

Theology Proper
The Existence of God

Q - If you had no Bible and knew nothing about Jesus Christ (as is the case with many people in our world) how could you know that God exists?

The following is a list of several arguments which have been developed down through the centuries in support of the existence of God.

1. The Cosmological Argument (*kosmos* - order; world)

Because a “cosmos” exists, and because something cannot come from nothing, there must be an original cause for the cosmos who is the reason for the world’s existence.

Cf. Romans 1:18-20 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (19) because that which is known about God is evident within them,; for God made it evident to them. (20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

2. The Teleological Argument (*teleios* - full grown, mature; complete, perfect)

Order and useful arrangement in a system imply intelligence and purpose in the organizing cause. Our universe is characterized by a high level of order and useful arrangement, so the universe must have an intelligent cause.

Cf. Psalm 8:1 “O LORD, our Lord, / how majestic is Your name in all the earth / Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens.”

Cf. Psalm 19:1 “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; / And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (2) Day to day pours forth speech, / And night to night reveals knowledge. (3) There is no speech, nor are there words; / Their voice is not heard. (4) Their line has gone out through all the earth, / And their utterances to the end of the world.”

3. The Anthropological Argument (*anthropos* - man)

The existence and nature of mankind require a cause sufficient to explain them. Man is not simply a physical being, but a being with a conscience, intellect, emotion, and will. So man's cause must be a cause sufficient to account for man's conscience, intellect, emotion and will.

Cf. Psalm 139:14 “I will give thanks to You, / For I am fearfully and wonderfully made; / Wonderful are Your works, / And my soul knows it very well.”

4. The Moral Argument

Wherever he is found on earth, mankind has a moral nature - a sense of right and wrong. The moral nature of mankind must have come from someone who is also a moral being. Man's recognition of moral standards and concepts cannot be attributed to any evolutionary process; it must have come from God, a moral being.

Cf. Romans 2:14-16
“For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinct-

ively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law are a law to themselves, (15) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, (16) on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

5. The Ontological Argument

The Ontological Argument is a philosophical argument rather than an empirical (experiential) argument. It argues that man’s ability to conceive of a perfect God is evidence that such a God exists. Someone has stated it as follows: “If man could conceive of a perfect God who does not exist, then he could conceive of someone greater than God Himself, which is impossible; therefore God exists.”

Cf. Isaiah 40:18,25 “To whom then will you liken God? / Or what likeness will you compare with Him?” (25) “To whom then will you liken Me / That I should be his equal?” says the Holy One.”

Cf. Acts 17:22,23 “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. (23) For when I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.”

Think About It: Though the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ are our best revelation about the existence and nature of God, there are powerful reasons to believe in His existence even apart from their message.

Apply It: As A.W. Tozer stated it (in his book, The Knowledge of the Holy), “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”

Theology Proper

The Denial of God

Though the world's many religions are proof positive that mankind is incurably religious, there are many people who, in a variety of ways, seek to deny God's existence - or, at least, His importance.

The following list includes man's attempts to deny God the place He deserves and desires in people's lives.

1. The Atheistic View

Atheism is the denial of God's existence. Atheists come in three varieties: (1) the practical atheist who lives as if there is no God; (2) the dogmatic atheist who openly repudiates God; and (3) the virtual atheist who rejects God by his terminology (e.g. Paul Tillich: "God is the ground of all being").

Psalm 14:1 & 53:1

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.

2. The Agnostic View

An agnostic is a person who is not sure that there is no God, but who believes that God's existence cannot be known. Lacking the knowledge of God, he lives as if God did not exist or matter (as in Psalm 10:3-4).

³ For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire,
And the greedy man curses *and* spurns the LORD.

⁴ The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does
not seek *Him*.

All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

3. The Evolutionary View

The atheistic evolutionist takes an anti-supernatural approach to life and its origin. He believes not only that there is no God, but that everything which exists can be satisfactorily explained without reference to God. Humanism, which exalts man to the place of supremacy, denies God's existence, holding an atheistic evolutionary perspective.

Cf II Peter 3:3-6

Know this first of all, that in that last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, (4) and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues as it was from the beginning of creation." (5) For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water (6) through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

4. The Polytheistic View

Polytheism is the view that there are many gods. Like the ancient Egyptians (Exodus 12:12) who worshiped the sun, the Nile, frogs, and even gnats (etc.), polytheists deny the true God the attention He deserves by their belief that there is more than one God.

Cf. I Corinthians 8:5-6

For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, (6) yet for us there is but one God, the Father,

from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

5. The Pantheistic View

Pantheism is the belief that everything is God and God is everything. The Greek poet Seneca said, “What is God? . . . He is all that you see and all that you do not see.” The Scriptures teach that God is “in all,” both in the sense that He is omnipresent, and in the sense that He is in every believer, but they also teach that He is “over all” - so the Creator is clearly not to be confused with His creation.

Cf. Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling, (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Cf. I John 3:24

The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

6. The Deistic View

Deists believe that there is no personal God to whom man can relate. They believe in an impersonal God who created the world and then divorced Himself from the human race and left man alone in His created world. This is quite a contrast to the God who invites His people (I Peter 5:7) to “cast all [their] anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.”

Think About It: The book of Psalms assures us (twice!) that

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1).

Apply It: Beware of fools and the foolish way of life which, whatever it says about God, denies Him by ignoring His importance!

Theology Proper

The Aseity of God

Little children have often been known to voice the profound question: “where did God come from?” How would you answer their question?

It is our experience that every effect has a cause of some kind or another. So it is very logical that we should wonder, concerning such an enormous “effect” as God is, what it is that “caused” Him! But the truth about God, revealed in His word, is the truth that God **alone** (of all persons and things in existence throughout the entire universe) does not have a cause. A theological term conveying the concept of God’s self-existence is the word “aseity.” It comes from the Latin *a*, meaning from, and *se*, meaning oneself. God is His own source! As someone has described Him, God is “the uncaused cause”!

1. God Has No Cause Outside of Himself

Q - How did God describe Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14? He described Himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM.”

Q - What is the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 6:3? The name by which God revealed Himself to Moses is the name LORD (*Yahweh* - He IS).

Q - Why would you say God chose this name as His self-designation? The name He chose reveals Him as the One who really exists (in contrast to all the so-called “gods” who do not exist); and it implies His timelessness as the eternal God.

Q - How is God described in Deuteronomy 33:27? God described Himself as “the eternal God” who is a “dwelling place” to those who are His people, supporting them with His

“everlasting arms”.

Q - What does Psalm 90:1-2 tell us about God’s origin?
It tells us that God did not have an “origin” because He is God
“from everlasting to everlasting.”

God **is**, pure and simple; and He always has been! This is just one of the many facets of His nature as God to be observed in the study of theology proper.

2. God Has Caused All That Is

Though God has never been caused to exist Himself, He is the cause of all besides Himself that **does** exist!

Q - What does Genesis 1:1 tell us that God created in the beginning? Genesis 1:1 tell us that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Q - What does Hebrews 11:3 tell us God used in His work of bringing things into existence? Hebrews 11:3 tells us that God used His word in His work of bringing things into existence - making what we see out of things which are not visible.

Q - What does Psalm 148:1-5 tell us God deserves because of what He has made? Psalm 148:1-5 tells us that God deserves to be praised because of all that He has made - by angels and armies and heavenly bodies and by the waters that are above the heavens (Cf. Psalm 19:1ff.).

3. God Is the Cause of Life Itself

Q - What does Genesis 2:7 tell us God gave to the man He made out of the dust of the ground? Genesis 2:7 tells us

that “God breathed into his [man’s] nostrils the breath of life,” so that man became a living being.

Q - What, according to John 5:26, is the source of God’s life, and of the life of His Son Jesus? John 5:26 tells us that “the Father has life in Himself,” and that “He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.”

Q - What did the Apostle Paul say the Lord needs from anyone or anything He has created in Acts 17:24-25? The Apostle Paul told the intellectuals at the Areopagus in Athens that God does not need anything from anyone since “He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.”

Think About It: Though everything else we know about has been caused to come into existence by some outside influence, the Lord is the cause of His own existence and of the existence of everything else that exists throughout the entire universe!

Q - What is the practical significance of this truth for **us**? Because God is the uncaused cause who created all that is and gave life and breath to all, He deserves to be praised and trusted by all that He has made!

Theology Proper

The Unity of God

Q - When have you encountered the worship of “gods” who are not GOD?

Down through the ages there have been many “gods” recognized by the people of the world. The Bible talks about the false gods of:

The Egyptians

Exodus 12:12

The Canaanites

II Kings 11:7 mentions Molech of the Ammonites; and Numbers 21:29 mentions Chemosh of the Moabites; and Judges 16:23 mentions Dagon of the Philistines

The Babylonians

Bel and Marduk and Nebo are mentioned in Isaiah 46:1 and Jeremiah 50:2.

And others as well.

But the Scriptures teach that there is only **one God!** The doctrine of the unity of God teaches us that God is one essence: that only **one** is God and that God is **one**. This doctrine is the basis for maintaining two important truths:

1. There is only **one true God**. This is the foundational truth of monotheism.

Q - Who does Deuteronomy 6:4 tell us is the one true God? It tells us that the Lord (*Yahweh*) is God, and that He is one.

It was their belief in the one true God which set Israel apart from her ancient polytheistic neighbors!

See Deuteronomy 4:35-39

Q - What is the Lord's declaration regarding His deity in Isaiah 43:10 (cf. 44:6; 45:5,21-22; 46:9-10)? The Lord declared that He is God, that there was no God before Him, and that there will be no God after Him.

It is our belief in the one true God, revealed by His divine Son Jesus, which today sets Christians apart from peoples all around the world who believe in “gods” who are not **God**.

2. There is no other being who can be favorably compared with the one true God

Q - What three things, according to Exodus 15:11, set the LORD apart from the “gods” of the nations?

- (1) He is majestic in holiness;
- (2) He is awesome in praises;
- (3) He is working wonders.

Q - How did the psalmist illustrate the futility of the worship of idols in Psalm 115:4-7 (cf. Isaiah 44:12-20)? He stated that the idols of silver and gold are the work of man's hands; their mouths cannot speak; their eyes cannot see; their ears cannot hear; their hands cannot feel; their feet cannot walk; their throats cannot make a sound; and that those who make them will become like them!

Q - How did the Prophet Jeremiah substantiate his assertion that “There is none like you, O LORD” (10:6) in Jeremiah 10:8-11? He said that the “wise men” of the nations are stupid and foolish, worshiping idols made by their own hands out of wood or silver or gold, dressed in purple clothing they have made for them - in contrast with the Lord, the true and living God, the everlasting king, who makes the earth quake in His

wrath so that the nations cannot endure His indignation.

Q - What does I Corinthians 8:4 say is actually true about idols? There is actually nothing real about an idol because there is only one who is truly God.

Q - How does I Corinthians 8:5 describe the “gods” of the nations? I Corinthians 8:5 describes the many “gods” and “lords” of the nations as “so-called gods” (literally “those called gods”).

Q - What important truths does I Corinthians 8:6 tell us about who God is and how we are related to Him? It tells us that there is only one God, the Father, from whom and for whom all things (ourselves included) exist; and it tells us that there is only one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom everything (ourselves included) exists.

Think About It: Though people down through the ages have worshiped many “gods,” there is only **one** who **is** God.

Apply It: How are we showing that we understand who is the one and only God, and that we understand our place and purpose in view of who He is?

Theology Proper
The Trinity of God
Old Testament Evidence

Q - What is your favorite illustration of the truth of the trinity of God?

Though the word “trinity” (or trinity) is never found in Scripture, the concept is clearly there. It is a concept which is fundamental to the Christian faith. Belief or disbelief in it separates the orthodox from the unorthodox.

To an orthodox Jew the Christian doctrine of triunity is an offensive doctrine. He will quickly retreat to the “Shema” of the Old Testament which is the daily focus of many Jewish people:

Deuteronomy 6:4 - “Hear O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”

But the Hebrew word for “one” in that verse (*echad*) is the same word which describes the **two** partners of a marriage as “**one** flesh” in Genesis 2:24 - so it obviously doesn’t rule out the divisibility of the divine Godhead.

In fact, there are numerous Old Testament passages which lay the groundwork for the teaching of the triunity of God!

1. Genesis 1:1 tells us that “God” is the creator of “the heavens and the earth.” But the word for “God” in Genesis 1:1 is plural in its form - followed by a third person singular verb (“created”). Why do you suppose the Bible frequently refers to “God” (*elohim*) using a plural noun? Several Hebrew nouns are frequently or always used in the plural in what Hebrew grammarians refer to as the “plural of majesty” because they speak of things which are so awe-inspiring that they can hardly be con-

ceived as singular. In addition to water and the heavens, God is such a subject. But the appearance of the word for God in the plural certainly opens the door for consideration that He is to be viewed in the plural in some sense - as in the concept of tri-unity.

2. Genesis 1:2 tells us that “the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” Why do you suppose this verse distinguishes between “God” who created (v. 1), and “the Spirit of God” who was moving over the surface of the waters (v. 2) as it does? Genesis 1:2 is already anticipating the separate persons in the triune Godhead by its reference to both God, the creator, and His Spirit.

3. To whom was God speaking when He said, in Genesis 1:26, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, according to **our** likeness” (cf. 1:27)? It is clear that He had to be speaking to the other members of the Godhead because only God is credited with the creation of the earth and the universe throughout the Scriptures, beginning as soon as Genesis 1:27.

4. Who are the persons specified in the conversation of Psalm 2:6-7? The two person speaking in Psalm 2:6-7 are the Lord and His Anointed (cf. v. 2). Since the LORD who is issuing the decree of verse 7 is speaking to His Son, the two persons have to be God the Father and God the Son.

5. To whom was the LORD speaking in Psalm 110:1 when He promised a seat at His right hand and a footstool made up of enemies (cf. Matthew 22:41-46)? The LORD (yahweh) is speaking to the one David identifies as his Lord (*adonai - master*) - applied by Jesus to Himself in Matthew 22:41-46.

6. What sign was promised from the LORD to King Ahaz in Isaiah 7:14? And what is the meaning of the name predicted in

this verse (cf. Matthew 1:23)? The Lord promised to Ahaz the sign of a virgin conceiving and bearing a son whose name would be Immanuel - meaning “God with us.” Because Ahaz had refused the Lord’s offer of a sign, he never lived to see the sign, but the gospel records make it crystal clear (cf. Matthew 1:23) that the virgin predicted was Mary and the Son was the Lord Jesus who was the personification of the name Immanuel which is frequently used with reference to Him.

