

ONE GOD  
ONE MESSAGE

*Part 3*



*Encountering*  
Perfection

by P. D. Bramsen



- What God Is Like
- None Like Him
- A Special Creation

**ONE GOD ONE MESSAGE - PART 3**  
**ENCOUNTERING PERFECTION**

by P. D. Bramsen

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# Encountering Perfection

Dear friend,

What does *perfection* look like? Do you know of *anything* that is perfect? Do you know *anyone* who is perfect? Perfection is virtually unknown in our world today. We may strive for it, but, ultimately, we find ourselves saying, “Nobody’s perfect!” Yet the Scriptures of the prophets reveal One who is, has always been, and forever will be...

PERFECT.

Did you know that the Holy Scriptures tell of a time in history when everything and everyone on earth was perfect? Does this seem impossible? Hard to imagine? Then keep reading.

It is in this third section that our journey really begins. Here, in the first pages of God’s Book, we will discover:

- what true perfection looks like.
- the glory and complexity of *The Perfect One*.
- how and why God created the first man and woman.

It is our prayer that the Creator and Owner of the universe will be your teacher as you brave these next three chapters. Be sure to take plenty of time to mull over the questions at the end of each chapter and send your answers to us.

Enjoy the journey!

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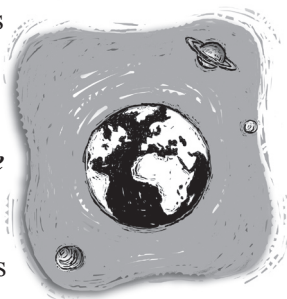


# 8

## WHAT GOD IS LIKE

**T**he journey begins where God's Book begins—with one of the greatest declarations of all time:

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1)



No attempt is made to prove God's existence. It is self-evident.

If you are walking along a deserted beach and come upon a set of fresh footprints in the sand, you instinctively conclude that you are not alone. You know those evenly spaced tracks didn't create themselves. You know the wind and water did not form them. Someone caused those footprints.

You know that.

Yet many people contend that they do *not* know that the sand in which the footprints were formed, and the human being who caused the footprints, were also caused by Someone. In an attempt to explain creation apart from a Creator, man has come up with many elaborate theories, some imagining a string of causes stretching back billions of years. But once they arrive at what they call "the beginning," they are no closer to answering the original question: *What caused it?*

The Scripture says: *“What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, **being understood from what has been made**, so that men are without excuse.”* (Romans 1:19-20 NIV)

The rationale is elementary: design necessitates a designer.

Just as this is true with man-made things like footprints, cars, and computers, so it is true with mechanisms like feet, cells, and constellations. Whether observed with the naked eye, or through a microscope or telescope, the irreducible complexity and intricate order of the universe necessitates a Creator and a Sustainer.

Just as a footprint requires a footprint-maker, so a universe requires a Universe-Maker.

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”* (Psalm 19:1 NIV)

So who is this Universe-Maker? How can we know what He is like? We can *know* because He has made Himself *known*.<sup>94</sup>

## ETERNAL

Earlier we heard from an e-mail correspondent who asked sarcastically, “Who created God? I’ve forgotten.” The answer is: *no one*. God is eternal. *“In the beginning **GOD**...”* teaches us that our Creator is like no one and nothing else.

*“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even **from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**”* (Psalm 90:2)

Past, present, and future are as nothing to God. He is the *“Lord God Almighty, Who **was and is and is to come!**”* (Revelation 4:8)

He is timeless and incomprehensible.

No created being will ever know everything about God. He is *“the High and Lofty One who **inhabits eternity.**”* (Isaiah 57:15)

He never changes. *“You are **the same**, and Your years will have **no end.**”* (Psalm 102:27)

## GREATER

God is greater than anything we can imagine.

Just as the eternal One makes no attempt to *prove* His existence, because it is self-evident, so He makes no attempt to *explain* His existence, because our finite minds are incapable of grasping that which exists apart from time, space, and matter.

As a little boy, I remember looking up into the sky and thinking that if I could travel high enough and far enough, I would eventually come to a ceiling and the end of the universe. What I failed to consider was the endless space on the opposite side of my imaginary ceiling!

Some things can only be understood by believing what the Creator has revealed.

Faith in the consistent and proven Word of God is the key to the highest level of wisdom and knowledge.

*“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ... **By faith we understand** that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”* (Hebrews 11:6,3 NIV)

Modern science affirms that “*what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*” Physicists tell us that matter is made of invisible atoms, which are made of electrons, which whirl around a nucleus made of protons and neutrons, which are made of quarks, which are made of...? Mankind has discovered so much, yet we know so little! Those who are wise recognize the limitations of human intellect.

What science will never be able to prove or disprove is “*that the universe was formed at God’s command.*” We can only *know* this through our God-given sixth-sense: **faith**.

It is “*by faith we understand*” life’s greatest themes and questions. The reason for this is obvious:

*“God is **greater** than man.”* (Job 33:12)

So what else has this great One revealed about Himself?

## LIMITLESS

He is all-powerful. *“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”* (Jeremiah 32:17 NIV) The Creator transcends His creation. He is above and beyond anything we can imagine.

He is all-knowing. *“You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts....”* (Psalm 139:2 NIV) The Creator knows everything—past, present and future. He does not grow wiser over time. *“His understanding is **infinite**.”* (Psalm 147:5)

He is everywhere present. *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?”* (Psalm 139:7) The infinite One can be with you at the same time He is with me. At the same moment He is talking with the angels in heaven, He can be speaking to men on earth.

He is limitless.

## SPIRIT

Here is another significant piece of information about this limitless One:

*“God is **Spirit**.”* (John 4:24)

God is the invisible, infinite, and personal Spirit who is present in all places at one and the same time. Although He needs no body, He is able and free to manifest Himself as He chooses. The Scriptures report several occasions when God appeared to men and women in unique, visible ways—*“face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”* (Exodus 33:11)

God the Supreme Spirit wants to be known, trusted, and worshiped by the spiritual beings He has created for that purpose.

*“The Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* (John 4:23-24)



## THE FATHER OF SPIRITS

One of God's titles is "*the Father of spirits.*" (Hebrews 12:9)

Before He created the earth,<sup>95</sup> God made countless millions of powerful, magnificent *spirit beings* called *angels*. He created them to live with Him in His heavenly home. *Angel* means "*messenger*" or "*servant.*" God, who purposed to have a kingdom of loving subjects with whom He could share eternity, created these spirits to know, worship, obey, serve, and enjoy Him forever.

*"I heard the voice of **many angels** around the throne... and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands...."* (Revelation 5:11)

From the start, God created as many angels as He wanted, since they were not designed to reproduce. These spirits were in no way equal to God, although they shared certain likenesses with their Creator. God gave them a high level of intelligence. He also gave them emotions, a will, and the capacity to communicate with Him. Like their Maker, angels are invisible to man unless they are sent on a mission in which they must become visible.<sup>96</sup>

In His kingdom of created spiritual beings, God is the only uncreated, infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing, limitless Spirit.

## ABOVE ALL

*"There is...one Spirit...one Lord...one God and Father of all, who is **above all**...."* (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Although the One who "*is above all*" is not confined to time and space, there is an actual place in the universe where He dwells and reigns. "*The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.*" (Psalm 103:19) In meditating on the greatness and the nearness of God, King Solomon prayed these words to His Creator:

*"Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and **the heaven of heavens** cannot contain You."* (1 Kings 8:27)



The Bible speaks of three different *heavens*. Two are visible to man; one is not.

There is the *atmospheric heaven*—the blue sky over our heads.

There is the *interstellar heaven*—the black space in which God placed the planets and stars.

