



The Majesty of God: His Self-Existence Study 2

Immortal, Invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes;
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.

I. What Does the "Self-Existence of God" Mean?

The self-existence of God means that His existence is in Himself. On the other hand, everything God has created owes its existence to Someone outside of itself. For example, in order for you to live (exist) in this world, you require parents to give you birth, you are in need of water and food to quench your thirst and hunger, you must have air to breathe and ground to stand on. However, God does not require parents to give Him birth, He never gets

thirsty or hungry and He does not need air to breathe or ground to stand on. Everything needed by God is contained in God Himself. As creatures, we have a "derived-existence" from God; As the Creator, He is Self-existent giving existence to all other things. The Bible opens with the words, "In the beginning God created..." (Gen. 1:1). The reason why God was "in" the beginning is because God has "no" beginning.

II. What is the Meaning of the Words in the Stanza of the Hymn?

First Line: (1) God is Immortal, meaning that God cannot die; (2) God is Invisible, meaning that God is unseen in physical form; (3) God is only Wise, meaning that God is perfect in the application of His knowledge.

Second Line: God is Light Inaccessible, meaning that God dwells in the splendour of His radiance which no one can approach, therefore He is hid from our eyes.

Third Line: (1) God is Most Blessed, meaning that God is happy and joyful, being satisfied and having pleasure in Himself; (2) God is Most Glorious, meaning that God beautifully majestic in His own brilliant grandeur; (3) God is the Ancient of Days,

meaning that God although God is eternal, Being outside of all time and not subject to its limitations, yet He is also everlasting, filling every moment of time with His entire Being.

Fourth Line: (1) God is Almighty, meaning that God is the authority and has the ability to carry out whatsoever He wishes; (2) God is Victorious, meaning that God accomplishes whatsoever He wishes and no one is able to stop Him; (3) God's Name is Great, meaning that God has given to us distinctive titles of Himself which indicate His nature and personality which is great; (4) We praise Him, because this is the only true and living God.

The Apostle Paul's Sermon on the Self-Existence of God

(Acts 17:22-31)

Introduction: Athens was a celebrated city of Greece, distinguished for its learning, philosophy, arts, military genius and religious beliefs. It received its name "Athens" in honour of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and strength, who was chiefly worshipped in the province. The Apostle Paul visited this city where he met many people who were interested in understanding the truth. While passing through Mars Hill, the High Court of Appeal for criminal cases, he saw an altar with this inscription: "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." It became obvious to Paul that the people of Athens knew God existed, they just did not know who God is. He therefore preached a sermon which explained who God is. The sermon answers three basic questions, which are explored in the remainder of these notes. Take some time to read the sermon and try to understand the highlighted notes above each division.

The Religion of Man: Based on Human Superstition

(22b) Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. (23a) For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

The Ignorance of Man

(23b) Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Man is Derived-Existence and therefore Dependent on God

(24a) God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth,

God is Self-Existent and therefore Independent of Man

(24b) dwelleth not in temples made with hands; (25a) neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing,

Man is Derived-Existence and therefore Dependent on God

(25b) seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

God is Self-Existence and therefore Independent of Man

(26) and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

God is Self-Existence and therefore Independent of Man

(27) that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

Man is Derived-Existence and therefore Dependent on God

(28a) for in him we live, and move, and have our being;

Man is Derived-Existence and therefore Dependent on God

(28b) as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (29a) Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God,

God is Self-Existent and therefore Independent of Man

(29b) we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

The Ignorance of Man

(30a) And the times of this ignorance God winked at;

The Religion of Man: Based on Divine Revelation

(30b) but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

III. Do All Religions Lead to the Same God?

This is answered in verses 22b-23a and verses 30b-31. The two statements teach us that people have some knowledge about God's existence. However, there is a difference between true religion and false religion. False religion (22b-23a) is described by three characteristics: (1) Superstition. Paul said, "ye are too superstitious." Superstition is a belief based on speculation. For example, it is superstitious to believe that just because your ears are burning, it must mean someone is talking about you behind your back. False religions base their beliefs on ideas about God which have no evidence for their claim. (2) Sincerity. Paul "beheld their devotions." Even though they had no evidence for their beliefs, they nevertheless truly believed them with all their heart. In other words, it is possible for people to be wrong, yet not realize that they are wrong. There are many people who believe in false religions and they really believe they are right. (3) Idolatry. The inscription they had engraved on the altar was to an unknown god. They had created in their minds an image of God which was based purely on their superstition. The Bible calls this idolatry. False religions worship a false god and they are therefore guilty of idolatry. True religion (30b-31) is described by three characteristics: (1) Revelation. The statement begins with God "commanding all men everywhere." This means that God has revealed Himself by communicating with

His people through His words. Unlike the false religions who try to understand God through their superstitions, true religion tries to understand God through His revelation (the Bible). (2) Judgment. The next thing we learn is that God has appointed a day of judgment wherein all people will have to give an account of themselves to Him. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is required that every sinner be judged for the sins he has committed against God. There is no escape from this judgment. False religion and true religion have this one thing in common. Everyone knows that he is accountable to God and there is a day quickly approaching when He will judge all people. (3) Salvation. The final thing we learn is that God has given assurance of salvation to those who repent of their sins because Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour, has died to take away our sins and has risen from the dead to give us spiritual life. Romans 6:23 tells us that there are only two options available to each sinner: First, everlasting death in hell, "for the wages of sin is death"; Second, eternal life in heaven, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Unlike false religion which tries to worship an unknown god, true religion seeks to worship the one true God, Jesus Christ, who conquered death in order that we might have life.