7. Who are the persons referred to in Isaiah 11:1-2? The “shoot” springing from the stem of Jesse is Jesus upon whom the Spirit of the LORD would rest - so all three persons of the triune Godhead are referred to in Isaiah 11:1-2.

8. Many believe that God’s Messiah is speaking in Isaiah 48:16. Who else does He refer to in this verse? In the phrase “the LORD God has sent Me, and His Spirit” all three persons of the Godhead are in view as the Son refers to both the Father and the Spirit.

9. Because the repeated “you” of Isaiah 59:21 is second masculine singular, to whom does it refer (cf. 59:20), and who else is in view in verse 21? The second masculine singular “you” of verse 21 refers to the promised Redeemer of verse 20, so the phrase “As for Me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD, ‘My Spirit is upon you . . .’” refers to all three persons of the triune Godhead.

10. What three persons are in view in the opening lines of Isaiah 61:1 (cf. Luke 4:16-21)? The phrase “The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me” includes all three persons of the triune Godhead - as the quotation and application of this passage by Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth made clear (Luke 4:16-21).

Think About It: Though it may not be explicitly stated in the

Old Testament, the truth of the triunity of God is very evident in a careful study of its pages!

Apply It: The Old Testament provides no justification in its pages for anyone seeking to deny the existence of the triune Godhead.

Theology Proper
The Trinity of God
New Testament Evidence

Q - It is said that St. Patrick used a shamrock (three-leaf clover) as a symbol for the triune Godhead in his ministry in Ireland. Would you use it for the same purpose?

When it comes to the triune nature of God, what the Old Testament clearly lays the foundation for, the New Testament makes more explicit. Though even the New Testament does not contain a full-blown explanation of the doctrine of Triunity, there are numerous passages which make it much clearer than the Old Testament ever did.

1. What three persons of the Godhead are identified in connection with the birth of Jesus in Luke 1:35? The “power of the Most High” refers to the Father; the Spirit is clearly the subject of “the Holy Spirit will come upon you” [Mary]; and “the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” obviously refers to the Lord Jesus.

2. How is the presence of each of the three persons of the Godhead seen at the baptism of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 3:13-17 and Luke 3:21-22?

Father? The voice of the Father came out of heaven saying “this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.

Son? The Son of God was the one being baptized.

Spirit? The Holy Spirit was seen descending upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove.

3. How is each of the three persons of the Godhead identified in John 14:16?

Father? The Father is the one of whom the request is

being made.

Son? The Son is the one making the request.

Spirit? The Spirit is the “Helper” who is being promised to the disciples - to be with them forever.

4. Into whose name are the followers of Jesus to be baptized according to the instruction of the “great commission” in Matthew 28:19, and what is the significance of the singular “name” in this verse? The followers of Jesus are to be baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
The fact that they share the same name reveals their unity as the triune God.

5. Circle the three persons of the triune Godhead as they are referred to in Romans 8:11:

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised / Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”

How many references to each person of the Godhead appear in this one verse? The Father? 2 The Son? 2 The Spirit? 2

6. How does the believer’s privileged position as a child of God - witnessed by God’s Spirit - also bring him into relationship with both the Father and the Son according to Romans 8:16-17? The Spirit testifies that we are God’s children, making us heirs of God the Father, and co-heirs with Christ the Son.

7. What does Paul pray the Corinthians will experience from each member of the Godhead in II Corinthians 13:14?

Father? The love of God (the Father).

Son? The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spirit? The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

8. How did the Apostle Paul say the Lord has assured His people that they have been adopted into His family in Galatians 4:4-7? Because we have been redeemed by Christ and have received adoption as God's sons as a result, God has sent His Spirit into our hearts crying "Abba, Father."

9. How I Peter 1:1-2 say each person in the triune Godhead has contributed to the believer's salvation? The believer has been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and has been sprinkled with the blood of Christ to provide cleansing from sin.

10. What role does Jude 20-21 say each person in the triune Godhead should have in the building up of each believer in his holy faith? Each believer is to pray in/by the Holy Spirit, keeping himself in the love of God (the Father), and waiting anxiously for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Think About It: There is certainly no reason for a careful student of Scripture to miss the evidence the New Testament contains for the existence of the Triune Godhead!

Apply It: Though we may not fully understand how God can be one God and three persons at the same time, as those who accept the Bible as God's inspired word we have clear evidence in the New Testament of the triune nature of God.

Theology Proper
The Trinity of God:
Explanation of Triunity

Q - What is a favorite “mystery” of yours - if you are into mysteries?

The triunity of God is ultimately a “mystery” to the mind of man. Any attempt to explain it is bound to end in a certain amount of frustration, because it is beyond our ability to understand how God could be - at one and the same time - both one God and three persons. But because it is what the Bible clearly teaches, let’s take a stab at better comprehending the incomprehensible!

1. God is One in Regard to Essence

a. How does Deuteronomy 6:4 describe the LORD God? Why does its description not rule out triunity? It states that “The LORD is our God, the LORD is one.” The word for “one” (*echad*) is used to describe the husband and wife, clearly two persons, as “one flesh” in Genesis 2:24.

b. What light do Deuteronomy 4:35 and Christ’s quotation of this verse in Mark 12:29 throw on the message of Deuteronomy 6:4? They explain that God is one in the sense that “there is no other besides Him” (4:35) and that “THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD.”

c. How does Isaiah 43:10 affirm the singularity of the Lord as God? It quotes the Lord as assuring the people of Israel that “Before Me there was no other God formed, And there will be none after Me.”

d. What does James 2:19 tell us we do well to believe because

it is so evident that even the demons believe it? It says that we do well to believe “that God is one,” a truth which makes the demons tremble.

2. God Is Three With Respect to Persons

a. Where do you see the three persons of the Godhead in the opening lines of Luke 4:18 (Christ’s quotation of Isaiah 61:1)? Christ (God the Son) is quoting Isaiah’s statement of His own words when he writes “THE SPIRIT [the Holy Spirit] OF THE LORD [God the Father] IS UPON ME [God the Son].”

b. Identify the persons of the Godhead in Ephesians 2:17-18. The “He” of verse 17 is God the Son “through whom [v. 18] we have our access in one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] to the Father [God the Father].”

3. The Three Persons Have Distinct Roles

a. What roles does God the Father fill according to John 14:26? The Father was going to send the Spirit.

The Son? The Spirit was going to be sent by the Father in the name of Jesus to enable His followers to recall His words.

The Spirit? The Spirit was going to be sent by the Father to teach Christ’s followers all things and bring Christ’s words to rememberance.

b. What roles does God the Father fill according to John 15:26? The Spirit was going to be sent from the Father.

The Son? The Son was also going to have a role in sending the Spirit to testify about the Son.

The Spirit? The Spirit was going to come to the disciples from the Father and the Son, sent to testify concerning the Son.

c. What roles does God the Father fill according to Romans 8:11? The Father is described as “He who raised Jesus from the dead” and who “will also give life to your mortal bodies.”

The Son? The Son is the One raised from the dead by the Father.

The Spirit? The Spirit dwells in believers and has a part in giving life to the mortal bodies of Christians by His indwelling presence in them.

4. The Three Persons are Equal in Authority

a. What does John 5:21-24 tell us about the authority of God the Father and God the Son? It tells us that both the Father and the Son have authority to give life to believers who have died; that the Father has given the Son all authority to judge; and that both the Son and the Father deserve equally to be honored.

b. What did Jesus claim regarding His authority in Matthew 28:18? Jesus claimed that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth.

c. What price did Ananias and Sapphira pay for lying to the Holy Spirit according to Acts 5:1-11? Ananias and Sapphira were both struck dead on the spot for their agreement together to lie to the Holy Spirit.

How does this passage reveal the Spirit's authority? This passage reveals that the Holy Spirit is God (v. 4) and that He has the authority to take the lives of those who dare to lie to Him.

Think About It: Though God is one God, He is also three persons - each person with individual roles to play and divine authority to exercise. Whether we understand it or not isn't as important as whether we believe it or not!

Apply It: What are some practical ramifications of our relationship with the one God who reveals Himself as three persons?

Theology Proper
The Eternity of God

Q - How many times a day do you suppose you check to see what time it is? Where would we be without “time”?

It is impossible for a human being to understand what it would be like not to live within the bounds of time. Everything we do is measured by time, and we often find ourselves “up against the clock” with respect to time as we battle what someone has called “the tyranny of the urgent.” But attempting to understand what God is like requires that we try to comprehend a being who is not constrained by time.

1. What does Genesis 1:1 imply concerning the length of God’s existence? The fact that He created the heavens and the earth “in the beginning” implies that He was already in existence before the beginning.
2. Who does Genesis 21:33 say it was that Abraham called upon as he planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba in celebration of his covenant with Abimelech and Phicol? Genesis 21:33 says that Abraham called upon the name of the LORD, the everlasting God.
3. How did God describe Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14, and what does His self-revelation there suggest about His relation to time? The Lord described Himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM,” and told him to tell the Israelites in Egypt that “I AM sent me to you,” suggesting that He lives outside of the bounds of time as the God who always has been, is now, and always will be.
4. What did the Lord designate as His “memorial name,” to be used by His people, in Exodus 3:15, and how long did He say it

would continue as His “memorial name”? The Lord told Moses that His “memorial name” is “the LORD [Yahweh],” and He said that it would be His memorial name “to all generations.”

5. How is the Lord described in Deuteronomy 33:27 (and in Romans 16:26)? The Lord is described as “the eternal God” in both Deuteronomy and Romans.

6. How does the length of God’s existence compare with that of the mountains according to Psalm 90:2? Psalm 90:2 says that the Lord was already God “before the mountains were born.”

7. How did Moses describe the past and future of God’s existence in Psalm 90:2? Moses described the Lord’s past and future using the phrase “from everlasting to everlasting.”

8. How many generations of humanity have some memory of the Lord in their experience according to Psalm 135:13? Psalm 135 states that the memory of the Lord, like His everlasting name, extends “throughout all generations.”

9. How did Jesus describe the glory He shared with His Heavenly Father in John 17:5? Jesus prayed that God the Father would glorify Him together with Himself (as He anticipated His suffering and death and resurrection) with “the glory which [He] had with [His Father] before the world was.”

10. When did the Apostle Paul say that God chose believers in Christ to become holy and blameless before Him in Ephesians 1:4? Paul wrote that God chose believers in Christ to become holy and blameless before Him “before the foundation of the world.”

11. How do Psalm 90:4 and II Peter 3:8 describe God's view of a day or a thousand years? Moses wrote that a thousand years in God's sight is like "yesterday when it passes by," and the Apostle Peter wrote that "with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day."

12. While God is not Himself limited by time, what evidence do you see in Revelation 6:9-11 that He understands and deals realistically with time from a human perspective? When the souls of martyrs under the altar cried out, asking "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" the Lord told them that "they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also," so He showed sensitivity to the passing of time in the experience of His martyred servants.

13. How does an understanding of God's relation to time help explain His reference to "today" in Psalm 2:7 (cf. Acts 13:32-33; Hebrews 1:5)? Because the Apostle Paul, in Acts 32:35, interpreted the "today" on which the Lord Jesus was "begotten" as the day of His resurrection, we have an example of the Lord's timeless perspective as the God who dwells in eternity.

Think About It: As the eternal God, the Lord never had a beginning and He will never have an ending. He created time (John 1:3), so He no doubt understands it well, but He is not limited by His own creation, so He is never late and He is never early and He is never in a hurry. He sees and understands what we would call the "past" and the "future" from His eternal vantage point in what we call "the present."

Apply It: Though human beings who are bound by time cannot fully comprehend life without the restrictions imposed by time,

it is helpful to see the perspective of the Lord who exists (as He has existed and always will exist) beyond the bounds of time, knowing that we will one day gain the perspective of eternity.

Theology Proper
The Omnipotence of God

Q - When have you been particularly impressed with the power of the Lord?

The idea of power is an idea which is inherent in the idea of deity. In fact, though it is not as clear as we might wish it to be, there is evidence that the Hebrew word for God (*elohim*) speaks of power; and the title for God as the “Almighty” (Genesis 17:1, etc.) assures us of the extent of God’s power.

1. The Fact of God’s Power

God is able to do whatever He wills to do in the way in which He wills to do it.

- a. What did Jesus indicate in His prayer (Mark 14:36) that it is possible for God to do? Jesus acknowledged that “all things are possible” for the Lord - though He also acknowledged that God’s perfect will is most important.
- b. What attributes of God does Paul tell us are clearly seen as a result of God’s work as the Creator in Romans 1:20? Paul said that God’s eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen through what has been made in the world.
- c. How do we see God’s power demonstrated in His work as Creator according to Hebrews 11:3? Hebrews 11:3 states that the worlds were created by God’s word, so that “what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” (often described as “creatio ex-nihilo” - creation out of nothing).
- d. How did the Prophet Jeremiah affirm and illustrate his awareness of the power of the Lord in Jeremiah 32:17? He

observed that the Lord made the heavens and the earth by His great power and by His outstretched arm - revealing that nothing is too difficult for Him.

2. The Limits of God's Power

God's power is limited only by the bounds of logic and of His own nature. Though He CAN do anything, He is not going to do anything which is illogical or which is not in harmony with His perfections!

- a. What is the sensible response to the person who attempts to disprove God's omnipotence with a question like "can God make a rock so large that He cannot lift it?" The sensible response to such a question is that the question is illogical, so not worthy of any attempt to answer it.
- b. What does II Timothy 2:13 tell us about God? It tells us that the Lord remains faithful even when we are not faithful because He cannot deny Himself.
- c. What does Titus 1:2 tell us God is not able to do? It tells us that we are assured of eternal life because God promised it long ago and because God cannot lie.

3. The Extent of God's Power

The thing about God's power which sets Him apart from every other person or thing which also has power is the extent of His power.

- a. What does Psalm 115:3 tell us God does? It tells us that God, who dwells in the heavens, does whatever He pleases to do.

b. How does Psalm 135:6 describe the extent of the power of God? It tells us that God does whatever He pleases in the heavens and on the earth and even in the seas and the depths of the sea.

c. What was it that led the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar to make the confession he made about the extent of God's power which is found in Daniel 4:34-35? He confessed what he did about God's ability to act according to His will on earth and throughout the universe because his reason was restored to Him by God after he spent seven times (years?) living like an animal in the fields due to God's judgment against his pride.

d. How does Isaiah 14:24-27 account for the Lord's ability to carry out His plan to judge not only the Assyrian empire but the whole earth? It accounts for His ability to do what He has done and what He will do because He has the power to cause what He intended to happen to occur, and the ability to cause to stand what He planned should stand.

e. How did the Apostle Paul explain God's ability to sum up all things in heaven and on earth in Christ (v. 10), and to predestine His people according to His purpose in Ephesians 1:10-11? Paul explained God's ability to do what He does because He works all things after the counsel of His will.

