

The Fatherhood of God

by Alan Summers - July 2013.
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In The Bible

In the bible God is described as “Father” in a number of senses. He is Father in the sense that He is the originator of everything that has been made. In Malachi 2:10, for example, the questions are asked, “Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?” In that sense it is proper to speak of the universal fatherhood of God. It is not the case however that all men are the spiritual children of God because this is true only of those who are born again. The universal fatherhood of God does not mean that all His “children” are saved and destined for heaven.

In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament God was also the father of the nation of Israel. In Exodus 4:22-23, Moses says, “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me.” As with the universal fatherhood of God, the fact that God was Israel’s “father” did not assure them of individual salvation although it did assure the nation of His protective care and interest.

The Father of our Lord Jesus

God is also revealed in Scripture as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as stated in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. This father and son relationship however is not the same as that between human fathers and sons in that the Father never procreated the Son. The bible makes it clear that the Lord Jesus existed eternally (e.g. John 8:38; Heb. 1:2-3). The language of a father and son relationship is used to indicate the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Father loves the Son (John 3:35) and the Son submits to the Father (1 Cor. 11:3). Love and submission are key characteristics of this relationship just as they ought to characterise the human relationship between father and son. Thus the Son accomplished a work on earth on behalf of the Father and in obedience to Him. This is embodied in the familiar text of John 3:16, where it says that God, that is, God the Father, gave His Son to provide a Saviour for humanity.

The Father of all who believe

Lastly God is the Father of all who believe in Christ as Saviour. This is based upon spiritual birth, not natural birth. Christians are declared to be “the sons of God... which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13). In the Old Testament there is no indication that any of the great men of the pre-Christian era knew God or understood their relationship with God as that of a father and son. But today believers who are part of the Church know God intimately in a way similar to (though not identical with) the way the Lord Jesus knew the Father. As He called God “abba” (Mark 14:36) so too we “because (we) are sons... (cry) Abba, Father,” (Gal. 4:6). The Fatherhood of God is, accordingly, an important aspect of Christian faith and is supported by many Scriptures (John 20:17; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:3; 2:18; 4:6; Col. 1:12–13; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 1:3; 2:1, 22; 3:1). The fact that God is our Father is a comfort to believers as they seek to find the Lord’s will for their life. In approaching Him they are assured that He cares for them and is supportive of them as they seek to make their way through life. While earthly fathers may disappoint us, our heavenly Father is constantly wise and gracious and can be relied upon in all of life’s circumstances.