

THE WAY TO HUMAN FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION

If there is one thing that is essential to enjoyment of true and full human living, it is the matter of *personal freedom*. In ‘The Way To Human Freedom’ teaching series, we will be exploring what the Bible reveals about this critical theme. Study by study, the amazing dimensions of *God’s liberating action* towards us will be gradually spelt out—showing its power to bring personal and social transformation.

The freedom we all need is one that does not depend upon ideal situations and circumstances. It is, in fact, one that is able to liberate us into *full human vocation*,¹ bringing a *new capacity* to be all we were created to be, *regardless* of our background or environment.

In this series there is a progressively unfolding understanding. Each study will build upon what has gone before, until the whole picture is complete. Through it all, we may come to know our Maker’s way to the personal freedom and fullness He created us to enjoy!

Over the first eight studies of the series, we will be exposed to the ‘big picture’ of God’s redeeming—that is, liberating—work. In this, we will see who He is, what He has created us to be, what has become of us, and what He has done to make possible the freedom that every person yearns to know. Then, the next sixteen will describe the practical and vocational outworking of this personal liberty.

Because human beings have been made in the likeness of God, it is essential for us to begin with a knowledge of who *He* is and what He is like. We can never truly know who *we* are, and what we were created to be, without receiving such understanding.² Actually, it will become increasingly clear as we move through the various studies, that a ‘God-centred’ understanding of life is indispensable to enjoyment of a true humanity. A merely ‘human-centred’ approach promises much, but does little to satisfy the deepest cries of the heart.

Central to this series is an amazing proclamation of the Person of Jesus Christ—the Son of God. We will see that it is He who is the supreme focus of the Great Story that is being told within human history—the One who stands in the midst of it all as the Light of the world, the Liberator and Fulfiller of humankind, and the One through whom, finally, all justice will be served and the entire creation forever renewed! He truly is the ‘Desired One’, who fully answers the strong, insistent yearnings of every human being—those from among every nation and within every cultural climate.

Jesus, however, entered into history only after much preparation had been made. Over the centuries, God had, to this end, made Himself known in many powerfully significant ways—which included communication to us of His own nature, the glory, tragedy and dilemma of humankind, and the shape that ultimate human liberation would need to take. It is important then, that we begin our series with four studies that provide this essential background understanding.

So, let us now open our minds to receive firstly, some breath-taking revelation of the One who is the Author of the Story set before us—and is Himself, the Goal of all things: ‘The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’.

Study 1

THE GOD WHO IS

As said in the introduction, each study in the series builds upon what has gone before. That makes this first one foundational to all the others. It could be said that within Study 1 there are twenty-three others clawing to get out! This is, in fact, the case with each of the studies throughout the entire series—the remaining one’s are within the latest, impatiently awaiting their moment in the unfolding process.

¹ At this point, vocation can be generally defined as: human activity that is both purposeful and personally fulfilling—action that expresses who we are and serves others.

² What it means for a human being to be made in God’s ‘image’ or ‘likeness’ will be explained in our second study.

In this study we will be looking at the basic nature, character and action of God—a revelation that, although not immediately ‘human-centred’, is absolutely central to our most critical human need.

a matter of understanding

Every person has a concept of God. We all have ideas in our mind of what He is like. Even the atheist who says, “I cannot believe in a God who does this, or doesn’t do that,” is in fact, describing their view of God. Everybody has one. It may be accurate, or it may not.

And so there is a question we all need to ask: “Is the way I see God, the way He really *is*?” Experience has shown that even an extremely religious person may have a view of Him that is sadly deficient.

The way we see God, affects the way we see our-selves, others and the world around us. Our concept of God also affects the way we respond—or react—to Him, to others and to the circumstances of life. This will become increasingly clear as we proceed through the various studies before us. It is no exaggeration to say that the most significant thing anyone can ever do, is come to understand the way He *really is*.

Not all we need to know of our Maker will be covered here. But a foundation will definitely be laid for what is to follow. Actually, each study throughout the series will progressively reveal more of who God is, what He has done, is doing and has promised to do—and how that relates to what is for us all, a relentless personal pursuit: human freedom and fullness.

His nature: - Father

In speaking of God’s nature, we are describing the most basic elements of His divine Being. And the very first thing we must understand about Him is that He is, by nature, Father.³

Philippians 2:11

—*the supreme revelation of His nature*

[He is] God the Father.

The most basic and wonderful thing we can ever know about God is the reality of His Fatherhood. This is not to be understood merely in the light of certain ideas of ‘maleness’. His Fatherhood is, actually, full of everything that could ever be longed for in any relationship! It will take the whole of the series to unfold the magnitude of this.

Ephesians 3:14–15

The Father [is the One] from whom [His whole family] in heaven and on earth [receives its identity].

God, as Father, has a family. Further on in the process before us we will see the delightful nature of this family, and its incredible ultimate destiny—with members drawn from among all the nations of the earth!

- Creator

The entire universe, including the earth and everything in it and upon it, is the Father’s handiwork. This fact is the starting point for all true thinking and understanding. We must always begin with the One who is, Himself, the Origin of everything in His amazing world—and all that lies beyond it. Only then, can we proceed on the basis of the way things really are.

In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we have a thrilling account of the creation of all things, starting with a grand statement in the very first verse:

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Before the Creator brought the heavens and the earth into being, there was NOTHING!

The account then goes on to spell out—with powerful simplicity—the details of what has been made:

Day 1: light	>	Day 4: the lights: the sun and the moon
Day 2: the sea and the sky	>	Day 5: creatures of the sea and the sky
Day 3: the land and vegetation	>	Day 6: land animals and human beings

³ In later studies, we will speak of the nature and work of the Son and the Spirit. But here, we are focusing specifically upon God as Father.

At once, there can be seen in the sequence of God's grand creative act, a precisely ordered pattern—with the things made in each of the first three days, corresponding to those in each of the last three. We will see further on, that the Creator has in fact, built a purposeful order into the whole of His magnificent creation!

Later in this study, it will be shown that God created all things by His *word*. But apart from this, the Bible does not seek to tell us, specifically, *how* He created. What it does emphasize is *who* He is as Creator, and *why* He created. Throughout its pages, we have an awesome revelation of just who God is, and an ever-expanding proclamation of His extraordinary purpose!

The most significant thing we can ever learn about *the action of God* is that He is Creator. There is of course, so much more to be known as we continue. But it is His great act of creation that is basic to everything else.

Revelation 10:6

[He] created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it.

As Creator, God is both the Maker and Sustainer of the heavens, the earth and its bounty—and the humanity that is at the centre of it all!

Isaiah 42:5

[He is the One] who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it.

The immense universe that surrounds us was *stretched out* by this amazing Creator. And the earth that we inhabit was, *spread out* by Him, along with all that *springs* from it. What an unbelievably *lavish* variety of things our Maker has caused to *spring up* from His soil—His good dirt!

An enormously significant thing for every human creature to understand is that each of us, who find ourselves in God's world, receives our breath and life from Him, every moment.

Acts 17:25

He Himself gives all [people] life and breath and everything else.

Life and breath—yes, and *everything else* we are, have and enjoy!

Zechariah 12:1

[He is the One] who forms the spirit in human beings.

The human spirit is imparted to each of us by the Giver of life. He has especially formed within humankind that which sets it apart from the rest of His creation.

Psalms 139:14

—an *inescapable declaration*

[We are] fearfully and wonderfully made.

Every human person—along with all other creatures—is truly magnificent. A physical wonder to behold! The founder of the Evolutionary Theory,⁴ Charles Darwin, said, "Every time I look at the human eye I tremble." Towards the end of his life he said, "I cannot believe with my mind that all this was produced by chance."⁵

Yes, the creation is an absolutely splendid thing. And the best part about it, is that its Author is not a merely 'impersonal creative force'. Not at all! Behind the whole of the creation is One who is, by nature, *Father*. He always intended His world to be a superb, pleasure-giving home for His family!

Much more will be said of the Father-Creator's works as we move through this study and those to come.

- King

Being Creator, He is also *Owner* of all things. They belong to Him. As the Author of creation, He has authority—*author-ity*—over all He has made. Every moment, He reigns over the whole of His creation. All earthly and heavenly powers receive their authority *from* Him and must finally answer *to* Him.

Isaiah 37:16

⁴ A theory claiming that all things 'evolved' (progressively came into being) through vast periods of time and random chance happenings—producing a universe, and a human race, with no ultimate purpose. How sad! There are, it must be said, many Christians—and others—who believe in what is called 'Theistic Evolution'. That is, that God—as Creator—was behind the evolutionary process. This is, however, not the preference of the present writer.

