

Who Is God?

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I. God Exists!

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. (Psalm 19:1)

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God... (or "God does not exist" - RW)
(Psalm 14:1)*

Belief in the existence of a god is not really a big problem for most people. Of the more than 6 billion inhabitants of our world today, the percentage of those who don't believe in the existence of God is so minute that they hardly deserve our attention. The only reason they cannot be totally ignored is that they, like so many insignificant groups of irrational or immoral persuasion, they keep pressing their cause and crying their pleas louder and louder until they are heard. They become teachers and political activists, and can influence our nation and our world. However, considering the language of the Bible concerning these atheists, we won't spend our time in this lesson trying to prove through reason to irrational fools, that God exists. Our challenge instead, is to come to know God.

Although nearly everyone does understand that God exists, a great majority of those same people do not really know him! Who is the God whose glory is declared by the heavens?

II. Man's feeble attempts to know God.

A. Not possible to know who God is without his revelation.

In the context of a discussion about idolatry, Jeremiah made this observation (10:23), "*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*"

To the religious Greeks of Athens, Paul spoke of the ignorant times when we were seeking the Lord, feeling after him, trying to find him, even though he is close to everyone (Acts 17:27). In this, he alludes to the truth that, without revelation from God, man can only wander in darkness, never really knowing God or his will. It is this blindness which has led men to imagine thousands of gods since Cain departed from the presence of God. And as we will see, even what could be known of God through nature, has been ignored in the process.

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent... (Acts 17:29-30)

B. Gods of man's creation

People of religions other than Christianity worship the true God of the Bible, even if their worship is vain. The Islamic and Jewish religions claim an allegiance to the correct God. They know the right God, but do not know how to serve him. In truth, many today who claim to be Christians, are also ignorant of God's will for them. Aside from these religions, well more than half of all people alive today, worship other gods. Hindu religions, which come in many varieties, have existed for hundreds of years, and are based upon very ancient pagan religions. They realize this, and will sometimes use this as a defense for their beliefs. While pagan worship dates back far before Christianity, and even earlier than the ancient Israelites, worship to the true God of the Bible is by far the oldest and is in fact the original religion, beginning from the creation.

Given the ancient roots of today's pagan religions, the gods they worship today are not so far removed from the gods of gentile nations of Bible times. They did, after all, originate in the same place, the minds of fallible men. The Biblical descriptions are as valid today as they have ever been.

They are the "*work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell*" (Deuteronomy 4:28).

Deuteronomy 17:3 mentions worshipping the "sun" the "moon" and the "host of heaven" as a worship to false gods. Celebrations throughout many parts of the world on the summer and winter solstice (shortest night and shortest day of the year) have there origins in the pagan worship of these heavenly bodies. Even our calendar and weekday names find some connection to the idolatrous worship of stars and planets.

In Isaiah 44 and 45, where God demonstrated his authenticity by naming Cyrus 150 years before he was even born, and before the Persian empire became a reality, he contrasted his power to the idol gods of the gentiles.

They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? (44:9-10)

No matter how sincere and diligent the sacrifices of individuals toward their false gods, their work can never be of value. After all, when finished, the result will be nothing more than the creation of man.

The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. (44:12-13)

The true worth of such gods is seen in their origin. A man burns the wood for cooking food and keeping warm, and with what is left over from that, he makes a god.

He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. (44:16-17)

Jeremiah also confronted idolatry on God's behalf.

Thus saith the Lord... be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. (Jeremiah 10:2-5)

... for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. (Jeremiah 10:14-15)

Daniel 5:22, the hand wrote on the wall to Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar,

And thou his so ... hast not humbled thine heart ... But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven;... and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is ... hast thou not glorified

Why have men so consistently turned to idolatry? And why are there so many similarities between the various idol gods? Paul addresses both of these questions in Romans 1:21-23,

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart

was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

The God of heaven is greater than man. He represent a challenging standard of life. The bar is high, a level of moral and spiritual achievement that every mortal must strive to attain. Sadly, most people are unwilling to make the effort. Why? Because, as Jesus stated in Matthew 7:13, *"...strait is the gate and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life..."*

Genesis 1:27 reveals that *"God created man in his image..."* The idol and pagan gods of men on the other hand, are created in the image of man. They possess the characteristics of sinful men. They are amoral creations of men, which cannot condemn the immoral behavior of their worshipers. Even the worship to these false gods has often included fornication and human sacrifice. At the same time, they cannot bless or in any way benefit their followers. In Hosea 2:5-13, we find a disturbing description of the Israel as she turned to idolatry. In verse 5, *"for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink."* Then verse 8, *"for she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold..."* But God took away those things so Israel would realize the only he had power to bless. Pagans have often credited their own false and powerless gods for the blessings of the Almighty. Yet he is kind and good, blessing with sunshine and rain, all people of his creation, whether evil or righteous, (Matthew 5:45).