And there is the *heaven of heavens*—the brilliant sphere where God dwells. This heavenly home of our Creator and realm of angels is also called *the highest heaven, the third heaven, the Father's house, His dwelling, Paradise, and simply, Heaven.*<sup>97</sup>

*“The LORD looks from **heaven**; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of **His dwelling** He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.”* (Psalm 33:13-15)

## GOD IS ONE

The first verse of the Bible affirms that there is only one God: *“In the beginning **God**.”*

Both the Old and New Testament Scriptures declare: *“The LORD our God, **the LORD is one**.”* (Deuteronomy 6:4) *“There is **only one God**.”* (Romans 3:30)

God is ONE.

He has no competition. He has no equal.

In theological terms this is called *monotheism*: belief in only one God. Monotheism stands in stark contrast to *polytheism* (belief in many gods and goddesses) and *pantheism* (belief that god is everything and everything is god). Polytheists and pantheists blur the distinction between the Creator and His creation. As a result, they deny that God is a personality with character traits.

## COMPLEX

*“In the beginning **God**”* is an *elementary* truth, but it is not a *simple* truth.

The Infinite One is not simple. He is complex. His oneness is a multi-dimensional oneness.

The Hebrew word used for “*God*” is the masculine plural



noun *Elohim*. Hebrew grammar has singular (one), dual (two only) and plural (three or more) noun forms. *Elohim* is grammatically plural, but has a singular meaning.

The one true God is complex and unlimited in His capacities. The first three sentences of Scripture declare:

*“In the beginning **GOD** [plural noun] **created** [singular verb conjugation] the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the **SPIRIT OF GOD** was hovering over the face of the waters. Then **GOD SAID**, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”* (Genesis 1:1-3)

Thus, the opening statement of God’s Book tells us *how* He carried out His work of creation. He accomplished it by *His Spirit* and *His Word*.

First, *God’s own Spirit* was sent down from heaven to carry out His commands. Like a dove hovering over her nest, “*the Spirit of God was hovering over*” the newborn world. The Hebrew word used for “Spirit” is *ruach*, denoting *spirit*, *breath*, or *energy*. This “*Spirit of God*” is the energy-giving presence of God Himself.

*“You send forth **Your Spirit** [ruach], they are created.”*  
(Psalm 104:30)

Next, *God spoke*. Ten times the first chapter of Genesis states: “*God said....*” When God spoke, what He commanded happened.

*“By **the word of the LORD** the heavens were made, and all the host of them by **the breath** [ruach] of His mouth.”*  
(Psalm 33:6)

God created the world by His Word and by His Spirit.

## THE COMMUNICATOR

The fact that God created all things *by speaking* teaches us something else about God:

He communicates.

Before there was creation there was communication.

*“In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and **the Word** was God. **He was in the beginning with God.**” (John 1:1-2)*

This term, “*the Word*,” comes from the Greek word *Logos*, meaning: *the expression of thought*.<sup>98</sup> In the Scriptures, *Logos* is one of God’s personal titles. God and His Word are One.

All things were created by *the Word*.

God could have just *thought* the world into existence and in an instant all would have been in place and functioning. But that is not what He did. He *expressed* His thoughts. He *spoke*.

*The Word* spoke the world into existence in six orderly days.

Did the Almighty *need* six days to accomplish the task?

No, the timeless One did not need any amount of time. However, by creating our world in this way, God not only established the seven-day week,<sup>99</sup> He also provided us with insights into His personality and character. This is important since an unknown God can neither be trusted, obeyed, nor worshiped.

Let us now look, listen, and learn from the creation account, as reported by the Creator Himself.

## DAY 1: LIGHT AND TIME – GOD IS HOLY

*“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Genesis 1:3-5)*

On day one, God brought light to the creation scene. He also established time, causing the earth to begin its 24-hour rotation: the astronomical clock that regulates day and night. Yet God would not create the sun, moon, and stars until day four.

There was a time when scientists argued that the existence of *light* before the existence of *the sun* was scientifically inaccurate. This is no longer the case. Today even scientists who don’t believe

the creation record assert that light existed before and independent of earth's sun.<sup>100</sup>

By providing *light* (Day 1) before creating earth's *light-bearers* (Day 4), the Creator was demonstrating that He is the uncreated Source of light—physical and spiritual. Apart from Him, there is only darkness.

As we make our way through the Scriptures, we will continually encounter the Source of Light, culminating with a peek into Paradise itself where God's people "*will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.*" (Revelation 22:5 NIV)

Light remains a mystery even to the best minds. Physicists know a good bit about what it *does*, but understand very little about what it *is*. In science, light is an *absolute*. It travels at 300,000 kilometers (186,000 miles) per second. In physics, when Albert Einstein discovered  $E = mc^2$  (energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light squared), the awesome and terrifying atomic-nuclear age began. Light is unaffected by its environment. It can shine on a stinking garbage dump, but the light itself remains pure. Light cannot coexist with darkness. It dispels it.

God, the Source of light, is *the Ultimate Absolute*. His awesome splendor is terrifying to any living being unequipped to dwell in His presence.

God is pure and holy.

The word *holy* means: *divided, set apart, or that which is other*. God is *other*. There is none like Him. The angels surrounding His radiant throne in Heaven continually cry out, "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD!*" (Isaiah 6:3) Holiness is the only characteristic of God that is repeated in groups of three in Scripture—for emphasis. He is holy, "*dwelling in unapproachable light.*" (1 Timothy 6:16)

God cannot coexist with evil. He separates light from darkness. Only pure and righteous beings can live with Him.

*"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."* (1 John 1:5-6)

The first day of creation proclaims that God is **holy**.

**DAY 2: AIR AND WATER – GOD IS ALMIGHTY**

*“Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ ... and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.”*  
(Genesis 1:6-8)

The second day of creation focuses on two elements upon which all living organisms would depend: air and water.

The Hebrew word *firmament* refers to the great arch of expanse over our heads, in which are placed the atmosphere and clouds, and in which the stars can be seen. Think of the atmosphere’s perfectly balanced composition of gases such as oxygen and nitrogen, water vapor and carbon dioxide, ozone and more. Change the mix and we’re dead. God knew what He was doing.

Think of the trillions of tons of water vapor suspended in the atmosphere above us. What kind of wisdom and power was required to create and maintain that precise mixture of air and water—just by speaking?

*“He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”* (Psalm 33:9)

Like every other day of creation, the second day reminds us that our Creator is **almighty**.

**DAY 3: LAND AND PLANTS – GOD IS GOOD**

*“Then God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear’; and it was so. ... And God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself... And God saw that it was good.’”* (Genesis 1:9-12)

On day three God divided the land from the sea and spoke into existence all vegetation. *“And God saw that it was good.”* He put

just the right amount of liquid water on our planet. He has never needed to add any since that day.<sup>101</sup>

God designed each plant and tree to yield seed and to produce vegetables or fruit “*according to its kind.*” Why did God make all this food? He made it because He “*formed the earth...to be inhabited.*” (Isaiah 45:18) The earth is unique in our solar system. It is the only planet designed to sustain and enrich life.

Think, for example, of some benefits we reap from plants: vital oxygen, nourishing vegetables, delicious fruits, refreshing shade, useful woods, necessary medicines, colorful and fragrant flowers, beautiful landscapes, and much more.

When it comes to food, God could have made just a few things for us to eat—like bananas, beans, and rice. We could live on that. But that is not what God did. Scientists estimate that our earth has two million varieties of plants used for food and forage.

In Genesis chapter one, God declares seven times that His creation was “*good.*” Throughout the Scriptures, the number seven denotes perfection. Everything God made was perfectly good.

That’s because He is perfectly good.

“*God...gives us richly all things to enjoy.*” (1 Timothy 6:17)

Day three teaches us God is **good**.

#### DAY 4: CELESTIAL LIGHTS – GOD IS FAITHFUL

“*Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years...’ Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.*” (Genesis 1:14-16)

Day four reveals a God of order. He is the One “*who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night.*” (Jeremiah 31:35 NIV) By night, the fixed order of the stars provides a reliable map for travelers on land and sea. By day, the sun dependably clicks off days and years. The moon regulates the months and tides.



