

IS GOD THE FATHER OF ALL?

Today's Text: Malachi Chap. 2

Extracts:

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? [Mal. 2: 10]

In a Christmas and New Year goodwill message published in a national newspaper, the President-General of the ASJA (the Muslim organization in Trinidad & Tobago) said, among others, "The Muslim community recognizes the common beliefs and practices that we share (with Christians)... that emanate from the central doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of mankind."¹ A prominent member of the Muslim community, Imram N. Hosein, fired back in an advertorial calling the ASJA President's claim "an act of blasphemy." Quoting from the Koran, he maintained that Allah does not beget nor is He begotten. Therefore, He cannot be a father, not to talk of His being the father of all.²

The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is accepted by most Christians more by faith than by conviction. When you bring in the concept of the Trinity, God in three Persons, it gets more complicated! We easily accept that God created man in His image and likeness. That is, human beings also have a soul that lives forever, that we do not share with all the other creations of God. But does that make all of us His children? What of atheists who do not believe that God exists? How can they be the sons or daughters of a non-existent father? If He is in deed our Father, how did He beget us? After all, the Scripture teaches us that God has only one begotten Son, Jesus the Christ [Jn 3: 16].

Is God in deed the Father of all? Let us find out from this week's study.

¹ Story based on "Islam rejects the doctrine of 'Fatherhood of God,'" [Trinidad] *Guardian*, Friday, January 27, 2006; p. 34

² That position is confirmed by Bilquis Sheikh, a Pakistani convert to Christianity, in her book, *I dared to call Him Father*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Chosen Books, 1978; p. 46

1. Background: Creator or Father?

In last week's study, we began to examine the prophecy of Malachi that was set in the period between the return of the children of Israel from their 70-year exile in Babylon and the ministry of John the Baptist. The people had completed the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem as they had been encouraged to do by two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. However, the promised blessings and the coming of the Messiah had not yet materialized and the people became discouraged. They began to raise questions. Last week, we treated such questions as, "In what way have You loved us?" [**Mal. 1: 2**], and "In what way have we defiled You?" [**v. 7**]. In answering their queries, God made it clear to the chosen people that, whether they liked it or not, He would continue to be praised and worshipped, even by the Gentiles, round the clock [**v. 11**].

In today's lesson, the children of Israel raised another important question through the prophet Malachi, saying, "Have we not *all one Father*? Has not *one* God created us?" [**Mal. 2: 10**]. Let us examine the two loaded questions by recasting them as follows:

a) *Did one God create us?*

The Bible clearly teaches that God made man [representing both the male and female species] in His own image according to His likeness [**Gen. 1: 26-27**]. By that definition, all of us can trace our ancestry to the first man, Adam, whom God gave the mandate to "be fruitful and multiply (and) fill the earth" [**v. 28**]. But do all human beings accept that?

Some people believe in evolution, that human beings evolved from lower species, especially animals like apes, and were not created by God. The majority of scientists belong to this group. Even the attempts by scientists of faith to propagate the idea that there must be an intelligent designer behind the species (claimed to have evolved), have been sharply resisted. Attempts to teach creationism side by side with evolution in American science classes has also been resisted. Therefore, as long as some people believe that God did not create them, they will also not accept that He made man in His image and likeness.

The second challenge to the concept of God comes from religion. Christians believe that there is one God who is in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit [**Matt. 28: 19**]. The Jews believe that there is one indivisible God [**Deut. 6: 4**]. So, when Jesus claimed that He and His Father were one, they took stones to kill Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God" [**Jn 10: 30-33**]. Muslims believe in a God called Allah who is unknowable by humans. Every one of those views

cannot be right! If we are not talking about the *same God*, then we cannot talk about His fatherhood. What is the true nature of God?

Crime investigators use the fingerprints of suspects (among other clues) to establish their guilt or innocence.³ If God created the universe, His fingerprints should be found in all His creations, including humans, for “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament *shows His handiwork*” [Ps. 19: 1]. In the 1930’s, a scientist, Professor Nathan Woods, took up that challenge and published his remarkable findings in a book, *The Secret of the Universe*, which is now out of print. He discovered that:

- The totality of nature is referred to as the *Universe*, not multiverse, thus confirming the oneness of its Creator;
- The universe consists of *time, space* and *matter*, thus confirming the triune nature of the Creator;
- Time consists of *past, present* and *future*, again triune in nature;
- Space is measured by *length, breadth* and *height*. For example, the copy of the Bible on your desk right now has length, breadth and height. You cannot take up its length without simultaneously taking up the other two!
- Matter is *energy* in *motion* producing *phenomenon*

What creation of God do you want to examine that is not triune in nature? For example, the sun produces *light, heat* and *radiation* but remains one sun! Clouds may minimize its heat but you can still see its light. Government was created by God [Rom. 13: 1] and it consists of three branches: the *legislative*, the *executive* and the *judiciary*! The courts may rule against the actions of the President but they both belong to the government sector. Therefore, we can conclude *beyond reasonable doubt* that the Christian concept of God best represents His true identity. He is one God in Three Persons.

b) *Is God the Father of all?*

Fatherhood goes beyond merely creating. For example, a carpenter cannot be called the father of the doors that he has made but the father of the children that he has begotten. Thus, fatherhood is based on the concept of begetting, that is, supplying the seed that is implanted in the egg of the woman to produce a child. So, a man begets but a woman gets pregnant. For God to be a Father, He must have begotten children. But we know from the Scripture that God “formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” [Gen. 2: 7]. God made Adam but Adam begot Cain and Abel

³ “One God in Three Persons,” *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 1 No 12. , 8 July 2000; http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_1/PDFs/OneGodinThreePersons.pdf

because “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived” [Gen. 4: 1-2]. God created all humans (through Adam and Eve) but Adam is the father of all humans.

