

WHY DOES GOD MATTER? 2

Mankind has been reflecting on the big questions of life, truth, meaning and God for thousands of years. The word God means many different things to different people.

- Do you think God matters?
- If God exists, what do you see as the implications for us?

The heart of Christianity is learning to understand what God is like and how we relate to him. Christians believe that we can know what God is like because he's revealed himself to mankind in history as recorded in the Bible. The Bible teaches us what God is like so that we can learn to interact with him as he intended us to. In this study we'll look at three foundational aspects of God: God as creator, God as judge and God as rescuer.

GOD AS CREATOR:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalm 24:1-2 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world, and all its people belong to him. For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.

Psalm 95:4-7 He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains. The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. Come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God...

- What are the implications of these verses for how we relate to God?
- Psalm 24 clearly states that the earth, and all that's in it, is owned by God. What does it mean to own something?

The last two sentences from these verses in Psalm 95 give us several key insights about how we relate to God as our creator. Firstly, relating to God is not automatic; we have to come to him. Secondly, because he made us and everything else, he deserves to be treated with honour; we're to submit ourselves to him. The creator has the right to rule over everything he's created however he sees fit.

Psalm 139:2-4, 13-16 You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord . . . You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvellous – how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE...

- What are the implications of these verses for how we relate to God?

GOD AS JUDGE:

Romans 14:10-12 ...we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For the Scriptures say, "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will confess and give praise to God." Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God.

1 Samuel 16:7 ... The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

2 Peter 3:7-10 ... the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgement, when ungodly people will be destroyed. But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief...

- What do these verses tell us about us and God?

The verses from 2 Peter talk about "ungodly" people. Ungodly doesn't simply mean immoral. It means living "godlessly", without reference to God or his wishes. The Bible sees all other human ills as flowing from this source. In contrast, living a godly life doesn't simply mean being moral. It means living every moment in a reconciled loving relationship with our creator.

- What is the role of a judge? Do you see it as a good thing that God will judge our lives? Why?

GOD AS RESCUER:

Ezekiel 18:23 "Do you think that I like to see wicked people die?" says the Sovereign Lord. "Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live."

Luke 15:1-7 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people – even eating with them! So Jesus told them this story: "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbours, saying 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!"

- What do we learn about God's heart from these verses?
- The Bible teaches that although we're in big trouble with God and heading for judgement, God loves us and wants to rescue us. In view of what we've looked at so far, why might we need rescuing?

Jesus is God become man, stepping into our world to provide a way that we can be rescued from God's judgement and brought back into relationship with him. We'll look at how he's done this in more detail in the next studies.