⁵ From Darwin's autobiography.

THE WAY TO HUMAN FREEDOM
STUDY 1: THE GOD WHO IS

LORD Almighty ... enthroned ... You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Psalms 24:1

The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Every *thing* and every *person* in God's world belongs to Him—the Creator and King!

Psalms 103:19

The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.

Hebrews 12:28

[His is] a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

History is the record of the rise and fall of rulers and kingdoms. But the kingdom of God is one that will never be diminished in any way!

Psalms 47:8a

God reigns over the nations.

1 Timothy 6:15

[He is the] only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

There is only one Ruler. All others who rule do so under His authority—whether they realize it or not.

Psalms 47:9

The kings of the earth belong to God.

Isaiah 33:22

The LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King.

Every person on the earth has one Judge, one Lawgiver and one King. This, of course, includes those who are judges, lawgivers and kings! They all judge, make laws and rule under His authority—and as has been said, must finally answer to Him for the way they have done this.

* * *

To understand that God is *by nature* Father, Creator and King is a necessary place to begin in coming to see Him as He is. But this, of itself, is not enough information for us to know what He is really like.

In fact, to be told only that He is Father, Creator and King may well cause all kinds of images to come to our minds, leaving us with a concept of God which is far from accurate.

He is Father. But there have been many *fathers* whose fatherhood has been distant, self-interested, careless or cruel, or ineffective in any number of ways. What if that's what God is like?

We have said that He is Creator. But there are certain '*creative types*' who do what they do only to *express* themselves. What if God is like that? What if His creation was brought into being merely as the fulfillment of some kind of *creative urge*—a great accomplishment He was very proud of at the time, but for which He no longer has much concern?

We have said that He is King. But down through the centuries, there have been *those with kingly responsibilities and powers* that have misused their office, and serving only themselves have *oppressed* those under their rule and care—or have just been inadequate or foolish. What if His kingship is like that?

It must be understood however, that God is not *like* the human fathers we have known—even the best of them. He is *the* Father, whom all other fathers should be *like*.

He is not *like* some '*creative types*' we have observed. He is *the* Creator, whose purpose in bringing His creation into being was totally glorious. As will be seen, it was a most marvellous act of love! All other creativity should be *like* His.

And He is not *like* the kings and rulers of history, but is *the* King, whose reign is the *true* exercise of authority—to be *reflected* by all who are given that responsibility. Tragically, in our world as it is, such likeness to Him is never fully seen. It will be shown later, that it was only made known in the coming of His Son among us—in the freedom of His true and full humanity!

It is a fact that our concept of God *does* come from the experiences we have had, the impressions we have received and the mental images we have developed, in relation to human fathers, human creativity and human kings. And it is true, that unless our minds are renewed according to God's own revelation to us of Himself, wrong images and ideas will continue with us—and keep us from understanding what He is really like.

It is one thing to know that God is by nature, Father, Creator and King. But it is quite *another* thing to know what *kind* of Father, Creator and King He *is*!

the kind of Father, Creator & King God is, is seen in:

HIS PERFECTIONS AS ‘THE HOLY ONE’

The Bible reveals to us that God is holy. Holiness is not merely one aspect of His Being. He *is* holy! His holiness is all that He *is* and *does* that makes Him to be the ONE AND ONLY GOD. Every indication of what He is and does as Father, Creator and King, is a description of His holiness.

To say in worship, “Holy is the LORD!” is to declare, “You are *God!* There is *no one* and *nothing* like You! You are entirely *separate from, different to* and *other than* anyone, or any thing, that is less than GOD!”

Isaiah 57:15b

[He is] the high and exalted One ... whose name is holy.

His entire Being, and every action, is holy!

Isaiah 6:3

—*the joyous, awestruck cry of heavenly beings*

[They] were calling to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.”

Psalms 47:8b

God is seated on His holy throne.

His is a *holy* throne. It is completely different to any other—a throne from which all ‘His perfections as the Holy One’ are expressed. There never has been, or ever will be, a reign and rule like His!

Isaiah 46:9b

[He says] “I am God, and there is none like Me.”

Exodus 15:11

Who among the gods is like You, LORD? Who is like You—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

Isaiah 40:18

To whom will you compare God? What image will you compare him to?

He can never be compared to any physical image that is made by human hands—or to any mental image that is developed by human minds.

Isaiah 40:25

“To whom will you compare Me? Or who is My equal?” says the Holy One.

The humanly devised gods of history are many. But none may be compared with THE GOD WHO IS!

His perfections

In speaking of the various expressions of God’s holiness, the only adequate word to employ is ‘perfections’. Sometimes the word ‘attributes’ has been used to describe these. That’s fine. But attributes may refer to any kind of characteristic—good or bad, attractive or unpleasant. The term ‘perfections’ rightly allows for no possibility of misunderstanding. Everything about our Father, Creator and King is PERFECT!

In this study we are going to be exposed to *nine* of these divine perfections. But before they are explored, we need to establish a *key concept* that is common to each one.⁶

His perfections are characterized by:

*** *unsearchable greatness***

The greatness of God is undeniably the key to understanding these nine perfections that are before us. It is His greatness, above all else, that sets Him apart as the Holy One.

God’s greatness is a reality that is far beyond our capacity to mentally comprehend. Some express this by saying that He is ‘infinite’—a philosophical word that means ‘immeasurable’. The Bible simply speaks of His ‘*unsearchable greatness*’.

One of the most common problems we have in understanding what God is really like, is that we tend to keep Him reduced in our minds to the size of the gods of ancient Greece—a kind of over-sized

⁶ Every study in this series has at least one key concept—indicated by an asterisk (*).

human! This dreadful idea must be resisted at all costs if we are ever to know Him truly. Our minds must be open to receive an understanding that is so much more glorious, awesome and majestic!

Just to consider the vastness of the universe, gives us, at least, some idea of the Creator's unsearchable greatness.

Our *solar system*, consisting of Earth and eight other planets circling round the sun, is part of the *Milky Way Galaxy*. Within the Milky Way Galaxy there are at least 12 billion other solar systems like ours, each with their own sun (or star). But then our Milky Way galaxy is only one of *hundreds of billions of other galaxies* in the universe!

Such vastness is very hard to comprehend. But this is only what God has *made*. He, Himself, is so much greater than His creation! To bring this awe-inspiring insight into the greatness of His divine Being is, clearly, one reason why our universe is like it is—beyond human ability to measure.

Job 36:26a

How great is God—beyond our understanding!

Psalms 145:3 [NJKV]

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable.

Job 11:7 [NKJV]

Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?

There are none who could ever 'search out' the inner depths of God's holy Being. Nor could they ever 'find out' the vast dimensions of the nine perfections now to be described. But thankfully, although these things are beyond our understanding, the Holy One does love to reveal Himself to us—in our deepest parts!

Psalms 47:2

The LORD Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth.

In the previous section, mention was made of the many 'humanly devised gods of history'. Referring to God as the 'Most High' is one way that the Bible distinguishes Him from these.

Nehemiah 1:5

[He is] the great and awesome God.

Ezekiel 38:23

[He says] "I will show My greatness and My holiness ... Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Our Creator's intention has been declared! Let's apply our minds then, to the things He has made known of Himself.

Firstly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His dynamic eternal-Being

(grand activity as the 'Eternally Self-existent, Immortal, Invisible, Living & True God'—who is always at work)

The word 'dynamic' speaks of what is *active* rather than *passive*—what is full of *life* and *energy*. Throughout the series we will wonder at our Maker's grand, ceaseless and richly productive activity!

eternally Self-existent

It is common to speak of 'the existence of God'. That's OK, as long as He is not seen as existing as *we* do. *We* exist, because there was a time—before we were brought into being—when we didn't. But God simply *is!* He is the eternally *Self-existent* One.

John 5:26

The Father has life in Himself.

This statement clearly answers that often asked question, "Where did God come from?" He didn't come from anywhere. All things came, and come, from *Him*, and find their existence in Him. But He *is!*

Job 36:26b

The number of His years is past finding out.

Genesis 21:33

[He is] the Eternal God.

There never was a time when He *wasn't!*

immortal

Not only was there never a time when He *wasn't*, there will also never will be a time when He *won't be* the great Father, Creator and King.

1 Timothy 6:16a

[God] alone is immortal.

