

CORNERSTONES: THE CHRISTIAN FAITH “WHO IS GOD?”

THERE ARE NUMEROUS ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION "WHO IS GOD?"

1. An impersonal, all-pervasive, (life-) force – that’s Pantheism.
2. A creator who made the world, stepped away and is relatively uninvolved in human history – that’s Deism.
3. Many deities together or one deity expressed in many beings – that’s Polytheism.
4. Still others, often Christian, view God as a permissive, sentimental grandfather figure; or as a celestial policeman; or a harsh judge; or a cosmic Santa Claus.

HOW SHOULD WE DETERMINE WHAT GOD IS LIKE?

1. REASON.

We believe in thinking and we think in believing -- but reason is never enough.

“In the beginning God made man in his own image and ever since we’ve tried to return the favor.”

Isaiah 5:8-9: “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.”

The Good News is that we can know who God is because He has told us who He is. In other words, he has revealed himself to us.

2. EXPERIENCE

“The Blind Men and the Elephant”

3. TRADITION

MARK 7:5-9: So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites ... You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.” And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!”

4. SCRIPTURE AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS

2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 1:1-2a: In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

John 1:18: No one has ever seen God. But his only Son, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart; he has made him known.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

1. GOD IS holy.

In Scripture whenever people have a powerful, personal encounter with God, they are overcome with his holiness.

Isaiah 6:1-5: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Isaiah's reaction to God: (1) awestruck by God's greatness, and (2) aware of his own smallness and sinfulness.

Revelation 4:2-11 ... there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

vs. 2-5: God dwells in unapproachable light.

vs. 6-8: God is a different **kind** of being - He "was, and is, and is to come."

vs. 9-11: The proper reaction to God's presence is to humble ourselves and worship.

HOLINESS HAS TWO COMPONENTS.

A. IT MEANS TO “BE SEPARATE.”

When we say God is holy, we mean he is above and beyond the heavens and the earth. He is independent of the laws that run the universe – he controls them, they do not control him.

Summary: God is absolutely distinct from all his creatures and is exalted above them in infinite majesty.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

1. Our worship should reflect God's greatness.

- A. We should come to worship with humility and a sense of awe.
- B. Our worship should be a complete response of ourselves to God.
- C. Our worship should be characterized by deep gratitude that God has made himself known to us.

2. Our concept of God should reflect his greatness.

- No jokes about God.
- No sentimental mental pictures.

B. THE HOLINESS OF GOD ALSO HAS A SPECIFICALLY ETHICAL OR MORAL ASPECT.

God is totally separated from moral evil and sin.

James 1:13: God cannot be tempted by evil.

There is nothing in God for sin to appeal to.

Habakkuk 1:13: Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.

God cannot be neutral about sin.

God has an active, positive hatred for evil and he will judge sin. That's true of God as portrayed in both the Old and the New Testaments.

John 3.17-19, 36: Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.

The greatest example of God's wrath in either Testament is found in the New Testament. It is the cross.

God cannot overlook sin.

He will punish sin either in Jesus or in us.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

1. Don't flirt with temptation. Take our own holiness seriously.
2. We must not accept sin which the world promotes.

3. Again, we need to possess a deep gratitude that a Holy God who hates sin would make a way to save unholy sinners like us.

2. GOD IS EMMANENT.

Though he is above and beyond his creation in regards to his being, God's presence and power pervade his entire creation.

Isaiah 57:15: This is what the High and Lofty One says, he who lives forever, whose name is Holy: "I live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit."

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

1. We can live with assurance because God is always present to help.
2. We must live with caution because God sees all that we do.

3. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT.

God has the power to accomplish whatever he wills.

Jeremiah 32:17: Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth by your great power ... Nothing is too hard for you.

Luke 1:37: The angel Gabriel to Mary: "For with God nothing is impossible."

IMPLICATION FOR US:

We can live with great confidence.

Immanence means God is present to help.

Omnipotence means God has the power o help.

4. GOD IS SOVEREIGN.

God will achieve his will on earth.

Ephesians 1:11: ... him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

Is everything that happens on earth, therefore, God's will?

No, because there is evil in the world and God is not the author of evil.

Job 34:10: Far be it from God to do evil.

But we do believe that God can bring good out of evil and still accomplish his will.

The greatest example? the cross.

Romans 8:28: in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

1. Again we have every reason, in every moment to live with confidence and joy.
2. Christians must always look for the good in everything because God will be creating the possibility for good in every situation.
3. No evil or hardship can defeat us.

5. GOD IS ETERNAL.

God is self-existent. He has no beginning or end.

Psalms 90:2: From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

Exodus 3:13-14: Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them,

‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name? Then what shall I tell them?’ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

God's Name: Yahweh.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION: WHY IS THERE ANYTHING HERE?

Three possible answers -- all equally mind-boggling.

1. Something material came from nothing.
2. Something material has always existed.
3. The material world came from a non-material God who has always existed.

The Scriptures teach that God is the eternal one.

That means he is not bound by time.

God lives in the eternal present.

He knows what is going to happen on earth because it is already present to him.

IMPLICATION FOR US:

God knows everything you are going to do. He accepted you in Christ, knowing every sin you had committed and were going to commit. You are never going to do something that will cause God to change his mind about you.

6. GOD IS PERSONAL.

God is not an impersonal force.

He possesses the elements of personality: intelligence, feelings, and volition.

In the Scriptures God is described as loving, judging, giving, speaking, revealing, coming to people, being angry, purposing, etc.

IMPLICATION FOR US:

God can be known.

Christianity is not a religion to be practiced.

It's not a philosophy to be followed.

It's not good deeds to be done.

Christianity is a relationship with a personal God.

John 17:3: This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

7. GOD IS LOVE.

1 John 4:8: Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love.

God possesses all the characteristics that love entails: mercy, kindness, a desire for your best, a forgiving heart, etc.

Matthew 7:9-11: Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will our Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

God desires to give good gifts to His children.

Whatever is best for you, God wants for you.

Why? He loves you.

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God's love is more than talk or passing out gifts that cost him nothing. He paid the greatest price imaginable.

Romans 5:8: God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

- 1) We should never be afraid to open our lives to God.
Obedience will always bring blessing.
- 2) We **need** to receive God's love.
- 3) We must believe in God as someone who wants to share His life with us.
- 4) We must be loving to others.

8. GOD IS UNCHANGING.

James 1.17: ... the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Hebrews 13.8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and tomorrow.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

1. The morals and the truths of the Bible are as relevant today as ever.
2. We can trust God to be consistent in our lives.