

~ GOD IS LOVE ~

What is meant by the thought that Jehovah God is Love? For thousands of years, men have been striving to find words to describe the real meaning of God's love.

A simple search of the Internet will provide anyone hundreds of opinions as to an answer. The thoughts can range from one "God loves all" to "His love is for professed believers now" to even "God has no love because of the evil present today".

A scriptural reference to "God is love" is found in 1 John 4:8, and 16. Yet, life experiences may shape individual's conclusion of what God's love is resulting in a wide variance of opinions. How can we understand God's Word? Paul tells us "...No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." 1 Corinthians 2:11.

Who knows and understands the mind or spirit of God? Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus further supports this thought in Matthew 11:27, "...and no one knows the Father except the Son **and** any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Reading the receptive hearts of men, Jesus

revealed God's thoughts, including love, by what he taught and what he performed.

Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" His answer - "...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" Matthew 22:38-40.

Unlike the boundary commandments given to the Nation of Israel to **not** worship any other object, now the Jews were directed to the positive commandment, to love. But what is the meaning of the word used by Jesus? The word **love** cited previously is translated from the Greek word, agape. It carries a different thought as compared to phileo love.

For example where both agape and phileo are used in the same text is in John 21:15-17. Jesus twice asked Peter if he loved (agape) the Lord. Both times Peter answered, "I love (phileo) you". The third time Jesus asked Peter if he phileo him. And Peter gave the

same response. Did Peter not understand the question?

Peter was truly sorrowful for denying the Lord Jesus three times. And Peter wanted to reassure the Lord that he phileo or loved Jesus as a brother. Yet Jesus was searching Peter's heart to see if he had learned to love on a higher plane, agape or unconditional love.

The importance of developing an agape type love is revealed in the love demonstrated by Jehovah God. We are familiar with John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." The word "loved" is agape. God did not phileo the world to give his son to die on the cross. Why? Because the sin-filled world did not then, and with limited exceptions now, unconditionally love God.

The greatest commandment was to agape (unconditionally love) God. Much of the world does not even practice phileo (brotherly love) for God or even his brother (1 John 4:20-21). Yet Jehovah's love for the human race was established before the foundations of the world (1 Peter 1:20). His love for the world is in keeping of a promise to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). His love was shown in the promise given to Abraham

(Genesis 22:17-18). And one day every eye will see the fulfillment of all the prophecies as found in Ezekiel 12:23.

It is easy to love our friends, but it is hard to love those who despise us. The display of true agape love is found in John 15:13, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This act, of offering one's own life to permit someone else to live, is a true example of love. In times of war and hardships we hear about such wonderful deeds. Although based on noble intentions, such sacrifices fall short when considering the scripture Psalm 49:7-8 "Truly no man can ransom himself, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of his life is costly, and can never suffice".

The love of an imperfect man to save another from God's just sentence of death upon the human race cannot be satisfied with an act of love for all are imperfect (Romans 3:10). It requires a perfect man, who unswervingly manifests love for both Jehovah and sinful mankind, which can demonstrate such a perfect love as described in John 15:13. Who is this perfect man? "...the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to

which was borne at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Now, rereading 1 John 4th chapter, we may begin to see and understand the meaning of love expressed by Apostle John and his basis for stating that Jehovah not only loves, but He is Love. Love is one of the four attributes of God, always in balance with Power (Psalm 89:13), Wisdom (Isaiah 40:13-14), and Justice (Psalm 89:14). These four aspects work in harmony with each other to properly direct every thought and action in God's Plans and Purposes for the heavens and on this earth. Thus Love is one of God's foundation stones.

How about mankind? Will man be able to obtain a level of perfect agape love spoken by Jesus?

Adam was created in God's moral image as a perfect human being capable of making righteous and just decisions. Without life lessons, Adam lacked complete wisdom to fully understand the consequences of sin. When he was offered the forbidden fruit, the Adversary played Adam's love for God - to keep His commandment - against Adam's love for Eve. As result of Adam's choice, he and all his children fell from the plane of human perfection. Mankind would gain the lessons of the effects of

sin, evident all around us, exhibited in envy, hatred, and even death (Galatians 5:19-21).

The law was given to the nation of Israel to be a school master and guide them to prepare for the Messiah (Galatians 3:24). This law was written on stone. Yet faithful Moses, as Israel's mediator, could not lead them to keep the letter of the law. In God's loving arrangements, he provided annually the Atonement Day Sacrifices to clean the slate for the year to come. Moses, a great prophet for his time, told the nation, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren - him you shall heed..." Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the same time period mentioned by Moses. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel **after those days**, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will **write it upon their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall **all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember

their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

"After those days" (a time yet to come), God's plan includes the same covenant to Adam and **ALL** Adam's children. Then the Lord's spirit will work with each man's will. The letter and the spirit of the law will be known and embraced in their hearts and minds. (Isaiah 11:9, 1 Timothy 2:4) For all shall know that God is

Love. And all who truly desire to agape love God Jehovah will say, I delight to do Thy Will.

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