




THREE IN ONE


Many people have tried to imagine what God is like. God says in the Bible that it is better not to try.

 *Ex 20:4,5*

The reason God says this is really quite simple. You cannot capture Him in one image. There is not one creature we know who reflects who God is. With only one exception, nobody on earth has ever seen God as He really is. We would preferably portray God as a person, animal, water, fire or something like that, so that we have an idea of who He is. And yet we read that God doesn't want that, because we wouldn't do Him justice. We cannot understand, comprehend or fathom Him with our human mind. How can a creation completely grasp who its maker is?

Who is He?

Fortunately God lets us know in many other ways who He is! What He looks like is apparently not important. God says at creation for example, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

 *Gen 1:26,27*

Here we read that the image of God can be found in man and woman. The Hebrew word *tsalem* is used in this section. *Tsalem* means cast a shadow. This is a beautiful picture. The shadow only reflects in part the reality. Man can in this way reflect God's character in part, but never the whole picture. In mankind we can see some characteristics which tell us something about God. Man consist of body, soul and spirit. The body consists of bones, organs, skins etc. The soul consists of mind, will and emotions. The spirit consists of intuition and conscience. The three form one person.

And so there is one God who, just like man, consists of three figures. In this study we assume that God **cannot** be imagined as a living being with a body. But how can He then be three in one? This will always remain a mystery in our human understanding and we will never be truly able to fathom it. Yet we will try to take a peep behind the curtain.

Story

Imagine that the world is like a boat. There are many people on this boat, who we imagine as glasses. The boat is sailing on a clean ocean. No pollution just pure, clean and clear water. The ocean we imagine as God who is everywhere. His name is Omnipresent. He is much larger than the boat.

God really wants to communicate with the people on the boat. That's the reason He made the people. The glasses on the boat represent the people and are dirty on the inside. They are scared of God and don't know if He is there. God decides to come on to the boat as a glass. The glass is made and filled with the clear water from the ocean. When this glass moves around the boat, everyone can see that this glass is different. This glass is an example for others. More and more people want to be like this. But there are some who turn away from this example. There is only one way to become like this glass with clean water. The same water needs to be put in the dirty glasses. This can only happen if the glass with pure water is broken and the clean water is spread out over the entire boat. There is enough of this water for it is everywhere.

In this story we see the presence of God which is everywhere. Jesus came as God in the body of a man. His exterior died, so that His Spirit could spread everywhere. The Spirit of God came to earth when Jesus rose from the dead.

What do we see at creation?

Gen 1:2 (the Spirit hovers over the waters)

When Jesus returned to God the Father He said that the Spirit would come in His place. That is what happened at Pentecost. The Spirit of God still works today.

Acts 2:1-4

In the following lessons we will look separately at who God is, who Jesus is and who the Holy Spirit is.

Why three in one?

At the start of creation we see the story of Adam and Eve and how God related with them. It was completely normal for God to communicate with two people and to be with them. There was an atmosphere of peace and happiness. Everything was good.

We saw in part 1 how that entire scene changed. God has spoken through prophets how people could again get in touch with Him. How justice, peace and happiness can return to this world. We find a beautiful example of this in the Old Testament.

Who goes up the mountain, what do they do there with God?

Ex 24:9-11 (the leaders of Israel go up the mountain and eat there with God)

In this story we see how Moses and the elders meet God in a very special way. God shows here what is important to Him. He wants to be with people and eat with them. A meal is a sign of hospitality and relationship with one another.

Yet we see in the OT that time after time things go wrong between God and mankind. People keep on drifting away from God. Eventually God decides to reveal Himself as man on earth in the person of Jesus. Because He also has a human body, people wouldn't be scared of Him. Jesus would also be an example of His love. Jesus 'greatest goal was to bring down the barricade between man and God. You can learn more about this in lessons 6a and 7a. Jesus could only be in one place at one time. That's why He went away after He had finished His work. God returned as the Holy Spirit who can be with everyone in the world. You can read more about this in lesson 8a.

Exercise:

Ask God if He will show you in the coming lessons who He is. You can ask Him before each of the lessons to change your thoughts about Him so that you can gain new insight into who He is.

At the start of the study we read that God doesn't want us to make images. People did that in those days to make what was most important in their lives visible and to honor it.

Nowadays it is not as frequent. But there can be things in our lives which are more important than God. Often we spend a lot of time on this. Take time and think if there are things in your life which are more important than God. If there are, what do you want to do about it?

Have a talk with your mentor about how you always saw God. Who is He for you?

Reading exercise. Try to read the Gospel of John regularly during part 2. Write down what you read about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Also write down other things you notice, what you don't understand and what is new for you.

Texts part 2 lesson 1

Ex 20:4,5

You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the

waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

Gen 1:26,27

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Gen 1:2

Genesis 1:2

2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Ex 24:9-11

9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. 11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.