Like the sun and stars, earth's moon bears constant witness to the dependability of the One who made it. God calls the moon "*the faithful witness in the sky.*" (Psalm 89:37) From every location on earth, the lunar planet constantly faces the earth, never revealing its backside.<sup>102</sup> With clockwork precision it waxes and wanes. The moon is faithful because the One who made it is faithful.

Because God is faithful, there is something He *cannot* do. He cannot contradict His own nature, nor can He ignore His own laws. "*He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. ... It is impossible for God to lie.*" (2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 6:18) Many people think God is so "great" that He can do that which is contrary to His own character, or go back on His word. That is not God's definition of "great."

*Fickleness* is not a part of His character—*faithfulness* is. Like the fixed order of the planets and constellations, our Creator-Sustainer is dependable.

You can trust Him.

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from **the Father of lights**, with whom there is **no variation** or shadow of turning."* (James 1:17)

The fourth day of creation bears witness that God is **faithful**.

## DAY 5: FISH AND FOWL – GOD IS LIFE

On day five, in His infinite wisdom and power, God created creatures of every kind to inhabit sea and sky, equipping them to move efficiently in their unique environments—the fish in the water with their gills and fins, and the birds in the air with their light bones and feathers.

*"God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.' So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."* (Genesis 1:20-21 NIV)





Notice the wording, “*Let the water teem with living creatures.*” *Teem* means “*to be crammed, packed with.*” Microbiologists tell us that a single drop of pond water can contain millions of living microorganisms and that many are as complex as some larger animals! The largest of the ocean’s incredible array of creatures, the blue whale, feeds entirely on plankton—minuscule plants and animals that float in the sea.

The ocean is one huge collection of God’s living miracles.

The same could be said of the amazing assortment of birds that fly across the sky.

Notice also the words, “*according to their kinds.*” This phrase is repeated ten times in Genesis chapter one, declaring the stability of each kind of living organism. The Author of Life decreed that each plant and creature should reproduce “*according to its kind.*” Man’s hypothesis of evolution goes against this invariable natural law. While there can be variations, mutations, and adaptations within each kind of living creature, none can “evolve” beyond the distinct limits set by the Creator. The fossil record is witness.

God alone is the Source and Sustainer of that unique energy called *life*. Apart from Him there is only death.

*“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life.”* (John 1:3-4)

The abundant living creatures created on day five teach us that God is **life**.

## **DAY 6: ANIMALS AND MAN – GOD IS LOVE**

At the start of the sixth day, the Creator made tens of thousands of fascinating mammals, reptiles, and insects.

*“God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”* (Genesis 1:25)

God made them all, some big and some small, giving to each the intuitive knowledge required to live and contribute to the

natural world, each producing offspring in its own likeness, each caring for its young.

When God created the animal kingdom everything “*was good.*” No evil or bloodshed had yet entered the scene. Animals were designed to live on a vegetarian diet. God said, “*To every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.*” (Genesis 1:30) There was no creature-eat-creature food chain. Hostility and fear were unknown. God’s kindness was reflected in everything. A lion would graze next to a lamb, and a cat and bird would enjoy one another’s company. The world was a perfectly peaceful place.

Once God finished creating the animals, it was time to form His masterpiece: *man and woman*. God had a plan whereby humans would become His devoted subjects in a glorious, joyful, everlasting kingdom of love.

For our Creator, love is more than something He does. Love is what He *is*.

“*God is love.*” (1 John 4:8)

God’s creative acts on day six declare that He is **love**.

### “LET US”

It is because God is love that He created a beautiful world for the people who were to become the objects and recipients of His love. And so still on the sixth day:

“*Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’*” (Genesis 1:26)

Stop!! Wait a minute! What was that? Did God really say, “*Let **Us** make man in **Our** image*”?

Since God is ONE, who is the “*US*” and “*OUR*”?

To whom was He speaking?



## CHAPTER 8 REVIEW

# WHAT GOD IS LIKE

1. In your opinion, why, in the first chapter of His book, does God make no attempt to prove His existence?
2. What are angels and why did God create them?
3. How can God be one, yet be in more than one place at a time?
4. Why is it important for us to know something about God's personality and character?
5. List six character traits (attributes) of God, which He displayed on the six days of creation. Of these six attributes, is there one for which you are particularly thankful today? Why?
6. In your own words, explain Psalm 33:9. *"He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."*

# 9

## NONE LIKE HIM

*“God is God... the great God, mighty and awesome....”*

— Prophet Moses (Deuteronomy 10:17)

**WARNING:** This next stage of the journey will take travelers outside their comfort zone. Minds will be stretched and hearts will be tested. Nonetheless, all who make it through this section will be well-equipped to face the remaining challenges that lie ahead.

### GOD IS GOD

Most of us share the belief that God is greater than what we would naturally conceive Him to be.

The sincerity of our belief is about to be tested.

On the sixth day of creation, after God finished creating the animal kingdom, He said: *“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”* (Genesis 1:26)

In the next chapter, we will muse on some of the ways the original man and woman were made to reflect God’s nature and likeness, but first another question must be answered.

Since God is *One*, why did He say, *“Let Us make...”*? Why did He not declare, *“I will make man in My image, according to My likeness”*? Why does God sometimes refer to Himself as *Us*, *Our*, and *We*?<sup>103</sup>

Some contend that God's use of "*Us*" and "*We*" is the "plural of majesty," such as a king who speaks of himself as "we." While God is incomparably majestic in power and glory, Hebrew grammar provides no solid basis for this "plural of majesty" explanation.

Others believe God was speaking to the angels when He said, "*Let Us make man in Our image*," even though angels are not mentioned in the text, nor was man made in the image of angels.

What is clear from a plain reading of the Scriptures and from a scrutiny of the grammar, is that our Creator chose to describe Himself in a plural yet singular fashion.

PLURAL: "*God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image.'*"

SINGULAR: "*So God created man in His own image.*"

(Genesis 1:26-27)

God's description of Himself as both plural and singular is consistent with who He is and who He has always been.

The complexity and magnitude of God's oneness goes far beyond many people's superficial definition of "one." The Infinite One will not fit into man's self-conceived mold.

God is God.

*"From everlasting to everlasting, You are God."*

(Psalm 90:2)

## GOD'S COMPLEX ONENESS

God's Book opens with these words:

*"In the beginning **GOD** [Elohim – masculine plural noun] created [singular verb conjugation]... And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters. Then **God said**, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."*<sup>104</sup>

GOD created all things by His Word and His Spirit.

*"By **the word of the LORD** the heavens were made, and all the host of them by **the breath of His mouth**."*

(Psalm 33:6)

## HIS WORD

For all who want to learn about the complex nature of their Creator, the Scriptures provide ample information. For example, the Gospel according to John opens with these words:

*“In the beginning was **the Word**,  
and the Word was **with God**,  
and the Word was **God**.  
**He** was in the beginning with God.  
All things were made through **Him**....”* (John 1:1-3)

As we considered in the previous chapter, “*the Word*” is the *outward expression of God’s inward thoughts*. Even as you are one with your thoughts and words, so God is One with His Word. “*The Word*” is declared to be both “*with God*” (distinct from Him) and “*God*” (one with Him).

It is also helpful to observe that the personal pronouns “*He*” and “*Him*” are used when referring to “*the Word*.”

## HIS SPIRIT

Just as the LORD God describes *His Word* in a distinctive, personal way, so He describes *His Spirit* in a distinctive, personal kind of way.

*“You send forth **Your Spirit**, they are created;  
and **You** renew the face of the earth.”* (Psalm 104:30)

*“**By His Spirit He adorned the heavens.**”* (Job 26:13)

*“Where can I go from **Your Spirit**?  
Or where can I flee from **Your presence**?”* (Psalm 139:7)

*“**The Holy Spirit... He will teach you all things.**”* (John 14:26)

Like *the Word* (who spoke forth creation), *the Holy Spirit* (who carried out the commands of *the Word*) is perfectly One with God.