Human beings are neither self-existent, nor—of themselves—immortal. Before their conception in the womb they did not exist, and although they do have continued existence in eternity, this is only because the Immortal One gives it to them.

Isaiah 57:15a

[He is] the high and exalted One ... who lives forever.

Revelation 4:9

[He is the One] who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever.

We will see that immortality is a theme that is of very great significance to humankind.

invisible

God does not have physical form, and so cannot be seen.

Later, we will see that during the time of the Old Testament—the first part of the Bible—He did 'appear' to His people in different ways. This was usually in the form of one called 'the angel of the LORD'.

His divine Being is, by nature, spiritual. He is for us—in our present state—the Unseen One.

John 4:24

God is spirit.

1 Timothy 6:16c

[God is One] whom no one has seen or can see.

John 1:18

No one has ever seen God.

1 Timothy 1:17a

[The Eternal King is] invisible.

He is invisible, but is, nevertheless, reigning every moment as the King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

No one has ever seen God. But as we progress through the series, it will be shown—as stated already—that He has *visibly* made Himself known, in a *total* way, in the Person of His Son. What a Story that is going to be!

always in the action of who He is

We have said that there *was* never a time when He *wasn't*, and *will* never be a time when He *won't be* Father, Creator and King. But there also never *was* a time when He *wasn't*, and never *will* be a time when He *won't be in the action of* all He is as Father, Creator and King.

The Bible does not speak of God being eternal, merely, as amazing information. It always has to do with the fact that He is the One who is unsearchably greater than time, and wonderfully *at work* within it. When speaking of His eternal Self-existence and immortality, the focus is always upon what He *does*. HE IS 'THE LIVING GOD'.

Our Father, Creator and King is always, and forever, the One who *gives life* and who *acts*. History is full of the ceaseless operations of the One who is Self-existent, immortal and invisible!

Psalms 90:2

From everlasting to everlasting You are God.

From the farthest past He *has been*, and into the most distant future He *will be*, in the constant movement of who He is as the Holy One.

Revelation 1:8

I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

God is the Alpha and the Omega—that is, the beginning and the end, or, the A to Z of all things. There is nothing that exists, or that operates, outside of His absolute reign and rule as King of His creation. The record of history focuses on human activity. But He is the One who is constantly operating far above and beyond it all!

History has shown that powerful, human personalities can sometimes hold situations together for many years. But when they die, so often all that has been secured falls apart. God, however—in His dynamic eternal-Being—will always be totally and effectively active on behalf of His creation.

Jeremiah 10:10

He is the Living God, the Eternal King.

John 5:17

[The] Father is always at His work to this very day.

the dynamic One & Only

There has only ever been, is today, and will only ever be, ONE GOD—who is marvellously at work in His world.

1 Thessalonians 1:9

[He is] the Living and True God.

Isaiah 44:6

[The LORD says,] “I am the First and the Last; apart from Me there is no God.”

Isaiah 46:3, 9

[He says,] “Listen to Me ... I am God, and there is no other.”

Jeremiah 16:20

Do people make their own gods? Yes, but they are not gods.

Psalms 96:5

All the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

There are many ancient religions with their various deities. But the Creator Himself saw their beginning—when they were devised—and He will see their end. There was no God before Him and will be none after Him.

1 Timothy 1:17

To the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Secondly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His righteousness

(right action according to the way/law of His own nature)

All that God does matches perfectly with what is *right* for Him to do as Father, Creator and King. There is never any difference between what He *is* by nature and what He *does*. We will see later that He has total *freedom* to act, every moment, in accordance with His own way, or law. He is never *driven* from within, or *forced* from without, to act any differently!

To say that God does what is right according to the *law* of His own nature, doesn't, mean that He operates *under* His law—as if He were legally subject to it. It simply means that He always acts consistently with the way of His Father-hood, Creator-hood and King-ship.

God's righteousness has to do with *true relational action*. It has nothing to do with any *strict legal demand* that He places upon Himself. There is no *legalism* in God, or in His written word, the Bible. True law in the Scriptures is about 'instruction in the way of God Himself', rather than 'heavy legal obligation'.

The Father desires to show us that His way, or law, is not—at all—a harsh and heavy thing. It is *the way of life*—and to operate according to it is the way of true personal freedom and fullness. Any experience we may have had of oppressive legal demands, must, *never* be confused with the life-giving way, or law, of God.

the Holy & Righteous One

Our Maker's unsearchably great righteousness is a constant—and magnificent—revelation of His holiness. By His unceasing actions of righteousness He shows Himself to be *separate from, different to, and other than* anyone or anything that is less than God!

Isaiah 5:16

The holy God will show Himself holy by His righteousness.

Psalm 145:17

The LORD is righteous in all His ways.

Psalm 11:7

The LORD is righteous, He loves justice.

He loves *justice* and *fairness*. Nothing brings Him more pleasure than to act in these ways towards His creation.

Daniel 4:37

Everything He does is right and all His ways are just.

Romans 14:17

The kingdom of God is [a matter of] ... righteousness.

Psalm 97:2

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

His holy reign and rule over the whole of His creation is entirely founded upon His righteousness! Every moment of history is a manifestation of His *right and just relational action* as Father, Creator and King.

Psalm 36:6

—*the breathtaking 'Himalayan' nature of His righteousness!*

[LORD,] Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains.

To speak of His righteousness as being 'like the mighty mountains', isn't merely describing the huge *amount* of righteous acts that He performs in His world. It is a statement of the *awesome nature* of His righteousness itself. The kinds of things He does are enormously significant and breathtakingly wonderful!

Psalm 111:3

Glorious and majestic are His deeds, and His righteousness endures forever.

As the series progresses, we will learn much, much more of the unsearchable greatness of God's righteousness—with its astonishingly liberating and life-giving implications for us, in both time and eternity.

Thirdly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His faithfulness

(absolute trustworthiness & dependability— as the One who never changes & whose every word is truth)

Because God is righteous—always acting consistently with His nature—He is also faithful. At all times, and in every way, He is absolutely reliable and dependable. We can always trust Him to do what is right!

To say that His trustworthiness and dependability is *absolute* means that it is as great as it could possibly be. We could never say, "If He was a little more like this, or, a little less like that, it would be easier to trust Him." There is nothing that could be added to, or taken from, His character that would make Him to be more reliable or dependable—or desirable!

Lamentations 3:23b

—*the proven affirmation of those who know Him*

"Great is Your faithfulness."

God's greatness is always *unsearchable*. And when it comes to the greatness of His faithfulness, this is certainly the case. All who truly know Him are aware of His faithfulness in so many ways; but its immense proportions could never be fully comprehended by them. They just know that during every minute of every day, and in each detail of their lives, His absolute trustworthiness and dependability can be counted on!

the One who never changes

In His faithfulness, God is the Unchanging One. *We* change, people around us change, circumstances and social standards change. But God always remains the same!

Malachi 3:6

—*what every person may be absolutely certain of*
“I the LORD do not change.”

James 1:17b

The Father ... does not change like shifting shadows.

When things alter within our human relationships, this can be very painful—especially when it involves someone we care about very much. But that will *never* be the case with the Father-Creator-King of us all. In His unsearchably great faithfulness, He can be trusted to always be the same—every moment!

The way such faithfulness is expressed will be seen in this study, but also in an ever-increasing way as the series progresses.

Hebrews 1:10–12

—*unlike His magnificent creation, He is the Eternally Unchanging One; never in need of renewal!*

“In the beginning, Lord, You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end.”

Just a passing comment: *It is much better to look to an eternally unchanging Creator, than a creation that is wearing out!*

Deuteronomy 32:4a

—*as steadfast as can be*
He is the Rock.

Exodus 3:14

—*what His messengers may say*
“I AM has sent me to you.”

Our Father, Creator and King is the great ‘I AM’. That is, HE IS THE ALWAYS ACTING, UNCHANGING GOD OF ALL HISTORY.

As Father, He will never change the way He relates to His family; as Creator, He will never change the way He has structured His world; and as King, He will never change the way He constantly exercises His perfect reign and rule over all things. This One who is the *Rock*—the great I AM—is indeed, absolutely trustworthy and dependable!

the truth of His word

God’s faithfulness also has to do with the *unchanging truth* of what He says. In the Old Testament, the ideas of ‘truth’ and ‘faithfulness’ come from the same word in the original Hebrew.

Isaiah 45:19

[He says], “I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right.”

John 17:17

[The Father’s] word is truth.

Everything God says is a perfect revelation of the truth; that is, *things as they really are*. His word makes known to us the way things were created to *be*, or the way they have *become* in history because of choices made against Him. Through His word we may know the exact truth about Himself, humanity and the creation.

