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Wed. Bible study
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Basic Bible Teaching
Theology – study of the Doctrine (Teaching) about God

Part II. GOD--WHO IS HE? WHAT IS HE LIKE?

A. His Person Defended

The Bible reveals that God is a Person. It uses personal titles to describe Him: He is called a father, a shepherd, a friend, and a counselor. The Bible also uses personal pronouns to refer to God. The Hebrew and Greek texts refer to God as He, never it. And the Bible shows God to be a person because He thinks, acts, feels, and speaks--He communicates. All the evidence of Scripture indicates He is a person, and all the evidence of creation and our personhood indicates we came from Him.

B. His Person Defined

1. God is spirit

a) Numbers 23:19 -

b) John 4:24 -

c) Luke 24:39 -

Accommodating the Message to the Man

Even though God doesn't have a body, the Bible says such things as, "The eyes of the Lord ... run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zech. 4:10), "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?" (Isa. 50:2), and "Thou hast a mighty arm" (Ps. 89:13). We call those descriptions anthropomorphisms. That word comes from two Greek words: anthropos (man) and morphe (form). References to a human form attributed to God are an accommodation God has made to our finite understanding.

Caution - avoid using those anthropomorphisms to reduce God to a man, like some of the cults have done. Psalm 91:4 says God covers us with His feathers, but that doesn't mean He's a bird. God is not a man or a bird--He is spirit.

1 Timothy 1:17 refers to God as invisible. No man has ever seen God (John 1:18). In Exodus 33:20 God says, "No man [can] see me, and live." Nevertheless, in the Old Testament God represented Himself by the Shekinah--the divine light, fire, and cloud. In the New Testament He represented Himself in the form of Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 18).

Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). God may choose to manifest Himself in some way by limiting Himself to something visible, but that is not the totality of His Person.

2. God is one

There is only one God. Moses made that clear in the following statement, the key to Israel's religious convictions: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). The people of Israel lived in the midst of polytheistic societies, yet they were to believe in only one God.

a) Defended by Jesus

Jesus claimed to be God--does that mean He claimed to be another God? No. He reiterated what Moses said about the oneness of God: "The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel: The Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:29-30).

b) Defended by Paul

(1) The Corinthians' problem – food offered to idols – 1 Corinthians 8

(2) Paul's solution – 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

To correct the problem Paul said, "As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world" (1 Cor. 8:4). Paul's argument is that since an idol represents a nonexistent god, there is nothing wrong in eating the food. Then he said, "There is no other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there are gods many, and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (vv. 4-6).

3. God is three

God is one yet exists as three distinct persons. Revealed in the Bible from beginning to end.

a) Implicit evidence in the Old Testament

(1) Genesis 1:1--"In the beginning God." The Hebrew word translated "God" is Elohim. An im ending on a Hebrew means it's plural. Genesis 1 presents a singular God who is expressed as a plurality.

(2) Numbers 6:24-26--"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." The three references to the Lord could be an allusion to the Trinity.

Other implicit evidence is studying how the word "Lord" is used in Genesis 19:24 and Psalm 110.

b) Explicit evidence in the New Testament

(1) Matthew 3:16-17

(2) John 14:16-17

(3) 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

(4) 2 Corinthians 13:14

(5) 1 Peter 1:2

God is one, yet He is three. That is a mystery, yet it is not without parallel in our experience. An egg is one, yet it consists of three parts: a shell, a white, and a yolk. Water is one, yet it exists in three states: solid, liquid, and gas. However, those are imperfect illustrations because God is greater than we can fully comprehend.

III. GOD--WHAT IS HE LIKE?

A. He Is Unchanging (Immutable)

1. The concept

a) Psalm 102:26

b) Malachi 3:6

c) James 1:17

2. The contrast

a) The heavens change

The heavens move about, following their courses. Scientists tell us there are exploding stars--new worlds are being created all the time. Revelation 6-19 gives a drastic picture of the extreme changes the heavens will undergo until they are dissolved by fire (Rev. 8:12; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12). The stars will fall, the sun will go out, the moon will turn a bloody hue, and the heavens will roll up like a scroll (Rev. 6:12-17).

b) The earth changes

Man has been changing the face of the earth with his bulldozers and the atmosphere with pollution. Revelation 6- 19 details the changes the earth will undergo: the seas will be

polluted, plant life will die, and people will die. Earthquakes and hailstorms will drastically change the face of the earth (Rev. 6:1-11; 8:3-11; 9:13-19). The earth was changed once by a flood; it will be changed again as it is consumed with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:6-7).

c) The ungodly change

What unbelievers now believe is a happy or acceptable way to live they will find was a tragic existence when they realize they will spend an eternity without God.

d) The saints change

There are times when our love for Christ burns and we obey Him, but there are other times when it smolders and we disobey Him. David said, "The God of my rock; in him will I trust" (2 Sam. 22:3). But he also said, "I shall now perish ... by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. 27:1).

e) The demons change

Jude 6 says that the demons "kept not their first [angelic] estate."

Everything in the universe changes except God and Christ, which reveals His equality with God. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

3. The comfort

What does the unchanging character of God mean to us as Christians? Comfort. Since God loves us, He loves us forever. Since He forgave us, He forgave us forever. Since He saved us, He saved us forever.

a) 2 Peter 3:9

b) Romans 11:29

c) 2 Timothy 2:13

d) Jeremiah 31:3

e) Isaiah 54:10

f) Isaiah 46:10

To be rightly related to an unchanging God we have to undergo a drastic change. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

4. The confusion

Several scriptures such as Genesis 6:6, Amos 7:6, and Jonah 3:10 say that God repented. Yet Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that he lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." How do we reconcile those scriptures? We know that God Himself doesn't change (Mal. 3:6). However, He may will something to change under certain circumstances.

a) Didn't God change His mind about Nineveh?

God commissioned Jonah to warn Nineveh of impending judgment because of its wickedness (Jonah 1:2-3). Jonah rebelled, but God got him there through a miraculous ride inside a large fish (1:17; 2:10). When he arrived, Jonah preached and the people repented (3:1-5). Verse 10 says, "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he said that he would do unto them, and he did it not." But God didn't change; Nineveh did.

b) Didn't God change His mind about creating man?

When God looked on the pre-flood civilization, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Gen. 6:6-7). God made man to do good, but he did evil. Yet God Himself hasn't changed; He continues to reward good and punish evil.

You can't blame the sun for melting wax and hardening clay. The problem is in the substance of those objects, not the sun. How a man stands before God dictates what happens to him. Have you ever ridden a bike against the wind? It's a struggle until you turn around and coast with the force of the wind. You can't say that the wind changed; you changed in relation to the wind. God never changes. He will continue to reward good and punish evil. How you view what He does depends on where you are within His grace and will.

Conclusion

The Bible says to the believer, "My God shall supply all your need" (Phil. 4:19).

But to the unbeliever God says, "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).

Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death."

Psalms 119:89 says, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." God never changes. For some that truth brings great joy. For others it ought to cause fear and a desire to repent from evil.