Think About It: The Lord possesses the power to do anything He chooses to do. His power assures His ability to cause anything He chooses to happen to occur according to His will, and to take anything that does happen and use it to accomplish His purposes!

Apply It: What practical difference is the truth of God's omnipotence making in our lives?

Theology Proper
The Sovereignty of God

Q - What does the term “sovereign” suggest when it is used to describe or address a human ruler among men?

The sovereignty of God assures us that He is the final authority. He is the Supreme Being, the one to whom all of creation answers. He is in complete control of all things, though He may choose to let certain events happen according to the natural laws which He has (sovereignly) established.

1. The Fact of God’s Sovereignty

a. Where does Psalm 11:4 tell us that the throne of the Lord can be found? It tells us that the Lord’s throne can be found in His temple in heaven.

b. What does Psalm 103:19 teach us about the significance of the sovereignty of God? It teaches us that the sovereignty of the Lord “rules over all.”

c. What evidence does the psalmist cite in Psalm 135:5-6 that the Lord is great and above all others called “god”? He cites the fact that the Lord does whatever He pleases - in heaven, on the earth, in the sea and all the way to the depths (of the sea).

(cf. verses 7-12 for additional evidences)

d. How does Acts 15:13-18 demonstrate that the Lord has a plan for the ages? It cites the Prophet Amos (9:11 ff.) in his prediction that, though the Lord judged the nation of Israel for its sins, he had plans to restore the people of Israel and use Israel to introduce the rest of mankind to the Lord so that even Gentiles would be called by His name.

2. The Evidence of God's Sovereignty in His Names/Titles

Q - What divine names/titles indicate the sovereignty of God in the following verses?

- a. Genesis 14:18-20 - The designation “God Most High” clearly speaks of the sovereignty of God over all who rank “below” Him.
- b. Genesis 15:2 (cf. Deuteronomy 3:24) - The reference to the Lord as Lord God (*adonai Yahweh*) recognizes the “one who is” as Lord/Master, implying His sovereignty.
- c. Genesis 17:1 (cf. Exodus 6:2-3) - The reference to God as “God Almighty” (*el shaddai*) clearly places the Lord above all others in terms of His strength and, thus, His sovereignty.
- d. Revelation 1:8 - The designation “Alpha and Omega” speaks of God’s eternity, the designation “Lord God” describes Him as the deity who exercises mastery, and the term “Almighty” attributes all power to Him - each of them implying the sovereignty of the Lord.

3. The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

- a. How does the gospel demonstrate the sovereignty of God in salvation (Romans 1:16)? The Apostle Paul described the gospel as the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,” making the connection between God’s sovereign power with His provision of salvation.
- b. How does Romans 8:28 demonstrate that the Lord is sovereign in the affairs of His people? The fact that God can cause “all things” to “work together for good” in the lives of people who love God and are called according to His purpose makes it

clear that He sovereignly controls the events in His people's lives.

c. How does Romans 8:29-30 demonstrate God's sovereignty in the salvation of His people? The assurance that everyone whom God has foreknown will ultimately be glorified (already accomplished from God's perspective) demonstrates His complete control in the process of a soul's salvation.

4. The Extent of God's Sovereignty

a. How does the evil which is so evident on earth fit into God's sovereign plan according to Proverbs 16:4? The fact that God has an "evil" end in mind for all who are wicked demonstrates His sovereign control over the outcome for all who are wicked.

b. How is God's sovereignty seen in Isaiah 46:9-11? The Lord's ability to announce from the beginning how things will turn out in the end - including who will be involved in the process - clearly reveals His sovereignty.

c. How many things does God's purpose include according to Ephesians 1:11? Paul writes that "all things" have been pre-destined according to the purpose of the God who works all things according to the counsel of His will clearly reveals His sovereignty in all things.

d. What will be the end result of God's purpose according to Ephesians 1:12,14? The glory of God will be the end result of God's purposes for all who hope in Christ - clearly revealing the Lord's sovereign control in the lives of His people.

Think About It: The Bible teaches that God is the ultimate king, the supreme ruler and law-giver of the entire universe.

Apply It: How are WE recognizing God's sovereignty in practical ways in our lives?

Theology Proper

The Immutability of God

Q - What are some of the ways in which you have experienced change during your life?

The immutability of God assures us that God does not change and, therefore, that He is unchanging. The Lord never changes in terms of His perfections, His purposes or His promises. Because all change takes place either for better or for worse, change is impossible for God because He can never become any better than He already is, nor is it possible for Him to become diminished in any way - which would make Him less than God. A.W. Tozer has written (in his book The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 55): "To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself."

1. The Immutability of God Himself

a. What sets the Lord apart from the earth and heavens which He created according to Psalm 102:25-27? The earth and the heavens will "wear out like a garment" (i.e. they will be changed), but the Lord is ("but You are the same - literally He") and His years will never come to an end.

b. What does Malachi 3:6 assure us the Lord never does? It assures us that the Lord never changes - which is the reason the "sons of Jacob," sinners like all human beings are, have not been and will not be consumed.

c. How does Hebrews 1:10-12 assure us that Jesus is like God the Father? The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 102:25-27 and applies the passage to Jesus who, like God the Father, is unchanging in His divine nature.

d. How does James 1:17 describe the difference between the Lord and the lights which He created? It acknowledges the Lord, the giver of “every good thing given and every perfect gift,” - the “Father of lights” which are constantly changing - as the One with whom there is “no variation or shifting shadow.”

2. The Immutability of God’s Purposes

a. What does Psalm 33:11 assure us “stands forever”? It assures us that “the counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.”

b. How does Proverbs 19:21 contrast the purposes of a man with the purposes of the Lord? It contrasts the plans of a man’s heart, which are “many,” with the counsel of the Lord which “will stand.”

c. What two unchangeable things are included for our encouragement in Hebrews 6:17-18 regarding the certainty of the Lord’s purposes? The promises the Lord has made to the heirs of the promise (also referred to as “the unchangeableness of His purpose”), and the oath which He made to Abraham (as verses 13 and 14 have just explained), are the two things referred to as “unchangeable things.”

3. The Immutability of God’s Word

a. What does Numbers 23:19 tell us God never does? It tells us that the Lord never lies or repents, but He always does what He has said He will do.

b. What does I Samuel 15:29 assure us God will not do? It tells us that the Lord will never lie or change His mind.

c. How does Isaiah 40:8 affirm the unchangeableness of the

word of God? Contrasting God's word with grass, which withers, and flowers, which fade, it affirms that "the word of our God stands forever."

d. What does Isaiah 55:11 say about the dependability of the words of the Lord? It says that the word which goes out of the mouth of the Lord will not return to Him empty, but will accomplish what He desires and succeed in the matter for which He sent it.

e. How does Matthew 5:18 affirm the accuracy of the words of the Law of the Lord? Matthew 5:18 states that, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished.

f. Because the Lord never changes, how does Matthew 24:35 compare and contrast the words of the Lord with heaven and earth? Matthew 24:35 contrasts heaven and earth, which will pass away, with God's word which will not pass away.

Think About It: The truth of God's immutability assures us not only that the Lord Himself does not change, but also that His plans do not change and His word does not change.

Apply It: How are you encouraged by the doctrine of the immutability of the Lord?

Theology Proper

The Infinity of God

Q - When have you been prevented from doing something you attempted to do or would like to do because of personal limitations?

The infinity of God means that God has no bounds or limits. The truth of the infinity of God is related to all of His attributes by the fact that they are each what they are to an infinite degree. For example, God is not only holy, He is **completely** holy. And God is not only good, He is **totally** good.

1. The Lord is Spatially Infinite

When infinity is applied to space, it becomes immensity - meaning that God is beyond all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole being.

- a. What did Solomon acknowledge to be true of the Lord in his prayer at the dedication of the temple in I Kings 8:27? He acknowledged that “heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain” Him - much less, then, the temple which he had built for the Lord.
- b. Where is God in relation to the heavens and the earth according to Jeremiah 23:23-24? Jeremiah wrote that God is both near and far off, filling the heavens and the earth - with the result that there is no place where a man can hide himself from the Lord.
- c. Where does Pslm 139:7-12 say the Lord will be found by those who seek to escape from His presence? It says that the Lord will be found in heaven, in Sheol (the nether world - the place of the dead), on the wings of the dawn, in the remotest

part of the sea, and in the dark places (which are like light places to the Lord).

2. The Lord is Temporally Infinite

When infinity is applied to temporal concerns it becomes eternality.

- a. What temporal bounds of God's existence are recorded in Psalm 90:2? It says that God is “from everlasting to everlasting.”
- b. When will the Lord's years come to an end according to Psalm 102:27? The Lord's years will not ever come to an end.
- c. How does II Peter 3:8 (cf. Psalm 90:4) describe the Lord's perspective on the passing of time? It states that “one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

3. The Lord is Intellectually Infinite

When infinity is applied to intellectual issues it becomes omniscience.

- a. What did the psalmist David acknowledge that the Lord knew about him in Psalm 139:1-6? He acknowledged that the Lord knew everything about him - including thoughts he hadn't yet thought.
- b. What does Psalm 147:5 tell us about the Lord's understanding? It tells us that His understanding is infinite.
- c. What does Hebrews 4:13 tell us can be hidden from the Lord? It says that “there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare before the eyes of Him

with whom we have to do.

4. The Lord is Morally and Ethically Infinite

When infinity is applied to moral and ethical matters, it becomes perfection.

a. How did Moses describe the Lord's works in Deuteronomy 32:4? Moses said that “His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.”

b. How did Jesus describe God Himself in Matthew 5:48?
Jesus said “your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Think About It: God transcends all of the limitations which time or space or knowledge or ability or nature impose on all others because all others are finite.

Apply It: What are some practical implications of the truth of the infinity of God for our consideration?

Theology Proper

The Omnipresence of God

Q - When have you ever wished you could be in two or more places at the same time?

For finite human beings being in more than one place at the same time is an impossibility. In fact, we sometimes aren't "all there" even where we are! But for God this is not a problem because of the truth of His omnipresence.

I. The Meaning of Omnipresence

Omnipresence means that God is present everywhere (from the Latin *omnis* "all," and "presence"). Charles Ryrie explains the meaning of this truth about God (Basic Theology, page 41) in these words:

Omnipresence does not mean that God's being is diffused throughout the universe as if part of Him is here and part of Him there. His whole being is in every place, and the presence of the Lord within every believer serves as a good illustration of this.

- a. God is both near and far off according to Jeremiah 23:23.
- b. God fills the heavens and the earth according to Jeremiah 23:24.

The truth of God's omnipresence is similar to the truth of His immensity. Immensity emphasizes the transcendence of God (existing or operating beyond the normal or physical level) and stresses that He is not bound by space, whereas omnipresence emphasizes His immanence (existing or operating within His universe), stressing the fact that He fills all of space, in-

cluding the earth.

2. The Fact of Omnipresence

a. The truth of God's omnipresence is clearly taught in Psalm 139:7-10. In what four places did the psalmist report God's presence in verses 8-9?

- a. Heaven
- b. Sheol
- c. Wings of the dawn
- d. Remotest part of the sea

b. Where was the presence of the Lord evident in His leadership of the people of Israel according to Exodus 13:21? The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

c. How does Leviticus 10:2 explain the death of the sons of Aaron when they offered "strange fire" in His service? It says that fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them.

3. The Immediacy of God's Omnipresence

Omnipresence does not mean that the immediacy of God's presence does not vary. It does!

a. Where is God's presence seen in II Chronicles 7:1,2? His glorious presence was seen in the temple on the occasion of its dedication.

b. Where is Christ's presence seen in Galatians 2:20? Christ's presence is seen in the life of the Apostle Paul (and others who can say what Paul said) in Galatians 2:20.

c. Where is God's presence seen in Revelation 4:2? His presence is seen in the throne room of heaven.

d. Where is God's presence seen in Revelation 14:9 & 10?

His presence is seen in hell where people who received the mark of the beast during the tribulation are suffering in the presence of fire and brimstone.

Think About It: Because God is everywhere, no person can ever escape His presence. For those who reject Him, this is a warning (Psalm 139:7 ff., Jeremiah 23:23-24). But for those who receive Him this is comforting truth (Matthew 28:18; Acts 18:9-10). We never get out of His sight or out of His reach or beyond the possibility of His companionship!

Apply It: How have you been impacted in practical ways by the omnipresence of the Lord?

Theology Proper

The Omniscience of God

Q - When have you been painfully aware of your lack of knowledge in some important situation?

We have all heard of a “know-it-all,” a description of that obnoxious person who thinks there is nothing he can learn from anyone. Well, there really is a “know-it-all” who DOES know it all! He isn’t obnoxious; but He is omniscient! That God is omniscient means that He knows everything (*omnis*, “all,” and *scientia*, “knowledge”). A more comprehensive definition from Paul Enns’ book, The Moody Handbook of Theology (p. 194), is this: “God knows all things actual and possible, past, present, and future, in one eternal act.”

1. God Knows All Things Actual

a. What did the psalmist David acknowledge that God knows in Psalm 139:1-3? He said that the Lord knew when he sat down or rose up, what he was thinking in spite of the distance between heaven and earth, and that He was intimately acquainted with all of his ways.

b. What illustration of God’s vast knowledge is seen in Psalm 147:4? The Lord knows the number of the stars and knows the name of each one of them.

(See also Matthew 10:29-30)

c. What surprising revelation did Jesus make to the Samaritan “woman at the well” according to John 4:16-18? He was aware that she had been married five times and that she was currently living with a man to whom she was not married.

2. God Knows All Things Possible

- a. Why did David decide to leave the city of Keilah according to I Samuel 23:11-13? David learned from the Lord that the men of the city of Keilah would turn him over to King Saul, who was looking for him, when King Saul came to the city.
- b. What does God know before it happens according to Psalm 139:16? The Lord is aware of an individual's "unformed substance" while developing in the womb, and He knows about all the days ordained for that person's life before he is even born.
- c. Even though it never actually occurred, what did Jesus know would have occurred if miracles performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been performed in Sodom according to Matthew 11:23? Jesus knew that the city of Sodom would have turned from sinful ways and remained until His own time if Sodom had witnessed the miracles He performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida.

3. God Knows All Things Future

Because God is eternal and knows all things in one eternal act, events that are future to man are an "eternal now" to God.