IV. Why Do Not All People Know the One True and Only God?

This is answered in verses 23b and 30a. The two statements teach us that people do not know the one true and only God because they are ignorant. The word

ignorant means "a lack of knowledge or awareness". Although everyone has the knowledge that God exists imprinted on his heart, no one is able to know God because

of his sin. As a result of sin, people are spiritually dead, which means they cannot see, hear or feel God spiritually. This leads some people to suppress their knowledge of God by claiming He does not exist - they call themselves Atheists. This leads others to pervert their knowledge of God by creating for themselves an image of God which is pleasing to them - they form false religions. Do you think God is worried that sinners deny and distort Him? No. Verse 30a tells us that God "winked"

at the times of this ignorance, meaning He disregards the ignorance of man as something powerless to change Him. It doesn't matter how many people don't believe in God, their unbelief does not change the truth of God's self-existence; neither does it matter how many false religions worship idols, their perversion of God does not change the reality of who God truly is. The only way for sinners to see God spiritually, is if they are born again. (John 3:1-8)

V. Who is the One True and Only God and How Are We Related to Him?

(1) God is Self-Existent and therefore Independent. Verses 24b-25a, 29b, 26, 27 teaches that the one true and only God has no beginning, but has given a beginning to everything else in existence. Verses 24b and 29b explain that God is not made by men moulding an idol out of gold, silver or stone; He does not dwell in the confines of a temple built by man; neither does He need anything in order to be God. He is not dependent on anyone or anything outside of Himself. Verses 26 and 27 explain that the Self-Existent God nevertheless has entered into human history and is not far from any of us. Although He stands above His creation independently, He also moves within His creation penetratingly. He has created people in His image ("made of one blood all nations of men") and has a perfect plan for the world ("determining the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation"). It is for this reason, God moving among us and God making us in His image (spiritual capacity) that we should seek the Lord.

dependent. Verses 24a, 28b-29a, 25b, 28a teaches that man has a beginning and therefore is dependent on the one true and only God who gave man that beginning. Verses 24a and 28b-29a explain that God is the ruler of heaven and earth because He has made the world and everything in it. Imagine a kingdom: there must be a king, subjects, law and society. In God's kingdom, He is the King, we are the subjects, this world is the society and His Word is the law. As subjects, we are not only dependent on the King, but we are also under His authority. Paul uses another example by quoting from one of the Athenian poets: "For we are God's offspring." Imagine a delivery room in a hospital. A baby is born from his mother. The baby not only depends upon his mother for life and sustenance, he also is under her authority. Verses 25b and 28a explain that people live, move and have their existence in God because He has given to every person life, breath and all things. We must therefore always remember, we do not live apart from God in this world. He is above us ruling, beneath us upholding, within us filling and around us embracing.

(2) Man is Derived-Existence and therefore

VI. How Can We Have A Relationship with the One True and Only God?

When the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colosse, he gave a fuller explanation on the Self-Existence of God and how we are able to have a relationship with Him. He said that God the Father has delivered us from sin by sending His Son into the world. The Son of God not only created all things, He also became one of His own creatures by becoming a man. Based on the redemption through His blood, we are able to receive forgiveness from our sins. God has made peace with sinners through the blood of Christ and has therein reconciled

us to Himself. Yes, even you who has been separated from God and has been His enemy by your wicked works, has been reconciled to God through Christ. The Son of God became the Son of Man (the God-Man), that sons of men (sinners) might be made the sons of God (saints) through Him (Christ). (Col. 1:12-22) "For [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)

Homework

Monday: (1) Read Sections 1 & 2; (2) Memorize Hymn; (3) Memorize Isaiah 40:28a

Tuesday: (1) Read Introduction & Acts 17; (2) Memorize Hymn; (3) Memorize Isaiah 40:28b

Wednesday: (1) Read Section 1; (2) Memorize Hymn; (3) Memorize Isaiah 40:29

Thursday: (1) Read Section 2; (2) Memorize Hymn; (3) Memorize Isaiah 40:30

Friday: (1) Read Section 3, Parts 1 and 2; (2) Memorize Hymn; Memorize Isaiah 40:31

Saturday: (1) Read Section 4; (2) Memorize Hymn; (3) Write Testimony - naming three ways you have depended on the Lord this week; (4) Review Isaiah 40:28-31.

Memory Verse

Isaiah 40:28-31

28a Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?

28b There is no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.