

## **THE DOCTRINE OF GOD**

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

It never occurs to any of the writers of the Scriptures (or, for that matter, the writers of any other religious works) to **attempt to prove** or to argue for the **existence** of God. Everywhere and at all times it is taken **for granted**. He is the self-existent One (Exodus 3:14) and the source of all life (John 5:26).

Interestingly, Psalm 14:1: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'", doesn't just speak of the atheist, but more speaks to the one who disbelieves in God's **active interest** in the affairs of men- it rebukes the one who thinks that God seems to **hide** Himself from the affairs of men!

The Scriptures recognize the fact that men not only know of God's existence of God, but people also have a number of ideas as to who and what He is through the creation (Romans 1:18-20).

I will not take space here to go into a lengthy discussion, but I want to point out several things about the existence of God:

1) No matter the nation or culture, **finite** human beings have a belief in an **infinite** God- this is the natural state of every person on earth. Little children are born with a natural belief in God all the world over. Where does this belief come from except from what the Bible clearly says: "**He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.**"-

**Ecclesiastes 3:11**. God has deeply rooted the idea of eternity in every human heart; and every thoughtful person sees that all the activities of God deal with things that matter in the endless duration of this eternity.

God has also given men minds that look beyond daily occurrences to the total sweep of life. Yet the **human mind** is **limited**, so that no man can see the totality of what God is doing- indeed, God says in Isaiah 55:9- "**As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**" We can **never solve** all the seeming **paradoxes** of life. God has given us reasoning power, but we do not naturally possess enough to unravel all mysteries. That is why we need to trust, or have complete faith in, the goodness of our God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

2) Science teaches us that in order to establish a fact, we need to be able to do an experiment that is **observable, repeatable and verifiable**. Upon fulfilling these requirements, we establish **scientific fact**. I believe this is was on the mind of God when He poured out **His Spirit** on the **Day of Pentecost** and why the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement is the most vital movement on the planet. When Jesus declared that He would die, be buried and be raised from the dead, He told His disciples that He would, upon His Ascension send the Holy Spirit back, enabling His followers to, "**In my name...drive out demons...speak in new tongues...and they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.**" (Mark 16:17-18) Each time you hear someone praying in tongues or see a demon cast out, or you see someone healed by the power of Jesus, you see irrefutable scientific evidence of the fact of the existence of the only true God!

## **THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD VS. MATERIALISM**

What we mean by this is the fact that God is not a **physical, material** being- He is far bigger and beyond our complete comprehension. This is vitally important to know because there are many religions that make **humans or objects** into gods and worship them.

Jesus states in John 4:24, “**God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.**” This statement is in response to the question of the Samaritan woman as to **where** God is to be **found or worshiped**. Jesus’ answer is that God is not to be confined to any one place (Acts 7:48, 17:25; 1 Kings 8:27). The point is that God must be worshipped **in spirit** as distinguished from place, form and other physical limitations- and **in truth** as distinguished from false conceptions resulting from humanly imperfect knowledge. (4:22)

Here are some Scriptures that shed more light for us:

**1 Tim 1:17-** **Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Col 1:15-** **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.**

These passages teach us that God has nothing of the **material world** or a bodily nature and cannot be seen by physical eyes that see dimly! In fact, if you study Scripture passages such as Deut. 4:15-23, Isaiah 40:25; Exodus 20:4, you will note that the reason why making idols or images of God is forbidden is because they **would not represent** Him **accurately**- since no one had ever **seen** Him.

Nothing on earth resembles Him.

The clear point of the Bible is that God is without body and free of all limitations and must be understood not by the **physical senses**, but by the **Spirit revealing** Him to our **spirits and souls** (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

One problem people have with this is that the Bible says we are all made in God’s image and also refers to times people have seen God (such as Moses in the OT), and even declares such things as God having hands, feet, as well as having the ability to talk, hear etc...

