

The Reality of God

Psalm 14:1

“The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, and there is none who does good.”

I am convinced that the greatest need in people's lives today is to discover the true identity of God. If the world really understood the God they are rejecting, they would probably stop what they are doing and turn to Him in faith. If believers really understood the character and personality and the nature of God, it would revolutionize their lives. The power of Christianity is in the nature of the God we serve.

As we begin our study of God, let me tell you that there is not one writer in the Bible that waste any time trying to prove the existence of God, and neither shall we. The problem concerning man's understanding of God is seen in Isaiah 55:8-9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

God is infinite and man is finite. Therefore, it is impossible for man to comprehend God, and to be on the level of God. And the truths about God cannot be proven in the same way that we demonstrate things in the material realm. **God does not answer every prayer a Christian offers with a sudden miracle.** He does not exempt believers from suffering. He hasn't given us an answer to every question we may raise. Our faith in Him does not rest on a set of outward proofs that can convince others and ourselves. **There would be no virtue in believing God if there were always an immediate and open material advantage.** It would give God very little glory and would do nothing to develop our character. Faith would not be faith if it rested so completely upon outward evidences.

But, on the other hand, we must understand that faith in God involves more than just some kind of an attitude toward God. Faith in God involves certain truths upon which that faith is grounded. For a person to believe in God, he must believe something about Him, and what you believe about Him makes all the difference in the world. In the past some of the people believed in gods and goddesses who acted like wicked humans. As a result, the conduct of these worshipers was vile and evil. Their very "faith" encouraged them to a life of immorality! It is essential then that our faith have a proper content; that it is based on the Word of truth, so that our faith in God may perceive Him as He really is.

There are many today that say they "believe in God," but haven't the slightest idea of what He is really like. It is for this reason that we are going to become involved in this study of God. We need to know what the Bible tells us about God, and how He relates to each of us in our every day lives.

The very first thing that we must realize is that God is eternal. One cannot begin a study of God without first of all realizing that God is eternal, as seen in Psalm 90:1-2, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The Scriptures open this way in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." There was a time; if "time" it could be called, when God, in the unity of His nature (although equally in three persons) dwelt all alone.

"In the beginning..." there was no heaven, where His glory is now particularly manifested. There was no earth to engage His attention. There were no angels to sing His praises. There was no universe to be upheld by the Word of His power. There was nothing, no one, but God; and that not for a day, a year, or an age, but "from everlasting."

In other words, God was self-contained, self-sufficient, and in need of nothing. Had a universe, or angels, or humans been necessary to Him in any way, they also would have been called into existence from all eternity. God was under no constraint, no obligation, and no necessity to create anything at anytime, for the creation added nothing to Him essentially, for according to Malachi 3:6 "God does not change", and according to Ephesians 1:11 He "works all things after the counsel of his own will."

Therefore, we must realize that God is eternal.

The second thing we need to see is that God is Spirit. God is not only eternal, but He is Spirit, as seen in John 4:24, "God is Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth." **This simply means that God is not made up of matter.** He is distinct from all that is apprehended with physical senses. It is impossible for us to know the true essence of God through our organs of taste and touch, or those of smell, sight and hearing.

Jesus understood this fact when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, as seen in Luke 24:39, "Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a spirit, because spirits don't have bodies, as you see that I do."

Because God is Spirit, all efforts of finite men to represent Him in picture or image are both futile and wicked, and therefore are forbidden, as seen in Exodus 20:4-5, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them."

The question arises, "If God is Spirit and invisible, how could people in the Old Testament have seen Him?" We have these words in Psalm 34:15, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." And then in Deuteronomy 5:15 Moses declared, "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm." And we are told in Exodus 24:10, "There they saw

the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.”

How can we reconcile these Scriptures with those that clearly emphasize that God is *Spirit* and *invisible*? The answer to this question opens to us a truth so wonderful and comforting that I would ask for your most careful attention, and allow God to show us His answer.

As a means of demonstrating God's love and concern for His finite creatures, the Bible describes those occasions when God appeared to men; and in depicting those experiences to prove that God actually is a personal Being, the Bible sometimes ascribes human characteristics and feelings to Him. To communicate with men God sometimes took upon Himself a material form. He appeared to Abraham as a man. He spoke to Moses from a burning bush. He manifested His presence to the Israelites in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. **In a variety of ways God's presence was seen and heard by those to whom He manifested Himself.** In one sense we can say that no man ever saw God. But from the standpoint of experience, God showed His presence in some visible or audible manner to certain of others.

Although it is true in this sense that some favored ones saw God, **we must remember that God could never be fully discerned by human physical senses**, as seen in God's words to Moses as recorded in Exodus 33:18-23, "(Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory.”

Then (God) said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand

while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” **God assured Moses that when the full glory of His presence passed by, He would hide him in the cleft of a rock and cover his face; and keep him from the full glory which other wise would have slain him.** And then, at the proper moment the covering would be removed and Moses could see the after-glow of God's presence.

This great Old Testament truth is also emphasized in the new Testament, and recorded in 1 Timothy 6:16, “(God) alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever!”

It is true then, God has manifested Himself to humanity, but they have not been able to see God in His full glory. So infinitely glorious is God that in order for Him to communicate with men, He must condescend to *shield*, to *clothe*, to *encase* Himself as it were in some visible form and thus protect His creatures from destruction. Whether in *human form*, or in *a pillar of cloud*, or *a burning bush*, or in *a vision*, God graciously shielded man from the blaze of glory that otherwise would have resulted in death.

We must understand that God described Himself in human terms that we might know Him not only as the **Great Jehovah God of the entire universe**, but also as **the Compassionate personal God** who is always near at hand when we need Him.

The third thing that we must see is that God is revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. The supreme unveiling of Jehovah God is found in Jesus Christ, as seen in Micah 5:2, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth to me the One that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." God spoke through the prophet Isaiah giving the prophecy of the virgin birth of the Savior, as

seen in Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel." Now, notice Matthew 1:23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." And then we are told in Colossians 1:15 that Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation." And then in Colossians 2:9, "For in him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

The glory of God is seen in Christ. If you want to know what God is like, then you must see Jesus, for Jesus was God in human flesh, as seen in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." **Everything outside of Jesus Christ is just a guess when it comes to the knowledge of God,** as seen in Matthew 11:27, "My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

The Bible draws this conclusion - If I am to approach God, I must do so through the Person of Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of Jesus in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but through me." Therefore, in the finished work of Christ we are able to see the hand of God drawing **all** men everywhere to Him, as seen in Romans 5:8-10, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Christ's divine message speaks to us all. The love of God is extended to all men everywhere through Him. Now, let me ask you this simple, but sincere question - **What is your relationship to God through Jesus Christ?**

Please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Help me to understand more intimately through my relationship with Your Son. In Jesus' name. Amen.