Psalms 12:6

The words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.

Precious metals like silver are often passed through a process of purification. The goal in this is, of course, to have a piece that is absolutely pure.

In a court of law, the statements people make are also put through a process of testing or purification. Questions are asked from all kinds of angles, until—hopefully—the real truth is finally arrived at. But with the words of the Faithful One, no such process is needed. Every word He speaks is like silver that has been purified seven times!

In a later study, we will look in some detail at the Bible as the ‘Holy Scriptures’—God’s good and trustworthy word to us in written form.

a word that will never cease to be the truth—in time or eternity

Because God's word reveals to us 'the way things really are', it is a word that will continue to be absolutely reliable and dependable.

Mark 13:31

Heaven and earth will pass away, but [the word of God] will never pass away.

I Peter 1:24–25

All human beings are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands firm forever.

Human thoughts and ideas can be brilliant. But like those who form them, they come and go. It is only God's word that endures as the unchanging truth.

Psalms 119:160

All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal.

Psalms 119:89–90

Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations.

The Creator's word 'stands firm in the heavens'. Nothing can touch it! His faithfulness 'continues through all generations'. No matter how much things change socially and culturally over the years, God's word is always the one unchanging source of true wisdom for living in His world.

We could say that His word is like the needle of a compass, always pointing north, no matter how confused we may be.

the Ten Commandments

In Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, God gave His people *foundational instruction for life* in what are known as 'The Ten Commandments', or 'ten words'. He has never had to give a *revised version* of these in order to keep up with the times!

Those ten words, are in fact, a revelation of the way our Maker created us to operate. Any society, at any stage in history, which goes against these—or, any other word of God—is going against the very design of creation. History tells us that when this is the case, it is not long before things begin to become dysfunctional—so much less than what they were intended to be.⁷

the promises of His word

Another aspect of the absolute trustworthiness and dependability of God's word, has to do with, the promises He has made.

incredible & priceless

2 Peter 1:4

He has given us His very great and precious promises.

There are many things in life that people regard as incredible—that have enormous significance to them. There are also things that are regarded as being of great value—that are treasured above all else. But as we move through this series one thing will become increasingly apparent; there is nothing more incredibly significant, or utterly priceless, than the very great and precious promises of God!

fulfilled by the Faithful One

Psalms 145:13

The LORD is faithful to all His promises.

1 Samuel 15:29

He is not a human being, that He should change His mind.

Numbers 23:19

God is not a [human being], that He should lie, [or one of us] that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?

Joshua 21:45

Not one of all the LORD'S good promises ... failed; every one was fulfilled.

⁷ In a future study we will look at the 'Ten Commandments' in some detail.

1 Kings 8:56

Not one word has failed of all the good promises He gave.

Titus 1:2–3

[God], who does not lie, promised ... and at His appointed season He brought [the fulfillment of] His word to light.

Lamentations 2:17

—*what every person will finally say*
He has fulfilled His word.

We will see as we go on that what was promised in the first part of the Bible—the Old Testament—was wonderfully fulfilled in the second part—the New Testament. There are still promises yet to be fulfilled. But God's great faithfulness makes it *impossible* that He should ever *fail* to keep one of them!

Fourthly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His moral purity

(utter separateness from evil & jealous burning against it—in His holy wrath, bringing righteous judgment)

Within God's holy Being there is only complete and absolute purity. There is *nothing* in Him that is impure or evil. Nothing that is morally dark, ugly or unlovely.

What is *moral* always has to do with *choice*. And *every* choice made by the Holy One arises out of the utter purity of His divine Being.

Psalm 92:15

There is no wickedness in Him.

1 John 1:5b

In Him there is no darkness at all.

But not only is there *nothing* impure, dark or unlovely within the Holy One; there is also *everything* within Him that is right, just, fair, true, kind, lovely, beautiful and breathtakingly excellent!

1 John 1:5a

God is light.

1 Timothy 6:16b

[God] lives in unapproachable light.

The One who made us is, Himself, *light*. In the unseen spiritual realm His very presence illuminates everything around Him—with the blazing splendour of an unapproachable brightness! From within His holy Being, there shines out the radiance of a glorious 'uncreated light'!

the dynamic nature of His purity

The complete moral purity of God is, indeed, an awesomely wonderful thing. But—as must be immediately obvious—it is definitely not something that is merely *passive* or *static*. It is in fact, totally *active* and *dynamic*!

Because of the utter purity of His Being, there is an instant response within Him to all that is impure and morally corrupt. He is deeply grieved and offended when faced with any kind of moral darkness or corruption.

Our Maker is never *unmoved* in the face of evil. There is no sense in which He is prepared to 'put up with a bit of bad behaviour' from His creatures—as if, at least some measure of human unrighteousness should be expected, and tolerated.

Our next study will show how far this is from the case. There, it will be seen that human beings—as the image of God—have been given a high and holy calling. They have been created as magnificent creatures, to exercise a noble moral authority in their Creator's world. His expectation of them is, rightly, very great—and His grief in the face of their moral and vocational failure, enormous.

Genesis 6:5–6

The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil all the time ... and His heart was deeply troubled.

Isaiah 63:10

They rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.

The grief God knows in the presence of evil is more than just a deep sorrow. It has within it a holy anger and jealousy—a fierce burning against all that is morally dark and impure!

Habakkuk 1:13

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; You cannot tolerate wrong.

Deuteronomy 4:24

The LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Hebrews 10:31

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.

1 Samuel 6:20

—*the cry of some who tasted His fierce judgment*

“Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?”

Mention was made above of the *liberating* and *life-giving* implications for us of His righteousness. But His righteous acts of *judgment* may also be *terrifying*.

His holy agenda—the revelation of His glory

We will see throughout the series that God continually acts in history, with one grand purpose above all others: THAT THE SUPREME EXCELLENCE AND WONDER OF ALL THAT HE IS AND DOES— HIS GLORY—MAY BE MADE KNOWN AND ENJOYED IN ALL THE WORLD.

In the relentless pursuit of this He will never allow His name or His word to be despised. He will, in fact, come in judgment against the doers of evil, who dishonour Him. If He did not pursue the revelation of His glory in all the earth, nor finally judge those who despise it, *that would be great unrighteousness!*

And so He *is*, all the time, moving out towards, and coming up against, every expression of human evil—with a view to judging it and, ultimately, purging it from His universe!

Psalms 138:2

You have exalted above all things Your name and Your word.

Isaiah 42:8

I am the LORD; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols.

Ezekiel 36:23

I will show the holiness of My great name.

the wrath of the Holy One

The wrath of God is His righteous anger against all that is greatly offensive to Him.

Psalms 7:11b

[He is One] who expresses His wrath every day.

Although—with the world as it is—God’s wrath is expressed daily, it must be understood that our Father, Creator and King is not wrathful by nature. He is angry only in the face of evil.

His wrath is a ‘holy anger’—one that is different to any other. It comes out of an inner fountain of personal freedom and fullness. It is never the expression of a dark, perpetually smouldering inner rage—that erupts at the slightest provocation. His wrath is always clean, clear, purposeful, decisive and controlled.

Nahum 1:2–3

The LORD is a jealous and avenging God ... The LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.

Yes, He is jealous. But divine jealousy is not tainted by the fearful and petty self-interest that often accompanies human jealousy. Again, it is a ‘holy jealousy’ that flows from within His glorious Being.

The next major section will show that our Maker’s jealousy actually flows from that perfection which is at the heart of all others—His unsearchably great and indescribable LOVE. Such divine love will not leave *un-judged* what corrupts and demeans His image, and dishonours His name.

Psalms 105:7

He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth.

the righteousness of His judgments

As terrible as His judgments may be, they are of course, always right and just. He could never be accused of ‘creation abuse’!

Psalms 7:11a

God is a righteous judge.

Genesis 18:25

Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Job 34:12

It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice.

Ezekiel 14:23

I have done nothing ... without cause, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Daniel 9:14

— *when promised judgment comes*

The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything He does.

Revelation 15:3

Great and marvellous are Your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are all Your ways, King of the ages.

Throughout all the ages over which He has reigned, His ways have never been less than 'just and true'. His every act of judgment—rightly understood—is a 'great and marvellous' revelation of His glory. God's glory is, actually, revealed as much by His righteous judgment of evil, as by the more 'pleasant' actions of His righteousness.