## GOD IS GREAT

Most monotheists have no problem agreeing with the following excerpt from one of King David's many recorded prayers: "***You are great, O LORD GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.***" (2 Samuel 7:22)

Yet many who are quick to affirm, "God is great! God is God, there is none like Him!" are equally quick to reject God's own revelation of His plural yet singular nature.

Since "there is none like Him," should we be surprised if the Almighty reveals Himself to be greater and more complex than we would naturally imagine? God urges us to think correct thoughts about Him.

*"You thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you!"* (Psalm 50:21)

## GOD IS ONE

Orthodox Jews regularly repeat a prayer known in Hebrew as the *Shema*, which states: "*Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai **echad**,*" meaning, "*The Lord our God, the Lord is **one**.*" This prayer is from the Torah: "*Hear [Shema], O Israel: The LORD [YHWH] our God, the LORD is **one** [echad]!*" (Deuteronomy 6:4)

The Hebrew word used to describe God's oneness is *echad*. This word is often used to describe a *compound unity*, such as a *cluster* of grapes. Elsewhere in Scripture, *echad* is translated "*a unit*" in referring to a captain and his soldiers.<sup>105</sup> In the next chapter, this word will pop up again as the first man and his wife become *echad*, that is, "***one** flesh.*" (Genesis 2:24) By looking at other verses in which this same Hebrew word is used it becomes clear that the term by which God describes His oneness can include more than one entity.

The Old Testament contains scores of verses alluding to and affirming God's plural oneness.<sup>106</sup> Here is one example:

*"From the beginning... I was there. And now **the Lord GOD and His Spirit** have sent **Me**."* (Isaiah 48:16)

Who is “*the Lord GOD*”?

Who is “*His Spirit*”?

Who is the “*I*” and the “*Me*” sent by “*the Lord GOD and His Spirit*”?

These questions will be answered with clarity as we think our way through the Scriptures.

### TRI-UNITIES WE AGREE ON

Our English word “unity” comes from the Latin *unus*, meaning “one.” While most people reject the concept of God as an eternal tri-unity, few dare deny the three-in-one unities that fill our everyday lives.

For example, **time** forms a kind of tri-unity with its *past*, *present*, and *future*.

**Space** is another, consisting of *height*, *length*, and *width*.

**A human** is composed of *spirit*, *soul*, and *body*.

**One man** can be a *father*, a *son*, and a *husband*.

**The sun** is also a tri-unity. Even though earth has only one sun, yet we call

the *celestial body* **the sun**,

its *light* **the sun**,

and its *heat* **the sun**.

Does that make three suns? No. The sun is not three, but one. There is no contradiction between the sun being one and a tri-unity. So it is with God. As the light and the heat of the sun proceed from the sun, so *the Word of God* and *the Spirit of God* proceed from God. Yet they are ONE, even as the sun is one.

Of course, all earthly illustrations fall short of adequately explaining the complexity of the one true God. Unlike the sun, He is a personal, loving, and knowable Being. Nonetheless, such illustrations should lead us to common ground since all agree that tri-unities exist in creation and most agree that the Creator transcends His creation.

*“He who built the house has more honor than the house.  
For every house is built by someone, but He who built all  
things is God.”* (Hebrews 3:3-4)



If God's creation is filled with complex unities, should it surprise us if God Himself is a complex unity? If, with all our scientific knowledge, we cannot fully explain the world in which we live, how much less can we explain the One who created it?

God is God.

***“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.”***

(Job 11:7-9 NIV)

It is as we probe *“the mysteries of God,”* that we will be privileged to discover and experience one of the most wonderful attributes of His eternal nature:

*“God is **love**.”* (1 John 4:8)

## WHOM DID GOD LOVE?

The love of God is an incomprehensibly deep affection that flows from His Father-heart and expresses itself in practical ways.<sup>107</sup> Since God *is* love, His love is not contingent on the loveliness of the recipient.

*“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”* (1 John 3:1 NIV)

Here is something to think about. Love requires a recipient. I don't just say, “I love,” but I can say, “I love my wife, I love my children, I love my neighbors,” and so on.

Love calls for an object.

***So whom did God love before He created special living beings as objects of His love?*** Did He *need* to create angels and people? No, our Creator is *self-sufficient*. He created spirit beings and human beings not because He *needed* them, but because He *wanted* them. The difference is significant.

As we already learned: ***God speaks.***

Speech can only exist in a meaningful way in the context of a relationship. ***With whom did He speak before He created angels and humans?*** Did He *need* to create other beings to have someone to understand His words? No, all God “needs” is within Himself. He needs nothing. God is self-sufficient and self-satisfied. Yet it is part of His nature to want to speak and be spoken to, to love and be loved.

This leads us to another truth: ***God is relational.***

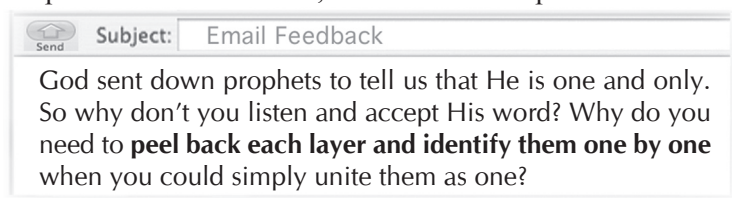
Love and speech can only exist in a meaningful way in the context of a relationship. ***With whom did God enjoy a relationship before He created other beings?***

The answer is embedded in God’s complex unity.

In eternity, before He created angels or man, our relational God enjoyed a satisfying and intimate relationship of love and communication within Himself—with His personal Word and personal Spirit.

## PEELING BACK THE LAYERS

In response to such deep thoughts about the plural, interpersonal nature of God, one e-mail correspondent wrote:



While it is true that we will never be able to understand *all* there is to know about our infinite Creator, should we not seek to understand what God *has* revealed about Himself in the writings of His prophets? If we are to think of God at all, we must think about Him accurately.

Most of us agree that God is ONE. But what has this ONE GOD revealed about Himself? What can we discover about Him in the Scriptures as we “peel back each layer”?

We encounter a personal, knowable, and trustworthy *God* who is ONE with His *Word* and *Spirit*.

In His infinite greatness, God has identified Himself as **the Father**, His Word as **the Son**, and His Spirit as **the Holy Spirit**. These are the three personal distinctions within the one true God.

Let's look at a few Scriptures that "peel back" this truth.

## THE SON OF GOD

The Scripture makes it clear that the same *Word* who was with God in the beginning is also called *God's one and only Son*.

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with God**, and the Word **was God**. ... No one has ever seen God, but **God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side**, has made him known. ... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of **God's one and only Son**."* (John 1:1,18; 3:18 NIV)

In Senegal, people sometimes react to the term "*Son of God*" by muttering, "*Astaghferullah!*" This Arabic formula carries the idea: "*May God forgive you for uttering such blasphemy!*" (Blasphemy can be defined as "*mockery of God*.") On occasion, I have responded to their rebuke by quoting one of their own proverbs: "*Before you slap the shepherd on the mouth, you should find out what he is whistling about.*" They laugh and then I tell them, "Before you reject the expression '*Son of God*,' you should find out what God has said about it."

The Scriptures contain more than a hundred verses that directly refer to God's "*Son*," yet none of these verses imply "more than one God," nor do they suggest that God "took a wife and had a son," as some choose to interpret the term. Such thinking is not only blasphemous; it also reveals a shallow grasp of the Scriptures.<sup>108</sup>

God invites us to think His thoughts.

*"As the heavens are **higher** than the earth, so are My ways **higher** than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:9)

Many years ago a well-known Senegalese businessman was killed in an automobile accident. Senegal's national newspaper reported that this man's two thousand employees were "like his own children," and eulogized him as "a great son of Senegal."<sup>109</sup> Did these words imply that the country of Senegal had relations with a woman and engendered a son? Of course not! The Senegalese people have no problem honoring a well-loved citizen with this title. They understand what the expression "son of Senegal" means. They also know what it does *not* mean.

