

# Theology – God

## I. Knowing God – Introduction

- A. General Revelation – Creation is Evidence of a Creator (Romans 1:18–20; Psalm 19:1–6; Acts 17:23, 27).
- B. Special Revelation – The Creator is Knowable and Desires to be Known (1<sup>st</sup> John 1:3; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:9–16).
- C. Knowing About God is not the same as Knowing God (John 5:39–40; 14:6; 17:3; Jeremiah 9:23–24; Hosea 6:6).

## II. Trinity – Unity of Three

- A. Two Difficult Concepts
  1. Infinity – Psalm 90:2; Micah 5:2; Revelation 22:13
  2. Trinity – God does not reveal himself in a contradiction. Three does not equal one. He is not three in the same sense as He is one. He is one in essence and three in person.
- B. One God – Monotheism
  1. God (Elohim - אֱלֹהִים) is introduced in the first verse of the Bible (Genesis 1:1).
  2. The personal name (I am - אֲנִי) and memorial name (YHWH - יְהוָה) of God are revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14–15).
  3. YHWH is the most common name for God in the Old Testament where it appears over 6800 times. אֱלֹהִים Elohim (a plural noun) is also widely used, appearing over 2300 times in reference to the one true God.
  4. YHWH is God and there is no other (Deuteronomy 4:35–39).
  5. The Unity of God in the Shema, Israel's commanded prayer (Deuteronomy 6:4).
  6. Other applicable passages include Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 43:10–12; 44:6–8; 45:5–7; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:4; James 2:19).
- C. Three Persons – Trinity
  1. The whole of scripture declares one God who is eternal, self-existent, and uncreated. Yet God reveals Himself as three distinct persons who have equal claim to the same essence and attributes.
  2. All three share one Name (Matthew 28:19).
  3. The apostles speak of the Father, Son, and Spirit cooperating to redeem a people for Themselves (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:13–14; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:2).
  4. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit also cooperate in the believer (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:4–6).
  5. The Logos was face to face with God, yet was also God, showing a distinction yet also a unity. Here we see eternity, creative power, and self-existence attributed to the Logos, who is Jesus. John 1:1–4
  6. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:1–6, Paul affirms the oneness of God yet ascribes deity to Christ. He distinguishes between the Father and the Son, and he notes that all things are “from” the Father and “through” Christ, and that we exist “for” the Father and “through” the Son.
  7. In John's gospel, Jesus makes a number of “I am” statements: “I am the bread of life” (6:48), “I am the Light of the world” (8:12), “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58), “I am the door” (10:7), “I am the Good Shepherd” (10:11), “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (14:6), and “I am” (18:5–6). These are allusions and declarations to Jesus being YHWH.
  8. Lying to the Holy Spirit equals lying to God (Acts 5:3–4).
  9. God's attributes of Omniscience (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:10) and Omnipresence (Psalm 139:7) are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

### III. Personality, Character, and Nature – What kind of God is God?

- A. God is a Being and therefore has essence.
  - 1. Essence studies will tell us what God is as to His nature.
- B. God is a person and therefore has personality.
  - 1. Personality studies will tell us what kind of God He is.
  - 2. The three members of the trinity each have distinct personalities.
  - 3. The One True God has one unique personality.
- C. Personality and essence overlap.
  - 1. God is love (essence), and He is a loving God (personality).
  - 2. God is righteousness (essence), and He is a righteous God (personality).
  - 3. Essentially, every element of essence will be reflected by a personality trait. Not every personality trait has a single attribute of God though. Some of God's personality traits are manifestations of multiple attributes or even all of God's attributes combined.
- D. The study of God is an inductive study from Genesis to Revelation.
  - 1. There is no "fruit of the Spirit" passage in the Bible that reads, "The essence of God is..."
  - 2. God has revealed Himself in the scriptures through descriptions of His essence and personality.
  - 3. God is also revealed through what He does (Romans 9:17-24; Deuteronomy 7:21-22).
  - 4. God Desires that we know him through His word (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:41-43; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:9-16; John 1:18; Hebrews 8:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:18).
- E. How the Bible describes God.
  - 1. Compassionate, merciful, gracious, patient, abounding in faithful love and truth (Exodus 33:19; 34:6-7; Numbers 14:18; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 24:14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 30:9; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 25:6; 57:10; 86:15; 89:14; 103:8; 106; 108:4; 138:2 Isaiah 48:9; Lamentations 3:22-23, 32; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; John 1:17; Romans 9:22-23; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9).
  - 2. Jealous/ zealous (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Numbers 25:10-13; Deuteronomy 4:24 cf. Hebrews 12:28-29; Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2; Zechariah 8:2).
    - a. Carnal jealousy stems from selfishness and pride (Genesis 30:1; Acts 17:5).
    - b. Godly jealousy stems from unselfish and humble devotion to Jesus Christ (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:2).
  - 3. Vengeance (Deuteronomy 32:34-43; Psalm 94:1; Nahum 1:2; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30).
    - a. Carnal vengeance stems from selfishness, pride and anger.
    - b. Godly vengeance stems from righteousness and justice.
  - 4. Humor (Psalm 2:4; 37:13; Proverbs 1:26; 8:30-31; Luke 18:25; John 10:32).
    - a. Relaxed mental attitude.
    - b. Mental delight.
  - 5. Confident and secure, He only has a need to be consistent with His own personality, essence, character, attributes, and nature (Acts 17:25; Psalm 50:8-15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:13).