Revelation 16:5, 7

— *the worship of those who witness the outpouring of His wrath*

"You are just in these judgments, You who are and who were, the Holy One ... Yes, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Your judgments."

God is justly working out His judgments in His world today. This is what He always has done. It is good and right that evil be judged, with a view to righteousness being established in the whole earth. One who neglected justice within His creation would never be worthy of His creatures' worship.

In our next section the matter of God's *blessings*—the good things He loves to give—will be spoken of. These are wonderful to receive. But, it must be seen that His judgments are, in reality, as much a part of divine *faithfulness* as His blessings. In any situation He will bring them both, according to what He has said in His word.

Our unsearchably great Father, Creator and King, is One who relates to, and maintains, His family, creation and kingdom, in absolute moral purity—with impeccable justice and complete integrity. Of this we may be entirely certain!

Fifthly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His love [at the heart of it all!]

(holy affection, yearning desire to bless, & ceaseless
Self-giving—shown in divine goodness, mercy & grace)

Here we are speaking of what is central to the Father's divine Being, and what is needed above all else, by every human creature.

1 John 4:16

We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

We are told not only that God loves, but that HE, ACTUALLY, *IS LOVE!*

The Creator's love is His pure and holy affection, desire and action towards us, and the whole of His creation. Every moment of every day He goes out towards us to bless, serve, and do us good—desiring that we enjoy His own freedom and fullness.

Because He *is* love, it is impossible for Him to love anyone 99%. He can only love 100% and does so 100% of the time. There has never been an unloved person in the whole of human history!

1 John 3:1

What great love the Father has lavished on us!

This unsearchably great love of God is at the heart of all His other perfections. The outline heading above, mentions three specific expressions of divine love: goodness, mercy and grace. But actually, everything about Him is a manifestation of His love. And so we must speak of His 'dynamic eternal

Being of love', 'the righteousness of His love', 'the faithfulness of His love', 'the moral purity of His love' etc.—including the remaining four perfections of this study.

The love of God for every person has within it a 'holy affection'—one that is not inflamed by infatuation, or governed by a grasping self-interest. In another study, it will be seen how this is 'different to', 'separate from' and 'other than' all other feelings of tenderness and fondness—where a prior intimacy with our Creator is lacking.

We have said that within this love is a 'yearning desire to bless'. As the One who has created all things in love, He longs to see His creatures abundantly endowed with, and fully enjoying, every good thing He has purposed for them. Again, later, we will see why this divine yearning is often pained by a deep and holy grief—as His love is spurned and disregarded.

Every act of God in history flows out of His love. As already mentioned, even His strong judgments upon human evil are the judgments of His love. They have as their goal the ultimate blessing of those who come under them—if they will have it that way.

Further on in the series, it will be shown how God—in the greatness of His fatherly affection—has acted in such a way as to be just, and yet, declare to be *not guilty forever* those who trust in what He has done! The unfolding revelation of this—and its outcomes—will be truly incredible!

His love expressed in goodness

The goodness of God is His glad provision of our needs, through both the established creation and His ongoing providence. As Provider and Keeper His goodness is expressed in endless seen and unseen ways. Such divine benevolence is our Maker's vast and generous supply of all that is pleasant to, and beneficial for, His creatures.

This teaches us something very wonderful about our Creator's authority as King of His creation: HIS AUTHORITY IS ONE THAT INVOLVES BOTH *RULE AND CARE*. It will be seen in future studies that in any true exercise of authority, these twin-dynamics of rule and care are never separated.

Further on, when we look at the Story of God's great love in the Old Testament, it will be seen that our 'faithful Creator' has established a covenant-of-love with the whole of His creation. He has in fact, bonded Himself in love to every element of it: from the minutest particle to the hugest mass; and from the most insignificant creature to the humanity He has created as His image and likeness.

We will see that His covenant-of-love is one that will never be dissolved. It is not *contractual*—that is, not dependant in any way upon human response for its continued operation. There may be questions that come to mind at this point about the nature and implications of such a covenant. These will all be covered later.

a good & kind Father-Creator-King

Our Maker is *ceaselessly* engaged in a glorious *divine Self-giving*—every moment of every day, acting on our behalf as OUR GREAT SERVANT KING.

James 1:17a

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father.

Psalms 33:5

The earth is full of His unfailing love.

The whole of the creation was brought into being in love, and as such, is a magnificent gift for our enjoyment day after day. It is His glad provision, both for those who love Him and those who don't.

Psalms 34:8, 10

Taste and see that the LORD is good ... Those who seek the LORD will lack no good thing.

Matthew 5:45

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Luke 6:35

He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Acts 14:17

—*the goodness of God to those who don't know Him*

He has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with [gladness].

This statement was made to a particular group of people whose circumstances in life were, clearly, very favourable. In the world as it is today—often impacted by wrong human choices, natural disasters

etc.—there may not always be the abundance that is desired. Yet, in these situations there is, nevertheless, still much to be grateful for—as many people living in such circumstances have confirmed. The gifts of God are all around, even where great deprivation is sadly present.

Galatians 5:22

The fruit of [God's] Spirit is ... kindness [and] goodness.

Psalms 145:9

The LORD is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made.

In the Scriptures our Good Creator has revealed Himself to be the Shepherd of His people—the One whose kind provision can be depended upon at every moment.

Psalms 23:1–4, 6

—*the assurance of a king, who knew the goodness of his own Creator-King*

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. ... [LORD] even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me ... Surely Your goodness and [unfailing] love will follow me all the days of my life.

His love expressed in mercy

God's mercy is His reviving action towards those who are rightly under His judgments, bringing them out of their misery. It is also seen in His deliverance of those who are suffering through no fault of their own. His divine mercy is *perfect* for every situation in which it is exercised—and so wonderful to receive!

Deuteronomy 4:31

The LORD your God is a merciful God.

In the Old Testament study to come, we will see that when God's people were under His wrath (the action of His holy-anger—His hot-love!), they were held in the pain of His judgments only for as long as was needful. Then, He had mercy on them and brought them out of their misery. Again and again, He showed Himself to be 'the Compassionate and Merciful One'.

He is not under obligation to be merciful to those who are rightly under His judgment. All who willfully live against Him and His way, may have no assurance of mercy. Yet He does love to be merciful!

Ephesians 2:4

God ... is rich in mercy.

Micah 7:18b

[He delights] to show mercy.

Psalms 78:37–38

[His people] were not faithful ... Yet He was merciful ... Time after time He restrained His anger and did not stir up His full wrath.

Psalms 103:10

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Up till now we have not mentioned this word 'sin'. As we proceed through the series it will be seen that sin is whatever is against God, His will and His way. It is His great mercy that doesn't see us every day treated, as our sins deserve!

Lamentations 3:22a

Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed.

Psalms 145:8

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and [abounding in unfailing] love.

God is deeply and profoundly moved by the plight of those who suffer.

Isaiah 63:9

In all their distress He too was distressed ... In His [unfailing] love and mercy He redeemed them.

The grand theme of *redemption*—the action of God in bringing His people into freedom and liberation—will be introduced in our Old Testament study. And from then on it will be a key to the rest of the series.

Psalms 116:5

God is full of [mercy and] compassion.

2 Corinthians 1:3

[He is] the Father of [mercy and] compassion and the God of all comfort.

Lamentations 3:22b–23a

His [mercies and] compassions never fail. They are new every morning.
It is a marvellous fact that those who know Him—seeking His way—may anticipate His mercy in all kinds of situations!

His love expressed in grace

God's grace is all that He gladly, freely and lavishly bestows upon His sinful and undeserving creatures, to bring them into human freedom and fullness!

His divine grace, we will see, is His *perfect* provision for the restoration of a restlessly struggling humanity—given in overwhelming abundance!

In the Old Testament the grace of God is described in two ways: 'unfailing love' and 'favour'.⁸ We will see how God was wonderfully and constantly gracious to His people throughout the Old Testament period.

Exodus 34:6–7

The LORD passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in [*unfailing*] love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Genesis 6:8

Noah found *favour* in the eyes of the LORD.

It is in the New Testament that grace is revealed in its ultimate and most glorious form. There, we witness the Father freely giving up His Eternal Son for the forgiveness and purification of our sins. In this—and all that flows endlessly from it—He makes Himself known as 'the God of all grace'!⁹

Romans 5:20

Where sin increased [God's] grace increased all the more.

Ephesians 1:2, 6–8

Grace and peace to you from God our Father. ... His glorious grace, which He has freely given us... [The] riches of [His] grace that He lavished on us.

Ephesians 2:7

[He will show] the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us.