The term "son" is used in a number of ways. When the Qur'an and Arabs refer to a *wayfaring traveler* as a "son of the road" (*ibn al-sabil* [Sura 2:177,215]), we know what they mean. When Almighty God refers to *His Word* as *His Son*, we should know what He means too.

Let us not mock the titles and terms our Creator magnifies.

*"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by **the word** of His power...."* (Hebrews 1:1-3)

God wants us to know that He has "*spoken to us by **His Son**.*" He also wants us to understand that *His Son* is *the Word* by which all things in heaven and earth were created and are sustained. In Arabic translations of the Bible, the Son's title as "*the Word of God*" is translated "*Kalimat Allah*," a title both the Bible and Qur'an ascribe to the Messiah. Later in our journey, we'll take a closer look at this.

## THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Even as God is One with *His Word-Son*, so He is One with *His Holy Spirit*.

The Holy Spirit of God was involved both in creating the world and in inspiring God's written Word. The second sentence

of the Bible declares that, when God created the world, “*the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*” And later the Scripture states: “*Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*” (2 Peter 1:21 NIV)

Some people teach that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel. Others have convinced themselves that the Spirit of God is a prophet. Such conclusions do not come from the Scriptures of the prophets. Angels and men are created beings. The Holy Spirit is the uncreated, “*eternal Spirit.*” (Hebrews 9:14)<sup>110</sup>

The Holy Spirit is “*the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:17), by whom God carries out His purposes in the world. He is “*the Helper*” (John 14:16) who reveals God in a close and experiential way to all who believe God’s message. Many people on earth today know *about* God without *knowing God*. Such knowledge does not satisfy God or man. It is the Holy Spirit who makes it possible for people to enjoy a personal relationship with God. Later, we will learn more about God’s wonderful Holy Spirit.<sup>111</sup>

How goes the journey? A bit overwhelming? These are not easy-to-grasp thoughts. Some people claim their religion and definition of God must be true “because it is so simple.” Their definition of God may be simple, but God is not simple.

“*‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD.*” (Isaiah 55:8)

## FOREVER ONE

The Scriptures are clear. There has never been a time in all eternity when the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did not exist.<sup>112</sup> They have always been ONE. In the context of human history, the Scriptures reveal the *Father* as the One who speaks from *heaven*, the *Son* as the One who spoke on *earth* and the *Holy Spirit* as the One who speaks to the *heart*.<sup>113</sup> Each is distinct in His role, yet they are ONE.

It is as people grow in the knowledge of God’s revelation of Himself that they begin to delight in the richness of the ONE who is love and who shows His infinite love in practical ways.

Love can only exist in a meaningful way in the context of a relationship. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always enjoyed an interactive relationship of perfect love and unity. Elsewhere in Scripture, we hear the Son saying, “*I love the Father*” and “*the Father loves the Son.*” The Scripture also declares that “*the fruit of the Spirit is love.*” (John 5:20; 14:31; Galatians 5:22)

The best of human relationships—such as the oneness between a man and his wife, or the bond between father, mother, and child—flow out of *who God is*. Such earthly relationships, at their very best, are but faint reflections of God’s awe-inspiring oneness and love. Our Creator is the original source, pattern, and purpose of all that is good.

“*God is love.*” (1 John 4:8)

The best part about “*God is love*” is that He invites you and me to enjoy a close relationship with Him forever! He simply wants our trust, even though He cannot be fully explained.

## GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY

Think back over what we observed about God from the six days of creation. As a mathematical equation, it looks like this:

Day 1: God is holy  
 + Day 2: God is almighty  
 + Day 3: God is good  
 + Day 4: God is faithful  
 + Day 5: God is life  
 + Day 6: God is love  
 = TRUSTWORTHY GOD

Isn’t it strange that we are quick to trust people who fall short in these qualities, yet we are reluctant to trust the One who possesses these attributes in perfection?

When I drop a letter in the mailbox, I trust the postal service to deliver that letter. How much more should I be able to trust the Creator-Sustainer-Owner of the universe to keep His promises!

*“If we receive the witness of men, **the witness of God is greater**... he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.” (1 John 5:9-10)*

## GOD’S PERSONAL NAME

God wants us to know Him, trust Him, and call on His name.

*“Those who **know Your name** will put their **trust in You**; for You, **LORD**, have not forsaken those who seek You.”*  
(Psalm 9:10)

Many people think that God’s name is simply “*God*”—or *Elohim* (Hebrew) or *Allah* (Arabic<sup>114</sup>) or *Alaha* (Aramaic) or *Dieu* (French) or *Dios* (Spanish) or *Gott* (German), or whatever generic term is used in the language they speak.

Indeed, God is God (the Supreme Being), but is “God” His *name*? Would that not be like me saying my name is “Human”? I am a human, but I also have a personal name. God is God, but He also has names by which He has revealed Himself and by which He invites us to address Him as a Person.

Many imagine God to be some kind of unknowable source of energy like gravity and wind, or like “the Force” portrayed in a popular series of science fiction films. This is not the biblical concept of God.

God is the Ultimate Personality who wants you to know Him in a personal way.

Not only is the concept of God as a personality biblical, it is logical. Just as humans are not mere balls of cosmic energy, neither is the One who made all things. He is a Personal Being with a name.

God’s primary personal name is first revealed in the second chapter of Genesis.

*“This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that **the LORD** God made the earth and the heavens.”* (Genesis 2:4)

Did you notice the name by which God refers to Himself?

His name is “*the LORD*.” At least that is how it has been translated into English. Thankfully, God is fluent in all languages and does not require us to address Him in any one particular language. He invites us to speak to Him in our mother tongue, at any time, in any place, facing any direction, in our heart language.

## I AM

In Hebrew, God’s primary personal name, “*the LORD*,” is written with four consonants: **YHWH**. When vowels are added, it is pronounced as *YaHWeH* or *YeHoWaH*. The name is derived from the Hebrew verb “*to be*” and literally means “**I AM**” or “**HE IS**.” This teaches us that God is *the Self-Existent Eternal One*. This personal name of God is used more than 6,500 times in the Old Testament, more than any other name of God.

Listen to what God declared, when Moses, who had been raised in polytheistic Egypt, asked God to tell him His name.

*“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.’”* (Exodus 3:14)

Only a personal being can say “I am.” God wants us to understand that He is the Ultimate Person. His name is *I AM*.

He is *the One who IS*.

Past, present, and future are nothing to Him. His existence transcends time and space.

He is self-sufficient.

You and I need air, water, food, sleep, housing, and other elements to live, but He needs nothing. He is the One who reasons and exists by His own power. He is the Great *I AM*—the LORD. (Note: In the English Bible, whenever the name LORD appears in capital letters, the original Hebrew word for LORD is YHWH, meaning *the Self-Existing Eternal One*.)

God has not left it up to man to define Him.

He is the self-defining One.



## HUNDREDS OF NAMES


In His eternal existence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the LORD bears hundreds of names and titles. God's names reflect His character. Each title is intended to help us better understand who God is and what He is like. For example, He is called:

*The Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Author of Life, the Most High, the True Light, the Holy One, the Righteous Judge, the LORD who Provides, the LORD who Heals, the LORD our Righteousness, the LORD our Peace, the LORD my Shepherd, the God of Love and Peace, the God of All Grace, the Author of Eternal Salvation, the God who is Near at Hand...*

Whatever our present understanding of our Creator, each of us should humbly admit that *He is God and **there is none like Him***. Even though He cannot be fully explained or understood, He wants us to know His name and to trust Him, love Him, and live forever with Him. It was with this purpose in mind that God said on the sixth day of creation:

*"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." (Genesis 1:26)*

What did He mean? How could visible man bear the image of the invisible God?