- a. What amazing revelation of future events did the Lord make in His response to the serpent in the garden of Eden according to Genesis 3:15? The Lord predicted the age-long enmity between the descendants of Eve (all of humanity) and the "seed" of the serpent (fallen angels), and more specifically the fatal wound the "seed of the woman" (a reference to Jesus) would inflict on Satan when Satan bruised His heel (referring to the superficial wound of His death on the cross - because He returned from death to life).
- b. How did the Prophet Daniel account for his ability to reveal

the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, along with its meaning, according to Daniel 2:22, 28? Daniel acknowledged the Lord God in heaven had revealed the dream and its meaning to him.

c. What did God reveal to Daniel concerning the future in Daniel 2:36-43? God revealed that Babylon, ruled at the time by Nebuchadnezzar, would be followed by an inferior kingdom (Medo Persia), then by a kingdom which would rule over the earth (Greece), and then by a fourth kingdom which would initially be as strong as iron (the Roman empire) - though its final days (pictured by the feet of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream) would be characterized by iron mixed with clay.

d. What future kingdoms did the Lord identify by name in Daniel 8:20-22? He identified by name the kingdoms of Media and Persia, followed by the kingdom of Greece.

e. What future events did Jesus predict in Matthew 24:29-31? He predicted that the tribulation will be followed immediately by troubling heavenly signs introducing the coming of Christ in the clouds with power and great glory to gather His elect from every part of the earth.

God's knowledge is different from our own in the fact that it is intuitive and immediate, not coming through the senses; it is simultaneous, not acquired through observation or reason; it is actual, complete, and according to reality.

Think About It: God has never learned anything because He has always known everything. There is nothing, actual or possible - past present or future - which He does not know.

Apply It: Because our knowledge is limited we should be turning to the Lord for understanding and help in times of need because there is nothing He does not know.

Theology Proper
The Omnisapience of God

Q - What are some characteristics of people you have known who seemed to be wise in your thinking?

It has often been observed that the Lord God knows everything - i.e. He is omniscient. But the Scriptures reveal as well that He also knows what is best in every situation. He possesses the highest degree of skill in His handling of the affairs of His universe. In other words, He is all wise, which is what omnisapience is all about (though the word is seldom used, and it may not appear in your dictionary). People who are attuned to the works of the Lord are able to see the evidence of God's amazing skill all around them.

1. God's Wisdom in the Universe

- a. What does Psalm 104:24 tell us God has used in making the many “works” He has made? It tells us that God used wisdom in making all of His many works.
- b. List several evidences of God’s skill in creating the earth as mentioned in Psalm 104:5-9. He established the earth on its “foundations” so it will never totter; He covered the earth with the deep (waters) as with a garment; He used the waters to make the earth when they “fled” at His rebuke; He set a boundary which would keep the waters of creation from passing over to once again cover the earth as they did at the beginning of creation.
- c. Who claims to have been with the Lord “at the beginning of His ways” in Proverbs 8:12, 22? Wisdom personified in Proverbs 8 claims to have been with the Lord at the beginning.

d. What does Proverbs 8:30 describe as God's attitude toward this "master workman" in His creative work? It describes God's attitude as one of "delight" toward wisdom as His "master workman" at the time of creation.

2. God's Wisdom in Mankind

a. What did the Psalmist David acknowledge was "fearfully and wonderfully made" in Psalm 139:14? David acknowledged that his soul knew very well that he was fearfully and wonderfully made.

b. What skillful act of God did David express wonder over in Psalm 139:15? He expressed wonder over the fact that his frame was skillfully wrought in "the depths of the earth" when, though he was made in secret, he was not hidden from God.

See Ecclesiastes 11:5 for Solomon's amazement over the same process!

c. Though mankind is hardly worthy of notice in God's vast universe (Psalm 8:3-4), what noteworthy truths about mankind are seen in Psalm 8:5-8? Mankind was made "a little lower than God;" he was crowned with glory and majesty; he was made to rule over the works of God's hands; placed "under his feet" are all things - including sheep and oxen, beasts of the field, birds of the heavens, fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the sea.

3. God's Wisdom in Christ

a. What "spirit" did Isaiah predict the Messiah would receive from the Spirit of the Lord in Isaiah 11:2? He predicted that the Messiah would receive the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, and of knowledge and the fear of the Lord from the Spirit of God.

b. What did the Apostle Paul say the Lord made Christ to become to those who are His people in I Corinthians 1:30? He said that the Lord made Christ to become wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption to His people.

c. In Colossians 2:3 Paul sees Christ as the personification of “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

4. God’s Wisdom in Salvation

a. Thinking about God’s plan to provide salvation for both the Gentile and the Jew (Romans 1-11), what impressed Paul about the Lord according to Romans 11:33? Paul was impressed with “the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” in showing saving mercy to both Jew and Gentile.

b. What does Ephesians 3:10 tell us the Apostle Paul saw revealed in the unfolding of the “mystery” (Ephesians 3:8-9) which was hidden for ages in God? It tells us that Paul saw the “manifold wisdom of God” in the unfolding mystery of God’s salvation plan for both Jew and Gentile.

Think About It: The wisdom of God is clearly seen in all that He has made in the material universe and revealed in mankind, in His Son Jesus, and in His plan of salvation.

Apply It: Do you see the evidence of God’s wisdom all around you? If so, what impresses you most about the Lord’s wisdom? Have you ever wished you could have some of that wisdom for yourself? Where does James 1:5 tell us the person who lacks wisdom can find it, and how?

Theology Proper
The Spirit Nature of God

Q - What is the most memorable depiction of the Lord (perhaps a picture or a drawing or a diagram) which you have found helpful in understanding the nature of God?

God is spirit (not “a” spirit). He has life and power, but He does not have corporeity or physical form. Not that this is a liability (as it might seem at first), because a body localizes, but God as spirit is everywhere; He cannot be limited by space. The fact that God has no physical body does not mean that He has no substance, because He is the ultimate reality! His substance is simply not material substance - except as He took on flesh in the person and work of Christ!

1. The Fact of the Spirit Nature of God

a. What was the basis upon which the Lord commanded His people not to make any image to use in their worship of Him in Deuteronomy 4:15-20? The Lord condemned the use of images of Himself in the worship of Israel with the reminder that there had not been any form of God visible as He revealed His majesty and His word at Mt. Sinai when Israel entered into a covenant with Him.

b. How did God express His distaste toward anyone who would make an idol or a molten image to use in their worship of Him in Deuteronomy 27:15? The Lord cursed anyone who would make an idol or molten image in the worship of Himself as He described such images as an abomination.

c. What did Jesus say to the woman at the well in Samaria about the nature of the Lord in John 4:24? Jesus told the woman at the well that “God is spirit, and those who worship

Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

d. Because of what God is like (John 4:24), what must mankind do in order to properly worship Him? Mankind must worship the Lord “in spirit and in truth.”

2. The Reality of the Spirit Nature of God

a. What does God’s self-revelation in Exodus 3:14 have to say to the thought that, because God is not corporeal, He is less than real? The Lord’s revelation of His name as “I AM WHO I AM” assures all who know and worship Him that He truly exists, as He always has and always will exist.

b. Why does Isaiah 31:3 tell us it was foolish for the people of Israel to look to the Egyptians instead of the Lord for help against their enemies? Because the Egyptian people are men, not God, and their horses are flesh, not spirit, trusting the Egyptians for help instead of trusting the Lord would turn out to be an exercise in futility as both the Egyptians and those who depended on them would fall.

3. The Revelation of the Spirit Nature of God

a. In view of God’s spirit nature, why does the prohibition of Exodus 20:4 make perfectly good sense? Because God is spirit it is impossible to make any image or any likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth which would accurately depict the Lord.

b. The many references to God’s physical features in Scripture are called “anthropomorphisms” (figurative language giving to God human characteristics in an attempt to make Him understandable in His attitudes and actions toward mankind). What does each of the following scripture passages reveal to us about

God by its mention of the parts of a human body?

Deuteronomy 33:27 - Depicts the arms of the Lord providing support for those who trust in Him, the God who drove out enemies before His people and destroyed them.

II Chronicles 16:9 - Depicts the eyes of the Lord seeing things which happen all around the earth, enabling Him to be fully aware of every person and everything that happens upon the earth, assuring His awareness of the needs of all those who trust Him.

Psalm 34:15 - Depicts the eyes and ears of the Lord attuned to the righteous and open to their cries (for help).

Isaiah 40:10-11 - Depicts the strong arm of the Lord ruling over and rewarding His people, gathering the lambs of His flock in His arms and holding them close to His body.

Isaiah 58:14 - Depicts the mouth of the Lord approving those who remember His Sabbath (v. 13) and feeding (i.e. teaching) them from the heritage they received from their father Jacob.

Isaiah 65:2 - Depicts the Lord extending His hands to beckon His rebellious people to turn back from their evil ways.

Think About It: God is pure spirit. This makes Him invisible, but it doesn't make Him any less real or capable. Because He has no physical body, we can't make or worship any likeness of Him, but He has given us more than enough information about Himself in His world and in His word to give us every reason to worship Him.

Apply It: The spirit nature of the Lord makes Him equally accessible to every person on earth, so we are never out of His

presence, and we are never out of His reach in our times of need.

Theology Proper

The Truthfulness of God

Q - When have you found the truth on some important matter to come to your rescue?

It would be impossible to make any sense out of a world in which there was no truth. Truth identifies things as they are. Only when we see things and say things as they really are can life make any sense. So it is no surprise that the Lord Himself is the source and the personification of truth! Properly defined in relation to God, His truthfulness is “that perfection of His being by virtue of which He fully answers to the idea of the Godhead, is perfectly reliable in His revelation, and sees things as they really are” (Berkhoff, Systematic Theology, p. 69).

1. The Truthfulness of God Himself

The truthfulness of God means that He is the true God as distinguished from all others called god; there is none like Him.

- a. How does Isaiah 65:16 twice refer to God? It twice refers to God as “God of truth.”
- b. How does Jeremiah 10:10 describe the Lord? It describes Him as “the true God,” the “living God and the everlasting King.”
- c. Why did the Apostle Paul state, in Romans 1:25, that those who have worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator are headed for trouble? It says that they are headed for trouble because “they exchanged the truth of God for a lie.”

2. The Truthfulness of God’s Knowledge

The Lord knows things as they are; He is the beginning of all knowledge and makes it available to man in order that man may have fellowship with Him. It has been well said that “all truth is God’s truth.”

- a. What did David acknowledge in Psalm 51:6 that the Lord desires in the hearts of men, and what did he believe the Lord would do to help him find it in his own heart? He acknowledged that the Lord desires “truth in the innermost being,” and he believed that the Lord would make him know wisdom in the hidden part.
- b. Considering the extent of God’s knowledge about mankind (Psalm 139:1-5), what was the psalmist’s confession concerning God’s knowledge in Psalm 139:6? He confessed that God’s knowledge was “too wonderful” for him, and that it was too high for him to attain it.
- c. What is the obvious answer to Isaiah’s rhetorical questions in Isaiah 40:13-14 regarding God’s understanding? In a word, the answer was “no one” - because no one has directed God’s Spirit, or informed Him as His counselor, or taught Him understanding as His consultant, or taught Him in the path of justice or taught Him knowledge, and no one has informed Him in the way of understanding.
- d. As the Apostle Paul reflected on a personal experience He had with God’s revelation of His truth in II Corinthians 12:2, what did He acknowledge about God’s understanding of an experience he himself did not fully understand? Paul acknowledged that God knew what he, who actually had the personal experience, did NOT know.

3. The Truthfulness of God’s Word

The truthfulness of God assures us that His revealed word is reliable. He can be trusted to speak the truth.

- a. How does Numbers 23:19 tell us that God is unlike man? It tells us that “God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent.”
- b. What did the prophet Samuel tell the sinful King Saul the Lord would not do in I Samuel 15:29? Samuel told Saul that God would not lie or change His mind.
- c. What does Paul tell us the fact that some people don't believe God does to His truthfulness in Romans 3:3-4? He said that man's unbelief in Him will never nullify the faithfulness of God. He said God will always be found true even if every man is found to be a liar.
- d. What do Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18 each tell us God cannot do? They tell us that God cannot lie.

Think About It: God's truthfulness assures us that God is totally believable. He truly is God; He truly knows all there is to know; and He speaks the truth whenever He speaks.

Apply It: What are some of the practical implications of God's truthfulness for you and me?

Theology Proper
The Goodness of God

Q - Other than the gift of salvation, what are some things which stand out in your thinking as evidence of the goodness of the Lord in your life?

If, as Webster defines it, “goodness is that which conforms to the moral order of the universe,” then the Lord’s goodness is obvious by the fact that He is the author of the moral order of the universe. But, easier to see and appreciate, the fact that God is good is seen all around us every day in the way He has made and provided for all of His creatures on the face of the earth - and in the way He cares for those who are His own people (cf. Matthew 6:25-26).

1. The Statement of God’s Goodness

a. What three characteristics of the Lord are identified in Psalm 100:5? The Lord’s goodness, His everlasting lovingkindness, and His faithfulness are identified as characteristics of the Lord.

b. What does Psalm 106:1 tell us the Lord’s deserves from us in response to the fact of His goodness? The Lord deserves our praise and thanks in response to His goodness in our lives.

c. What was Jesus’ assertion about God to the “rich young ruler” when, in Mark 10:18, he referred to Jesus as “Good Teacher”? Jesus asked the “rich young ruler” “why do you call Me good” in view of His assertion that “No one is good except God alone.”

2. The Evidence of God’s Goodness

a. What evidence of God's goodness is repeated in Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31? The truth that each of the things referenced in these verses was seen by God to be "good" is evidence of God's goodness.

b. In spite of the evils which Job experienced, how did the Lord demonstrate His goodness (Job 42:10) when the testing of Job's life was finished? He demonstrated His goodness to Job by the fact that He not only restored to Job the things which he had lost, but He "increased all that Job had twofold."

c. What did the psalmist David say the Lord has stored up for those who fear Him in Psalm 31:19? David said that the Lord has stored up goodness for those who fear Him.

d. How did Jesus demonstrate God's goodness in Matthew 5:44-45? Jesus demonstrated God's goodness in the fact that "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

e. How does James 1:17 explain the consistency of the goodness of God? He explained the consistency of the Lord's goodness in the fact that, unlike the heavenly lights which the Lord created, "there is no variation or shifting shadow" in the good and perfect gifts which He sends down into the lives of men.

