

THEISM

How Would You Introduce God?

When someone arises before an audience to introduce another, he is concerned about the composition of the audience, the circumstances related to the occasion, the nature of the person being introduced, and his own relationship with him. Now, suppose you found yourself in a position where you were called upon to introduce God. How would you do it? Was not Moses called upon to introduce God? Did not the apostles find themselves needing to introduce God on different occasions? Are not Christians sometimes called upon to introduce God to others? How should we proceed? Since the Bible is from God, and since the Bible presents God's disclosure of himself, then surely the best way to introduce God now is the same way the Bible indicates that God introduced himself in the first four chapters of the book of Genesis. In contemporary times, the first chapter of Genesis is often related to the controversy between creation and evolution, or to recognition of how our world began. But perhaps more significant when the book was written is the fact that the first chapter of Genesis is about introducing God to humanity.

Moses was the one who, by divine inspiration, wrote the book of Genesis. He wrote it for a dual audience, that is, for Israelites of his own time and for humanity of all time. The precise date when Genesis was written is unknown, but it was probably while the Israelites wandered in the wilderness before entering the land of Canaan. The idolatrous nature of cultures surrounding the patriarchs and their descendents, even while the Israelites were in Egypt, meant that the Israelites tended toward idolatry and toward forsaking the God of their forefathers (Joshua 24:2; Genesis 31:19-35; 35:2, 4; Exodus 12:12; 32:1, 23). Extensive commandments would be given that they should not be idolatrous (Exodus 20:3; 23:13, 24; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4; Deuteronomy 5:7; 6:14). The Israelites needed a better understanding of God and what God required of them. The writings of Moses responded to that need. As Israel then tended to forsake God, so also have people often forsaken God through the centuries. Whenever humanity turns away from God, the writings of Moses about God and his relationship with humanity are just as instructive and beneficial for us now as they were for them then.

Whenever people think about gods, they think practically about the power of gods and personal benefits they may receive from serving a god. Gods are presumed to have abilities to give prosperity or to bring adversity, to bless with health or conversely to curse with diseases. To achieve the greatest and most possible benefits, worshippers seek to determine who among the gods is the most powerful. Within the human mind, gods are presumed to operate within and upon natural conditions. Gods are presumed to have powers over nature.

Therefore, when Moses introduced God, he began by noting the power of God and his superiority over nature. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (In like manner, the Apostle Paul introduced God to later audiences. He called attention to God's power and deity as demonstrated by his creation of the heavens and the earth. [Romans 1:19-20; Acts 14:15; 17:24]). Therefore, if we would introduce God as Moses and Paul did, we should begin by calling attention to the power of God and his control over nature.

Much can be learned about God from the first four chapters of Genesis. Briefly, the first verse implies the eternity of God because in order for God to create the heavens and the earth, he would have had to exist before their creation. The first chapter of Genesis indicates that God is a communicating God. He spoke creation into existence. God is an observing God. He observed that his creation was good. God is a planning God. He planned the making of mankind,

giving him a special place in his creation, making man in his own image. God is a delegating God. He delegated to mankind dominion over all living creatures. God is a commanding God. He commanded all living creatures, including mankind, to be fruitful and to multiply. God is a giving God. He gave food for mankind and all other living creatures.

That God is a caring God is further indicated in the second chapter of Genesis by the fact that before man was created, God prepared a large and bountiful place for him to live, namely, the Garden of Eden. That God is a commanding God is further indicated by the fact that Adam and Eve were explicitly told not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were warned that if they did they would die. That God is an observing God is further indicated by the fact that he recognized that it was not good for Adam to be alone, and therefore made woman. He did not do so, however, until Adam had first discovered that while all other creatures were coupled as male and female, he had no female. Only then was Adam prepared to receive his female counterpart. That God requires obedience is indicated in the third chapter of Genesis by the fact when Adam and Eve disobeyed, they were then doomed to die. The man was told he had to work by the sweat of his face, the woman was told she'd bear children in pain. They were put out of the Garden of Eden to keep them from eating of the tree of life. That God expects humanity to worship him is indicated in the fourth chapter of Genesis when Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to him. And when God rejected Cain's sacrifice, God first counseled Cain to do better. When Cain killed Abel, God punished him by taking away his livelihood and making him a fugitive and a vagabond.

How does all this introduce God? In summary, the first four chapters of Genesis indicate that God is eternal, the creator of heavens and the earth and everything in them; that God communicates to his creation and evaluates his own work; that God is the maker of and ruler over the world, and all humanity. In these chapters, Moses indicates that God provides for all human needs; that God is a lawgiver, a judge, and an executioner; that God's expects to be worshiped, and that he rewards those who sacrifice by faith, but rejects those who are disobedient.

These characteristics of God are re-enforced, not contradicted, by other biblical writings. When people say that God is not introduced at the beginning of Genesis, but that God is simply assumed, they surely have not considered the matter well. Does not God adequately introduce himself through Moses in these first four chapters of Genesis? While these chapters in Genesis do not present all that is now known about God, they do give an excellent introduction.

And just as the ancient Israelites tended toward idolatrous practices when the Book of Genesis was written, so also now humanity tends towards idolatrous practices. Contemporary idols may be classified as whatever comes before God, such as power, fame, wealth, and pleasure. In our contemporary world, the Creator who rules over all things seems to be forgotten by a vast majority of people. At the same time, people worship idols by seeking political and corporate power, fame through personal accomplishments, wealth from business acumen, or pleasures through eating and drinking, drug addiction, or sexual conquests.

The next time you have opportunity to introduce God to someone, why not begin with the first four chapters of Genesis? It not only tells about the nature of God, but also indicates humanity's responsibility toward him. We must understand that, just as in the Genesis record, those who acknowledge and serve God by faith will be blessed whereas those who reject and disobey God will be punished.