

In The Beginning God . . .

*An In-Depth Study of the
First Three Chapters of Genesis*

All Truth Begins Here



The Character of God: Part Two

INTRO: Continuing our study of the character of God, we find that these first three chapters contain insight into nearly every revealed attribute of God. Just by reading and meditating on these verses we gain amazing understanding about Who God is and what He is like. In the first part of this study we discovered that God is transcendent, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, creative, and actively involved in His universe. Here we will mine further the first few verses to discover what else they may tell us about God and expand our study further into the text to confirm our initial impressions.

I. He is One God but Existing in Three Persons

- A. Our first hint of this comes in the fourth word: “God” is *Elohim*, which in Hebrew is in the plural form. This hint becomes solid evidence in Deuteronomy 6:4 where the Scripture states that Yahweh is our *Elohim* (Gods) but that He is ONE.
- B. Then we find the “Spirit of God” brooding over the surface of the waters, and, perhaps a little more obtuse here, but much more clear throughout the rest of Scripture, using the “Word of God” to actually call created elements into being.
 1. “brooding” is an activity which implies personality, intelligence, and thoughtfulness
 2. God spoke the universe into existence and all of its elements, later we learn that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, and that all things were created by and through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-18)
- C. The evidence of this singular plurality (One God / Three Persons) is further evidenced as we move forward into the text of Genesis and read statements like:
 1. Then God said, ‘Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness’ (1:26)
 2. *Elohim* created man in HIS own image, in the image of *Elohim* HE created him (1:27)
 3. This is the account in the day that *Yahweh Elohim* made earth and heaven (2:4)
 4. In the day when *Elohim* created man, HE made him in the likeness of *Elohim* (5:1)
- D. This is a mystery about God to which no person has ever been able to give a fully adequate explanation, and yet throughout the Bible The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are clearly identified with the singular being of God, maintaining individual personality while operating in singular unity as ONE. (John 15 & 17)
 1. The name *Elohim* is unique to Hebraic thinking: it occurs only in Hebrew and in no other ancient Semitic language. The masculine plural ending does not mean “gods” when referring to the true God of Israel, since the name is mainly used with singular verb forms and with adjectives and pronouns in the singular. However, considering the *Hashalush HaKadosh* (Trinity), the form indeed allows for the plurality within the Godhead.

(copied directly from: www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/Elohim/elohim.html)
 2. YHVH (*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*) is the personal name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush and is derived from the Hebrew verb “to be.” It reveals God as the Eternal Being One, without beginning and without end, self-existent and in need to nothing to support His Being; and as the Personal God Who is involved in the affairs of human beings. *Yahweh* is always in the singular form as the ONE true God.
 3. *Elohim* is the name of God which relates to His strength and power as the Mighty One of Israel and as the Creator of the universe. It always occurs, with reference to the true God, in the collective plural but takes the singular verb, adjectives, and pronouns.

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Exodus 3:13-15 ¹³ Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

Deuteronomy 6:3-5 ³ "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁴ **"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"** ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. John 14:9-11 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" ¹⁰ "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. ¹¹ "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

John 10:18 No one has taken it [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." Acts 2:32 This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

II. God is Also a Personal God, Not a Force or Power, but a Person

- A. Besides His obvious creative nature revealed in his creativity in 1:1, we next find God speaking, using words and language, forming sentences and commands—an obvious characteristic of personality including all of the elements of mind, will, and emotions:
 1. Then God said—language and thought
 2. “Let there be light”—choice, will, command and authority
 3. And He saw that it was good—evaluation and satisfaction
- B. He is both Personal and Relational
 1. Let Us make man in Our Image (1:26)
 2. It is not good for the man to be alone (2:18)
 3. Throughout these first chapters God has conversations with Adam and Eve who are made in His likeness (1:28-30, 2:16-19, 3:9-22)
 4. He is the God Who seeks us when we are lost (3:9)

CONC: God is the personal Triune God, Maker of heaven and earth, Creator of humanity with personality and relational desire like His own. Yet He does not need human beings to fulfill His nature for He is content within Himself in the communion of the Holy Trinity. None-the-less, He has made us like Himself in these respects and desires our fellowship while we are in absolute need of His.

NOTES

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. List some common ways of thinking about the Trinity that are contrary to the truth the Bible presents?
2. List some analogies that you have heard to describe the nature of the Trinity and discuss the problems with each analogy.
3. What is the significance of the name with which God reveals Himself to Moses?
4. Jesus speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 14-16 and prays very specifically for us to have the same unity He enjoys with the Father in John 17. Discuss how this passage of Scripture gives a clear expression of the Triune God.
5. How does John 1:1-18 give clear evidence that the Word is equal to God and that Jesus is the Word? How does this tie into Genesis chapter one in the narrative of creation?
6. Why is it so important to understand the personality and relationship oriented nature of God?