3. The Challenge to God's Goodness

a. How did Joseph explain to his anxious brothers God's use of the evils which came into his life in Genesis 50:20? Joseph assured his anxious brothers that, although they meant for evil what they did in selling him into slavery in Egypt, the Lord meant it for good in order to bring about the preservation of many lives.

b. What does Psalm 34:13-14 tell us the Lord desires to see in the life of the person who wishes to live and experience good during the days of his life (v. 12)? Psalm 34:13-14 tells us that Lord desires for His people to keep their tongues from evil and their lips from deceit, to depart from evil and do good, and to seek peace and pursue it if they wish to live and experience good during the days of their lives.

c. What does God, because of His own nature, expect of His followers according to Luke 6:27 - even toward those who might be considered “enemies”? The Lord expects His people to love their enemies and to do good even to those who hate them.

d. What does Romans 8:28 tell us God is committed to bring about, whatever the circumstances of life may be, for those who love Him and are committed to His purposes? It tells us that, whatever life's circumstances may be, the Lord is committed to make all things work together for good for those who love Him and are committed to His purposes.

Think About It: God’s word declares and the evidence around us clearly demonstrates that God is good. Though our world is filled with evil, the Lord is not its author; but the Lord is going to use even evil to accomplish His good purposes in the lives of His people.

Apply It: Do we recognize God’s goodness in our lives as we should? And in what ways are we reproducing God’s goodness in our lives in our relationships with others (Matthew 5:44-45)?

The Doctrine of God

The Love of God

Q - What are some of the characteristics of the most loving person you have ever personally known?

Perhaps the best known attribute of God is the attribute of love. As much as any other attribute, the love of God characterizes Him because, as the Apostle John tells us twice in his first epistle (I John 4:8, 16), “God IS love.”

I. The Fact of God’s Love

Many, many times in the Scriptures we are assured of the love of God. Both the Old and New Testaments contain words for love which are best demonstrated in the love of God Himself.

chesed (related to *chasd*, the Hebrew word for stork, a bird which is well-known for its care of its young) - often translated “lovingkindness” in the New American Standard Bible Old Testament because no single English word exactly covers its meaning.

agape - the word most frequently translated “love” in the pages of the New Testament - a love which finds its origin in the will, not the flesh or the emotions, a love described beautifully by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13.

a. What was it that did and did not motivate the Lord’s love for the people of Israel according to Deuteronomy 7:7-8? It was not because they were more numerous than other nations, but because the Lord loved the people of Israel and was committed to the oath He had made to their forefathers that the Lord delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt as His own.

b. What is the second line in every one of the 26 verses of the 136th Psalm? “For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

c. What does the well-known John 3:16 tell us it was that motivated God to send His Son Jesus to provide salvation for those who otherwise would have perished? It tells us that God sent His Son Jesus to provide salvation for us, who would otherwise have perished, because He loved the world.

2. The Evidence of God’s Love

When we seek to explain what love means we almost always explain it in terms of what God has done, because His love is the best example there is of love in action.

a. How did the Lord say He would demonstrate His love for the people of Israel in response to their obedience to the terms of His covenant with them in Deuteronomy 7:12-15? He said that He would keep His covenant and the lovingkindness sworn to Israel’s forefathers; He would love and bless and multiply them; He would bless the fruit of their womb and the fruit of their ground, their grain and new wine and oil, the increase of their herd and the young of their flock, in the land which He swore to give to their fathers. He said that He would bless them above all people, and that there would be no male or female barren among them or among their cattle. And He said that He would remove all sickness from them, and would not put on them any of the harmful diseases they had known in Egypt.

b. How does Paul tell us God demonstrates His love for us in Romans 5:8? Paul wrote that God demonstrates His love for us in the fact that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

c. How did the Apostle Paul express the practicality of the love

of God in Galatians 2:20? He stated that the practicality of God's love is evident in the fact that the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us.

d. How does John explain the evidence of God's love in I John 4:10? John wrote that God's love is evident in the fact that He loves us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

3. The Permanence of God's Love

The Scriptures make it clear that the love of God is not only real and practical but is also very steady and lasting.

a. How does the Prophet Micah characterize God's love for Israel in Micah 7:18-20? Micah wrote that God delights in unchanging love and compassion, which caused Him to give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham as He swore He would do to their forefathers from the days of old.

b. What does Paul tell us cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ in Romans 8:35-39 (especially vv. 38-39)? Paul wrote that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, convinced as he was that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Think About It: God has committed Himself in very practical terms to the well-being of His people - a commitment which nothing can ever end!

Apply It: In view of the fact that God has commanded us to do as He did (John 13:34-35; Ephesians 5:2), how does our love compare with His?

Theology Proper

The Grace of God

The grace of God is His undeserved blessing freely poured out on mankind. It is a very important attribute of God in view of the fact that man, in his natural sinful condition, deserves not blessing but punishment.

In discussing the subject of grace it is helpful to distinguish between common (general, universal) grace and special (saving, regenerating) grace - and to respond properly to the grace of God in our lives.

1. The Common Grace of God

Common grace is so called because it is common to all mankind. Its benefits are experienced by the whole human race without any distinction between one person and another.

a. What works of God's grace through Christ are described in Colossians 1:16-17? The favor of God in creating all things - in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - in Christ and for Christ, and holding all things together by Him, are all works of God's grace in Christ (though the word grace does not appear in the passage).

b. What does Solomon identify as a channel of grace in Proverbs 4:9 (see 7-9)? He states that wisdom is able to place a "garland of grace" on the head of all who acquire and prize and exalt and honor her.

c. In what did Ezra see the grace of God as mentioned in Ezra 9:8? He saw God's grace in leaving Israel an escaped remnant when He returned them to their land following the Babylonian captivity, enlightening their eyes and granting them a little

reviving.

d. How does God display His grace to all men according to Matthew 5:44-45? He displays His grace by causing His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

2. The Special Grace of God

Unlike common grace, which is universally given, special grace is poured out only on those whom God blesses with salvation.

a. Who did John describe as, more than any other person, the channel of God's saving grace in John 1:14-17? John described the Lord Jesus, full of grace and truth, as the source of grace upon grace when grace and truth were realized through Him.

b. How can a person experience an introduction to God's saving grace according to Romans 5:1-2? A person can experience an introduction to God's saving grace by their faith.

c. What human response to God's grace does Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us results in our receiving the gift of salvation? It tells us that it is through our faith that human beings are to respond to God's gracious offer of salvation in Christ

d. What are some of the specific accomplishments of God's saving grace as seen in Ephesians 1:7? The riches of God's saving grace in Christ accomplish our redemption through the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of our trespasses.

e. What does I Peter 5:10 tell us "the God of all grace" yet has in store for those who have been called to salvation? Peter writes that the God of all grace will ultimately perfect, confirm,

strengthen and establish those He has called to salvation.

3. The Believer's Call to Grace

- a. How does the Lord want His people to be prepared to exhibit grace in their relationships with those who hear what they have to say according to Ephesians 4:29? He wants His people to exhibit grace to those who hear them by avoiding unwholesome words and speaking only words that are good for edification according to the need of the moment.
- b. How did the Apostle Paul account for the privilege he was given “to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ” in Ephesians 3:8? Paul wrote that it was the grace of the Lord which gave him, the “very least of all saints,” the privilege of preaching to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.
- c. What result of God’s grace accompanies the gift of salvation according to Romans 12:6? Gifts that differ according to the grace given to us accompany the gift of salvation according to Romans 12:6.
- d. How does the Apostle Peter challenge believers to make good use of the “manifold grace of God” in their own lives in I Peter 4:10? Peter challenges believers to employ the (spiritual) gift each of them has received in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Think About It: If you and I got what we deserved it would be trouble - both now and forever. But God, who is gracious to all human beings, has something much better in store for all who come to Him through saving faith in His Son Jesus.

Apply It: If that includes you, aren't you glad that it does - and

are you responding as you should to the grace of God in your life? If it does not include you, what keeps you from receiving the gift of salvation in Christ, and the benefits which come with salvation, offered by the grace of the Lord to every person?

Theology Proper
The Mercy of God

Q - When have you been relieved to escape what might have happened if you had received what you had coming to you?

The mercy of God is His kindness and love in withholding from sinners the full payment which is justly due them for their sins. The Bible tells us clearly that all have sinned (Romans 3:23), and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), so the full payment which is justly due us as a result of sin is death - ultimately, eternal death. But, because of God's mercy, there is hope for those who would be hopeless without it.

1. The Need for God's Mercy

a. What special piece of furniture in the tabernacle of ancient Israel (mentioned in Exodus 25:17) was a constant reminder of the need for and availability of God's mercy? The "mercy seat," which was on top of the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and the temple, was a constant reminder of Israel's need for and the availability of God's mercy. The Hebrew word *kapporeth*, related to the word *kaphar* (to cover or atone), describes that which covers, sometimes translated as "atonement cover" or "propitiatory."

b. What warning concerning this special place of mercy in Leviticus 16:2 should have made it very clear to Israel that God's mercy was not something to be taken lightly? Leviticus 16:2 says that even Aaron, the high priest, was not permitted to enter to the mercy seat in the Holy Place uninvited on pain of death.

c. What does Joshua 11:20 say was likely to be the fate of

Canaanite nations who found no mercy before the Lord? It says that Canaanite nations which did not receive mercy from the Lord were likely to be destroyed.

d. From what does the Lord have to turn in order to show mercy to His people according to Habakkuk 3:2? The Lord has to turn away from His wrath in order to show mercy to His people in view of their sinful condition.

2. The Fact of God's Mercy

a. What did the Virgin Mary say was true of the Lord in her "Magnificat" in Luke 1:50? She said of the Lord that "His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him."

b. How does Ephesians 2:4 describe the Lord? It describes the Lord as "rich in mercy."

c. What does Ephesians 2:4 tell us is the basis for God's mercy? It tells us that the basis for God's mercy is "His great love with which He loved us."

d. What does I Peter 2:10 tell us we have received from the Lord in being made the people of God? It tells us that we, who previously had not received mercy, have now received mercy.

3. The Application of God's Mercy

On Behalf of the People of Israel

a. What did the Lord promise to do for the leaders of ancient Israel at the mercy seat in Exodus 25:21-22 and 30:6? He promised to meet with them at the mercy seat and to speak to them about all that He would give them in commandments for

the sons of Israel.

b. What does Isaiah 63:9 tell us that the Lord did for Israel because of His love and mercy toward them? It tells us that it was in His love and mercy toward Israel that He redeemed them and lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

On Behalf of the People of the Church

c. What does Titus 3:5 tell us is the basis upon which the Lord accomplishes our salvation from sin? It says that the Lord saved us according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

d. What does the author of Hebrews (4:16) say believers will receive as they draw near to God's throne of grace in times of need? It says that believers will receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

e. What does I Peter 1:3 tell us God has done for us in view of His mercy? It tells us that, according to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Think About It: Apart from the mercy of God sinful humanity would be in serious trouble. But God has extended mercy to His people by dealing personally and graciously with them and providing salvation from sin.

Apply It: Have you experienced God's saving mercy in your life because of your relationship with the Lord Jesus?

Theology Proper
The Holiness of God

Q - How would you make the distinction, which many people seem not to understand, between the sinlessness of God and the holiness of God?

To be holy is to be “set apart” or “separated.” In all of the universe there is no person who, or thing which, is as fully “set apart” from all other persons and things as the Lord is! Many people see holiness as the foremost of all of God’s attributes, because holiness pervades all the other attributes and is consistent with all that He is and does.

1. The Fact of God’s Holiness

The truth that God is holy is stated and emphasized in many portions of the Scriptures.

a. What was the message of the seraphim who were a part of Isaiah’s vision of the Lord in Isaiah 6:3? Their message was “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

This truth may be seen in an eternal setting in Revelation 4:8ff. in the New Testament.

b. How is God’s holiness described in Exodus 15:11? Recalling the Lord’s defeat of the army of Israel, drowned in the Red Sea, the “song of Moses and of Israel” stated that the Lord is “majestic in holiness.”

c. Where does the holiness of God place Him by comparison with other beings according to Isaiah 40:21-25? The holiness of God places Him far above all other beings as the incompar-

able God, the “Holy One” (v. 25).

d. What is the significance of God’s name and dwelling place being holy, as described in Isaiah 57:15? God’s Holy name is a reflection of the fact that He is “the high and exalted One who lives forever,” dwelling on a high and holy place - as well as with the contrite and lowly of spirit.

2. The Implications of God’s Holiness

The fact that God is holy has some important implications for those who want to enjoy a relationship with Him.

a. What did the Lord expect of His people Israel if they were to be recognized by Him as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation according to Exodus 19:5-6? God’s people needed to obey His voice and keep His covenant if they were to fulfill the role He had in mind for them to fill as His people on earth.

b. What does the fact that God is holy require of God’s people according to Leviticus 19:2? The fact that the LORD, Israel’s God, is holy requires that His people be holy as well.

See I Peter 1:13-16 for the same truth in its New Testament setting.

c. What does the fact that God is the “Holy One” (Habakkuk 1:12) mean concerning His relationship to evil according to Habakkuk 1:13? The fact that God is the “Holy One” means that His eyes are too pure to approve evil; that He cannot look with favor on wickedness - which surprised Habakkuk in view of the fact that the Lord had revealed to him that He was going to use the evil Babylonians to judge His own wicked people.

d. What does the holiness of God require of His people accord-

ing to Psalm 99:3, 5, 9? The fact that God is holy requires that His people respond to His holiness with praise (v. 3) and exaltation in worship (v. 5 & 9).

e. What is the familiar challenge for Christians in their worship of the Lord with respect to their physical bodies in Romans 12:1? It is the challenge to present their bodies as a living and holy sacrifice as their “spiritual service of worship” (NASB).

F. What can people who have no concern for the holiness of God expect according to Psalm 11:4-7? People who have no concern for the holiness of God can expect Him to rain snares down on their lives - including the “fire and brimstone and burning wind” of eternal punishment.

Think About It: God is in a class by Himself in terms of His being and His behavior. He is the standard which others can only seek to approach but never equal. But He has called on His people to reach for that standard, and there will be consequences for those who don't make that their goal, approaching Him on His terms!

Apply It: Where do WE stand in relation to the Holy God of heaven?

Theology Proper
The Righteousness of God

Q - How does the word “righteous” provide its own assistance in understanding the concept which it involves?

For mankind, righteousness involves “conformity to the will of God in thought, word, and deed.” The fact that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) assures us that no human being will ever be righteous on the basis of his own performance, so every person needs help from the Lord in order to achieve a righteous standing. For God Himself righteousness means that He always conforms to His own divine nature and standards. He always does what is right as His nature and His word reveal the right.