## CHAPTER 9 REVIEW

# NONE LIKE HIM

1. In the first chapter of Genesis, God, who is one, introduces Himself with the plural pronouns “Us” and “We”. What do you consider to be the best explanation for this?
2. Can three-in-one unities from everyday life help us to better understand the complex nature of our Creator? Explain.
3. What does the term “Son of God” not imply?
4. State three things the Scriptures reveal about the Holy Spirit.
5. How is the biblical definition of God different from the popular concept that God is an unknowable force?
6. In your own words, explain Psalm 9:10. *“Those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.”*

# 10

## A SPECIAL CREATION

**T**wo chapters ago, we reflected on one of the greatest declarations of all time: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Genesis 1:1) Here is another:

***“God created man in His own image.”*** (Genesis 1:27)

God designed humans to be the crown of His creation.

### IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

*“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in **Our image**, according to **Our likeness**; let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”* (Genesis 1:26-27)

God creating man “*in His own image*” does *not* mean the first humans were like God in every way. God has no equal.

“*God created man in His own image*” means that humans would *share in God’s nature*. Man was designed to reflect God’s character. God gave the first man and woman characteristics that would allow them to enjoy a meaningful relationship with Him.

God blessed humans with an *intellect*, giving them the ability to ask big questions, reason logically, and grasp deep truths about their Creator.

God made them with *emotions* so they could experience feelings such as joy and empathy.

He also gave them a *will*, which included both the freedom and the responsibility to make choices of eternal consequence.

Further, He endowed them with the ability to communicate—to speak, gesture, and sing. He also enabled them to make long-term plans and to carry out those plans with amazing creativity. Most importantly, He entrusted them with *an eternal soul and spirit* so they might worship and enjoy their Creator-Owner forever.

Such capacities set mankind apart from the animal kingdom.

God created humans *for Himself*. The God who “*is love*” (1 John 4:8) created man and woman, not because He *needed* them, but because He *wanted* them. People would become the recipients and reflectors of His love.

## THE HUMAN BODY

While chapter 1 of Genesis presents a concise history of how God created the world, chapter 2 fills in the details, particularly with regard to the creation of humans.

*“The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* (Genesis 2:7)

Although the LORD created the heavens and the earth from nothing, He chose to create the first man from *dust*. Present day biologists affirm this fact: “In a way, the body seems almost unimpressive. The twenty-odd commonplace elements that compose it are all present in the earth’s dry *dust*.”<sup>115</sup>

While the human body is composed of such lowly elements, it is, nonetheless, a miraculous piece of craftsmanship put together with approximately seventy-five trillion (75,000,000,000,000) living cells—each with its specific role to play.

The cell is the basic unit of life. A cell is so small that it can only be seen under a powerful microscope, yet it is packed with millions of working parts. Each cell contains a two-meter-long (six foot) microscopic twisted strand of DNA, the genetic code for a person's basic features.

Bill Gates, the famous computer software guru, stated, "Human DNA is like a computer program but far, far more advanced than any software ever created."<sup>116</sup> There are at least 200 different types of cells in the human body. Some make liquids such as blood; others create soft tissues and organs, while still others unite to make hard bones. Some cells bind body parts together, while others organize the body's functions, such as the digestive and reproductive systems.<sup>117</sup>

Think of your body's structure and working parts: the skeleton with its 206 bones bound and garnished with ligaments, tendons, muscles, skin and hair; or the circulatory system with veins, arteries and blood, transporting the ingredients of life itself. Then there is the stomach, intestines, kidneys and liver. There is also the intricately-wired nervous system connected to your brain. And don't forget the faithful pump called the heart, or that God has provided you with eyes, ears, a nose, mouth and tongue, along with vocal cords, taste buds and teeth! Those feet and hands are rather useful too! And have you ever thanked God for giving you thumbs? Try to use a broom or hammer without one! Those fingernails come in pretty handy too...

No wonder the prophet David wrote,

*"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well!"* (Psalm 139:14)

## SOUL AND SPIRIT

As marvelous as the human body is, it is not the body that makes humans so special. Animals, birds, and fish have amazing bodies too. Man's uniqueness is found in his *human soul* and *eternal spirit*. It is the soul and spirit that set apart the first man and woman as special beings made "*in the image of God.*"

Thus, once God finished forming man's body from dust, He *"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."* (Genesis 2:7) The body God made for Adam was merely the housing, or tent, into which God placed Adam's eternal spirit and soul.

God gave man a body so that he could be aware of the world around him, a soul so that man could be aware of his inner self, and a spirit so that man could be aware of God.

The *body* was to be governed by the soul,  
the *soul* was to be governed by the spirit,  
and the *spirit* was to be governed by God Himself.<sup>118</sup>

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

## CREATED FOR A PURPOSE

The Master Craftsman created man to be a kind of tri-unity, linking *"spirit, soul, and body"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23) and making it possible for humans to enjoy close friendship with their Creator. God had given life to man and now it would be man's exalted privilege to live for the pleasure and praise of his Creator-Owner.

*"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory... This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise."* (Isaiah 43:7,21)

Humans were created for God's glory.

The earth was made for mankind, but mankind was made for God. The Creator's intent was that the first humans might know Him, enjoy Him, and love Him forever. That is also His intent for you and me.

*"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."* (Mark 12:30)

## A PERFECT ENVIRONMENT

After God created Adam, He planned and planted a luxuriant garden called *Eden*.

*“The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.”* (Genesis 2:8-10)

Eden, probably located in the land known today as Iraq<sup>119</sup>, was a vast garden of endless delights, filled with wonderful sights, sounds, and smells. A sparkling river watered the garden. Luscious fruit trees lined its banks. There were untold varieties of fruits to be tasted, sweet-smelling flowers to be appreciated, towering trees and lush meadows to be gazed on, beasts, birds and bugs to be studied, mysterious woodlands to be explored, gold and precious stones to be discovered. Indeed, God had provided for Adam *“richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17)

God also planted two special trees in the middle of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Eden means *pleasure*. God had created this wonderful home for man’s enjoyment, but the greatest of all pleasures would be for man to enjoy fellowship with his Creator.

Nothing is more wonderful than knowing God personally and being with Him. ***“In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*** (Psalm 16:11)

## A SATISFYING TASK

Once the garden was ready, the LORD put man in it. God didn’t ask Adam if he wanted to live there. God was man’s Maker and therefore man’s Owner. The LORD knows what is best for mankind and doesn’t have to answer to anyone for what He does.

*“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” (Genesis 2:15)*

God gave Adam two responsibilities in his new home.

First, he was *“to tend”* the garden, but without sweat, toil, and tiredness. It would be a thoroughly enjoyable task, since everything was good. There were no thorns to get pricked on and no weeds to pull.

Second, Adam was given the responsibility to *“keep it.”* Could this last phrase hint of some malevolent, dangerous element lurking in the universe?

That question will be answered soon enough.

### A SIMPLE RULE

Since man was a person and not a puppet, God also gave Adam one straightforward rule to obey.

*“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden **you may freely eat**; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”*

(Genesis 2:16-17)

God gave the man this command before He created the woman. God had appointed Adam to be the head of the human race and God held Adam responsible to uphold this one rule.

### THE FIRST WOMAN

Next, God created the woman. And what a special creation she was!

*“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ ... So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and*



*he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.'*

(Genesis 2:18,21-25 NIV)

Thus, God performed the first operation, fashioning from Adam's side a beautiful and lovely wife and then personally presenting her to Adam.

How Adam rejoiced in the close and loving companion and "helper" God had provided for him! The late biblical scholar Matthew Henry wrote, "The woman was made... out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."<sup>120</sup>

Like the man, the woman was made *in the image and likeness of God*—created to reflect the LORD's character and enjoy spiritual oneness with Him forever. While the Creator established definite order and distinctive roles for the man and the woman, He declared them equal in value and importance.