As the series unfolds, these 'incomparable riches' of God's grace will be increasingly explored—that we may know more and more of the great joy they bring! We will see that this amazing grace of God is at the heart of the *redemption* He has accomplished for us, His dearly loved humanity.

Sixthly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His purpose[s]

(sovereign plan[s] of wisdom & love for both time & eternity—His 'good, pleasing & perfect will')

God's purposes are those things that—in holy wisdom and love—He has planned from eternity to accomplish in history.

Right from the moment of creation He has been totally purposeful in everything He has done—bringing all things towards a *great and glorious climax*.

The diagram below is one that will be increasingly developed throughout the series. It illustrates a 'linear' ('straight line') view of history—where all is moving forward towards the Creator's goal.

Creation

Climax



The outline speaks of 'His purpose[s]' and 'sovereign plan[s]'. God is working out His great *purpose* and *plan* for history, but is also fulfilling his particular *plans* and *purposes* towards that End.¹⁰

⁸ 'Unfailing love' is from the Hebrew word 'chesed', and 'favour' from the word 'chen').

⁹ 1 Peter 5:10. The New Testament Greek word for grace is 'charis'.

creation, a product of the wisdom and will of God

There is nothing random in God's creation. Nothing is a result of chance. All is present and operating according to His sovereign plan.

Jeremiah 10:12

He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding.

Psalms 104:24

How many are Your works, LORD! In wisdom You made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures.

Immediately after His awesome act of creation, we have the statement of our Creator's great pleasure in it all:

Genesis 1:31

God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

'Very good' means *functionally* or *purposefully* good. When He saw the finished creation, His response was, "It is perfect! It will exactly fulfill My purpose in making it. Every part—down to the last detail—is precisely as it needs to be to achieve My goal!"

From that point onwards, all of history has been the out-working of His great plan. Since then, our wise Creator has been relentlessly moving all things towards a glorious, final 'telos' (the New Testament Greek word for *end* or *goal*).

As we progress through the series, the wonder of this grand *climax* will be unveiled. In it all, we will see that history has always been, is today, and will always be, *HIS-STORY—THE STORY OF GOD!* In the midst of human decision and action, it is the unfolding of His sovereign and wise purpose.

The fact of the creation itself is enough to draw exalted worship from every man, woman, boy and girl. Let alone the glorious purpose for which He has created it!

Revelation 4:11

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.

the unsearchable nature of His purposes

God's plans are unsearchably great. In them all He is exercising a wisdom that only He has—as the Holy One.

Isaiah 40:28

His understanding no one can fathom.

Isaiah 55:9

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

When we consider the incalculable vastness of the universe—the degree to which 'the heavens are higher than the earth'—we may appreciate the unsearchable greatness of the ways and thoughts of the One who is far greater than His creation! There is never a moment when we are able to stand in judgment upon what He has purposed to do in His world. Our only appropriate response is to know that history is the outworking of the purposes of the Holy One—in the perfection of His wisdom and love.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful [and functional] in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet people cannot [search out] what God has done from beginning to end.

Job 37:5

He does great things beyond our understanding.

Ecclesiastes 11:5

You cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

Unless He reveals His purpose, we are completely unable to comprehend what He is doing, or predict what He will do. It is utterly beyond us!

¹⁰ The word 'sovereign' will often come up throughout this series. It is a wonderful word that describes the unsearchable greatness of God's purposes, plans and actions in history. His 'sovereign plan[s]', are those that He alone decides upon, and which He works out independently of all else. In the accomplishment of them—although incorporating human response—He is not controlled or limited by anyone or anything.

Isaiah 40:13

—in His unsearchably great wisdom, He never has been, or ever will be, in need of counsel or advice

Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten Him and who taught Him the right way? Who was it that taught Him knowledge or showed Him the path of understanding?

Romans 11:33–36

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever! Amen.

the One who knows all before it takes place

God's greatness in relation to His purposes is often referred to as His 'omniscience'. This is a philosophical term that speaks of Him being 'all-knowing'.

To say that He has such knowledge, however, doesn't merely refer to Him being able to see into, and predict, the future. He certainly knows what the future holds. But this is because He knows all that He, Himself, has purposed to do in history. We must not think of Him merely as some kind of celestial fortune-teller!

Isaiah 37:26

Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass.

Isaiah 46:10

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what still is to come.

Acts 17:26

—no historical or geographical surprises for Him!

From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

Psalms 139:16

—He determined the length of our lives before we were born

All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.

Job 14:5

[LORD God, You have determined the days of human beings]; You have decreed the number of their months and have set limits they cannot exceed.

Here, we are not at all speaking of 'fatalism'. That is, the idea that the future of every person is already planned out in detail, and cannot be changed no matter what they do. Such an understanding of history produces a sense of hopeless resignation. It suppresses human initiative and moral choice.

This is by no means, the way of God. The revelation here, of His purposes from eternity, is not meant to dampen our own will, but to thrill our heart! The more assurance we have of a good and sovereign Father, the more able we are to live creatively, confidently, gladly, freely and purposefully in His world.

Psalms 147:5

Great is our Lord ... His understanding has no limit.

Maybe, at this point, it would be good to make a practical comment: As we proceed through the various studies there will no doubt be many questions that come to mind. But when all twenty-four have been covered—and the 'big picture' of God's purposes and our part in them has been received—all of these questions should be appropriately answered. This is an integrated series, with each study building on what has gone before, and so the framework for such answers will be progressively developed.

the One who is at work in His world, according to His righteous & eternal purpose of wisdom & love

God knows exactly what He has planned to accomplish in His creation; and He is—as already said—working this out in the midst of human decision and action

As Our Maker accomplishes His great plan—and His many purposes within it—He does not act within humanly desired time limits. How foolish it would be to demand that He operate according to our timetable! He is the God of the centuries, and His purpose spans them all. Only at the end of history will it be seen how amazingly He has brought it all about.

2 Peter 3:8

—*time is nothing to Him*

With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

Time is something God has created. He, Himself, is not locked into it. Although always at work within time, He is unsearchably greater than it and sovereignly rules over it.

He is the Eternal One—GOD—who knows exactly what He has planned to do over the centuries and millenniums of history. This great Father, Creator and King, is neither slow nor impatient as He goes about His business. In His wisdom and love He is always acting according to His will—and His timing is always perfect. The only fitting response on our part to this grand reality is *joyous humility* and *full-hearted worship!*

Ephesians 1:11

[He] works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

Romans 12:2

[His will is] good, pleasing and perfect.

Proverbs 16:4

—*his sovereign purpose includes ultimate judgment for those who oppose Him*

The LORD works out everything to its own proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster.

Isaiah 45:6–8

—*the One whose purpose includes both judgment & salvation*

I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things ... Let salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it; I, the LORD, have created it.

God is sovereignly operating in the affairs of His world. As has been seen, sometimes this takes the shape of needful judgment. Other times, He ordains tragic situations to take place for reasons known only to Him, as the One who *is love*. But in it all, there is one thing we may know. Our Father-Creator-King is relentlessly engaged in working out His GREAT SAVING PURPOSE, in the midst of human history.

God's *salvation* has to do with His *deliverance* of those who desperately need it. As we proceed, much more will be said about His amazing *plan of salvation*. Its accomplishment is one of the grand themes of the Scriptures—and so will be a central emphasis in this series.¹¹

Jeremiah 29:11

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Romans 15:13

—*with Him there is always a sure way ahead*

[He is] the God of hope.

To people of faith, the revelation of God's unsearchably great purposes brings *enormous* expectation and promise. Those who look to Him need never be afraid of His will. It is the path of His wisdom and love!

Seventhly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His personal presence

(intimate involvement with His creation every moment)

His personal presence is His divine capacity for *total, personal involvement* in every situation of human history. There is no place in His whole universe where the great Father-Creator-King is not fully, personally present. This perfection of God is sometimes called His 'omni-presence'—meaning 'present everywhere'.

Of course, He is not *just* present everywhere. His presence is—every moment—wisely and purposefully dynamic!

Jeremiah 23:24

"Do I not fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

¹¹ In the Bible, God's righteousness and salvation often have the same meaning. That is, the words are regularly used in an interchangeable way. The salvation of a needy humanity is at the heart of His righteous purpose!

Ephesians 4:6

—*wonderfully present to His family*

[There is] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The Father is over all things on behalf of His family, is actively operating in the midst of all things for its sake, and is always dwelling intimately within it.