## IV. Essence and Attributes – What is God?

### A. Sovereignty

1. God is not subject to any authority higher than His own. He alone is uncreated and He alone has created. As the source of all things God is master of all things. Absolute Sovereignty, however, does not mean that God is not subject to anything. God is, in fact, subject to Himself.
2. God is self-existent but not self-made. God did not create Himself and so God is not master of (sovereign over) Himself. To be precise: God's Sovereignty does not enable Him to violate His being.
3. Bible passages on Sovereignty – Job 23:13; Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:9-11; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11.
4. No being can overrule God's Sovereignty, but neither can God's Sovereignty overrule His own essence. He cannot deny Himself (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:13b). Moses even had the confidence in God's character to tell God what He could not do! In effect, Moses pointed out to God that His Sovereignty was not free to destroy Israel because God's Veracity would not allow Him to go back on a promise He had made to Israel (Exodus 32:9-14; Numbers 14:11-19).
5. Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of God's Sovereignty is the significance of His sovereign creation of volitional creatures. The provision of volition in the angelic and human realms of creation sometimes prompts a conflict within our finite minds. Does the human exercise of volition actually overrule God's Sovereignty? Not at all! When man takes an action contrary to what God directs he is acting within the sphere of what God allows. God's Directive Will and God's Permissive Will are both within the realm of God's absolute Sovereignty. Since God sovereignly bestowed volition, the use of volition does not diminish Sovereignty. On the contrary, volition magnifies Sovereignty. God takes no pleasure in compulsion, but takes pleasure in voluntary service (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:7; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:2; Philemon 14). Since Sovereignty by definition is the achievement of God's pleasure, volition is essential to Sovereignty, and determinism (no volition at all) is antithetical to it.

### B. Righteousness

1. God is absolute righteousness (Deuteronomy 32:4), not the relative righteousness of humanity (Genesis 38:26; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 24:17; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:32). Righteousness means being right and doing right (Isaiah 24:16a). The opposite of righteousness is treachery (Isaiah 24:16b). The terms good and evil are used synonymously with righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 5:45).
2. God's absolute Righteousness is the eternal standard by which He may be approached. No human being measures up to absolute Righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). Any sin falls short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), and separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:2). By faith in Jesus Christ, we may become the Righteousness of God in Him (Romans 3:22; 5:19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21).
3. God's righteousness is a theme often celebrated in the Psalms 7:9,11,17; 9:4,8; 11:7; 31:1; 116:5; 119:75,137,142; 129:4; 145:17. The walk of righteousness is the walk of wisdom according to Proverbs 1:3; 2:9,20; 3:33; 4:18; 10:2,3,6,7,11,16,20,21,24,25,28,30,31,32 etc.

### C. Justice

1. God possesses the absolute unchangeable standard of Righteousness, and when He administers that standard judicially He manifests His absolute unchangeable Justice.
2. Absolute Justice means God is absolutely fair in all of His judgments. The LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 19:7). God's Justice cannot be bought (Deuteronomy 10:17). This is the only form of Justice that can exist consistent with God's absolute Love (Deuteronomy 10:18).
3. He is Righteous and upright, and this finds expression in His faithful exercise of Justice. All His ways are just. He is a God of faithfulness and without injustice (Deuteronomy 32:4). Because He is an impartial Judge, God's gracious and compassionate personality must be consistent with His Righteousness and Justice (Isaiah 30:18).