1. The Fact of God’s of Righteousness

- a. How did the Lord Jesus acknowledge the righteousness of God in His “high priestly prayer” in John 17:25? He addressed the Lord as His “righteous Father.”
- b. What is it about the Lord which assures the person who confesses his sin that he will be cleansed from all unrighteousness according to I John 1:9? The fact that the Lord is “faithful and righteous” (“just” in KJV) to forgive us our sins assures the person who confesses his sins that he will be cleansed and forgiven.
- c. How does Psalm 11:7 describe God’s relationship to righteousness? It reveals that “the LORD is righteous” and that “He loves righteousness.”
- d. How did Daniel describe God’s relationship to righteousness in his prayer in Daniel 9:7? Daniel described God’s rela-

tionship to righteousness in his statement that “righteousness belongs to You.”

2. The Revelation of God’s Righteousness

Because God is a righteous God we should not be surprised that He has revealed His righteousness to mankind.

- a. How does the Psalmist David describe the Lord’s judgments in Psalm 19:9? David wrote that “the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.”
- b. What do Psalm 119:138 and 144 tell us about the testimonies of the Lord? They state that the Lord has “commanded [His] testimonies in righteousness” and that “Your testimonies are righteous forever.”
- c. How does Titus 1:2 affirm the righteousness of the Lord, and why is its affirmation a significant affirmation? Titus 1:2 assures us that “God cannot lie” - a significant affirmation because, if God did lie, He would no longer qualify as the righteous God He is!

3. The Response to God’s Righteousness

That God is righteous and has revealed His righteousness to mankind is no guarantee of a proper response from man.

- a. What words does the Apostle Paul use to describe man’s condition before the Lord in Romans 1:18? He describes man’s condition as one of “ungodliness and unrighteousness” and observes that men “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”
- b. How does mankind respond to the revelation of God’s righteousness according to Romans 3:9-12? It states that men

are “all under sin,” with the result that “there is none righteous, not even one.”

4. The Reception of God’s Righteousness

- a. How may a man obtain the righteousness of God according to Paul’s argument in Galatians 3:11? Paul observes that no one is justified (declared righteous) before God by the Law (cf. Galatians 2:16), but that (quoting Habakkuk 2:4) “the righteous man shall live by faith.”
- b. God’s righteousness is revealed in the Law, but it is not accessible by law observance because no man is able to fully comply with God’s law, so how does the Apostle Paul tell us it is received by man in Philippians 3:9 ? Paul wrote that righteousness comes “through faith in Christ,” opening up to mankind the possibility of “the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”
- c. How does Romans 5:1 express the happy condition of the person who is fully trusting the Lord by faith? It states that the person who has faith in God has been justified (declared righteous) as a result and can experience peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think About It: God is righteous because He always lives up to His own divine nature and perfect standards. But man is not able to live up to God’s perfect standards, so God provides righteousness as a gift to those who put their trust in the person and work of His Son Jesus.

Apply It: Where are you and I in relation to the righteousness of God?

Theology Proper
The Justice of God

Q - How do you think you would fare if the Lord rewarded you justly for your performance in life?

The justice of God means that God is entirely correct and fair in all of His dealings with humanity. God's justice is carried out in accordance with His nature, as revealed in creation, and His law as revealed in His word. Since God's world and the universe which surrounds it reveals His nature, and His word reflects His standards, God is righteous and just when He judges man for insensitivity to the revelation of His nature in creation and for his violations of God's revealed law.

1. The Fact of God's Justice

- a. What is the Lord's attitude toward justice according to Psalm 33:4-5? The Lord loves righteousness and justice.
- b. How does Ethan the Ezrahite describe God's relationship to justice in Psalm 89:14 (cf. Psalm 97:2)? He writes that righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne.
- c. How is God's justice seen according to Deuteronomy 10:17-18? The Lord does not show partiality nor take a bribe, but He executes justice for even the orphan and the widow.
- d. What does Proverbs 29:26 tell us is man's best hope for finding justice? Though people seek favor from their human rulers they may or may not receive it, but justice for man comes from the Lord.
- e. What was Jesus' assurance to His hearers in Luke 18:7-8 regarding the matter of justice? He assured His hearers that

God will bring about justice for His elect who cry out to Him day and night - and He will not delay long in bringing it.

2. The Categories of God's Justice

There are two sides to God's justice, depending on which side of any issue a person happens to be on.

On the positive side there is what is called **remunerative** justice (a reflection of divine love), which dispenses reward to the obedient.

a. What does Romans 2:6-7 assure us people who persevere in doing good can expect from the Lord? People who persevere in doing good (because they obey the truth, v. 8) can expect glory and honor and immortality in eternal life.

On the negative side there is **retributive** justice, an expression of divine wrath in which God punishes the wicked.

b. How does Romans 1:18-22 explain God's justice in displaying His wrath against sinful humanity (cf. II Peter 3:3-7)? It explains that God will justly display His wrath against people who fail to honor God and give Him thanks because they suppress the truth that what God has made clearly reveals His divine nature and eternal power.

c. What does Romans 2:6 and 8 assure us people who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth can expect from the Lord? They tell us that such people can expect wrath and indignation from the Lord on the basis of their deeds.

3. The Requirements of God's Justice

a. What does Proverbs 21:3 tell us the Lord desires more than

sacrifice in the lives of His people? It says that the Lord desires righteousness and justice more than sacrifice in the lives of His people.

- b. How did Amos describe God's desire for His people in terms of justice in Amos 5:24? It states that the Lord desires for His people to "let justice roll down like waters, And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
- c. How does Micah 6:8 describe God's requirement of His obedient people in terms of justice? It says that the Lord requires His obedient people to "do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with [their] God."
- d. What phrase did Jesus use to describe justice in Matthew 23:23? He described justice and mercy and faithfulness as "the weightier provisions of the law."

Think About It: Because God is a God of justice, "who impartially judges according to each man's work" (I Peter 1:17), Peter warns us: "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth."

Apply It: What is the good news for all who are "in Christ" in view of God's intention to judge all men according to each man's work (cf. I Peter 3:18)?

Theology Proper
The Names and Titles of God: *El* and *Elohim*

Q - What is a thought which comes quickly to your mind at the mention of the word “God”?

The English word “god” translates the Hebrew words *El* and *Elohim* as titles for the God revealed in the Bible. Though the Bible never defines the words for “god,” it uses these words to tell us many important truths about Him.

1. The Introduction to “God”

- a. What does the opening verse of the Bible tell us about the significance of God (*Elohim*)? It tells us that it was He who created the heavens and earth “in the beginning.”
- b. What did Moses reveal about the God of creation in Psalm 90:2? He revealed that the God (*El*) who created the earth is an eternal being - existing “from everlasting to everlasting.”
- c. What did Israel’s King Jehoshaphat acknowledge to be true about God (*Elohim*) in I Chronicles 29:11? He acknowledged that the God of the heavens, who is the God of the fathers of Israel, rules over the kingdoms of all the nations so that no one can stand against Him.

2. The Identity of God

The Hebrew words *El* and *Elohim* occur more than two thousand times in the Old Testament (*Elohim* is used as the name for the true God about 2,310 times). Some understand that *El* and *Elohim* come from a Hebrew root meaning fear, revealing that God is to be feared, reverenced, or worshiped. Others trace *El* and *Elohim* to a root that means strong, indica-

ting a God of great power.

- a. How is God (*El*) described by the fascinating priest/king Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-19? He is described as “God Most High” (*El Elyon*) and as the possessor of heaven and earth.
- b. How does Deuteronomy 10:17 refer to God? It refers to Him as “the God (*Elohim*) of gods (*elohim*) and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God (*El*) who does not show partiality or take a bribe.”
- c. How did Nehemiah describe God in Nehemiah 2:4? He described Him as the “God (*Elohim*) of heaven.”
- d. How is God (*Elohim*) characterized in Isaiah 54:5? He is characterized as Israel’s Maker, the “LORD of hosts,” Israel’s Redeemer, the “Holy One of Israel,” and the “God (*Elohim*) of all the earth.”
- e. How does Jeremiah 32:27 describe *Elohim*? It describes Him as “the LORD, the God of all flesh” for whom nothing is too difficult.

3. The Forms of the Word for “God”

Most people understand the relationship between *El* and *Elohim* as simply singular and plural forms of the same root word, interchangeable as to their meanings. *Elohim* is a Hebrew plural form, usually termed as a “plural of majesty,” because the Bible recognizes only one true God, though it reveals Him as the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

- a. How does Deuteronomy 6:4 help to fill in the picture about who God is and what He is like? It states, on behalf of the

people of Israel, that “the LORD is our God (*Elohim*), the LORD is one” (where the word *echad*, for “one,” is the same word used with reference to the man and the woman who become “one flesh” in marriage (Genesis 2:24).

- b. How does God distinguish Himself from any other god (*Elohim*) in Deuteronomy 32:39? He states up front that “I am He” (recalling His “I Am that I Am” self-revelation to Moses), denying the existence of any other god, and as the One who puts to death and gives life, who wounds and who heals, and the One from whose hand there is no deliverance.
- c. What do Psalms 14:1 and 53:1 have to say about those who say that “there is no God”? They state that such people are fools who are corrupt and have committed abominable deeds, never doing what is good.
- d. How does the Apostle Paul respond to the common belief that there is more than one true God in I Corinthians 8:4-6? Paul writes that “there is no God but one, for even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”

Think About It: The Bible reveals, by its use of the designations *El* and *Elohim*, a God who has brought all things into existence by His amazing power. These terms reveal a God of power and majesty, and they set the stage, by the plural form of *El* (*Elohim*), for the New Testament revelation of the triunity of God.

Apply It: If (as A.W. Tozer expressed it), “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important

thing about you,” what *is* it that comes into your mind when you think about God?

Theology Proper

The Names and Titles of God: Compounds of *El* & *Elohim*

Q - If you have sung the popular chorus “El Shaddai,” with its inclusion of several Hebrew words and phrases, did you have any idea what you were singing?

El Shaddai, El Shaddai (God Almighty)
El Elyonna Adonai (God Most High, O Lord)
Age to age You’re still the same
By the power of the name,
El Shaddai, El Shaddai, (God Almighty)
Erkahmkana Adonai; (We will love you Lord)
We will praise and lift You high,
El Shaddai. (God Almighty)

In addition to the titles *El* or *Elohim* for “God,” there are several compound titles built on the word *El* which occur in Scripture. These compounds serve to further describe the One who is designated by them.

1. *El Shaddai*

The most widely accepted meaning for the word *Shaddai* comes from an Akkadian word meaning “mountain.” This would make the compound *El Shaddai* descriptive of the lofty grandeur of God.

- a. Why is the title *El Shaddai* an appropriate designation for the Lord in Genesis 17:1-7? The Lord was promising Abram to establish His covenant with him; to multiply his descendants greatly; to make him a father of nations; to make him fruitful as the father of nations and kings; to establish His covenant with Abram and his descendants as an everlasting covenant; and to be their God.

b. How did the Lord reveal the significance of His title “God Almighty” (*El Shaddai* - 6:3) to Moses in Exodus 6:6-8? The Lord promised to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage; redeem Israel with an outstretched arm and with great judgments; take Israel for His people; be the God of Israel; make Israel know that it was He who was delivering them from slavery; take Israel into the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and give the promised land to Israel as their possession.

2. *El Elyon*

The name “the Most High God” emphasizes God’s loftiness, sovereignty and supremacy. Its first mention in the Bible is found in Genesis 14:19, when it was used by Melchizedek when He blessed Abram. But many Bible students believe that Isaiah 14:14 records its prior use by Satan in his attempt to usurp the supremacy of God.

a. Why was Satan’s desire to be like *El Elyon* in Isaiah 14:14 a foolish desire? There can only be one “Most High God,” so Satan was hoping to fill a position which was already filled!

b. How did Melchizedek elaborate on His description of the Lord as “God Most High” in Genesis 14:19? He went on to describe the Lord as the possessor of heaven and earth.

c. Why should the “saints” feel secure according to Daniel 7:15-18? The “saints of the Highest One” will receive God’s kingdom and possess it for all the ages to come (cf vv. 22 and 27).

3. *El Olam*

This title means “the Everlasting God,” from an original form meaning “the God of eternity” (Genesis 21:33). It empha-

sizes God's unchangeableness (Psalm 100:5; 103:17) and is connected with His great strength (Isaiah 40:28).

- a. Why do you think Genesis 21:33 equates "the name of *Yahweh*" with the divine title "the Everlasting God"? The name Yahweh, coming from the verb "to be," designates God as "He who IS," implying His eternality!
- b. How does Isaiah 40:28 demonstrate the practical relevance of the title *El Olam*? It informs us that the Everlasting God (*El Olam*), the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not become weary or tired - not even at the "ends of the earth."

4. *El Roi*

This title means "the God Who Sees" and was given to God by Hagar when she spoke to Him before the birth of Ishmael in Genesis 16:13.

- a. What does Genesis 16:3-6 reveal about the situation Hagar found herself in when the Lord revealed Himself to her with an encouraging word about her future? Hagar, who had been impregnated by Abram, began looking down on Sarai, who treated her harshly, so Hagar was fleeing from her presence.
- b. What was the reason Hagar "called the name of the LORD who spoke to her 'You are the God who sees' [*El Roi*]" according to Genesis 16:13? Hagar was apparently very impressed by the fact that the Lord was well-aware of her sad situation, and that she realized that she was blessed to remain alive after having seen the Lord (i.e. Jesus, the "angel of the LORD," v.7).

Think About It: When you combine the thoughts, revealed by His titles, that God is powerful, exalted, eternal and aware it should be clearer than ever that He really does deserve our trust

and our worship!

Apply It: How is our trust and our worship of the Lord evident in the things we think and say and do each day of every week?

Theology Proper
The Names and Titles of God: *Adonai*

Q - What comes to your mind when you hear someone refer to another as a “lord”?

One of the most common designations for God in the Scriptures is the word “Lord.” Unfortunately, the English word has to do double duty in the pages of the Old Testament because it is used to represent two different words - one, the proper name of the LORD (*Yahweh*), and the other a title for the Lord (*Adonai*). Seeking to obey the command not to use the name of the LORD their God in vain, the Hebrew people adopted the habit of assigning the vowel points for the word *Adonai* to the four consonants of the Hebrew name of God (the “tetragrammaton) to remind them to read *Adonai* instead of *Yahweh*. Some English translations distinguish between the two words by using all capital letters for the name of God (*Yahweh*) and lower case letters for His title as “Lord” (*Adonai*).