Today, contrary to God's intention, many societies treat their women like a piece of property. I have seen people celebrate when a male child is born and express disappointment when a female is born. Some men show more care and concern for their livestock than for their wife. Some societies have gone to another extreme, choosing to ignore the distinct male-female roles and responsibilities God has assigned to each. Both extremes degrade women.

## THE FIRST WEDDING

Notice who officiated the first marriage ceremony.

It was *the LORD*. The Scripture says, "**He** brought her to the man." From the start, the Creator was directly involved in the lives of the people He had created for Himself. He is the One

who declared that *“a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become **one** flesh.”* The Hebrew word used for *“one”* is *echad*, denoting oneness and unity. God designed the first couple to enjoy and serve one another, *and* to enjoy and serve HIM, forever in perfect harmony. He wanted the man and woman to make their Creator-Owner the nucleus of their lives—individually and corporately.

Tragically, in our present world, most people ignore God’s original blueprint for marriage and are clueless as to how increasingly wonderful the relationship between one man and one woman can be as the years go by. As a result, they fail to reflect the loving, faithful, unselfish, and cherished relationship that the LORD, from the beginning, intended for a man and his wife.

The Creator’s authorship of marriage between man and wife is a reflection of God’s immeasurable heart of love. God intends for the bond of marriage to illustrate the even closer, more wonderful, growing, *spiritual* relationship He invites people to enjoy with Him now and throughout eternity.

Did you notice how the Author of marriage defines marriage? *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be **united** to his wife, and they will **become one** flesh.”* And the Scripture adds: *“The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt **no shame**.”*

God’s plan for marriage is for a couple to be united in purpose and in body, free from shame. On an even higher plane, God’s plan was for people to shamelessly enjoy *spiritual* oneness with HIM throughout eternity.

## MANKIND GIVEN DOMINION

After God presented the woman to the man, He spoke to them directly and personally. It seems that God appeared to them in a visible kind of way, since the Scripture speaks of *“the LORD God **walking** in the garden.”* (Genesis 3:8)

Now imagine the Lord leading the man and his wife up a high mountain from where they could gaze over their Creator’s glorious, pristine creation...

*“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.’”*  
(Genesis 1:28-29)

God put Adam and Eve<sup>121</sup> and their descendants in charge of His creation. He gave them the privilege and responsibility of being the “starter couple” of the human race. He granted them “dominion” over all creation. *Dominion* means “authority” and *control*. Adam and Eve and their offspring were to enjoy, care for, and wisely rule the earth. They were to use it but not abuse it.

The Creator designed creation to be in harmony with mankind. In the beginning, the earth cooperated with whatever man wanted or needed. Adam and Eve never had to wonder about where their next meal would come from. All they had to do was reach up and pick a delicious piece of fruit from any of the countless varieties of fruit trees. Hard soil, weeds and thorns, sickness and death were non-existent. Every corner of creation was submitted to Adam and Eve. Man had dominion.

Creation would be in submission to man as long as man was in submission to his Creator.

## GOD AND MAN TOGETHER

From the beginning, the LORD God intended for humans to live in close, sweet fellowship with Himself. That is why He gave Adam and Eve *minds* and *hearts* (intellect and emotions) with which to understand and love Him, and freedom of *choice* (a will) with which to decide whether or not to trust Him and obey Him. The element of choice was absolutely necessary since true love and loyalty cannot be coerced. The Sovereign Lord would hold Adam and Eve responsible for their choices.

Make no mistake about it: though the Creator and Owner of the universe needs nothing and no one, He is deeply relational.

Just as we want to be known and loved, so God wants to be known and loved by the people He made for Himself. It is part of His eternal nature to desire a heart-level friendship with those He created *“in His image.”*

I hear people say, “I am God’s slave and nothing more!” Admittedly, it is an immense honor to serve God as a willing servant works for his master, but the Scriptures are clear: God’s design was never that man should be *“a slave, but a son.”* (Galatians 4:7) *“A **slave** does not abide in the house forever, but a **son** abides forever.”* (John 8:35) God, expressing His heart’s desire anthropomorphically (in human terms), tells us what He has planned for all who trust Him:

***“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”*** (2 Corinthians 6:18)

What’s more, God does not stop at likening His love for us to the love parents have for their children. Our Creator takes the imagery to another level, comparing the bond and depth of His love for people with the love a man has for his beloved bride.

***“‘It shall be, in that day,’ says the LORD, ‘that you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master,’ ... I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.’”*** (Hosea 2:16,19-20)

Imagine the most satisfying relationship possible between two individuals on earth, and then reflect on this: The relationship God invites us to experience with Him is infinitely more wonderful than the best possible human relationship on earth.

Apart from entering into a personal relationship with your Creator, your life will be incomplete and unsatisfying. No amount of earthly possessions, pleasure, prestige, people, or prayers can fill the void in your soul. Only the LORD can occupy the empty room in your heart He designed for Himself.

*“He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.” (Psalm 107:9)*

Here is a point not to be missed: The one true God does not delight in the *rituals of religion*, but in a *genuine relationship* with those who trust Him.

At varying levels, God has enjoyed and will forever enjoy fellowship with:

- HIMSELF. For all eternity, love and fellowship has flowed between the Eternal Father, the Eternal Son, and the Eternal Holy Spirit. For example, the Scriptures record the Son saying to the Father, *“Father... You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”* (John 17:24)
- ANGELS. He created angelic beings to know Him and love Him, and appreciate His awesome glory forever. *“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”* (Hebrews 1:6)
- PEOPLE. God created humans to one day have a closer relationship with their Creator than even the angels enjoy. King David wrote: *“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.”* (Psalm 8:3-5) God wanted to be with His people. However, man must first be tested.

## DAY 7: CREATION FINISHED

The creation narrative concludes with an important piece of information:

*“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was **very good**. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were **finished**. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had **done**, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had **done**.”*  
(Genesis 1:31; 2:1-2)

God's creative work was *done*. It was time to rejoice in all He had made. The LORD did not rest on the seventh day because He was tired. The self-existing One whose name means "*I AM*" is never tired. God rested (ceased working) because His creative work was *finished*.

The LORD God was satisfied.

Everything was perfect.

Imagine a perfect world inhabited by two perfect people who had been privileged to enjoy a growing friendship with their perfect Creator. That was the state of our planet in the beginning.

Alas, today this old earth is far from perfect. Evil and immorality, grief and pain, poverty and hunger, hatred and violence, and disease and death abound.

What happened to God's perfect world?

That is the next part of the story.



## CHAPTER 10 REVIEW

# A SPECIAL CREATION

1. The first man and woman were created “in the image of God.”  
Name three human traits that affirm this.
2. With what “material” did God create the heavens and earth?  
With what did He create the first human?
3. Name two great purposes for which God created humans.
4. What are two extreme attitudes that degrade women and go against God’s plan for humankind?
5. What is the significance of the seventh day of creation?
6. In your own words, explain John 8:35. “*A slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.*”

# ENDNOTES

## CHAPTER 8: WHAT GOD IS LIKE

<sup>94</sup> Cosmologists' attempt to figure out the history of the universe is based on a "combined observational and theoretical effort." (Loeb, Abraham. "The Dark Ages of the Universe," *Scientific American*, November 2006) While their knowledge is based on *observation and theory*, the knowledge of those who believe the Bible is based on *observation and revelation*—revelation that bears the divine signature (as observed in chapters 5 and 6 of ONE GOD ONE MESSAGE). God has revealed His truth in such a way that we can *know* it is true.

<sup>95</sup> The book of Job 38:6-7 indicates that the angels were observing and rejoicing when God created the earth. Job is a poetic book, thus angels are described as "*morning stars*" and "*sons of God*." These two expressions do not indicate different beings. This double description is an example of parallelism, a characteristic of Hebrew poetry. See also Job 1:6; 2:1.

