

PART 4: GOD

Who or what is God? Philosophers and theologians have debated this question for centuries and have come up with various answers ranging all the way from, on the one hand, the master of the universe who takes a personal interest in His creation, to on the other hand an impersonal force taking no personal interest at all. But according to the Bible God is the Supreme Being who created everything that is, whether spiritual or material, and is, therefore, the ultimate source of all knowledge and truth. The entire universe with its underpinnings of energy, matter, space and time is God's handiwork. All of history is His Story.

The Bible never tries to prove the existence of God, but simply proceeds on the fact that His existence has been established by General Revelation. Materialist-Atheism contends that nothing exists outside the material world and that all of existence can be explained with natural scientific laws. There is no god, gods or supernatural world to impede or affect the universe. The Bible clearly refutes this idea as we discussed in the chapter on General Revelation. God has given to all mankind enough evidence through nature to hold us accountable for the acknowledgment of His existence.

But although a basic awareness of God exists in everyone, different nationalities and cultures have exhibited various beliefs about the nature of God. All of these

beliefs can be grouped into three main categories: polytheism, pantheism, monotheism.

Polytheism is the belief that there are many gods. This was the popular view of ancient cultures such as the Greeks, Babylonians and Romans and still exists today in many parts of the world.

Pantheism is the belief that the spiritual world and the material world are one and the same. The ultimate divine being is not disassociated from universe but is identified with it. There is no god above creation or transcendent from the world. Pantheism is fundamental to Hinduism and Buddhism and much of the present New Age beliefs.

Monotheism is the belief that God is a being who is one in nature, personal, eternal, infinite, the creator who is transcendent above His creation and yet at the same time immanent or existing within it. Christianity is a monotheistic belief that holds to the conviction that God is perfectly holy and the ultimate standard for all that is morally right and wrong and in His love wishes to establish a redeeming, loving relationship with man.

By Special Revelation found in Scripture, God has revealed His character or attributes in a way that we might truly know Him and worship Him. An attribute is a quality that is essential to the identity of who or what someone or something is.

In theology it is common to separate God's attributes into two categories. There are communicable attributes and incommunicable attributes.

Communicable attributes are attributes that God shares with man and which are inherent within man's personality because God made mankind in His own image and likeness. Communicable attributes are qualities such as love, wisdom, holiness, and goodness.

For example, love is defined by Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as "a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties."

John said that: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).*

Here we see that God's definition of love involves more than just an emotion but includes the behaviors of grace, self sacrifice and mercy toward others for their ultimate good and benefit.

As God's children we are expected to show the same attitude of self-giving toward others. Thus we find Christ commanding us: "*that you love one another;*

as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35).

Holiness is best defined as God's sinless perfection and transcendent purity.

Peter writes: *He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15).*

Although our lives will never be perfect while we live on this earth, we are instructed to live a life that is separated from sin and devoted to God.

The incommunicable attributes of God are, on the other hand, those qualities that belong to Him alone and are not shared with man. These include such characteristics as His omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.

Omnipresence means that God is present at all places at all times. Although God is present everywhere, He is transcendent and independent of His creation. God is not limited by space the way we are and there is no part of the universe where He is not.

Omnipotence means that God is all-powerful and there is nothing that God wills to do that He can not do or be prevented from doing.

For with God nothing will be impossible."(Luke 1:37)

Omnipotence does not mean that God will do anything that anyone wants or desires Him to do. It does mean that God does everything according to His good and holy will and within the expression of His holy character. All of creation is under His control and is being sovereignly worked out for His and our good purposes.

Omniscience means that God is all-knowing. God is perfect in His knowledge of all past, present and future events and even all possibilities.

God proclaims through the prophet Isaiah: *For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' (Isa 46:9-10)*

The above incommunicable attributes are not just abstract ideas about God but they reveal divine qualities of God that have real personal and significant meaning to the life of every believer.

God's omnipresence assures us that God is with us at all times to care for us: ... *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt 28:20).*

God's omnipotence gives us certainty that all things are under His sovereign control and that no promise of His is beyond His ability to fulfill: *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us (2 Cor 1:20-21).*

God's omniscience gives us confidence that nothing escapes God's knowledge, for He understands our deepest needs and troubles and knows what is best for us: *O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. (Ps 139:1-3).*

Christianity also teaches that, while there is but one God who is divine in nature, there are within this divine nature three persons that coexist as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The tri-unity of God is a great mystery. The term used to describe this mysterious and profound doctrine of God is the word "Trinity".

Although the word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible, the word captures the reality of a doctrine that is clearly taught in the Bible; namely that there is only one true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons.

We find the distinctive Persons of the Trinity suggested in Old Testament passages such as in the creation story: *Let us make man in our image and in our likeness (Gen 1:26)*.

We also find the Trinitarian belief taught by Christ Himself when, to mention just one example, He commissioned His disciples to: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matt 28:19)*

Although the doctrine of the Trinity is in part beyond our understanding, it is neither illogical nor a contradiction and has been held in traditional orthodox faith since the beginning.