

The Pursuit Of God

Session Three / July 6, 2016

The Attributes Of God

1 An "attribute of God" is anything that is true of Him. Tonight we begin by studying

2 THE SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD

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4 This past week has been one of the most satisfying of my life as Darlene and I were part
5 of the Convoy of Hope cruise to Alaska. We stopped at several spots, including
6 Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway (which was my very favorite). While in Skagway, we
7 took the mountain railway White Pass Express - a vintage train built in the 1880's that
8 makes its way thousands of feet high over perilous peaks. (See picture on next page) I
9 rode between cars on the little platform, giving me photo access to God's wonders that
10 held me spellbound. On several occasions I was forced to put down my camera to wipe
11 tears from my eyes as I saw, not on film but "right there before me," some of the most
12 spectacular vistas I have witnessed in my long lifetime. The thought kept running
13 through my mind, "*My Heavenly Father built all that!*"

14
15 Let's face it: our finite minds cannot comprehend our incomprehensible God! Our
16 efforts to describe the ineffable (something impossible to express in human language)
17 strains our thoughts and imaginations beyond limits. *For example, when the prophet*
18 *Ezekiel saw heaven opened and beheld visions of God, he found himself looking at that*
19 *which he had no language to describe. What he was seeing was wholly different from*
20 *anything he had ever known before, so he fell back upon the language of resemblance.*
21 *"As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of*
22 *fire."* Tozer / *The Knowledge of the Holy* / Christian Publ. / page 15 The reality that today God and
23 His redemptive plan are being dumbed down by thoughtless, professional religionists is
24 an affront to both logic and reality - and certainly to our Heavenly Father!

25
26 The first four years of my life were spent in a tiny Northwest Iowa town called Climbing
27 Hill where 97 intrepid souls existed. If Climbing Hill were the only town I had ever
28 seen, I would have a jaundiced concept of society today. A trip to New York, or Rio, or
29 Beijing would quickly disabuse any preconceived ideas I might have had about
30 civilization. My thoughts prior to last week of Skagway, Alaska, were far from the
31 reality of the place as it really is for I had never seen it. Is that not our predicament as
32 followers of Jesus today? All we know is this present life, this world, temporary
33 realities. The concept of a pre-existent and eternal God bends our minds! There are
34 two antipodes that come into play here: We either want to know God and more about Him

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THE WHITE PASS RAILROAD OUT OF SKAGWAY, ALASKA

or we deny Him totally. There hardly seems to be a middle ground.

So - to comfort our troubled minds we ask ourselves such questions as: Where did God come from? How did He begin? How can we comprehend "self-existence" since all we know are beginnings and endings? How can God have no beginning and no ending, as far as our definitions are concerned? The very moment we ask such questions, let it be understood we have reduced God to a "creature," something or someone made and who will die or end.

Perhaps this is where skeptics and/or out-and-out atheists lose heart for it is not comfortable making room in our finite thinking to allow Someone so beyond us, so outside our circle of knowledge, to exist - this "Someone" who is responsible to no one but Himself and is eternal, self-existent and self-sufficient.

This being the case, mankind seeks to bring God down to our level. Romans 1:19-21 **But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! [20] By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse. [21] What happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives.**

1 TRYING TO COMPREHEND ETERNITY

2
3 Suppose you had a rope that was thousands of feet long to represent eternity. At one end of the rope, you would attach a piece of tape a quarter-inch long. Look at that tiny piece of tape....and then look at your mile-long rope. Your life could represent how few our years are in comparison to eternity. Yet that isn't a good example either because the rope would have an ending; eternity has neither beginning nor end.

4
5 Lonnie Branham has written: *The word "eternity is a difficult term for humans to*
6 *comprehend. It is related to time, but it is something far superior to time in quality and*
7 *duration. That is a powerful point he made here for eternity is not only different to*
8 *"time" in terms of length, but it is also vastly different in quality. Life that lasted forever*
9 *but was painful or in some way complicated would not be appealing at all (which will*
10 *certainly be the case for those in Hell. Time is duration in which things are considered*
11 *as happening in the past, present and future. Time is measurable. Earth time is*
12 *measured by the revolution of the earth around the sun and the rotation of the earth upon*
13 *its axis. Time, as we know it, has a measurable limit and is said to be finite. The word*
14 *'finite' comes from a Latin word that means finished, concluded, or ended. When the*
15 *earth makes a trip around the sun a few score times, most of us are gone. This is the*
16 *only clear-cut and understandable concept which we humans have of time.*

17
18 *The Bible teaches that God inhabits eternity. "Timeless existence" is what we mean by*
19 *eternity and has nothing to do with the revolution of planets around the sun. One of the*
20 *greatest thoughts that has ever entered the human mind is the eternity of God.*

21
22 **SO HOW DID GOD BEGIN? HE DIDN'T! HE ALWAYS WAS! AND THIS IS**
23 **WHERE WE STOP ALL COMPARISONS WITH HUMAN BEINGS. GOD IS NOT**
24 **"THE MAN UPSTAIRS," AS ONE SONG PUT IT.**