This must all be explained by the fact that God longs to have **a relationship** with His creation and attempts to reveal Himself in ways our **finite minds** can understand Him. That is why He came to the earth in the person of His Son Jesus! This is what John 1:18 speaks to: “**No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**”

The point is that no one has seen God in His totality, but He has revealed Himself to people so that they might know Him and He has done so in ways we can grasp truths about Him.

To answer our other problem, we can turn to three interesting Scriptures that will help us to understand in what way we are made in God’s image. Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 4:24, and 1 Thessalonians 5:23 basically tell us that man’s **intellectual, spiritual** and **moral** aspects are what make us like God in image.

Indeed, the fact that we are “triune”, i.e., three parts- **body, soul, spirit**- makes us

identical to the triune God who is Himself a **Trinity**- God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, three-in-one! But more on that later...

### **THE PERSONALITY OF GOD VS. PANTHEISM**

Pantheism believes that all that exists in the universe is an expression of the one ever changing substance which is God. In other words, **God is everything** and **everything is God**. God is an unconscious **force** working in the world. God is ultimately an **energy** or unknowable **essence** permeating the rocks and trees and stars. Hinduism, Buddhism, Deism, the New Age Philosophy, and others have variant forms of this belief. The Bible teaches us something very different: our God has a **personality**- He is a **personal** God! True religion can be defined as the communion between **two persons: God and man**. Religion is a personal relationship between God in heaven and man on earth.

**An important definition: Personality is said to exist** where there is intelligence, mind, **will**, reason, **individuality**, self-consciousness and self-determination. By this definition, it is easy to see that mankind is not dealing with an unknowable essence, but a personal, loving God!

All throughout the Bible, names and personal pronouns are given to God which undeniably prove that He is a Person. Some examples:

1) Exodus 3:14- "**I AM THAT I AM.**" God is telling us, "Hey! I exist and have a personality!" Furthermore, the words used signify that **He was, He is, and always will be.**

2) The names given to God describe various aspects of His awesome personality: Jehovah Jireh ("I AM the God **who provides**- Gen. 22: 13, 14), Jehovah Rapha (I AM the God **who heals**- Exodus 15:26), Jehovah Shalom (I AM the God who is **your peace**- Judges 6: 24).

3) Jesus' prayer in John 17:3 talks of **knowing** God which means He can be know as a person would an **intimate friend**.

We don't believe in an unknowable God, but a friend of sinners who loves to talk to humankind He has made! That is why the Bible makes such a clear distinction between the gods of unbelievers and Himself! In Jeremiah 10:1-16 God rebukes all idolatry. Why? Because idols are **things**, not persons; they cannot walk or speak, they can't do good or evil, and they can never help people- because they have **no life, no emotion, and can't help anyone**. That is why God tells us to turn from **dead idols** to a living, loving, **personal God** who is far wiser than those who make mute forms for worship.

A form of pantheism known as **deism** maintains that God, while the Creator of the world, has no **personal attachment** to it. He is a clock maker who makes the clock and winds it up and lets it run itself with no personal interference on His part.

This couldn't be further from the Biblical truth which teaches us that God is a personal God who takes a personal interest in all the affairs of man and the universe He created. Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15-17; Ps. 104:27-30, 75:6, 7 teach us incredible truths: 1) the universe and mankind were created by God, 2) all things (like the laws of nature, etc.) are held together by His

intimate supervision, 3) God sustains all living things through His hand, 4) history and nations are all guided by Him, and 5) the most minute detail of every aspect of creation is cared for by Him (e.g., Matt. 6:28-30, 10:29, 30).

### **THE UNITY OF GOD VS. POLYTHEISM & THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY**

By the “unity of God” we mean that there is only one God. Polytheism believes that are many Gods. Some believe that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which we discuss below, maintains that Father, Son & Holy Spirit are three distinct Gods.

**The teaching of the Bible clearly declares that there is only one God and that He exists in three persons.**

#### **ONE GOD ALONE**

No other truth in the Bible, especially in the OT, receives more prominence as the fact that there is only one God.