Acts 17:26–28

—*intimately present to & 'seekable' by all*

From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being.

There is not one nation, tribe or people-group that the Father-Creator-King is not present to, and intimately involved with, every moment. As will be seen later, He has provided all that is necessary for people to seek Him and find Him—if they will have it that way.

As the Holy One works out His great plan, He doesn't do it in a detached or mechanical manner, without personal involvement. The 'deistic' view of God is, that He has wound up the universe like a clock, which just keeps ticking away until all has worked itself out—apart from any ongoing action by Him. This is not the way of the Living God!

There is no situation where He is not *there*—actively! Never, at any time, does He accept evil events that take place in His world. But He is, nevertheless, sovereignly involved in them all, keeping them from going beyond a certain point. And when—in His divine wisdom—He ordains that wickedness should continue, we may be sure that His holy anger burns fiercely against it! We may also be sure that He will bring judgment upon all such evil, on the Day when history is brought to its great climax.

a penetrating, searching presence

Another aspect of His personal presence is, that there is nothing in the whole of His creation of which He is not totally aware at any moment. He even knows what is in our 'secret heart'. This too is an example of His 'omniscience'—as the All-knowing One.

Because of His personal presence, it is just as though each of us were the only one with whom He had to do—having His total attention at all times!

Psalm 139:1–4, 7

You have searched me, LORD, and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely, LORD ... Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?

Psalm 38:9

All my longings lie open before You Lord: my sighing is not hidden from You.

1 Kings 8:39

[LORD,] You alone know every human heart.

Psalm 139:17

How precious [are Your thoughts concerning me, O God!] How vast is the [number] of them!

Psalm 147:5b

Great is our Lord ... His understanding has no limit.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

Psalm 33:14–15

He watches all who live on earth—He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

Proverbs 5:21

Your ways are in full view of the LORD, and He examines all your paths.

Psalm 90:8

You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence.

1 John 3:20

—*He is far more aware of us than we are of ourselves!*

God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.

Hebrews 4:13

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

When the human conscience is unsettled, the fact of God's presence is not very appealing. It may even be quite terrifying. But such uneasiness before Him is not what our Maker desires. We are going to see that He has so acted in history, that we may be liberated into an *enjoyment* of His presence—that is more wonderful than anything we have ever known!

Hosea 11:9

[The LORD says,] "I am God, and not a human being—the Holy One among you."

The Holy Father-Creator-King may be trusted to act among His people in accordance with His divine nature and purpose. For those who know Him, the kind of uncertainty that *human* presence often brings needs never, to be felt in *His* presence.

Eighthly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His power

(full ability to accomplish everything He has purposed)

God's power is His sovereign ability—in holy love—to personally accomplish in history, all He has purposed from eternity. His power is, indeed, unsearchably great! This perfection is often called His 'omnipotence'—meaning that He is 'all-powerful'.

Job 26:14

[His many mighty acts within the creation] are but the outer fringe of His works; how faint the whisper we hear of Him! Who then can understand the thunder of His power?

The frighteningly powerful forces of nature are certainly, awesome to behold. But these are only a faintly whispered testimony to the power of the Almighty One.

needing only to speak in order to accomplish His will

Reference has already been made to the *absolute dependability* of God's word. But now we see that His word also has *incredibly great power*.

Romans 4:17

[He is the] God who ... calls into being things that are not.

Genesis 1:3

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

2 Peter 3:5

By God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed.

Psalms 148:5

At His command they were created.

Hebrews 11:3

The universe was formed at God's command.

Psalms 33:9

He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm.

The Creator has brought all things into being out of nothing—simply by His word!

always the Sovereign Creator

The creation does not just continue on automatically—operating and replenishing itself apart from its Creator. It is renewed, maintained, or diminished, *always* by His personal sovereign action.

the Giver, Maintainer & Taker of Life

As Creator, every second of life or occurrence of death within His creation is in His hands.

Psalms 104:29–30

When You take away [the breath of Your creatures], they die and return to the dust. When You send Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth.

Job 12:10

In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of every human being.

Psalms 36:6b

LORD, You preserve both people and animals.

Matthew 10:29

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.

the Maintainer of the Heavens

The vast expanses of God's immense universe are present and functioning, solely by His great wisdom and sustaining power.

Jeremiah 31:35

[He is the One] who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night.

Isaiah 40:26

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

never unable to do what He has planned

The great Father-Creator-King has never been, or ever will be, frustrated in the outworking of His purpose. The word 'difficult' cannot be used in regard to His intentions. It is never a matter of whether He can or cannot do something—only whether or not it is His will!

Job 12:13

—*2 inseparable perfections*
To God belong wisdom and power.

Isaiah 48:3

I foretold the former things long ago, My mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.

Luke 1:37

No word from God will ever fail.

Jeremiah 32:17

Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.

Jeremiah 32:26-27

Then the word of the LORD came ... "I am the LORD, the God of the whole human race. Is anything too hard for Me?"

Matthew 19:26

—*in the face of His incredible mercy & grace*
Humanly, this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

no person, situation or thing is able to prevail against what He has purposed

God is *free* to do all that He has purposed in His world, regardless of what is happening at any moment of history. And in this, His every action is a pure expression of divine righteousness.

Isaiah 46:9–11

I am God, and there is no other. ... I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. ... What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

Isaiah 14:24

[The LORD Almighty says,] "Surely as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand."

Psalms 33:11

The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.

Daniel 4:3

How great are His signs, how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; His dominion endures from generation to generation.

Psalms 115:3

Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him.

Psalms 135:6

The LORD does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and in all their depths.

Daniel 4:35

He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: “What have You done?”

Isaiah 43:12–13

[The LORD says,] “I am God. ... When I act, who can reverse it?”

Ecclesiastes 3:14

—*the enduring perfection of His works*

Everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it.

Proverbs 21:30

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.

Even in the midst of great adversity, His people may know that He is working out His glorious purpose of love—for them, and His whole creation. The way He does this is beyond our comprehension. But He is *able* to do it to perfection!

Often the Sovereign One gives His rebel creatures up to the wicked intentions of their hearts—so that they unwittingly become His ‘agents’ in bringing about His righteous purpose. The perpetrators of these things will, of course, be judged for their evil.¹²

Proverbs 19:21

Many are the plans in a human heart, but it is the LORD’S purpose that prevails.

sovereign over the history of nations and their rulers

World affairs, with all of their complexity, are totally under the control of ‘the King of the nations’. The rise and fall of rulers and kingdoms is in His wise and strong hands.

Daniel 2:21

He changes times and seasons. He deposes kings and raises up others.

Daniel 4:32

The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of the earth and gives them to anyone He wishes.

Isaiah 40:17

Before Him all the nations are as nothing.

Job 12:23

He enlarges nations, and disperses them.

Ezra 1:1

In order to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia.

Proverbs 21:1

The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases.

Isaiah 40:23

He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

Isaiah 14:26–27

[His hand is] stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart Him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

worthy of absolute trust & adoring worship!

This unsearchably great Father-Creator-King is able to *do* all that He has both purposed in His heart and promised to His people. Sometimes fathers—or others with people under their care—have excellent intentions and sincere desire to do certain things. But when it comes to actually carrying out their purpose or promise, they—in the end, for some reason or another—are unable to accomplish it.

Such frustration will never, be known by the Living God. His people can be sure that every promise given will be *totally* fulfilled. This faithful and powerful Father and King, is indeed, worthy of our absolute trust and adoring worship!

Deuteronomy 3:24

Sovereign LORD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand.

¹² Isaiah 10:5–6, 12.

1 Chronicles 29:11

Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour. ... Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all.

the most perfect expression of His divine power

In all this, we must see however, that God's power is not merely an *overwhelming physical force*. The greatness of His power is seen supremely in the *weakness* of His *love*—displayed ultimately in the *Central Act* of all history: the sin-bearing death of His Son. It will be made clear in later studies, that this very weakness is, in reality, the great, transforming power of the Almighty!

1 Corinthians 1:18

The message of the cross ... is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:25

The weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

As has been indicated, throughout this series we will be exploring the amazing dimensions of such an all-powerful love.

Ninthly, His perfections are understood by the awesome revelation of:

- His blessedness

(unbounded joy & delight, & perfect rest & peace, in the light of all that He is & does—the 'Blissful & Supremely Happy One', enjoying total personal freedom & fullness)

Having seen all that we have of 'the God who is', this final perfection should come as no surprise!

the Blessed God

Our Maker has unbounded joy and perfect rest, in the light of His own glory—that is, in view of all that He is and does as the Holy Father, Creator and King. He is the 'Blessèd God'. He lives every moment in the happiness and calm of His own perfections.¹³

He is not restricted or oppressed by anything within Himself. He is entirely free to *be* and to *do* all that is according to His divine nature. He is not striving 'to become something'. He doesn't need 'personal development' in any way. HE IS GOD—enjoying total personal freedom and fullness.

