

## *II*

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### *THE NATURE OF GOD*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . (Jn. 1:1, 14).

Early in my Christian life I thought that the Law reflected the nature of God. It does not! At least not in any accurate sense, and it was not intended to.

As ridiculous as it sounds today, at one time I actually thought that the Law was given to teach that God was legalistic. I was wrong!

When I read that Moses was kept out of Canaan because of a technical mistake, I thought that to be like God I had to become technical.

When I read in Leviticus 10 that Nadab and Abihu were killed by God for offering strange fire which the Lord had not commanded, I thought that to be like God I too had to become judgmental upon those who also did things which the Lord had not commanded.

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When I read in II Samuel 6 that Uzzah died for touching the Ark of God, I felt a strong compulsion to be “God like” and also condemn those whose conduct violated the teaching of Scripture.

Again I repeat, the Law was not given to reflect the nature of God or to teach that God was legalistic.

The Law was given as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.

### *Shadows and Substance*

Hebrews 10:1 teaches that the Law was only a “shadow” and not “reality.”

Shadows are ever changing, but God is never changing. He is the Father of Lights in whom there is no variation or shadow cast by turning (James 1:17).

We do not understand the nature of God by looking at shadows. Such a practice has resulted in distortions without number and problems that defy description.

The intelligent way to know about God is by looking at Jesus. He is the Light of the world and in Him is no darkness at all.

Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. His name was Immanuel, which means, God with us.

The Colossian letter teaches us to avoid being spoiled through philosophy and intellectualism, and to recognize that in Jesus all the fulness of the Godhead dwelled in a human body.

My shadow is not me. Your shadow is not you. The law was only a shadow . . . not God.

The most theologically accurate view that mankind can have of God . . . is Jesus!

### *God and Law*

There is an old joke which goes like this: “Where does an 800 pound gorilla sit?” Answer - “Anywhere he wants to.”

In this respect it is both axiomatic and obvious that God can do “anything He wants to.”

God operates outside the realm of law. He can never be controlled by external pressure.

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If there was a law to which God had to subscribe, who made that law and who will enforce it?

We have been schooled to think that someone who operates outside the realm of law is bad. We call him an "outlaw" and the very mention of that word conjures up frightening images in our minds.

God, however, operates outside the realm of law and He is good. There is no one who can make God do anything. He does exactly what He pleases. The nature of God is such, however, that He only "pleases" to do that which is good.

Here then is the mystery which no eye had seen, no ear had heard, and which had never entered into the heart of man. God was going to establish a kingdom of people just like Himself. Citizens of this heavenly kingdom would not be controlled by external pressure or law, but by a new nature from within. God would accomplish this miracle by placing His sperm within us and enabling us to be "born again" (I Jn. 3:9). He would replace our sinful human spirit with His blessed Holy Spirit.

The First Adam began a physical race which was subject to deterioration and decay. In Adam all die.

Jesus is called the "last Adam." He is the progenitor of a new race. He is the founder of an heavenly kingdom. Those who are "born from above" and who have their "citizenship in heaven" partake of "everlasting life."

Citizens of heaven are not conformed by earthly laws and carnal commandments, but by a totally new concept of government and law.

### *The New Nature and the New Law*

Citizens of earth are bound by certain "laws" of nature. Everytime we drop something, it falls. This leads us to assume that there is an inexorable "law of gravity" from which no one can escape.

We live in a generation now, however, which knows that astronauts in orbit can drop objects which only float. They operate in a totally different environment. The laws that apply to someone outside the atmosphere of earth transcend earthly considerations.

At sea level, with standard barometric pressure, water will boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Not so in outer space, for the boiling point of water is directly associated with barometric pressure.

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On earth we are instructed that an airplane moving through the atmosphere faces two kinds of resistance—induced drag and parasite drag. Conditions are such that when an airplane doubles its speed, the drag quotient is quadrupled. This is not true in outer space at all. A satellite can move at 18,000 miles per hour with virtually no drag at all. A person who steps outside of an airplane in flight had better have on a good parachute. But the person who steps out of an orbiting satellite doesn't need a parachute at all. He merely floats alongside. Things are different in outer space.

Einstein proved that even time is not absolute, but relative. The faster we go through space, the shorter is the period of time. If we should ever be able to accelerate to the speed of light . . . time would stand still. We would exist in an eternal "now."

The point of it all is this. God does not have to abide by earthly laws. Jesus stated it succinctly: ". . . Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (Jn. 8:23).

God doesn't have to go 55 miles per hour if He doesn't want to! For those who are citizens of heaven there is:

"A change of the law . . ." (Heb. 7:12)

"The perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25)

"The Royal Law" (James 2:8)

"The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ" (Rom. 8:2)

"The Law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2)

etc.

Citizens of heaven reign in "heavenly places" with Christ Jesus. Here we experience a righteousness without law. We do the will of God because we want to, and not because we have to.

### *Can Man Judge God?*

Some years ago a farmer friend related to me a humorous incident involving a new hired hand.

The young man hurried out to the barn and climbed on the farmer's brand new tractor. Where he came from it was, "first come, first served." Needless to say he was now in a different place than where he came from.

It did not take the hired hand long to find out that his personal rules and philosophy were not binding upon his boss. When you own

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a farm and own the tractors, and pay all the wages, you are in a position to ride any tractor you jolly well want to. Certainly those of us who are merely "laborers" are in no position to question or coerce the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

Jesus once likened the Kingdom of Heaven unto an householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. He agreed with the workers on a certain wage and sent them out to work.

Later the Master of the vineyard went out at the third hour, and the sixth hour, and the eleventh hour, and hired other workers.

Those who had worked all day long felt that they were in a position to manipulate and control the owner of the vineyard. They were not! The owner of the vineyard could do anything he wanted to . . . which he did. (See Matt. 20:1-16.)

Neither are we in a position to take God to court and demand anything. God is God! He is the absolute Sovereign in the universe. When we have attempted to do all that is required of us we will fall down before Him and confess that we are but unprofitable servants. We will cry out with Paul:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out (Rom. 11:33).

Man is finite, God is infinite. We measure from point to point and from one increment of time to another. We do not have the mental capacity to understand either "infinity" or "eternity."

God's thoughts are not like ours, and vice versa. Isaiah expressed it beautifully when he wrote:

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Is. 55:9).

If we could understand all there was to know about God, He would no longer be the object of our adoration and worship. While we can never know all there is to know about God while experiencing the limitations of flesh, it is obvious that the nature of God is better communicated through light than through shadows, through Jesus . . . than through law.

Pause for a moment and look at your own shadow. The world's most brilliant and analytical scientists could study your shadow for a

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lifetime without knowing anything of your basic nature and personality. Neither could they identify you in person if all they had ever seen was your shadow.

The Law was a shadow cast by Jesus but the most devout students of that Law did not even recognize Him.

The purpose of that shadow was not to accurately reveal the nature and personality of God, but rather to act as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Jesus who was "God manifest in the flesh."

This encounter with Christ occurs through the phenomenon of faith by which means we may also receive our justification.

For ". . . the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Is God controlled by any influence from without?
2. The Scriptures teach that God does not change (Mal. 3:6, James 1:17, etc.). Can this be said of anyone else, or anything else?
3. How does a shadow differ from reality?
4. In what way is God reality and not a shadow?
5. In what way is the Law a shadow and not reality (Heb. 10:1)?
6. In what way are the children of God to be like God?
7. Does God want us to be controlled from without, or from within?
8. Is man's basic nature good or bad?
9. Can man's basic nature be changed?
10. How can man's basic nature be changed?