**Deut 6:4- Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one**

**Isaiah 45:5- I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God**

**1 Corinthians 8:4- ...there is no God but one**

There are more than 50 passages of Scripture that speak to this issue in the Bible. Our fundamental duty in life is to devote ourselves completely to the one true and only God! In the very first of the Ten Commandments, God declares (in one translation of the text): “The One Who is, Who was and Who will be, is the Supreme Object of Worship...you shall have no other gods.” (Exodus 20:1-3) To have many gods is a complete contradiction: there can be only one Being that can make the statement in the First Commandment. There can no other supreme, absolutely perfect, almighty Being.

#### **THE TRINITY VS. UNITARIANISM**

This doctrine of the Unity of God does not exclude the fact of the doctrine of the Trinity, i.e., that God exists in three persons, but is one. We have already discussed in this study that God has attempted to reveal Himself and His nature to finite humans with limited minds. He has done this through the world He has made (Romans 1:20), through the Bible, and by divine revelation through His Spirit (1 Cor. 2). Godly people throughout the ages have seen in the Scriptures and the world around them evidence that demands a verdict that God is One, but that in a mysteriously divine way He is a Trinity- One God, three persons. Those who do not believe this about His nature are classified as Unitarians- meaning they believe in one God, but not a triune being. They believe it is one God who merely acts in different ways or modes, as Father, as Son, as Spirit. They do not believe in the Trinitarian formula of three distinct persons in the nature of God working together.

Let it be said here that it is extremely clear from the Bible that our God is a Trinity! To say He is not because our minds do not understand the idea is to limit God and make Him like us. We have already seen that He is not like us. God is God- and He is far bigger than we could ever contain in our heads!

The term “Trinity” **does not appear** in the Bible. It is a term used to describe the implications that are **drawn from** the Bible regarding what God has said of Himself. For instance:

1) The Hebrew word for God- **Elohim**- is most often used in **the plural** and God often uses **plural pronouns** when speaking of Himself as well. When God speaks of Himself in Gen. 1:26, He declares: “Let US make man in our own image”. In Isaiah 6:8 He says, “Who will go for US?” Some have said God speaks this way, because He is referring to the counsel of heaven (all the angels, etc. who are present before His throne), but this cannot be the case, since we are told in Isaiah 40:14 that God does not consult anyone before doing what He does. Besides, in Genesis 1: 27 we are told we are made in His image- not in the image of angels! And the Bible clearly teaches us that we, made in God’s image, have a triune nature- body, soul, and spirit. The US of Gen. 1:26 is clearly the **plural majesty**, the **one true God!**

2) The **theophany**- i.e., a direct, visual manifestation of the presence of God- that Abraham had in **Genesis 18** exemplifies the Trinity. In verse one you see that the Lord (singular) visits Abraham, and throughout their discussion Abraham talks to our Lord- but there are **three persons** standing in front of him! This is clearly the triune God!

The NT not only clearly teaches the Trinity, but it is **explicitly declared**:

1) In the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16, 17) the Father speaks from heaven, the Son is being baptized, and the Holy Spirit is descending as a dove.

2) The way we are to baptize people is with this formula in Matt. 28:19: “In the name (**singular**) of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

3) The Apostle Paul’s benediction in **2 Corinthians 13:14** states, “...**the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**”

4) Jesus Himself teaches the Trinity in John 14: 16 when He tells us that He (the Son- God in the flesh) will pray to the Father who will give *another*(a different individual) Counselor.

5) Simply put, the NT sets forth a Father who is God (Romans 1:7), a Son who is God (Hebrews 1:8), and a Holy Spirit who is God (Acts 5:3, 4).

To finish this study, let me simply quote one man of God’s statement on this great truth and divine mystery: “The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead **invisible** (John 1:18); the Son is all the fullness of the Godhead **manifested** (John 1:14-18); the Holy Spirit is all the fullness of the Godhead **acting upon all of humanity** (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10).