does God plan for our inclusion in salvation after He knows how we would choose, or do we really have no choice at all?" Does this mean we could choose Him because He planned it? (The third year student will deal with this question.)

5. The Work of God

Psalms 92:4,5 *For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.*

Nehemiah 9:6 *You alone are the LORD; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.*

Matthew 5:45 *... "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*

Matthew 6:26 *"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*

1Corinthians 2:9 *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

It is clear from these verses that God is still working and is actively involved in His creation. Two things stand out:

- ◆ God created out of nothing and
- ◆ God preserves His whole creation.

If we have peace in our hearts, we will not be in fear of tomorrow. We will walk in faith in the ability and goodness of God – knowing that He has woven His purpose for our lives in the intricate network of His kingdom.

We see a glimpse of His greatness when we look at His work