

ELIMELECH, THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

“Now to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen! (I Tim. 16:17)

These are peculiar attributes belonging to none but the God of the Bible. He is King, absolute Sovereign, free to do all He pleases. Chapter 6 vs. 15 declares Him to be *“the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords”*. Eternal and immortal, standing outside of time and space, He is sole possessor and dispenser of life. He has no predecessors and will have no successor, and we exist and live only by His decree.

God alone is wise. The devil’s lie in the Garden promised knowledge for disobedience, life for rebellion; but man’s rebellion against the King only brought him darkness and death, alienation from God, the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge.

There is one other attribute in this doxology to the King which deserves close attention: God is invisible. He has no visible form. This is no deprivation or defect. God can very well take any form He chooses, but has very good reasons for remaining unseen. He reminds Israel that when He spoke to them at Horeb they saw no similitude of anything. He then warns them of the danger of lifting up their eyes and, beholding the sun, stars and hosts of the heavens, being driven to worship them. (Deut. 4:15-19) His invisibility is a safeguard against men’s inborn inclination to idolatry, to worship forms, figures and appearances. The lust of the eye, the illusion wrought by pleasing and impressive images is a device employed by demons as well as men to delude men into wrong thoughts and action. Merchants try to package their merchandise with forms, colors, and adornments to give the illusion of something better inside than the actual contents. Think about this for a minute: How much better judge one would be of a candidate for public office if he never saw his appealing appearance or heard his seductive speeches, if we had no more than a reliable account of his reputation, works, and deeds!

But the creature has a yearning to *see* his Maker, to lay eyes upon his God. (That is no small part of heathen’s making of images and worshiping them) Here is Phillip’s request of Jesus, “show us the Father” (John 14:8). It is highly significant that Jesus did not tell Phillip to look at Peter or John or Andrew or any other of the His disciples. Nor did He tell him to look in a mirror. The clear reason for this is that although man was created in the image of God, he no longer bore that image. Adam was created in God’s image, but his son Seth was born in Adam’s image, not God’s, for that divine likeness had been lost in the Fall. The next time God’s image would be seen on earth it would be in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus’ reply to Phillip’s request was, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” Jesus is said in Hebrews 1:3 to be “the express image of His Person”.

Now this presents somewhat of a puzzle. Is God not said to be invisible? How can one bear the image of one who has no visible image? If we knew what Jesus looked like, we would know what God looked like. When we think about that, it is a very good thing that no one knows what Jesus looked like. Although we have paintings, busts, and images of men prior to Jesus’ incarnation, there is not the slightest physical description of Him available. If there were you could be sure men would be idolizing that image. In fact, they do it anyway. Those so-called Jesus pictures sold by religious merchants are not mere decorations on walls. They pander to fallen men’s idolatrous inclination.

But the image of God in which Adam was first made was not a physical image at all. It was a spiritual image. There is indeed a spiritual image as well as a physical one. Three orders of created life occupy this planet: plant, animal, and man. All three have bodies. All three have life in their bodies so that they breath, they feed, take in food, they grow, they reproduce and they die. Animals, however, have an additional faculty called the soul, translated from the Hebrew, *nephesh*, and used of animals as well as men. The soul is not a spiritual faculty, but an animal one. It is comprised of a creature’s mind, his thinking and reasoning faculty, his affection, or emotions, and his will or volition. All of these can be easily illustrated in the behavior of animals, cats, dogs, monkeys and mules or whatever intelligent and knowing creature you can imagine. None of these, however, have any consciousness, or awareness, or desire for God. They are utterly uninterested in church meetings, the word of God or worship. That requires a third faculty, the spirit.

Man alone has spirit. He is a trinity, body, soul and spirit (I Thess. 5:23). Hebrews 4:12 makes an unmistakable distinction between soul and spirit. The spirit is that faculty of man which not only separates him from brute beasts, but makes it possible for him to bear the image of God. When God said, “Let us make man in our image and after our likeness”, He could not have been speaking of a physical visible image. The invisible God has no such physical image. It could only have been a spiritual image. He was made “like” God in a spiritual sense. We very often say one person is like another when there is no physical resemblance whatever. My daughter often says, “I am like my daddy”. I can assure you she *looks* nothing like me and has no intention of giving such an impression! She rather means, “I think like my daddy. I like the sort of things daddy likes, dislike what he dislikes, and behave a lot like he behaves.”

That is precisely what God did when He made man in His image. He created man with a unique faculty, (the human spirit) compatible with God, Who is Spirit, in order to house the life of God. He then breathed His Spirit into that human spirit. This became

the dynamic center of the life of unfallen Adam. His spirit, empowered by God, the Holy Spirit, was “King” on the throne of his soul. His soul (comprised of mind, emotion, and will) would be ordered by the Spirit of God in the inner man. He would think godly thoughts. He would love what God loved and hate what God hated. And he would will and choose what God chose. Therefore in his actions, deeds, and behavior in his body, his *visible form*, he lived and behaved godly! He was like God. He bore God’s image! There is, so to speak, a “King in Israel” and what Israel does is right in the sight of God, the King. The doctrine of God is Elimelech, “My God is King”. The doctrine of man...true man as God created him...is also Elimelech, “My God is King”. And what this true man does is right in the sight of God. In other words, it takes God to be a man!

- C. M.

