

God: What is He Like? How Does He Interact With Us?

(And how should that affect our interaction with him?)

What is the relationship between us and God? How can we compare God and people? What is God like... and how should that affect the way we live?

Person-to-Person

Scripture gives us two different perspectives for understanding God and his relationship to people. The one relationship, which is often easier for us to grasp, has to do with the way he relates to us, as one person to another. First and foremost, God is the King and Lord (master) over all. He is the judge - and for those who have rebelled against him (and who do not change), he is a *terrifying* judge. Yet on the other hand, for those who have made peace with him, he reveals himself as a friend and a brother.

Throughout the Old Testament, God is revealed in this way. However, the most complete and perfect revelation of his person-to-person relationship with people can be seen in the New Testament: Jesus Christ, who is God in human form, lived among people, interacted with people and showed them (and us) what God is like.

Person-to-Object

There is a second way that God reveals himself to us, one that is less easy to understand, yet equally true. This involves his relationship to us as the Creator over his creatures. From this perspective, the differences between God and people are so different, that *there are no completely accurate ways to describe it*. We just simply *cannot* comprehend what it is like to be an "uncreated being" - which God is. The best we can do, to get a vague idea of this relationship, is to describe it by means of an analogy - by taking something we *can* comprehend, and using it to give us an idea of what we *can't* comprehend.

Many have tried to invent analogies that could illustrate the difference between God and people. Some have said, for instance, that the relationship of God to people is in some way comparable to the relationship of people to an ant (or some other small creature). But such an illustration does not do justice - the differences between a person and an ant (or some other living creature) is just not great enough. We need to go further, and pick the greatest extreme we can comprehend. That would be the comparison of a human to something that is *non-living*, namely, dust or clay. And even then, the differences between the two would not be as great as the differences between God (as Creator) and people (as created beings).

A person working with clay. This is the analogy that God uses, to describe his person-to-object interaction with us (Isaiah 29:15-16; 45:9; 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1-10; Romans 9:21). The difference between a living human and inanimate clay (or dust) is the greatest difference that we, as humans, can comprehend, see or work with. Yet, interestingly, from *God's* perspective, there isn't much difference between the two! It isn't without reason, that God formed man from the dust of the ground - dry, powdered clay (Genesis 2:7)! The difference between the two, the man and the dust, is the spirit that God breathed into the man. Surely this fact should cause us to be willing to humble ourselves, in the presence of our God!

Interacting with God, on These Two Levels

God interacts with us from *both* of these levels. We need to remember this, for when we are dealing with issues that involve God's interaction with us as *Sovereign Creator*, we must be careful to look at everything from the person-to-*object* perspective. The way God interacts with us from *this* perspective will be *much different* from the way he interacts with us, from the person-to-*person* perspective. To confuse the two will result only in confusion and error, as we try to understand issues such as the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

How can we get an accurate understanding of the way these perspectives interrelate? Our minds are too limited to grasp the issues on our own. We need God to tell us the facts about these relationships - and he does so in his Word. We also need him to tell us how to interact with those facts - or we will most certainly reach false conclusions and go astray.

We need to remember that *all* our interactions occur on the level of a created being. Even when we interact with God, we interact on this person-to-*person* level. It is *impossible* for us to *consciously* interact with God on a person-to-*object* level, for "objects" do not consciously interact with "persons"!

It is important for us to remember these facts, and it can be quite encouraging to us, if we understand them correctly. Among other things, this means that we will *only* be judged for our interaction with God, based on what we do on the person-to-*person* level. When it comes to our judgment, we do not have to worry about what God may do (or "decree") from a person-to-*object* perspective, for that will *not* be the basis of our judgment. At the Day of Justice, these two perspectives will go "hand in hand," so we can rest assured that what *we* choose to do, on *our* level, will coincide with anything that happens on *God's* level.

We must remember that, if God didn't tell us about our person-to-*object* relationship with him, we would never know anything about it - not in all of eternity. We cannot feel, see, or in any other way sense this relationship. (Can a piece of clay feel, see or in any other way sense what happens to it?) Without God revealing this aspect of his relationship to us, we would only be aware of our person-to-*person* relationship with God.

This fact may leave some people wondering why God would tell us something we cannot fully comprehend, something we cannot in any way detect with our five senses. Yet there *are* good reasons for him doing so. First of all, he tells us about it, because it is true. It is a very important part of our relationship with him, and though *we* cannot see it, *he* sees it quite clearly. Secondly, he tells us about it, so that it can influence our actions.

How Should These Things Influence Our Lives?

How should knowledge of this issue influence our actions? God does not leave us to guess, for we are too limited to know. Sin has also influenced our perspectives, so that we tend to reach the wrong conclusions. So in order that we might have a proper understanding of how to react to this aspect of our relationship with God, God has shown us, in the Bible, how to do so.

The following are a few of the ways that this understanding of our person-to-object relationship with God should - and *must* - influence our attitudes and actions:

1. We should humbly acknowledge our position, as created beings, and submit to his Lordship. There is no real reason in heaven or on earth, why we shouldn't willingly (and joyfully) serve him. (Sin is *not* a legitimate reason.)
2. We should focus attention on our choices - the actions *we* are responsible for. We do not have to worry about whether or not God has sovereignly decreed something to happen in our life. The sovereignty aspect and our choices will coincide - God has guaranteed it! For us, *our* choices are what matters, and they are what we will be judged for.
3. God has *decreed* that what happens will be the way *we choose*. So we had better choose wisely! (God's decree will never conflict with our choices... so whichever way we choose, God's decree will match-up with it!)
4. The Word of God *cannot* fail; whatever God has said *will* happen. God's promises cannot be negated by human activity. Yet this does *not* mean that God will "violate" our choices. Whether or not people understand Scripture, they will *voluntarily* (by their own choices) choose the path that fulfils the Word. [Examples: Daniel knew prophecy was about to be fulfilled, and he prayed for it to be accomplished - Daniel 9:2. On the other hand, King Cyrus chose to do what God prophesied about him, without ever realizing that God had said it (and that God had even addressed Cyrus by name, years before he was born!) - Isaiah 44:28-45:6.]
5. A good study would be to see how people in the Old Testament responded to the issue of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Those who accepted the God of the Bible accepted *both* concepts, and allowed their understanding of God's sovereignty to influence their attitude toward God. The better they

- understood God's sovereignty, the greater their attitude of humility toward him, and the greater their reverential fear of him. (All people will experience the "fear of God." The main issue is *when* they will do it. We can choose to have reverential fear *now*, or we can wait until later and experience the terrifying fear of God, when we stand before him, to be judged.)
6. God tells us about his sovereignty, in order to encourage those of us who have turned to him for salvation. It is *because* he is sovereign, that we can have "assurance of salvation." If there is evidence that God has begun a good work in our lives, then *nothing* can prevent him from bringing this good work to completion - Philippians 1:6. (One caution, however: We need to let Scripture define what this "good work" is, or we could be deceiving ourselves into *thinking* we are "assured of salvation," when we are not.)
 7. God tells us about his sovereignty, to *warn* those who choose to sin. Because God is sovereign, we *cannot* get away with sin. He has decreed a Day of Justice, and nothing in all of creation can prevent that Day from coming.

Some Final Comments

You cannot, in any way, influence your person-to-*object* relationship with God. But you *do* have the opportunity to determine what type of person-to-*person* relationship you have with him. You have the opportunity to be a friend of the one who is both King of Kings and Creator of the universe. Don't throw away that opportunity!

Remember that, though he is the God of the universe, he was not only willing to interact with us on our own level, but was also willing to die for us, so that we could be with him and enjoy him forever!