

L LORD

OF HEAVEN & EARTH:

*LESSONS ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER
OF THE GOD OF SCRIPTURE*

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LORD OF HEAVEN & EARTH: Lesson Notes

****Class participants can prepare for each session by reading through the lesson notes and being prepared to discuss the Thought Questions in class****

LESSONS

1. TOTHEPRAISEOFHISGLORY

A lesson on Christian theology as a basis for praise to God

2. ETERNAL POWER & DIVINE NATURE

A lesson on the results and limitations of recognizing God in nature

3. MAKER OF HEAVEN & EARTH

A lesson on the identity of God revealed in the act of creation

4. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

A lesson on the transcendent nature of God

5. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A lesson on the immanent character of God

6. HOW LONG, O LORD?

A lesson on God and the problem of evil

7. THE GOD OF ISRAEL

A lesson on the story of Yahweh, Israel, and the blessing of the world

8. GOD WITH US

A lesson on the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth

9. FATHER, SON & SPIRIT

A lesson on the Trinity revealed in salvation

10. ALPHA & OMEGA

A lesson on the God who makes all things new

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LESSON 8: GOD WITH US – The Incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth

- ❖ The heart of Christian theology is that God is revealed in the life, prophetic ministry, and especially the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.
- ❖ The Kingdom of God
 - Throughout the period of the exile, the prophets looked for the restoration of Judah/Israel as the time and means of God's salvation. This would be the time for Yahweh to return to the Temple, David's heirs restored to the kingship, and the people established in righteousness as a light to the nations. (Jer. 31 / Ez. 37,43 / Is. 40-55 / Joel 2-3 / Zech. 9 / Dan. 2,7, etc.)
 - As Israel's history came into the first century their 'exile' continued under occupation of the Roman Empire.
 - The royal announcements of Jesus birth to Mary, Jewish shepherds and pagan wise men proclaimed him as the long-awaited King and Savior of Israel, the Messiah, Son of God. He is called 'Immanuel' ('God with us').
 - As an adult, Jesus begins preaching that he is ushering in the 'Kingdom of God,' making claims and performing actions which are reserved for the authority of Yahweh and the election of Israel
 - Claimed to be the royal Son of Man, Calling (12!) disciples, teaches on the fulfillment of the covenant Law of Moses, asserts authority over the Temple, claims to be Lord of the Sabbath, granted forgiveness of sins, healed the sick, exercised demons, confronted unrighteousness, controlled nature, claimed unity with God as 'Father,' etc. etc.
 - Jesus identity is defined by his association with Yahweh as the God of Israel who establishes his kingdom in the earth as a means of salvation for all the world. Thus, Jesus acts both as God, and as what God intended for his creation.
- ❖ The Victory of God
 - But Jesus' kingdom was unlike human kingdoms. It was for the humble, mourners, peacemakers, etc. and was expressed in humility. A prime example is the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as king mounted on a humble colt.
 - Ultimately, God's victory over sin, death and evil is won not by overthrowing his enemies but by suffering at their hands. He is fraudulently convicted by Israel and turned over to the Romans to be executed as a criminal.
 - As the Messiah, Jesus stands in for the sins of his people and endures the ultimate evil of humanity. He dies bearing the penalty of human sin.
 - The sacrifice of Jesus is the hidden victory of God over the dark forces of evil, who are 'condemned' and 'disarmed' by executing the innocent Son of God.
 - God's victory is manifested in Jesus' resurrection as an act of renewed creation in which sin and death no longer have any effect.
 - Jesus gives God's Spirit to his followers to proclaim his authority as Lordship over Heaven and Earth, and make disciples of all nations of the world, thus fulfilling the divine promises to David, and all the way back to Abraham.
- ❖ The Incarnation of God
 - Early Christians spoke about Jesus as the incarnation of God in two ways:

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- As the One God of Israel – Compare Duet. 6:4 to 1 Cor. 8:6; and Is. 45:18-25 to Phil. 2:9-11
- As the Creator God – see Col. 1:15-16 and John 1:1-18
- Some considerations for what the Incarnation reveals to us about the nature and character of God:
 - The character of God is revealed in the cross, where the eternal God shows love and solidarity with humanity by suffering and dying as a human being. God is able to relate to humanity and suffer with them through the pain and evils of the world.
 - The ‘scandal of particularity’ first recognized in God’s election of Israel is specified further in recognizing Jesus as the single person through whom God chooses to reveal himself and offer salvation. Only by acknowledging Jesus’ brand of kingship can one know God. Thus, Jesus is the ‘mediator of a new covenant.’ (Heb. 8:6, 9:15)
 - The point of God’s plan of salvation through the promises to Abraham was to bless all the world. Because redemption is accomplished in Christ, it is thus open to all people. This underscores the biblical notion that ‘God is no respecter of persons.’
 - Understanding Jesus as God in an ontological sense is more difficult. Christians in the centuries following the Apostles developed the idea of the DUAL NATURE OF CHRIST which indicates that Jesus was two unified (not separate) natures in one person.
- ❖ In Praise of God
 - Luke 2: 8-14 / Romans 8:31-39
- ❖ Thought Questions
 - Based on the description above of Jesus’ prophetic ministry, how would you define the phrase ‘Kingdom of God’? How would you define ‘The Gospel?’
 - In a previous lesson we discussed ‘impassibility’ as one of God’s transcendent attributes. Look back at that definition. In light of Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross, should we re-evaluate that as an attribute of God?
 - Was it necessary for Jesus to die to be the Messiah who would save Israel and the world? (Consider Peter in Matt. 16:13-23) What does the eventual crucifixion of the Messiah mean for our understanding of God’s purpose to save humanity? What does it mean for understanding God’s character?