

New Testament Sermon Outline 5/12

God the Father (1)

1. INTRODUCTION

The word Father, as applied to denote God is used both in the Old and New Testaments. This word is commonly used in Scripture as relating to a natural father in ordinary family relationship terms. However, the main Scriptural use of the word is to describe God as Father. He is shown to be God the Father in terms of the Trinity. We have, therefore, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The word father conjures up in the mind of the individual either thoughts of a pleasant male figure with all its fine attributes, a man who gives support and security to his child or one who is indifferent, callous or even abusive. Until we come to terms with our own experience of relationships with our father, we are never going to fully appreciate God in all His fullness.

2. DEFINITION OF FATHER

8.1 The Dictionary definition of the word Father is: “A male parent: an ancestor or forefather: a fatherly protector: a contriver or originator, the first person of the Trinity”¹

This definition gives us the picture of God being

- An originator of things i.e. In the Beginning God...”Genesis 1:1.
- A forefather. He was before we were created Exodus 3:6.
- He is our ancestor Deuteronomy 32:6.
- Our Fatherly protector Jeremiah 31:19.
- Our contriver. The meaning includes the ideas of a planner, inventor, to bring about or effect: to manage, arrange: to conceive, understand. 1 Chronicles 28:12, Psalms 33:11.

3. ATTRIBUTES OF A NATURAL FATHER

So that we may all fully appreciate the effects of fatherhood on each one of us, I want each person to consider their own experience of their own father. If a father was not present in the family then the next male figure that was to you a father figure. Write down up to ten positive qualities followed by any negative qualities you experienced. No-one will see your results but the exercise will help you put into context the qualities that

¹ Chambers English Dictionary (1992)

God the Father wishes to show you. Write down up to five positive and ten negative qualities

4. THE WORD FATHER RELATING TO THE GODHEAD IN SCRIPTURE

The word Father is used with a capital letter in Scripture to denote the concept of God as Father. That is, the Father of the Godhead. We have God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

There is a marked difference of understanding or emphasis in the two Testaments and as such they will be dealt with separately. The doctrine of God the Father is a gradually unrevealing one through the OT only receiving its full understanding in the NT and in particular in the Gospel of John. The word Father as relating to God is mentioned much less in the OT. Father is mentioned in the OT is 15 times. NT references appear as shown below:

Matthew 43 times, Mark 5 times, Luke 18 times and John 112 times. The rest of the NT contains a further 79 references. This gives a total of 257 in the NT. The word appears 17 times in 1 & 2 John. Therefore John mentions God as Father no less than 129 times!

5. OLD TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AS FATHER

It is always assumed in Scripture that God exists. There is not a single argument offered to prove the existence of God. The Scriptures task is to reveal the invisible God to man. One of the ways it does reveal God is through concepts and ideas that people can understand. God is seen in the OT as in the context of “practical religious life”² “The OT speaks of the hand, arm, mouth, lips, and eyes of God. As an illustration, Isaiah says, “when He makes bare His holy arm” (Isaiah 52:16). Again, God is seen at the head of the Medes mustering His hosts, and His military shout is heard (Isaiah 13:4). All this is but vivid conception of His being, His intelligence, His activity and universal power over the nations He directs. The human is transferred to His personality, as it could not but be, it is transferred graphically, as could not but happen when done by the poetical, vivacious and powerful fantasy of the people of Israel. The language only testifies to the warmth and intensity of the religious feelings of the writers.”

² Dictionary of the Bible (Hastings) Davidson AB

6. REVELATION OF GOD AS FATHER IN THE OT

The Prophet Isaiah had a grasp of the Fatherhood of God. He gives several illustrations of the working of the Father towards His people Israel. He gives the intimate picture of God as Father being the potter and His people the clay moulding them into shape (Isaiah 64:8).

Previously, Isaiah had shown that he regarded God as Father and Redeemer of Israel by saying "You are our Father..." Isaiah 63:16

David recognised God the Father as Father of the nation. Figure of authority

1 Chronicles 29:10 "Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever."

Early in Scripture come glimpses of the Father God figure.

Deut 32:6, 2 Sam 7:14, 1 Chron 17:13, 22:10, Isa 9:6, Jer 3:19 & Mal 1:6.

7. NEW TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AS FATHER.

"The NT concentrates on the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus. It is therefore less explicit about the great, basic characteristics of God Himself. These are regarded as axiomatic (self-evident truth) and are assumed".³ Jesus uses the name Father extensively as recorded in the four Gospels. It is in the NT that the full revelation of God as Father comes into God-fearing people. This is because Jesus Christ came to reveal God as Father whereby a person can cry "Abba Father"(meaning natural Father, heavenly Father).

8. DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION

This aspect of doctrine truly reveals the nature of the Fatherhood of God. The Greek word for 'adoption' means a placing or 'to place' and it signifies the place and condition of a son given to one to whom it does not naturally belong. The word is only used by the apostle Paul. In Romans 8:15 believers are said to have received "the Spirit of adoption," that is, the Holy Spirit who, given as the First fruits of all that is to be theirs, produces in them the realisation of sonship and the attitude belonging to sons. In Galatians 4:5 they are said to receive "the adoption of sons," i. e., sonship bestowed in distinction from a

³ The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible page 430

relationship consequent merely upon birth; here two contrasts are presented,

- between the sonship of the believer and the unoriginated Sonship of Christ,
- between the freedom enjoyed by the believer and bondage, whether of Gentile natural condition, or of Israel under the Law.

In Ephesians 1:5 they are said to have been foreordained unto “adoption as sons” through Jesus Christ, RV; the KJV, “adoption of children” is a mistranslation and misleading. God does not “adopt” believers as children; they are begotten as such by His Holy Spirit through faith. “Adoption” is a term involving the dignity of the relationship of believers as sons; it is not a putting into the family by spiritual birth, but a putting into the position of sons. In Romans 8:23 the “adoption” of the believer is set forth as still future, as it there includes the redemption of the body, when the living will be changed and those who have fallen asleep will be raised.