1. The Meaning of *Adonai*

The designation *Adonai*, in its Hebrew root, means “lord” or “master” and is usually translated “Lord” in English. *Adonai* occurs 449 times in the Old Testament and 315 times in conjunction with *Yahweh*. It emphasizes the master-servant relationship between God and man, presenting God as one who is sovereign in His rule, and has absolute authority. It is also possible to understand *Adonai* as a personal address meaning “my Lord” because of the first person singular pronominal suffix which ends the Hebrew word form.

a. Genesis 15:2 records the first occurrence of the word *Adonai*. Because it was used by Abram with the name *Yahweh*, it presents a translation problem in English - because most Eng-

lish Bibles translate both Hebrew words with the English word Lord. How does your translation solve the problem? The New American Standard Bible translates the verse “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

b. To whom do the two words for “Lord” refer in Psalm 110:1? The first “LORD” refers to God the Father, while the second word “Lord” refers to God the Son - whom David is recognizing as His “master” in this verse.

c. What point did Jesus make on the basis of the words for Lord in Psalm 110:1 in His comments in Matthew 22:41-46? He made the point that the Christ (Messiah) could not be just the “son of David” in view of the fact that David himself described Him as His Lord (*adonai* - master) in Psalm 110:1.

d. How could Psalm 8:1, which uses the English word “Lord” twice, be paraphrased to make its message clearer? It could be translated “O Yahweh, my Lord (or Master, or even my *Adonai*) . . .”

2. The Significance of *Adonai*

Used of God, the term *Adonai* describes Him as the supreme Lord/Master of the universe.

a. How did Moses amplify the meaning of the word *Adonai* in Deuteronomy 10:17? Moses referred to the LORD (Yahweh) as the “God of gods and the Lord [*adonai*] of lords,” amplifying the true God as the real God and the master of all lesser beings referred to by some as “lords.”

b. How does Joshua 3:11 emphasize the Lord’s significance as a “master” using the word *Adonai*? Joshua described the Lord

as the “Lord of all the earth.”

- c. What did the Lord insist He deserves from His people because of the meaning of this divine title in Malachi 1:6? The Lord insisted that He deserves to be respected by those who refer to Him as their “Lord.”
- d. How did Jesus use a similar argument in Luke 6:46? Jesus wondered aloud why there were some who referred to Him as “Lord, Lord” while failing to do what He said they should do - which any servant would be expected to do in response to his actual “master.”

Think About It: By its use of the Hebrew title *Adonai* (“Master”) in the Old Testament (as well as the Greek word *Kurios* in the New Testament), the Bible assures us that our “Lord” deserves the right to rule in His people’s lives!

Apply It: In what ways are we reserving this right for Him in OUR lives?

Theology Proper
The Names and Titles of God: *Yahweh*

Q - How would you respond to someone who wants to know what the name of the Lord is?

The word *Yahweh* is the result of the Hebrew “tetragrammaton” (four-lettered designation) with proper vowel markings added to assist in pronouncing the proper name of the Lord. Because the name was written originally without vowels, and because the Jews chose not to pronounce it to guard against profaning it, its proper pronunciation became a subject of debate. The word “Jehovah” resulted from the attempt to pronounce the name as it appears in the Hebrew Bible with the vowel markings from the word *Adonai* (which the Jews pronounced in the place of *Yahweh* when they read the name out loud).

1. The Origin and Meaning of *Yahweh*

Although there is considerable discussion concerning the origin and meaning of the name, this common designation (used 6,828 times in the Old Testament) is likely related to the Hebrew verb *hayah*, “to be.” Thus, in Exodus 3:14-15, the Lord declares “I AM WHO I AM . . . This is My name forever.”

- a. In Genesis 2:4, where the name *Yahweh* first occurs in Scripture, what does the context assure us about the one who bears the name? It assures us that *Yahweh* is the God who made earth and heaven.
- b. What did the Lord reveal to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15 concerning the significance of His name? He said that His name (I AM WHO I AM / I AM) is His name forever, His

memorial-name to all generations.

c. What does Exodus 6:2-3 tell us about the history of the name *Yahweh*? It tells us that the Lord made Himself known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as “God Almighty” (*El Shaddai*), but by His name *Yahweh* He did not make Himself known to them as He was doing to Moses.

d. Because Abraham and other early fathers of the Jewish nation knew the name of the Lord (cf. Genesis 12:8), what may be the point the Lord was making to Moses in Exodus 6:2 (cf. Jeremiah 16:21; Ezekiel 37:6)? He may have been saying that Moses was the first person to fully understand the meaning and significance of the name of the Lord in view of its connection with the verb “to be.”

2. The Uniqueness of the Name *Yahweh*

Whereas the titles *Elohim* and *Adonai* were designations known to other cultures, the revelation of the name *Yahweh* was unique to Israel.

a. What did Exodus 20:7, one of the Ten Commandments, require of Israel concerning the name of the Lord? It required that His people not take the name of the LORD [*Yahweh*] their God in vain.

b. What does Leviticus 24:16 tell us was to be the requirement for any person who blasphemed the name of *Yahweh*? It tells us that any person who blasphemed the name of the LORD was surely to be put to death - by stoning.

c. How does the Lord feel about His special name according to Isaiah 42:8? He said that He would not give His glory as the Lord (*Yahweh*) to another, nor His praise to graven images.

3. The Application of the Name *Yahweh*

- a. Who are the persons who share the one name of the Lord according to Matthew 28:19? The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit share the singular name of the Lord as the three persons of the triune Godhead.
- b. What was Jesus claiming concerning Himself in His discussion with the Jews in John 8:58? Jesus was claiming deity as the “I AM” who eternally existed before Abraham was born.
- c. How do we know whether or not the Jews understood the point Jesus was making in John 8:58 according to 8:59? The fact that the Jews picked up stones to stone Him reveals that they understood the point Jesus was making in verse 58.

Think About It: Though there are many who are called “god” or “lord,” there is only One who is called *Yahweh*. His name reminds us that He **IS**, setting Him apart from all other “gods” so-called.

Apply It: Are we each trusting in the name of the Lord? And how are we giving His name the reverence which it deserves?

Theology Proper
The Names and Titles of God: Compounds of *Yahweh*

Q - What might be the purpose for combining the proper name of the Lord (*Yahweh*) with other words as His designation?

The proper name of God, *Yahweh*, is used in several compound titles in the pages of the Old Testament. Of these compound titles only one is used repeatedly as a designation for God. But each of these compound titles broadens our understanding of the Lord, revealing the perspective of either the Lord Himself or of His people concerning His nature and His actions.

1. Compound Titles Used Only Once

a. *Yahweh Jireh* - “The LORD will Provide”

Q - What was the occasion in Abraham’s life (Genesis 22:13-14) which caused him to declare “The LORD will provide”? Abraham had placed his son Isaac on an altar in preparation for sacrificing him as the Lord had instructed him, but the Lord intervened and called his attention to a ram caught in a thicket which was sacrificed in place of his son because the Lord provided a substitute.

b. *Yahweh Nissi* - “The LORD Our Banner”

Q - What caused Moses to name the LORD his “banner” in Exodus 17:14-16? The Lord instructed Moses to write in a book of His intention to “utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” because of Amalek’s attack on the Israelites during their wilderness travels. So Moses built an altar and named it “The LORD is my banner” because it served

to remind Moses of the Lord's victory over Amalek when he held up his hands as if a banner to rally his army.

c. *Yahweh Macceddeshcem* - “The LORD Our Sanctifier”?

Q - Why did the Lord choose the sign He did in Exodus 31:13 to set Himself apart by the title “The LORD Our Sanctifier”? The Lord instructed Israel to observe His sabbaths as a day set apart from the rest of the week, indicating along with His instruction that He is the God who set His people apart to Himself.

d. *Yahweh Shalom* - “The Lord Is Peace”

Q - Why did Gideon name his altar “The LORD is Peace” in Judges 6:22-24? When Gideon saw the Lord face to face he was fearful that he might die, but the Lord said “Peace to you, do not fear; you will not die.” So Gideon built an altar and named it “The LORD is Peace.”

e. *Yahweh Tsidkenu* - “The LORD Our Righteousness”

Q - When will the Lord be known as “The LORD Our Righteousness” according to Jeremiah 23:5-6? Jeremiah predicted that the Lord will raise up for David a righteous branch who will do justice and righteousness throughout the land. As a result, the LORD will be known as “The LORD our Righteousness” during the reign of Jesus in the kingdom age.

2. The Most Used *Yahweh* Compound

The divine title *Yahweh Sabbaoth* - “The LORD of Hosts” - is the only compound title for the LORD (*Yahweh*) which is found repeatedly in the pages of the Old Testament (and translated twice in the New Testament - Romans 9:29 and

James 5:4).

a. Which “hosts” (over whom the Lord might be “The LORD of hosts”) are identified in each of the following passages?

Deuteronomy 4:19 - The “host of heaven” were not to be worshiped by the people of Israel as other nations worshiped them.

I Kings 22:19-23 - When the Lord was surrounded by the “host of heaven” (angels and demons) and sought someone to entice wicked King Ahab to go to battle at Ramoth-Gilead, where he was mortally wounded, one of the “host” offered to be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all of Ahab’s prophets so he would be convinced he should go to the battle.

Exodus 7:4 - The LORD told Moses that He would bring all His hosts, His people, the “sons of Israel” out of Egypt where they had been enslaved by the Pharaoh.

b. How does Psalm 24:7-10 help us to understand the significance of the designation “LORD of Hosts”? The psalm identifies the “King of Glory,” who will enter the gates of Jerusalem, as “The LORD of Hosts.”

c. What makes the mention of the Lord of Sabaoth (hosts) an ominous designation in the context of James 5:4? James is writing to rich people who have taken advantage of the servants who mowed their fields with the warning that the cry of the servants has reached all the way to the “Lord of Sabaoth” (The LORD of Hosts) - who has innumerable armies at His disposal to deal with His enemies.

Think About It: The compound titles used of the LORD assure us that the LORD not only **is** (Exodus 3:14), but that He is very

special to those who recognize Him as a provider, a banner, a sanctifier, and a giver of peace and of righteousness - One who reigns over the heavens and the earth as the sovereign, omnipotent “LORD of Hosts” and “King of glory.”

Apply It: What practical significance do you see for your own life in each of these revelations about the Lord?

Theology Proper
The Names and Titles of God: *Ab/Pater*

Q - How did Jesus begin the prayer - known popularly as “The Lord’s Prayer” - which He gave to His disciples as a model for their own prayers?

The Hebrew (*Ab*) and Greek (*Pater*) words for “father” are used of God in both the Old Testament (15 times) and New Testament (245 times) - with the New Testament’s more frequent usage providing fullest coverage.

1. God as Father in the Old Testament

Though God is not presented as “father” often in the Old Testament, His role as a Father is clearly presented.

- a. How does Deuteronomy 1:31 describe the Lord as a “Father” over Israel? It describes the Lord as a “Father” carrying His children of Israel in His arms as they made their way through their wilderness wanderings.
- b. On what basis did Moses call the Lord Israel’s “Father” in Deuteronomy 32:6? He described the Lord as the Father who bought Israel and who made them and who established them.
- c. What made God’s role as “Father” to Israel important in Isaiah’s mind in Isaiah 63:16-17? Isaiah acknowledged God as the Father and Redeemer of Israel - a more important relationship than their relationships with Abraham and Jacob, the human “fathers” of their nation, who he said no longer knew them or recognized them in view of the fact that they had strayed from God’s ways and hardened their hearts toward the Lord.
- d. What was the Lord’s desire for His sons as a “Father” ac-

cording to Jeremiah 3:19? He desired that they would call Him their Father and not turn away from following Him.

e. What did the Lord fail to receive as a “Father” to His sons according to Malachi 1:6? He failed to receive the honor He deserved as a “Father” - especially from Israel’s priests who He accused of despising His name.

2. God as Father in the New Testament

The New Testament deals even more fully than the Old Testament with the concept of God as “Father.”

a. How does a person become a child of God according to John 1:12? “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

b. How can a person demonstrate that he has a personal relationship with God as his Father according to Matthew 5:44-45? A person can demonstrate that he has a personal relationship with God by loving his enemies and by praying for those who persecute him, so that he may be a son of his Father.

c. What did Jesus tell His disciples their lives should produce in their response to God as their Father in Matthew 5:16? He said that their lives should produce good works which lead others to glorify their Father who is in heaven.

d. To whom is God related as “Father” in each of the following passages?

John 1:14 - He is related to Jesus, who became flesh and dwelt among us.

I John 3:1 - He is related to those who have become the children of God because of the great love the Father has bestowed upon them.

e. How did Jesus describe the relationship He had with God the Father in John 14:10? He said that He is in the Father and that the Father is in Him - abiding in Him.

f. What does God the Father desire and expect from His children in the following passages?

I Peter 1:17 - The Father desires and expects His children to conduct themselves in fear during the time of their stay on the earth because He will impartially judge each person according to their works.

II John 4 - The Father desires and expects that His children walk in truth - as He has commanded them to do.

Think About It: In becoming a “Father” to those who put their trust in Him, God enters into a very personal relationship with His people. Now He wants His children to respond to His kindness by their love for others and their honor and obedience toward Him.

Apply It: What are some practical ways in which are we responding to the Lord’s kindness? Does our response include loving others and obeying the Lord?

Theology Proper
The Names and Titles of God: N.T. Names and Titles

Q - What are some disrespectful uses of the titles for the Lord as our God and our Lord which stand out in your thinking in modern American culture?

The names and titles of God which are found in the New Testament carry over from the names and titles found in the Old Testament. Though there is little advancement in the meanings of the names and titles of God from Old Testament to New, it is worth noting that several titles with several different meanings are used. Although they are not the actual name by which the Lord revealed Himself to Moses and other Old Testament saints, they should still be used respectfully by those who know Him as their God and Lord and Master.

1. *Theos* - God

Theos is the most frequent designation for God in the New Testament and the most common translation in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) for *Elohim* (the Hebrew word translated “God.”) *Theos* almost always refers to the one true God, though sometimes it is used of the “gods” of paganism in the reported words of pagans, or by Christians repudiating these false gods.

a. Of what is the word “god” (*Theos*) used in Philippians 3:19?
It is used of the appetite of the enemies of the cross as their “god.”

b. Of what two persons is the word “god” (*Theos*) used in II Corinthians 4:4? It is used of “the god of this world” (Satan) and of Christ who Paul describes as “the image of God.”

c. Of whom (two person in some Greek texts) is the word *Theos* used in John 1:1,18? The word is used of Christ, the “Word” who was “with God” (the Father), and of Christ who “was God” in verse 1; and it is used of God, the Father, whom no man has seen, as well as “the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father” (Christ) in verse 18.

(See also John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13)

d. Who did Peter designate as “God” in Acts 5:3-4? Peter designated the Holy Spirit as “God” when he accused Ananias of lying to God.