III. God has revealed himself

A. There is a different kind of God?

Exodus 5:2, *"And Pharaoh said, Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go?"*

In sharp contrast to the false gods of men, the Creator stands as the tried and true God of all mankind. He has demonstrated his superior nature over and over again, prevailing in every battle for truth.

1 Kings 18:21-40. In one of the most impressive demonstrations of God's power in Old Testament times, God convinced Israel of his superiority over Baal. While Baal was unable to even light the offering made to him, at Elijah's petition, God utterly consumed with fire, not only the drenched offering, but the wood, the stones, the dust and the water.

Jonah 1. In Jonah's day, not only were the Assyrians unable to conquer Israel, but they actually reclaimed some of the occupied territory. This was unprecedented. Nineveh was a seat of corruption and cruel wickedness. While Jonah was fleeing from God instead of going to Nineveh, those sailors on the stormy sea gained a fear of God demonstrated in their petitions to him. Even Nineveh later repented because of this same fear of God.

On various occasions in the book of Daniel, God was able to demonstrate his genuine power. So convincing was this demonstration that Nebuchadnezzar pronounced death to anyone who would speak against God. Following the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, he said of God, *“there is no other God that can deliver after this sort”* (Daniel 3:29).

B. God is the only God

While naming Cyrus as the one who would send the Israelites back to Jerusalem, God said,

...I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:4-6).

C. God is a Living God

Jeremiah 10:10, *“But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God...”*

Romans 9:26, *“And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.”*

2 Corinthians 6:16, *“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God...”*

The people of Thessalonica *“turned from idols to serve the living and true God.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

D. God is Powerful

Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” (Isaiah 44:24-28)

The idol gods are nothing more than morons of wood, stone, gold or silver. They can not think, speak, or even go anywhere unless carried. Our God, Jehovah, on the other hand, is said in

this one passage, to “formed”, to “make”, “stretch forth”, “spread abroad”, “frustrate”, “turn”, “confirm”, “perform” and to “say”. There simply is no comparison.

His power is further seen in the resurrection of Jesus. *“But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses”* (Acts 3:14-15). It is faith in that same power that allows God to raise a believer from being dead in sin, through baptism, Colossians 2:12.

E. God is Loving

Matthew 5:44-45, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust..., 48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

1 John 4:8-9, *“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.”*

F. God is Righteous

Romans 3:5-6, *“...Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?”*

Romans 1:16-17, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...for therein is the righteousness of God revealed...”*

Deuteronomy 25:16, *“...even all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto Jehovah thy God.”*

Habakkuk 1:13, *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...”*

G. God is Merciful and Gracious

Luke 1:50. And his mercy is unto generations and generations On them that fear him.

Ephesians 2:4-5, *“but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)”*

Titus 3:5, *“...according to his mercy he saved us...”*

H. God is Patient and Longsuffering

2 Peter 3:9, *"the Lord...is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance".*

In Romans 15:5, he is called the *"God of patience and consolation."*

I. God is Jealous

Exodus 20:1-5, *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..."*

Exodus 34:14, *"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:"*

It is this aspect of God which led him to forbid the worship to other gods.

Exodus 20:23, *"Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."*

Exodus 23:13, *"And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth."*

So serious was the sin of idolatry that God pronounced the death penalty for any Israelite who was caught in the rebellious act, (Deuteronomy 17:2-5).

J. God is Just

John 5:29-30, *"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."*

Romans 3:23-26, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*

K. God is an Avenger

Romans 12:19, *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."*

1Thessalonians 6-9, *"...it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"*

IV. What does this mean for me?

A. **These traits of the God who created the world are balanced and appropriate.**

Romans 11:12, *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."*

While the jealousy, justice and severity of God is enough to bring us to our knees in fear and humility, his love, mercy and patience serve to give peace and security to those who obey him. As John put it, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us."* (1 John 4:18-19)

B. **We must strive to achieve his righteousness in our lives.**

God told the Israelites, Exodus 20:7, *"Thou shalt not take (or wear) the name of the Lord thy God in vain..."* Then Jesus taught that we are to *"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..."* (Matthew 6:33).

While we can never attain to the flawless likeness of God, we must rise to the challenge of obedience to the mighty one, the holy one, the greatest of all. Then, in his redeemer, Jesus Christ, we can have hope.

C. **Who is God?**

He is the God who, since he has spoken, we can obey and know we are pleasing in our lives.

He is the God who, because he hears, sees and loves, will hear the petitions of those who love and obey him, to help us through the most challenging times.

He is the God who, through his sacrifice and power, will give eternal life to all who obey him.

He is the God who, in his righteousness and justice, will condemn for eternity all who do not know him and all who do not obey him.

He is the God who we want on our side. Remember Romans 8:31-32, *"...If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"*