



Beyond The Dictionary

As small children, we were told about the “man in the moon.” So at night, we gazed intently at the moon in order to see this man. But he was not there. He was only the imagination of some creative minds of parents, or friends, who wanted us to focus our imagination on the heavens. And we did.

A. Imagining gods and carving idols:

Unfortunately, some never grow out of their childish desire to imagine. In the case of God, some imagine God after their own physical and emotion image. They suppose that God is of their same nature, emotions and physical appearance. The psalmist wrote, “*The Lord’s throne is in heaven. His eyes behold. His eyelids test the children of men*” (Ps 11:4). And thus the childish adult concludes that just as he has eyes and eyelids, then God must also have literal eyes and eyelids. Such childish interpretation of the Scriptures misses the metaphors of what the psalmist was trying to say.

By missing the metaphor of such statements in the Bible as the preceding, our “spirit of idolatry” often moves us to create a god after our own physical image. In our yearning to conceive of a god with whom we can identify, we bring God down to the definition of our own earthly terms. Some even go so far as to carve an image of their imagined god in a stone or on a piece of wood. In all our child’s play to create a god

with whom we can better identify, we forget that God is spirit, and the definition of “spirit” is that **there is no physical form** (Jn 4:24).

If one imagines a god who conforms to his psychological profile and physical image, then he has missed the biblical definition of God.

B. The God greater than our imagination:

Our efforts to create a god after our own image results in a very unfortunate conclusion. If the God of heaven were no greater than the appearance of a physical man, **then there could never have been an incarnation of the Son of God into the flesh of man**. Statements in the Bible as John 1:14 would simply be theological nonsense: “*And the Word [God] was made flesh and dwelt among us*” (See Jn 1:1,2).

If the Word were already flesh—some supposedly conclude that Moses saw some fleshly hinder parts of their fleshly god—then there could never have been an incarnation of the Son of God into the flesh of man. If the Son of God were already flesh, then His incarnation would have been only a parallel transfer from some location in the galaxies to this planet. Therefore, before one assumes that the God of heaven is in some physical form as a man, he should consider the conclusion that such a belief attacks the gospel of the incarnation. In other words—and we want to be perfectly clear—if one imagines that God has some physical form as man, **then he has denied the incarnation of the Son of God** (See Jn 1:1,2,14). He has denied the very foundation upon which the gospel is based.

C. The spirit of idolatry:

Our spirit of idolatry urges us to move even beyond the creation

of a being in our minds who conforms to our physical image. We seek to create a god in our minds who is no greater than our own emotionality. It is true that “*he who does not love does not know God, for God is love*” (1 Jn 4:8). But we must not confine the extent of God’s love to the limits of our own capacity to love.

Human loving is only the beginning to understanding the awesome God of love. We must remember that when our love toward our fellow man has reached its limit, God’s love continues on without limits. It must. Upon repentance, the most vile person can still be brought into the loving “arms” of God. **There is no sin of which one repents that is beyond the forgiveness of our truly loving God.** God’s love could have extended to Hitler if only Hitler would have truly repented of all his wickedness. If we believe that God’s love could never have extended to such lengths, then we have limited the love of God to our idol god who is no greater than our own capacity to love.

God’s love is without limits, whereas our love often reaches limits.

D. The incomprehensible God:

We must use the English word “incomprehensible” when speaking of the God of the Bible. We do so because there are no other words in any dictionary on earth that fully defines God’s existence, being and character. We catch a glimpse of His love through His loving behavior as it was demonstrated through the sacrificial offering of the incarnate body of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary. This “incomprehensible” act of love is recorded in the pages of the Bible, but with the limitation of the words of our dictionary. Sometimes the work of God in the affairs of this world go beyond the limits of the definitions of the words of our dictionaries.

We still struggled with the concept of incarnation simply because no human being has experienced such. If we throw away the Bible—as many do in their frustration to deal with such incomprehensible matters—we would still be driven to create a god after our own image and according to our own limited love. It is simply an innate drive within us that we must imagine “something” greater than ourselves (See At 17:22-28). If we cannot imagine such, then we make something of this world our god.

Idol gods are always humanly defined, and subsequently they behave as humans.

People who do not know the Bible, therefore, **can never come to an understanding of the loving God of the Bible.** Without the recorded message of the incarnation and cross, we are doomed to limiting God’s boundless love to the boundaries of our own limited love. In our ignorance of the Bible, we become idolaters, worshiping a god whom we have sculptured according to the limitations of our own limited reasoning. Nevertheless, regardless of our limitations in thought, and particularly our earthly experiences, we believe in a loving God who is far beyond the definition of the words of our dictionary.

Group Review Discussion Questions

[After reading the text of this book, answer the following questions in a discussion group with others.]

1. Why is it necessary to understand metaphors in order to understand the God of the Bible?
2. Why does our understanding of God after our own psychological and physical nature deny the God of the Bible?
3. Why does the belief that God in any way is physical deny the incarnation?
4. Why must the love of God extend far beyond our ability to love?
5. Why must we use the word “incomprehensible” in our struggle to understand God and the incarnation?

For continued research on this subject,
 download Book 12, *God, The Father*,
 in the *Biblical Research Library*.
www.africainternational.org

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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Written by **Roger E. Dickson** for the **Gospel Connection**; **Denville Willie**, administrator.

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