

# The Message of the Old Testament

## Session 4 A Book about God – He lives in relationship

### God exists in three Persons

God is One, Deut. 6:4 but Genesis 1 speaks of God in the **plural**, “Let us make man(kind) in our image”.  
**God (The Father), the Son (the Word), and the Spirit** are all engaged in the creation process, Heb. 1:2.

Jesus’ words in Matt. 19:17 hint at the paradox. The doctrine of the Trinity in unity is contained in the statement “**God is Love**”, 1John 4: 8, 16.

There is **an intriguing passage in Isaiah 48:12-16**. Three distinct Persons are involved in v 16 – “The Lord Yahweh”, “Me”, and “His Spirit”. “Me” refers to the speaker in the previous verses – logically the Son. C.f. Isaiah 63: 9-10.

**The Father is never seen by human eyes**, 1Tim. 6: 13-16.

**The title “God” is often used in Scripture to refer specifically to the Father, as demonstrated here by the context.**

**The Son is the visible revelation of the invisible God** (the Father), Col. 1: 15-17, Heb. 1: 1-3, John 14:9.

There are various “**Theophanies**” e.g. Gen. 18: 2, 16-17, 22 etc. and appearances of **the Angel of the LORD**, e.g. Exodus 3: 2, 4. & 6 and c.f. John 8: 57-59.

Psalms 2 and 110 use words that imply two Persons in the Godhead, c.f. Acts 4: 25-26 and Luke 20: 41-44.

Isaiah 9: 6-7 uses language that implies that the Messiah is God.

Daniel’s vision of **the Son of Man** 7: 13-14 is clearly of a more than human person.

Many Scriptures about the Son are ambiguous. The Holy Spirit makes the meaning clear through the apostles – Gen. 1: 3 and c.f. John 1: 1-4, 14 and 18, and Isaiah 6 c.f. John 12: 37-41.

**There are very many references to the Holy Spirit.**

God (The Father) is said to “send forth His Spirit”, Psalm 104:30.

His Spirit (i.e. the Spirit from the Father) led the people through the wilderness, Isaiah 63:11, 14.

Paul explained that Holy Spirit spoke the words that Isaiah (chapter 6) heard in the Temple, Acts 28: 25-27.

**The Holy Spirit is the Person who carries out the purposes of God (the Father), often doing so by revelation (prophecy)**, Num. 11: 17, 25-26, 2Kings 2:15, **or anointing (power)**, Judges 14:6, 15:14-15.

### He models and creates relationship

**Man and woman – marriage**, Gen. 2:18. Notice God’s evaluation of a solitary creature “It is not good ...”.

**He shares His secrets with His friends** Isaiah 41: 8, 2Chron. 20:7, **and servants** Amos 3: 7; c.f. John 15: 12-15.

Friend is never “mate” or “buddy”. It is an honour bestowed by a king on a trusted confidant, Gen. 18: 17, 26:26 (lit. “confidential friend”), c.f. 2Sam. 15:37, 16:16 and 17:14.

**God is not “my friend” but He may confer the honour of being regarded as his friend if I am faithful.**

**He is a Father**, Exodus 4: 22-23, Isaiah 63: 16, 64: 8, Hosea 11:1, Isaiah 9: 6, Ephesians 3:14.

**He is a Husband** Jer. 2: 2-3, 31: 32, Isaiah 54: 4-8, Hosea 1-3 is set in the context of marriage.

**Through these relationships we understand God’s attitudes and actions and “emotions”** (we need to see this as analogy or we will create a god in our own image).

**As a Father** He is full of **loving kindness** (*hesed*) and **compassion/mercy** (*racham*), and **grace** (*chen*) and truth/faithfulness (*emet*). All four words are included in Exodus 34:6; see also Psalm 103: 8-14.

**This is the God of the Old Testament.**

## The Message of the Old Testament

He expects the respect of his children Mal.1: 6 and obedience Mal. 3: 16-18, c.f. Heb. 12: 15-11. He chastised Israel, Jer. 31:18-19 and in the same passage refers to them as “my dear son, my delightful child” v20.

**Holiness is a higher ambition than happiness.** Our experience of God is a mirror image of how we approach Him, 2Sam. 22: 26-27 (27b lit. “twisted”).

Since He is our Father **we are part of a family** and have to learn to live in harmony with the others, Mal. 2: 10.

**As a Husband** He is **faithful** and **requires faithfulness** from his bride.

Idolatry is equivalent to adultery, Jer. 2:2-4, 11-13, Ezek. 23, c.f. James 4:4-5.

Israel was unfaithful and provoked his **jealous love** – see the scripture passages listed above. This is a corrective to our sentimental and soft view of love, Exodus 20: 5, 34: 14.

**He desires a devoted and holy bride** and will go to any lengths to accomplish this. His love is passionate and possessive, Hosea 11:8-9, 14:1-8.

**Only He can restore defiled Israel to the status of pure virgin**, Jer. 31:4, 21, c.f. Eph. 5:25-27, 2Cor. 11:1-2, Rev. 21:1-2.

**Jeremiah 31** is an amazing chapter about how God relates to Israel, in **everlasting love**, v4 and **grace**, v2.

**His commitment is unbreakable**, v35-37.

**There will be a final return of the exiles of Judah and Ephraim to the Land**, v5-14, 17, 23-25, c.f. Ezek. 37:1-14.

There will be **restored relationship between the divided people of Israel and Judah**, Ezek. 37:15-23, under the rule of their King Messiah, v24-28

**The resolution of the problem of their sin** – forgiveness, v34b, and a new heart, v33b-34a, - **is the New Covenant**, v31-33a.

### Current relevance:

- **We are confronted with a God who is much more complex than the “popular God” of contemporary Christianity.**
- **We cannot “work backwards” from our mental picture of husband, friend, or father. We must derive the understanding from biblical revelation.**
- **We, like Israel, are invited into relationship with this God – to find our identity, significance, and security with Him, an incredible privilege.**
- **Israel will return to their land and will persist to the end of time and be restored to relationship with God through Jesus their Messiah and King.**