25
26 One of my favorite theologians, Dr. Henry Thiessen, wrote concerning the self-existence
27 of God: *By self-existence we mean that God has the ground of His existence in Himself.*
28 *We have the ground of our existence outside of ourselves (human parents); but God is not*
29 *dependent upon His existence upon anything outside of Himself. As Thomas Aquinas*
30 *said, "He is the first cause, Himself uncaused." His self-existence is implied in His*
31 *affirmation (to Moses), "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14) and as is usually held in the name*
32 *Jehovah (Exodus 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the*
33 *name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.) It is not*
34 *correct to say that God is His own cause for if that were the case, He would have the*
35 *power to annihilate Himself.* LECTURES IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY / EERDMAN / P. 122

1 So God is not bound by time for time is a non-factor when considering eternity.
2 Thiessen continues: *God is without beginning or end. He is free from all succession of*
3 *time; and HE IS THE CAUSE OF TIME! That God is eternal is abundantly taught in*
4 *Scripture. He is called the "eternal God" in Genesis 21:33; the Psalmists say, "From*
5 *everlasting to everlasting thou art God" in Psalm 90:2 and "Thou art the same, and thy*
6 *years have no end (Psalm 102:27). Isaiah represents God as "the high and lofty One*
7 *that inhabiteth eternity (Isaiah 57:15). Paul says, "He only hath immortality" (I Tim.*
8 *6:18). (Ibid)*

9
10 You and I age, fact we rue. But God is free from all succession of time. Eternity for
11 God is one NOW! And yet God sees the past and the future as vividly as He sees the
12 present.

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On a number of occasions, while in Israel, I have made my way to a high point on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. From that peak, I can see the entire lake below, every boat on it, every building, every activity. It is somewhat like that, although a very inadequate similarity, with God who sees all of time at one and the same moment. He sees the past and the future as vividly as He sees the present.

15
16 God is not only free of any time constraints, He is also the CAUSE of time:

17
18 **Hebrews 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath**
19 **appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;**
20 **Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the**
21 **word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do**
22 **appear.**

23
24 Both time and space are among the all things which "were made through Him" (John
25 1:3).

26 27 WHY ETERNITY IS SO HARD FOR US TO COMPREHEND

28
29 When I woke up this morning, there were certain circumstances in my life that would
30 cause change today - some of the changes more marked than others, but, nevertheless,
31 change. We humans are in a perpetual flux, so to speak; that is, something is acquired or
32 lost every single day. There is always a succession of both quantity and quality in us.
33 Every single day we acquire something different to some degree and also every day we
34 lose something. A man is not the same at night that he was earlier that morning.
35 Something has stopped or expired and something has been added. There is a change in

1 our age, in our possessions, our substance. Such is not so with God. He never receives
2 anything new nor does He lose anything. He is always the same in His excellence and
3 perfection.

4
5 Let's examine a few concepts regarding our Heavenly Father:

6
7 **1. IT IS SAID OF US HUMANS THAT WE LEARN SOMETHING NEW**
8 **EVERY DAY. THAT IS NOT SO OF GOD. THERE IS NO SUCCESSION OR**
9 **IMPROVEMENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.**

10
11 **Acts 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.**

12
13 God knows everything instantly and has known it from the beginning. He is never
14 surprised, never shocked. He knows everything exhaustively, perfectly, simultaneously,
15 truly and fully.

16
17 **2. THERE IS NO CHANGE IN HIS DECREES.**

18
19 God decreed - spoke - everything into existence with the probable exception being the
20 human race for in Genesis 1:26-28 And God said, Let us **make** man in our image,
21 **after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the**
22 **fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping**
23 **thing that creepeth upon the earth. [27] So God created man in his own image, in the**
24 **image of God created he him; male and female created he them. [28] And God**
25 **blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the**
26 **earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of**
27 **the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.**

28
29 Some of today's sociologists and behavioral scientists might like to rearrange those verses
30 to their liking; however, God's decrees do not change. Ephesians 1:4 **According as he**
31 **hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy**
32 **and without blame before him in love:**

33
34 **3. THE REASON FOR GOD'S IMMUTABILITY (He does not change)**

35
36 He is unchanging for He is outside of any time or space dimension that so limits us. He
37 is eternal. Malachi 3:6 **For I am the Lord, I change not...** It can be truly said that
38 the eternity of God is a shield against all kind of earthly or human change. I am bound
39 up in Him, not by any manmade or social classification, subject to change at any whim of
40 mankind.