4. The absolute Justice of God can form the basis of a bold and confident prayer life (Genesis 18:25). Notice a similarity between Moses' prayer life already mentioned and the prayer ministry of Abraham on behalf of Sodom.
5. Quite often finite creatures bound by time (i.e. human beings) fail to apprehend God's Justice. We become impatient in our frustrations and we cry out "how long?" to the Judge of All the Earth because He is not blasting sinners to smithereens in a manner that we can approve of. God is not slow, as some count slowness, but rather patient (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9). He is slow to anger, and patient towards sinners as an expression of His compassionate personality (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:15). His compassion, though, does not negate His Justice. In the case of the unbeliever, He is patiently awaiting repentance so that His Justice can be administered to His undeserving Son on the cross rather than upon the deserving sinner (Ezekiel 18:23,32). In the end though, when patience has run its course, Justice is exercised and it is administered without any partiality. God will not be mocked (Galatians 6:7). He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 23:7; 34:7; Nahum 1:3).
6. God's impartial Justice is essential for our salvation. Specifically, the blessings of Justification can be faithfully counted upon only if our God is a God of impartial Justice (Romans 2:11; 3:5,6,21-26).

#### D. Eternality

1. God is outside of space and time is the creator of space and time. God alone is uncreated Being (I AM), without beginning and without ending. God infinitely transcends space (Omnipresence) and time (Eternality, Omnitemporality). God is the eternal God (Deuteronomy 33:27). He dwells in eternity (Isaiah 57:15).
2. Psalm 90:2 is a great definition of eternity. "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The realm of time has its beginning (Revelation 3:14), and its end (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:24). God enters into time through Jesus Christ, the first and the last (Revelation 2:8). Psalm 90 establishes the stark contrast between God and fallen man. God is the refuge for all generations of mankind (v. 1) as the eternal Creator (v. 2). Fallen humanity is finite in physical life of dust to dust (vv. 3-6). The Judgments of Adam (vv. 7-8), and the flood (vv. 9-10) have produced shorter life spans with greater urgency for wisdom (vv. 11-12). Redeemed humanity can rejoice throughout the entire process of physical life because of God's eternal perspective and the grace promises of eternal rewards (vv. 13-17).
3. Other passages for eternal life include Isaiah 44:6; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:8; and Revelation 1:4.

#### E. Omniscience

1. Related to His eternity and omnitemporality, God knows everything. There is no limit to His knowledge. He knows every actuality as well as every potentiality (Matthew 11:20-24). The Lord is a God of knowledge (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:3). His understanding is infinite (Psalm 147:5). God has infinite knowledge and an infinite mind. His knowledge is not an accumulated knowledge, it is perfect (תָּמִים tamim – complete, entire, free from error – cf. Job 36:4-5; 37:16). His knowledge has not only observed all things, but has thoroughly analyzed all things, and related all things to one another in His infinitely perfect plan (Habakkuk 2:1-3; Isaiah 55:11; Ephesians 1:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:3). These verses reveal the connection between His sovereignty, omnipotence, and omniscience (Job 36:5).
2. He alone knows the hearts (innermost being, thoughts) of men (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:7; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:39; 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 28:9; Proverbs 15:11).
3. The finite human mind can only grasp the fringes of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Romans 11:33; Job 26:14; Isa. 55:9).

#### F. Omnipresence

1. God is everywhere. God transcends both space and time. We've already studied His transcendence of time in our examination of Eternality and omnitemporality. Omnipresence

focuses on His transcendence of space. In terms of both space and time, God's transcendent position gives Him a perspective to interact with His creation at any point in space and at any point in time. Omnipresence is not only spatial, but also temporal—God is everywhere, and God is everywhen!

2. Psalm 139 describes omnipresence. Running away from God is not possible. Neither is it possible to hide from Him (Jeremiah 23:24). God's omnipresence is seen in the promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6).
3. God's omnipresence cannot be contained or confined within finite boundaries (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:27; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 2:6; Isaiah 66:1; Jeremiah 23:24). The Holy of Holies did not "contain" God. His particular presence there did not exclude His omnipresence everywhere else. His particular presence there supplied a point of time and space in which creatures of time and space could have a particular interaction with His glory. So it is with the indwelling of believers today. God's presence within each of us does not exclude or limit His omnipresence everywhere else. His particular presence within each of us supplies a particular manner in which we can interact with His glory (John 14:23; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:3; 3:24; 4:13,15,16).