

Contents

Glimpses of Our God

1. The Triune (Three-in-One) God (December 31–January 6)	4
2. In the Beginning (January 7–13)	12
3. God as Redeemer (January 14–20)	19
4. The God of Grace and Judgment (January 21–27)	26
5. The Holiness of God (January 28–February 3)	33
6. God the Lawgiver (February 4–10)	41
7. Lord of the Sabbath (February 11–17)	48
8. Creation Care (February 18–24)	55
9. The Bible and History (February 25–March 2)	62
10. The Promise of Prayer (March 3–9)	69
11. God as Artist (March 10–16)	76
12. Love Stories (March 17–23)	83
13. The Promise of Jesus' Return (March 24–30)	90

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Introduction

Knowing Our God

When a person looks at photos from the Hubble Space Telescope, he or she cannot help but wonder at the beauty of the universe. One writer was very impressed with the famous photo of the Sombrero Galaxy. The writer said, “How can we begin to understand and measure the knowledge, the power, the reasoning, the truths, and the purposes that went into the Sombrero Galaxy (which is just one among billions of others)? Here we are, so small and so isolated [placed far apart]! We are just one tiny dot of creation. There is so much in the universe to know, and yet, we understand so little.”

More amazing (wonderful) than the universe itself is its Maker. This is because only Someone (God) who is greater than the universe could have made it.

Of course, the God whom we worship and serve is the One who has made the universe—everything from the Sombrero Galaxy to the quarks¹ that make up all matter in it and everywhere else.

This quarter we are going to study more about the Lord whom we worship and serve. We are going to do some “theology.” Theology means “the study of God.” After all, it is important to know about the God whom we worship, trust, and serve. He is the One we are called to love with “all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (Luke 10:27).

The picture of God in the Bible is very broad. Yes, God’s love is very important. And yet, there is so much more about Him that He wants us to know. For example, there are hundreds of different names for God in the Bible. Each one of them could give a deeper and more informed understanding of the great God of heaven and earth. He is so much more than just a Santa Claus in the sky who gives out help when we ask for it. (A professional poker player recently won millions of dollars in a tournament, and then publicly thanked Jesus for it!)

This quarter we are going to learn more about the different parts of God as they have been shown to us. Then we will think about what these things mean for us. We are going to start with some of the basics, such as the Trinity (Three-in-One God). The Trinity is a very interesting teaching that God is One God and still made up of Three Persons. From there we are going to study about God as Creator. It is the doctrine (teaching) that is the basis of all that we believe. Next, we will study His work of Redemption (salvation). In a fallen (sinful) world, being created is not enough. We need to be bought back from sin by God, too. We

1. quarks—the tiniest particles. They are in matter, but they cannot be seen.

will also study about God as both a God of grace² and a God of judgment. We will then learn more about His holiness, His law, and the Sabbath. All of these teachings come from His character (who God is) and help us to understand more about what He is like.

We also are going to learn about some other parts of God that we do not often think of, such as God as a God of beauty, of history, and even of romance. Among other things, God is also a God of prayer and nature. We will learn more about what it means to serve our Lord. And we are also going to study more about God's great promise of the Second Coming, which leads to the grand closing of history and the end of sin.

God is big. (After all, He created the Sombrero Galaxy!) We are very small. How thankful we should be, then, for every bit of light that God gives our way. This quarter we will learn more about that light. It is up to each of us to faithfully walk in it.

Jo Ann Davidson is a professor of theology at Andrews University Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

2. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.