

The Nature of God

By Bob Young

We must study and understand the nature of God. Lists of theological categories often begin with theology “God” and “man.” We cannot understand human nature until we understand the divine nature.

God’s nature is more than the “omni” attributes—omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient. Add holiness, justice, and grace-mercy-love, and the picture is still incomplete. God is best understood by his actions. What he does is always consistent with his nature.

The human nature is introduced with image of God and likeness of God references (Genesis 1:26-27). But in Genesis 3 with the entry of sin and fall of humanity, the human nature is marred (torqued, twisted, destroyed, ruined). How to describe what happened has been the subject of many theological discussions. The result is separation from God. Sin is seen in the denial of God, the replacement of God, living as though God does not exist.

Christ comes to bridge these two natures—the divine and the human, and to restore communion and fellowship (Philippians 2). The church takes its nature from God; only in the church is God’s nature ultimately restored in human experience.

Think with me—five thoughts.

One, we must know God, recognize God. That is, to see him as he is, to see him fully according to his nature. To know God in this way is to understand sin. The first part of the Bible (Genesis 1-11) says a great deal about God’s nature, human nature, and sin.

Two, genuine worship depends on God’s nature, on knowing God. Worship is informed by and must be consistent with God’s nature. Worship is not guided by human nature, including human wants, desires, and enjoyment.

Three, in the Old Testament God continually reaffirmed his presence and relationship in the midst of an often distanced relationship with his human creation—specifically through his chosen people Israel. No genuine restoration of relationship was possible, no participation in the divine nature, without dealing with sin. God desires restored relationship, fellowship, communion, and has done everything necessary to make such possible. But the restoration of relationship is not unilateral. God desires response from his human creation.

Four, restored vertical relationship is foundation to healthy restored horizontal relationships.

Five, God works in and is present in this world through his people, through the church, both of which are reflections of his glory (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 3:20-21), making him known, making known his will.