When God was about to send the Messiah into the world in human flesh, He told the virgin Mary through angel Gabriel, “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.” When she questioned how that could be since she knew no man, God said, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” [Lk 1: 31-35]. Jesus is the Seed of the woman promised in the Garden of Eden [Gen. 3: 15] that was planted in the womb of Mary, a descendant of Adam [Lk 3: 23-38]. That is why the Nicene Creed says of Jesus, “begotten not made” and Jesus is the only begotten Son of God [Jn 3: 16]. *We can conclude that only Jesus the Christ qualifies to call God Father.* Therefore, God is not the Father of all!

2. How God can become your Father

We have established the following basic truths: the true God is one but triune in nature. He has only one begotten Son and His name is Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity. Therefore, if we want to become sons of God, we should listen to Jesus on the subject. Speaking to us through His disciples, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. *No one comes to the Father except through Me*” [Jn 14: 6]. In simpler terms, He is saying, “You can’t call God your Father without My permission!”

Let us illustrate with a practical example. A woman divorced a man (Mr. A) to whom she had borne a son (Mr. A Jr.). She married another man (Mr. B) to whom she bore another son (Mr. B Jr.). In due course, she and Mr. B died in a tragic motor accident, leaving behind a helpless Mr. B Jr. Her two sons are brothers of the same mother but not of the same father. Since Mr. A did not beget Mr. B Jr., he cannot be his father. Secondly, Mr. B Jr. cannot walk straight to him and say, “Daddy, I have come home!” The only condition under which Mr. A will consider the request is if it is made on his behalf by his own begotten son, Mr. A Jr., the true son of Mr. A and the *only way* to him on fatherhood matters. Even so, Mr. B Jr. can only be an *adopted son* of Mr. A’s.

When Adam fell from God’s favour in the Garden of Eden, he and his descendants were spiritually divorced from God. Through Mary the daughter of Adam, God allowed His only begotten Son, Jesus, the Seed of the woman, to take human form and to re-establish the broken link. Therefore, we are related to Jesus through Adam but we have no direct relationship with His Father because He did not beget us. So, no human being can bypass Jesus and go to God and say, “Daddy I am home!” He will not even notice you! The only way that He will

listen is when His only begotten Son introduces you to His Father. How does that happen?

The word of God says, “As many as received [Jesus Christ], to them *He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name*” [Jn 1: 12], and “no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” [1 Cor. 12: 3]. Consequently, “as many as are led by the Holy Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” They receive “the Spirit of *adoption* by whom (they) cry out ‘Abba! Father.’” They become children, then “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” [Rom. 8: 14-16]. So, ***the fatherhood of God is not automatic. It is a privilege enjoyed by only those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord.***

The privilege has the following implications:

a) *Jesus is a total package!*

You cannot want God as your Father but reject the Sonship of Christ. You cannot accept Jesus as a famous healer or teacher but reject His divinity as your Lord and Saviour. You cannot accept God and Jesus but reject the Holy Spirit. That is because, as we saw earlier, God is triune in nature and you cannot pick and choose. You reject one Person, you reject the three Persons in one God.

Baptism makes this point very clear. In her book, a former prominent Pakistani Muslim, Bilquish Sheikh, tells the story of how she had to have water baptism. Before then, she had received direct instructions from the Lord on how to move away from the religion of her life, Islam. One day, Jesus stood before her, wearing a white robe and a purple cape. He said to her, “It is time for you to be baptized in water, Bilquish.” For her, that was a major decision as a Muslim. Listen to her words:

I knew that the significance of baptism is not lost on the Muslim world. A person can read the Bible without arousing too much hostility. But the sacrament of baptism is a different matter. To the Muslim, this is the one unmistakable sign that a convert has renounced his Islamic faith to become a Christian. To the Muslim, baptism is apostasy⁴

On the day of His ascension to heaven, Jesus told His disciples that He had been given “all authority” in heaven and on earth. Yet, He asked them to “make disciples of all nations, *baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” [Matt. 28: 19]. One name of three integral parts. It is a total package.. To accept Jesus is to accept His Father and His Holy Spirit. You cannot pick and choose.

⁴ Bilquis Sheikh with Richard H. Schneider, *I dared to call Him Father*, Op. Cit., p. 71

b) *To accept Jesus is to obey Him*

Jesus said to those who milled around Him, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” [Lk 6: 46]. In another place, He told the Jewish leaders, “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” [Jn 5: 30]. Towards the end of His earthly ministry, He assured His disciples, “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you *from the Father*, the Spirit of truth *who proceeds from the Father*, He will testify of Me” [Jn 15: 26]. Therefore, to obey Christ is to obey His Father with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is what it takes to be born again, not merely parroting or parading the gifts of the Holy Spirit without demonstrating His fruits [Matt. 7: 21-23]! If you do not obey Christ, how can He introduce you to His Father as His brother or sister?

3. Conclusion: Make God your Father!

The children of Israel asked, “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” [Mal. 2: 10]. God’s answer suggests a negative answer to both questions! If He is the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that created them, why did the priest refuse to give glory to God’s name [vv. 1-2]? Why was the law of truth in his mouth not turning people away from their sins [vv. 6-8]? If God was their Father, why did Judah deal treacherously, profane the Lord’s holy institutions, and practise idolatry and adultery through divorces that God hated [vv. 10-16]? In deed, God “seeks godly offspring,” not those who do evil in His sight [vv. 15-17].

If God were to ask you the same questions right now, what would be your answer? Like Paul, you should be able to say with all confidence, “There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” [Eph. 4: 4-6].

Make God your Father!