2. *Kurios* - Lord

The Greek word *Kurios* means “lord” or “master.” It emphasizes authority and supremacy. Of the 717 occurrences of *Kurios* in the New Testament, Luke uses it 210 times and Paul uses it 275 times.

a. Who is described by the word *Kurios* (“lords”) in I Corinthians 8:5? The “so-called” gods of pagan worship are referred to as “gods” and “lords.”

b. Who is described by the word *Kurios* (“lord”) in I Peter 3:6? The word is used of Abraham who was addressed respectfully by Sarah, his wife, as her “lord” in Genesis 18:12.

c. Who is described by the word *Kurios* (two occurrences) in Luke 19:33-34 (“owners,” v. 33; “Lord,” v. 34)? The word is used of the “owners” (lords) of the colt which Jesus used when He rode into Jerusalem on “Palm Sunday” when the disciples explained, referring to Jesus, that “the Lord has need of it.”

3. *Despotes* - Master

The Greek word *Despotes*, like *Kurios*, means “lord” or “master,” but it emphasizes the idea of ownership rather than that of authority and supremacy.

a. How did Simeon’s description of himself in his prayer in Luke 2:29 make his use of *Despotes* for “lord” especially appropriate? He described himself as the Lord’s bond-servant after addressing the Lord as his “master” (*despotes*).

(Note the same combination of terms in Acts 4:24,29)

b. Who is addressed as “the master” (*Despotes*) in II Peter 2:1? The Lord is addressed by Peter as “the Master who bought” the false teachers he warned about in the churches to which he was writing.

c. Who is addressed as “master” (*Despotes*) in Jude 4? Jesus Christ is addressed as “our only Master (*Despotes*) and Lord” as he warned his readers of false teachers who would deny the Lord.

Think About It: New Testament titles for deity advance our understanding of His significance when they describe Him as “God,” our “Lord” or “master,” and our “owner.”

Apply It: What are some ways in which we can respond to the Lord in keeping with New Testament titles we have considered?

Theology Proper
The Decree of God: Definition and Scope

Q - What comes into your mind when you hear that someone has spoken a “decree”?

The decree of God, established in eternity past, has reference to God’s sovereign control over every realm and over all events throughout the entire universe. An understanding of the truth about God’s decree should give those who trust in Him an unparalleled sense of security - and those who don’t trust in Him something to seriously think about!

Ultimately, there are only two options. Either God is sovereign and has absolute control over the world and universe, or God does not have sovereign control, and the world and universe have the ability to carry on in defiance of His holy will.

1. Definition of the Decree

Question 7 of the Westminster Shorter Confession states: “The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

2. The Scope of the Decree

Though it is common to speak of the “decrees” of God (in the plural), the decree of God is actually a single plan which includes everything.

a. How long does Psalm 148:6 tell us God’s decree will last?
It tells us that God’s decree will last forever and ever.

b. In contrast to the plans in the heart of a man, what does

Proverbs 19:21 tell us is going to “stand”? It tells us that the counsel of the LORD will stand.

c. What ability of the Lord clearly demonstrates His control of the affairs of His universe according to Isaiah 46:9-10a? The Lord’s ability to declare the end from the beginning, from ancient times things which have not been done, clearly demonstrates His control of the affairs of the universe.

d. What does Isaiah 46:9-11 assure us God is going to “establish” and “accomplish”? It assures us that God is going to establish His purpose and accomplish all of His good pleasure.

e. How many things does God work “after the counsel of His will” according to Ephesians 1:11? The Lord works all things after the counsel of His will according to Ephesians 1:11.

3. Examples of the Decree

a. What things does Psalm 2:7-9 include as a part of God’s decree? It includes the Lord’s begetting of His divine Son, His giving of the nations as the inheritance and the very ends of the earth as the possession of His Son - with the power and authority to break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware.

b. What are some of the things recorded in Psalm 148:1-6 which are a part of God’s “decree”? Psalm 148:1-6 includes the heavens and the highest heavens, God’s angels and His hosts - including the sun, moon and stars, and the waters that are above the heavens as a part of His decree.

c. What significant part of God’s creation is kept under control as a result of the Lord’s decree according to the Prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 5:22? Jeremiah 5:22 reveals that the boun-

daries of the sea are under control as a result of the decree of the Lord.

d. What happened to the great Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar as a result of God's decree (Daniel 4:24-25)? King Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from mankind, dwelling with the beasts of the field, given grass to eat like cattle, and was drenched with the dew of heaven for a period of seven years until he properly recognized the Most High God as ruler over the realm of mankind as a result of the decree of the Lord.

e. What was the Prophet Zephaniah's challenge to the people of Israel (and of all the earth) in view of the Lord's decree concerning the coming day of the Lord (described in 1:14-18) in Zephaniah 2:1-3? Zephaniah challenged the people of Israel and of all the earth to gather together and seek the Lord and righteousness and humility in the hope that they all might be hidden from the anger of the Lord in the coming day of the Lord according to the decree of the Lord.

Think About It: God's purposes for all things in existence are going to work out for His glory just the way He planned them in eternity past. So it really doesn't make any sense for a person to try to deny Him or to try to defy Him. When all is said and done, there will be absolutely no doubt that He has been in charge all along.

Apply It: The sooner we "get with" God's plan the better things are going to go for us (Psalm 2:11-12)! So how are we at making room for God's plans in **our** plans?

Theology Proper
The Decree of God: Contents of the Decree

Q - What practical difference would it make if the Lord were not in control of all things as a result of His decree?

The decree of God includes everything that comes to pass in the past, the present, and the future. It embraces both the things which God brings about by His sovereign power and the things which He merely permits. So the decree of God is the practical reality which made it possible for the Apostle Paul to write, as He did in Romans 8:28, that “we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Let's consider some of the things which He has brought about (or is yet bringing about) by His sovereign power.

1. In the Material Realm

- a. What does Psalm 33:6 assure us has come about “By the word of the LORD”? It assures us that the heavens and all their host were made as a result of the word of the Lord.
- b. How do the Lord’s counsel and plans fare in comparison with the counsel and plans of the nations according to Psalm 33:10-11? We are assured that the Lord’s counsel stands forever, while He nullifies the counsel of the nations and frustrates the plans of the people.
- c. What does Deuteronomy 32:8 tell us the Lord has given to the nations and established (“set”) for the peoples of earth? It tells us that the Lord gave the nations their inheritance and set the boundaries of the peoples.

d. What additional fact did the Apostle Paul attribute to the determination of the Lord in Acts 17:26? Paul observed that the Lord determined the “appointed times” of the nations in addition to the boundaries of their habitation.

e. What did Job recognize as under the Lord’s control in Job 14:1,5? Job recognized that man’s life-span is under the Lord’s control.

See James 4:15 for New Testament confirmation.

2. In the Social Realm

a. What important institution does Genesis 2:18 and 24 show to be a part of God’s decree? They show us that the institution of marriage was established by the Lord’s decree.

b. What does Romans 13:1 tell us the Lord has established by His authority? It tells us that every person is to be in subjection to governing authorities because they have been established by the Lord .

c. What did the Lord promise to do for Abram in Genesis 12:2-3? The Lord promised Abram that He would make him a great nation, and that He would bless those who bless Abram and curse those who curse him.

d. How will the people of Israel figure into the Lord’s decreed plans according to Zechariah 14:1-11 (see also Joel 3:1-21)? Zechariah 14:1-11 (and Joel 3:1-21) assure us that, following a time of international war at Jerusalem, the Lord will establish Jerusalem as the center of His kingdom.

3. In the Spiritual Realm

a. What has God’s decree brought about for the church accord-

ing to Ephesians 2:13-16 and 3:4-6? These passages assure us that God has made the church (including believing Israel) His “body” and heirs of His promise in Christ.

b. How did the Apostle Paul account for the spiritual inheritance believers are privileged to obtain in Ephesians 1:11? He explained that believers are “predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

c. How does Romans 8:29-30 explain the process by which the Lord causes “all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (v. 28)? It explains that the Lord “foreknows” His people; He predestines them to become conformed to the image of His Son; He calls them; He justifies them; and He completes the process by glorifying them.

Think About It: God’s decree directly affects our earth and its boundaries, as well as the individual lives of each of its inhabitants. And He has decreed the family, the government, the nation of Israel, and the church. He really is in control - though many people fail to see it.

Apply It: How is our vision when it comes to the truth of God’s decree? How might our cooperation with God’s decree for us and for others improve our lives and theirs?

Theology Proper
The Decree of God: Sin and the Decree

Q - Who would you say is responsible when a person engages in a sinful action?

We have seen before that the decree of God includes everything that comes to pass in the past, the present, and the future. It embraces both the things which God brings about by His sovereign power and the things which He merely permits.

One of the things which God, for His own reasons, has permitted is the problem of sin. But this raises an interesting question: How can a sovereign God who is holy include sin in His eternal plan?

1. The Responsibility for Sin

In permitting sin, God does not become responsible for sin.

- a. Who does I John 3:8 say has been sinning from the beginning? It says that the devil has been sinning from the beginning.
- b. To whom did Jesus attribute the deceptive nature of the devil in John 8:44? Jesus attributed the deceptive nature of the devil to the devil himself, stating that when the devil speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- c. Who did the Mosaic Law hold accountable for sinful behavior according to Deuteronomy 24:16? The Mosaic Law held the person who sins responsible for his own sin.

Cf. Ezekiel 18:4 & 20

d. Habakkuk 1:6 tells us that God was raising up the Chaldeans to punish His disobedient people in Judah. Who does Habakkuk 1:11 tell us was responsible for the Chaldeans' sins?
Habakkuk 1:11 holds the Chaldeans responsible for their own sins.

e. Acts 2:23 explains that Jesus died according to the "pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God." Who did Peter hold responsible for the crucifixion of Christ in the same verse?
Peter held the people in his Jewish audience responsible for the crucifixion of Christ, explaining that He was nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men.

2. The Restraint of Sin

If God did not exercise some control over sin, the problem would be far worse than it is.

a. What is God's relationship with the evil acts of the devil as seen in Job 1:6-12? The Lord permitted the devil to do evil to Job in order to demonstrate that Job was not a "blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" only because the Lord had placed a hedge of protection around him.

b. What is God able to do with reference to sin which II Thessalonians 2:7 tells us He **is** doing in our present age? The Lord is restraining the "man of lawlessness" (v. 3, the anti-christ) from committing the evil he would like to commit.

3. The Allowance of Sin

Though God is not the author of evil, He has chosen to allow evil for His own reasons.

a. How did God direct the evil acts of men to accomplish His purposes according to Acts 4:27-28? He permitted men to rise up against and crucify His Son, Jesus, in order to carry out His predetermined plan to provide salvation for sin by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus for sin on the cross.

b. What part did God have in the sins of those who are described in Romans 1:24-28? The Lord permits sinful and foolish behavior to bear its own destructive fruit in the lives of people who refuse to acknowledge His existence and power so clearly displayed in the things which He has made.

c. What does James 1:13 assure us that God Himself never can do and never does with reference to sin? It assures us that God cannot be tempted by evil, and that He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Think About It: The decree of God includes even the problem of sin. But the Scriptures assure us that God is not responsible for sin. He merely permits it and controls it so that even sin fits into His eternal plan. Having permitted the problem of sin, God has also provided the solution for sin in the person and work of His Son Jesus.

Apply It: Are we careful to take responsibility for our own sinful behavior and to seek the Lord's forgiveness by confessing and forsaking it in order to honor the Lord and uncomplicate our lives?

Theology Proper
The Decree of God: Objections to the Decree

Q - Does the person who comes to salvation by faith in Christ do so because of God's sovereign choice or because of his own human volition?

Though the fact of the decree of God is taught throughout the Scriptures, there are those who object to the decree of God because they believe that the fact that God is sovereign in the affairs of His universe must mean that people are not free to choose whether they will be saved or not. So the following two allegations have been launched against the decree of God.

1. The Decree Does Not Allow for Man's Free Will

The concept of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is an "antinomy." The word antinomy comes from the Greek words *anti*, meaning "against," and the word *nomos*, meaning "law," so an antinomy is something that is contrary to law or contrary to human understanding. An antinomy, of course, is only an antinomy in the mind of man, because God fully understands even things which seem contradictory to the mind of man.

- a. Who did Jesus hold responsible for His betrayal in Mark 14:21 and Luke 22:22? Jesus held Judas responsible for the sin of betraying Him to His enemies.
- b. Who did Peter hold responsible for the death of Christ according to Acts 2:23? Peter held the Jewish people who nailed Jesus to the cross "by the hands of godless men" responsible for the death of Christ.
- c. To what and whom did Peter attribute the death of Christ in

Acts 3:17-19? Peter acknowledged the ignorance of the Jewish people and their leaders for their sinful behavior in subjecting Jesus to suffering even as He acknowledged that God announced beforehand, by the mouth of all the prophets, that it would take place (cf. vv. 13-16).

d. What did Peter call on his listeners to do in view of their role in the suffering and death of Christ in Acts 3:19? Peter called on his listeners to repent and return to the Lord for the cleansing of their sins and the pursuit of times of refreshing to come from the presence of the Lord.

2. The Decree Makes It Unnecessary to Preach the Gospel

The need to preach the gospel also hinges on an antinomy in the pages of the Scriptures. Why preach the gospel if it is the sovereignty of God which determines who will be saved and who will not?

a. Who does the Apostle Paul credit with the Christian's adoption as a child of God in Ephesians 1:5-6? Paul stated that God predestined His people to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.

b. What did Paul indicate the Ephesians did to be sealed into salvation by God's Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13? Paul indicated that, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of their salvation, the Ephesians believed and, as a result, were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise.

c. Why did Paul say he was unashamed of the gospel in Romans 1:16? He said that he was unashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

d. What did Paul say a person must do with the gospel in order to experience salvation in Romans 1:16? He said that a person must believe the message of the gospel in order to experience salvation.

People are lost not because God has failed to decree their salvation but because they have refused to believe the gospel. So the preaching of the gospel is not unnecessary because people can only embrace its message if they are aware of its message.

Think About It: The Scriptures clearly hold man responsible for sinful choices and they hold man responsible for receiving the message of the gospel - while also acknowledging that believers have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Romans 8:29). Though we may not fully understand how the decree can encompass both God's sovereignty and man's free will, the Scriptures clearly indicate that it does. So we need to accept it in anticipation of the day when we "shall know fully just as [we] have been fully known" (I Corinthians 13:12).

Apply It: It is important for every person to acknowledge their sinful condition and trust the Lord for the salvation He offers to all who will trust Him. The Lord will fulfill His essential role in our salvation when we fulfill our own role by trusting Him as the author of His divine decree.