<sup>96</sup> More than half of the Bible's 66 books refer to angels. For example: Genesis 3:24; 16:7-11; 18:1-19:1; 1 Kings 19:5-7; Psalm 103:20-21; 104:4; Daniel 6:22; Hebrews 1:4-7,14; 12:22; Matthew 1:20; 2:13,19-20; 22:30; 26:53; Luke 1 & 2; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 5:11; 18:1; 22:6-16, etc. (Revelation uses the word "angel" or "angels" more than 70 times).

<sup>97</sup> Deuteronomy 10:14; 2 Corinthians 12:2,4; John 14:2; Psalm 33:13; 115:3; 1 Kings 8:39

<sup>98</sup> Vine, W.E., M.A. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revel Company; 1966, p. 229.

<sup>99</sup> God's six days of creation and the seventh day of rest initiated for mankind a divinely appointed time cycle which is observed around the world to this day. Unlike days, months and years, *the week* is unrelated to astronomy. It is ordained by God.

<sup>100</sup> Proponents of the "big bang" hypothesis theorize that light preexisted the sun and earth by 9,000,000,000 years! (Loeb, Abraham. "The Dark Ages of the Universe," *Scientific American*; November 2006, p. 49.)

<sup>101</sup> Next time you take a drink of water, you might want to tell your Creator, "Thank You!" Besides the fact that H<sub>2</sub>O (water) quenches our



thirst and keeps us alive, it is truly amazing. Water is the only liquid that expands when frozen, thus it becomes less dense and floats. If water behaved like other matter and condensed when frozen, it would sink to the bottom of the seas, lakes and rivers. Much of it would not melt and eventually our fresh water would be locked up, frozen at the bottom. Good thing our Creator thought of this!

<sup>102</sup> The moon's dark side was first seen by man on December 24, 1968, when the Apollo 8 spacecraft orbited the moon. Interestingly, on that same day, the three astronauts read Genesis chapter 1, which was televised to earth from space. (Reynolds, David West. *Apollo: The Epic Journey to the Moon*. NY: Harcourt, Inc., 2002, pp. 110-111)

## CHAPTER 9: NONE LIKE HIM

<sup>103</sup> Additional examples in the Bible where God refers to Himself as “We” and “Us”: Genesis 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8 (Note: In the Qur’an, “Allah” constantly speaks in the plural form. The Qur’anic verses quoted in chapter 3 of ONE GOD ONE MESSAGE demonstrate this.)

<sup>104</sup> Genesis 1:1-3 While the opening section of Genesis does not explain God’s existence as a tri-unity, the way it is worded is in perfect harmony with explanations later revealed in the Bible. The Scriptures make it clear that all three Persons of the Godhead were involved in creation.

<sup>105</sup> When David became King over Israel, the Scripture narrates: “*The children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit [echad], and took their stand on top of a hill.*” (2 Samuel 2:25) The same word used to declare: “*the LORD is one*” is used to describe a unity in which there is plurality.

<sup>106</sup> Many Old Testament verses affirm God’s complex oneness: Genesis 17:1-3; 18:1-33 God appeared to Abraham in bodily form. These were face-to-face encounters and not a dream or vision. Genesis 35:9-15; Exodus 3:1-6; 6:2-3; 24:9-11; 33:10-11. Compare Exodus 33:11 with 33:20. Moses spoke face-to-face with One of the Persons in the Godhead (the Son), but he was not allowed to see the face of the other Person in the Godhead (the Father). Complex? Yes. God is God. See John 1:1-18. Here are more Old Testament passages that cannot be rightly understood apart from the concept of God’s plural oneness: Psalm 2; Psalm 110:1 (compare Matthew 22:41-46); Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 6:1-3 (compare John 12:41); Isaiah 26:3-4; Isaiah 40:3-11; Isaiah 43:10-11 (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7); Isaiah 48:16; Isaiah 63:1-14; Isaiah 49:1-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 7:13-14; Hosea 12:3-5; Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1-2, etc.

<sup>107</sup> Luke 15:11-32; Read also the First Epistle of John.

<sup>108</sup> Read Psalm 2 in which the prophet David refers to the Messiah as *God's Son*. Consider too some of the Son's other names and titles. He is called: "*the door*," (John 10) but that does not mean He is a door of wood or metal. He is also called: "*the Bread of Life*," (John 6) but that does not mean He is a loaf of bread. Nor does "*Son of God*" imply that God took a wife and had a son. Read John, chapters 1, 3 and 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Le Soleil*, March 14, 1984: «Bienfaiteur sincère, il considérait ses 2.000 employés **comme ses enfants** et partageait leur problèmes, leur soucis et leur joie. Le 'Vieux' comme l'appelaient familièrement et tendrement son personnel, était **un grand fils du Sénégal**.» (Translation: "A sincere humanitarian, he considered his 2000 employees **as his children**, sharing their problems, cares, and joys. The 'Old Man,' as his personnel tenderly called him, was **a great son of Senegal**.")

<sup>110</sup> Like God Himself, the Holy Spirit will not be forced into our preconceived mold. One of God's prophets, who was given a glimpse of Heaven, beheld the Holy Spirit as "*seven lamps of fire...burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God*." (Revelation 4:5) Another prophet described Him as the One who imparts seven qualities that come from God alone: "*The Spirit of the LORD...the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD*." (Isaiah 11:2)

<sup>111</sup> When on earth, the Son of God promised His disciples, "*The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*." (John 14:26) These words display the perfect unity that has always existed between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is a Personal Being ("*He...*"). For more about the Holy Spirit, see chapters 16, 22, and 28. Better yet, read *the Epistles* and *Acts* in the Bible, paying close attention to the role of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>112</sup> The Gospel documents the Son speaking to the Father of "*the glory which I had with You before the world was*." We also hear the Son saying: "*Father...You loved Me before the foundation of the world*." (John 17:5,24) See also Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6. As for the Holy Spirit, one of His titles is "*the eternal Spirit*." (Hebrews 9:14)

<sup>113</sup> Exodus 20:22; Hebrews 12:25; Luke 3:22; 5:24; John 1:1-18; 3:16-19; 17:22; Acts 5:3; 7:51; Galatians 4:6; etc.

<sup>114</sup> In the Arabic language, the term *Allah*, in its original meaning, is the Arabic equivalent of the English term *God*. Whether in an Old Testament verse like Genesis 1:1: "*In the beginning God created...*", or a New Testament verse like John 1:1: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*," the generic

word for *God* in Arabic is *Allah*, meaning *the Supreme Being*. It is important to understand that the Supreme Being has personal names by which He wants to be known. “Allah” is not God’s proper, personal name, although many believe it to be so. Neither is “God” His proper, personal name, though some may think it so.

## CHAPTER 10: A SPECIAL CREATION

<sup>115</sup> Guinness, Alma E. *ABC's of The Human Body*. Corporate Author: The Reader's Digest Association, 1987, p. 22.

<sup>116</sup> Gates, Bill. *The Road Ahead*. NY: Penguin Group, 1995, p. 188.

<sup>117</sup> To illustrate a greater spiritual truth, the Bible describes the harmonious system of the human body: “...*the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body....*” (Ephesians 4:16)

<sup>118</sup> These thoughts are adapted from John Phillips’ superb commentary on Genesis (Phillips, John. *Exploring Genesis*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980). **Note:** The Scripture distinguishes between spirit, soul, and body. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12-13; John 4:24.

<sup>119</sup> The notion that Eden was located in the region of Iraq is based on the geographical information of Genesis 2:13-14. **Note:** Some refer to the Garden of Eden as *the garden of paradise*, though the Scripture does not. The earthly Eden must not be confused with the heavenly Paradise.

<sup>120</sup> Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960, p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> Adam (*Adamah*) is the Hebrew word for *man*, literally meaning “red earth” because he was taken from the ground. Eve (*chavvah*) means “life”—“*because she was the mother of all living.*” (Genesis 3:19-20)

