

THEOLOGY SESSION 2

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

THE EXISTENCE, KNOWABILITY, AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

There is a right way and a wrong way to approach the doctrine of God. We can study God with a microscope or a telescope. A microscope makes something very small look very big. But this isn't the way we are to magnify God...Instead we should study God's attributes the way an astronomer studies a heavenly body—through a telescope. Its lenses enable us to see just how much bigger and more awesome something is than we first imagined.¹

Joshua Harris

Group Work: What are the theological implications of these verses in regard to the doctrine of God? (Rom 1:18-20; Rom 1:24-25; Psalm 102:25-27; Acts 17:22-28; Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Chronicles 16:23-29; Jude 24-25; Psalm 50:9-12; Romans 8:31-39)

The 2nd London Confession of Faith (1689)

There is but one, and only one, living and true God. He is self-existent and infinite in His being and His perfections. None but He can comprehend or understand His essence. He is pure spirit, invisible, and without body, parts, or the changeable feelings of men. He alone possesses immortality, and dwells amid the light insufferably bright to mortal men. He never changes. He is great beyond all our conceptions, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty and infinite. He is most holy, wise, free and absolute. All that He does is the out-working of His changeless, righteous will, and for His own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful and compassionate. He abounds in goodness and truth. He forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. He rewards those who seek Him diligently. But He hates sin. He will not overlook guilt or spare the guilty, and He is perfectly just in executing judgment.

God is all-sufficient, and all life, glory, goodness and blessedness are found in Him and in Him alone. He does not stand in need of any of the creatures that He has made, nor does He derive any part of His glory from them. On the contrary, He manifests His own glory in and by them. He is the fountain-head of all being, and the origin, channel and end of all things. Over all His creatures He is sovereign. He uses them as He pleases, and does for them or to them all that He wills. His sight penetrates to the heart of all things. His knowledge is infinite and infallible. No single thing is to Him at risk or uncertain, for He is not dependent upon created things. In all His decisions, doings and demands He is most holy. Angels and men owe to Him as their creator all worship, service and obedience, and whatever else He may require at their hands.

¹Joshua Harris, *Dug Down Deep*, 51.

THE GOD WHO EXISTS

Humanity's inner sense of God

*All persons everywhere have a deep, inner sense that God exists, that they are his creatures, and he is their Creator.*²

The evidence in Scripture and nature³

Scripture begins with the assumption that God exists (Gen 1 – *In the beginning God...*)

Scripture never attempts to prove the existence of God (in fact, it makes note of those who do not believe—
Ps 14:1 – *The fools says in his heart, "There is no God."*)

The attributes of God are clearly perceived in nature (Rom 1:20 - *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.*)

*...when we believe that God exists, we are basing our beliefs not on some blind hope apart from any evidence, but on an overwhelming amount of reliable evidence from God's words and God's works.*⁴

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 141.

³Ibid., 142-143.

⁴Ibid., 143.

THE GOD WHO IS KNOWABLE

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

We can never fully understand God⁵

Because God is infinite and we are finite or limited, we can never fully understand God.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. (Psalm 145:3)

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. (Psalm 139:6)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Romans 11:33)

Yet we can know God truly⁶

Even though we cannot know God exhaustively, we can know true things about God.

For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Cor 2:10-13)

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Evidence of Knowing God (J. I. Packer)⁷

Those who know God...

- Have great energy for God
- Have great thoughts of God
- Show great boldness for God
- Have great contentment in God

How can a right understanding of the *existence and knowability of God* strengthen our intimacy with him?

How can a right understanding of the *existence and knowability of God* strengthen our missional activity?

⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 149.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

⁷ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 27-32.