When speaking earlier in this study of His moral purity, it was said that there is *nothing* in Him that is impure or evil, or morally dark, ugly and unlovely. But it was also said that there is *everything* in Him that is right, just, fair, true, kind, lovely, beautiful and breathtakingly excellent!

Ephesians 1:17

—*the One whose dwelling place is full of the wonder of His Fatherhood!*

[He is] the glorious Father.

2 Samuel 22:31a

His way is perfect.

Deuteronomy 32:4b

His works are perfect.

In the end, no one will ever be able to say, "That was good, but He could have done *this* as well." Or, "It would have been better if He hadn't done *that*." Just the opposite will be the case. All that He has done—and continues to do—will be the utter delight of those who love Him, forever!

His works are perfect, and He lives always in the blessedness of them.

¹³ In the original Greek of the New Testament, there are two words for 'bless'/'blessed'. One is *eulogeo*, which means to praise, or to prosper, equip or supply. The other is *makarios*, which means 'personal bliss and supreme happiness'. Here, we are referring to *makarios*—indicated by the use of an inflected 'e' (è). *Makarios* is pronounced 'bless-ed' throughout this series, and *eulogeo* simply, 'blessed'.

Philippians 4:8

—*a catalogue of divine virtues*

[That which] is true ... noble ... right ... pure ... lovely ... admirable ... excellent [and worthy of praise].

Galatians 5:22–23

—*beautiful fruit of the divine Being*

The fruit of [God's] Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Throughout the rest of the series, we will receive increasingly wonderful revelation of 'the beauty of His holiness'.

Our Maker's primary choice is to rejoice in the utter beauty and excellence of all that He is and does. For Him to do anything less would be both *unthinkable* and *unrighteous*. The deep fountain of His divine Being is one of unending holy joy and rest!

1 Timothy 1:11

[He is] the blessed [One—the blissful and supremely happy] God.

1 Chronicles 16:27

Splendour and majesty are before Him; strength and joy are in His dwelling place.

the Joyful Creator

Imagine for a moment our dear Maker's pleasure in creating all things.

He surely had enormous delight in stretching out the universe in all its vastness—in order to display *something* of His unsearchable greatness! What joy He must have expressed in forming the mysterious depths of the oceans, and the grandeur of mighty mountains; in causing the seas, rivers and lakes to 'teem with living creatures'—many wildly exotic; in causing the skies to be inhabited by an almost endless variety of birds and insects—most with their unique songs, and all with intriguing behaviours; and, in filling the land with an indescribable array of fascinating animal life, appealing vegetation and delicious foods.

And all this—from the microscopic to the massive—to be seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelt for our delight, and His glory!

But above all, how richly would His divine happiness have been expressed in the formation of humankind, in His image and likeness—the crown and climax of all He had made! ¹⁴

Isaiah 44:24

—*His glad declaration*

I am the LORD, who has made all things.

Being the kind of Creator He is, no wonder the fruit of His Spirit is joy!

heavenly beings who share in His joy

Mention has already been made of 'heavenly beings' that joyously cry out at the wonder of God's perfections. The Bible speaks of a whole range of such spiritual creatures that were created before the formation of the world. These love to worship and serve Him—finding their greatest delight in all that He is and does as God.

They include angels, cherubim, seraphim ('burning ones'), living creatures and elders—each with different roles, and each giving expression to the awesome delight that fills them, in the presence of their Maker. The number of these is enormous.

Daniel 7:10

Thousands upon thousands [of heavenly beings] attended [the LORD]; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.

More will be seen of these spiritual creatures as biblical events are opened up to us.

Job 38:7

—*angels joining the Creator in His pleasure*

[When He created] all the angels shouted for joy.

¹⁴ At this point in the series, such a high claim for 'created humanity' may seem to be something of an overstatement. But future studies will certainly dispel any such reservation!

the gladness of all creation

There is a sense in which *the whole of creation* joins its Maker in His joy. It does this by simply *fully being* all that it was created to be—existing every second, for the One who formed it! At times the Scriptures actually call upon the creation to celebrate and exalt in what its Creator has done, is doing and will do—as He works out His great purpose of love for His world.

Psalms 96:11–13

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all of the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice before the LORD.

the God of peace

The One who in the beginning made everything to be ‘very good’, did so out of His own serene and ordered Being.

1 Corinthians 14:33

God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

But what about today, when so much within His creation has been tainted by human disorder and corruption? How could a grieved and offended Creator maintain personal serenity? Well, He *does*, simply because there is nothing that is disordered and corrupt within *Him*!

How thrilling it is to know this! Even in the midst of so much that is now chaotic and dysfunctional within His creation, the Holy One remains in perfect rest and peace!

Romans 15:33

[He is] the God of peace.

Philippians 4:7

The peace of God ... transcends all understanding.

God’s peace is beyond the understanding of one whose conscience has any sense of personal failure. But it is an unceasing reality for *Him*, because He never has failed, or ever will fail, to do what is *right* according to the way, or law, of His own nature. He is, ever, the Totally Whole and Integrated One!

The Father lives, every moment, in the perfect rest and peace of His own righteousness—and all of His other perfections. There is nothing about Him that is *desperate* or *uneasy*. Peace is always the fruit of the Divine Spirit.

Our Creator is, of course, divinely *passionate* in His love—being deeply *grieved* by evil and profoundly *moved* by the plight of those affected by it. The concern He has for His dearly loved creation is beyond our comprehension. But there is no desperation or uneasiness in this. He is *not* ‘the frantic Father’! In it all, He knows who He is, and the righteousness of what He has done, is doing and has purposed to do.

As the Holy Father-Creator-King, He is always *entirely at rest and at peace within Himself*—even when His divine affections are deeply stirred and aroused in the face of grievous human situations. How wonderful such serenity must be! This is what is at the heart of true, ongoing personal freedom—the *still centre* of a pure and untroubled conscience.

the Blessèd King

The One who has brought His creation into being, is pursuing His grand purpose of establishing within it a wonderful kingdom-of-love! The way He initiates, and ultimately fulfills, this purpose will be spelt out in ‘the great Story of Redemption’ mentioned above. There, we will see the amazing actions of the Blessèd King—gloriously at work within His creation.

1 Timothy 6:15a

[He is] the Blessèd [Blissful, Supremely Happy] and only Ruler.

Romans 14:17

The kingdom of God is [a matter of] ... righteousness, peace [and] joy.

It is so assuring to know that the One who rules over all things is never depressed or despairing. He reigns in the constant joy and rest of all that He is, has done, is doing and intends to do!

Yes, as grievous to Him as human unrighteousness is—and as deep as His divine compassion is—His blessèdness as the Sovereign One is not diminished in any way. In fact, His anguishing, grieving love—and the wrath it often brings—is what naturally flows from His ceaseless and unbounded joy and delight in Himself. How could it not! True, anguished compassion, and burning grief and wrath—

within God or human beings—always comes out of enjoyment of the divine perfections, and the personal peace and integration that comes from such delight.

the ultimate purpose of the Blessed One

As we progress through the series, we will see that it is God's purpose to enable *His people* to be one with Him in His boundless joy and delight, and perfect rest and peace, forever!

He actually wants them—even now—to increasingly enjoy this with Him in every moment of their lives—regardless of what has happened, is happening, or threatens to happen! The way this becomes possible is the central purpose of the first eight studies of our series; and our experience of it—as we respond to God's call—will be at the heart of the next sixteen.

CONCLUSION

This then, is 'the God Who is'. He is the *Holy One*: the *Unsearchably Great, Blissful and Supremely Happy Father, Creator and King*, who—in *righteousness, faithfulness* and utter *moral purity*—is *personally*, and *powerfully*, working out in history His *eternal purposes of love!*

\Deuteronomy 32:3

I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!

It must surely be clear that the description of our Maker in this study is *not* merely a list of ideas and concepts. The dynamic reality of each of His perfections will become increasingly apparent as we continue on through the series. They are, actually, the foundation for everything else that is to come.

Now, having seen who *God* is, we are in a position to see what a *human being* is, as one formed in the Creator's image and likeness. And so we come to Study 2: 'The High Human Calling'.

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