1 **4. GOD DOES NOT CHANGE, IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS NATURE, BECAUSE**
2 **HE IS ETERNAL.**

3
4 Think it through: anything that has “a beginning” will also have “an ending” and is
5 therefore by its very nature “changeable.” If God had a beginning, He could not be
6 infinite. He would be subject to failure. He would susceptible to change. But that is
7 not the case. As the Psalmist informed us, Psalm 106:48 **Blessed be the Lord God of**
8 **Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the**
9 **Lord.**

10
11 **5. THE FACT THAT GOD IS ETERNAL VALIDATES ALL OF HIS**
12 **ATTRIBUTES SUCH AS HIS OMNIPOTENCE (all powerful)**

13
14 Remember that an “attribute of God” is anything that is true of Him. Were God less
15 mighty now than He was in Moses’ day, He would not be eternal. He is mighty today
16 because He has always been mighty.

17
18 **6. SINCE GOD IS ETERNAL, HIS PROMISES ARE ETERNAL.**

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20 Hebrews 6:13 **For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear**
21 **by no greater, he swore by himself,**

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23 Hebrews 6:16-17 **For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for**
24 **confirmation is to them an end of all strife. [17] Wherein God, willing more**
25 **abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel,**
26 **confirmed it by an oath:**

27
28 What a great statement: **THE IMMUTABILITY OF HIS COUNSEL!** What God told
29 Adam and Eve is still valid now - today. His words to David are still true this moment.
30 This is incredibly important. Remember that we gain faith by hearing the Word of God -
31 Romans 10:17 **So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**
32 Nowhere in God’s written Word does He renege on His promises.

33
34 Take salvation as an example. What does the Scripture promise? Romans 3:23-25
35 **For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [24] Being justified freely**
36 **by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: [25] Whom God hath**
37 **set forth to be a propitiation* through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness**
38 **for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;**

39 ** It is by Jesus alone that God is appeased in His anger against our sins - both by*
40 *nature and by actual act. **GOD IS APPEASED BECAUSE OF JESUS!***

1 I emphasize this because I am often approached by people who have repented of their sins
2 and asked God to save them who then doubt that their salvation is acquired by faith in
3 what Jesus did. This, of course, is a trick of Satan who would like to somehow make us
4 believe we are saved because we are so good or deserving. No, we are saved
5 BECAUSE GOD SAYS WE ARE after accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. Please get
6 that: WE ARE SAVED BECAUSE GOD SAYS WE ARE! This is the very same God
7 Who cried out in the very beginning of Creation: LET THERE BE LIGHT. Just as there
8 was light at His proclamation, so there is salvation again by the divine proclamation.
9 We accept it by faith, not by feeling or any other human sense. God said it, I believe it,
10 and that settles the issue.

11
12 With regard to God's eternal edicts concerning salvation we must also give heed to His
13 decrees of those things which are to come. If His warnings were real in the days of the
14 Old Testament prophets, they are true now.

15 HOW GREAT THOU ART!

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18 We sing:

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20 O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
21 Consider all the worlds thy hands have made;
22 I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
23 Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

24
25 Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee,
26 HOW GREAT THOU ART, HOW GREAT THOU ART!

27
28 The words to this great song were composed by Carl Gustav Bobert who lived from 1859
29 to 1940 and were set to the music of a traditional Swedish melody. It was popularized
30 by the baritone voice of George Beverly Shea in Billy Graham crusades. The thought
31 behind this song was an echo of the Psalmist long ago who wrote:

32
33 Psalm 148:1-14

34 Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the
35 heights. [2] Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. [3] Praise ye
36 him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. [4] Praise him, ye heavens of
37 heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. [5] Let them praise the name of
38 the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created. [6] He hath also stablished
39 them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. [7] Praise the
40 Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: [8] Fire, and hail; snow, and

1 vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: [9] Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees,
2 and all cedars: [10] Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: [11]
3 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: [12] Both
4 young men, and maidens; old men, and children: [13] Let them praise the name of
5 the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.
6 [14] He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the
7 children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord.

8
9 Again my thoughts return to the old White Pass train, going from Skagway north toward
10 White Horse, through mountains that make one's heart beat faster. What a mighty God
11 we serve, One Who is eternal, Who was, is and will always be self-existent. He is not
12 the watered down "man upstairs" so trivialized by today's religionists. He truly is the
13 God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the God of all who will love Him, respect Him and
14 have a healthy and scriptural, holy fear of Who He is.

15
16 You and I will stand before Him one day. Let that reality fill your mind. 2 Peter 3:3-14
17 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their
18 own lusts, [4] And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers
19 fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. [5]
20 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of
21 old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: [6] Whereby the world
22 that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: [7] But the heavens and the
23 earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against
24 the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. [8] But, beloved, be not ignorant
25 of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand
26 years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men
27 count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish,
28 but that all should come to repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come as a
29 thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and
30 the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are
31 therein shall be burned up. [11] Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved,
32 what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, [12]
33 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens
34 being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? [13]
35 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,
36 wherein dwelleth righteousness. [14] Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for
37 such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and
38 blameless.

39
40 Next Wednesday we resume our PURSUIT OF GOD.