

*Essentials of Christianity (pt 5)*  
*3/21/2010*

*Introduction* \_\_\_\_\_

Good morning to everyone! This morning we will be partaking of communion immediately following our study. A very fitting way to wrap up another session in our survey of the essentials of Christianity.

*Theology: The Doctrine of God*

Last week we got started on the category of **Theology: the doctrine of God**. We began our time together talking about the fact that theology begins with the knowledge that God **DOES EXIST**; that He IS REAL; and that only a fool would believe otherwise.

We also spent some time looking at reasons why we know He does exist.

I want to make a similar statement to the one I made last week. I realize that the amount of information that I'm using for our purposes is not overly comprehensive. But I do believe what we've covered so far has hit on the most essential points.

Keep in mind that there will be situations that come up where people who are antagonistic toward the Christian faith will insist on you giving them an answer to suit their skeptical inquisitions.

This may force us to have to dig deeper in order to answer their challenges. But keep in mind a few things. Paul gave these warnings:

*<sup>NAU</sup> 1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge "--*

*<sup>21</sup> which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.*

*<sup>NAU</sup> 2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

*<sup>16</sup> But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,*

*<sup>NAU</sup> 1 Timothy 1:4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.*

*<sup>5</sup> But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

Sometimes we have to make a decision about whether we are fulfilling our duty of giving an account for the hope that lies within us, or casting our pearl to the swine.

Paul said to the Thessalonians:

*<sup>NAU</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;*

*<sup>2</sup> and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.*

Last week we ended on the subject of God's attributes. We really only got started. I'm going to readjust our starting point a little bit (more on that later).

If someone says they believe in God, or a higher moral being, then a definition of terms becomes very important.

There are a few religious groups who claim to believe in the God of the Bible, yet, they put their own spin on what *they* think He is like, rather than letting the Bible tell them who God is and what He's like.

They choose to make God in their image. They believe in God as they understand him.

God does not allow people to decide amongst themselves what they think He is like, and then conform to those images.

The way it works is, God decides what He is going to disclose about Himself, and we have to listen and affirm God's own testimony of Himself and adjust our beliefs accordingly.

For our purposes we're going to break down the rest of the teaching on theology into the following categories:

- 1. The person of God:** the nature of God as a person.
- 2. The attributes of God**
- 3. The acts of God:** what is essential to believe about the acts of God--the things He does.
- 4. God as Trinity:** this actually is a sub-category of the person of God, but we'll be looking at the subject of the trinity separately.

Let me say before we get into this that there is going to be some overlap in these categories. It is possible to use more categories or less categories to outline these attributes of God.

The naming of these categories *can be* a matter of opinion. What is *not* are the attributes themselves. These are non-negotiable attributes because they are based on the testimony of scripture itself.

## ***The Person of God***

What must we know about the person of God? First of all, we'll once again begin with the obvious.

### **A. There is only ONE God.**

Christianity is monotheistic (the belief in only one God).

This non-negotiable truth is found throughout the Bible. Let's take a look at some of the references, starting at the first of the Ten Commandments: **turn to Exodus 20:2-3.**

<sup>NAU</sup> Exodus 20:2 *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

<sup>3</sup> *"You shall have no other gods before Me.*

No other God's before me, because He is God alone.

Let's look at some other references about this essential truth.

**Turn to Deut 6:4**--probably the most well known reference to monotheism.

<sup>NAU</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4 *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!*

We'll come back to this one.

Turn to:

<sup>NAU</sup> Deuteronomy 4:39 "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

<sup>NAU</sup> Deuteronomy 32:39 'See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

<sup>40</sup> 'Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, And say, as I live forever,

<sup>NAU</sup> Isaiah 44:8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.'"

<sup>NAU</sup> Isaiah 45:5 "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

<sup>6</sup> That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other,

### One in the NT. Turn to 1Timothy 2:3-5

<sup>NAU</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

<sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

<sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

And on and on we could go with scriptural evidence that there is ONE God.

This rules out the possibility of other religions who are polytheistic of having legitimacy. Mormons and Hindu's are examples polytheistic religions. All of Israel's neighbors (OT) were polytheistic.

There are some non-Christian religious groups that claim to be monotheistic, yet they either embrace the wrong God or have a distorted view of the God of the Bible they claim to believe in.

**Judaism** believes in the right God, but rejects the only access to Him through Jesus Christ.

**JW's** claim to be monotheistic, yet they reject the essential teaching of the trinity.

The religion of **Islam** claims to be monotheistic and even claims that the God of the Quran is the same as the God of the Christian Bible.

But the god of the Quran is vastly different from the God of the Christian Bible.

The Bible is very cut and dry in how it labels any god (or gods) that is not the God of the Bible.

### **Turn to Psalm 96:1-4**

*NAU Psalm 96:1 Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth.*

*<sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.*

*<sup>3</sup> Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.*

*<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.*

Any so called god that is not the God of the Bible is classified as a idol.

## Commandment #2:

*NAU Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.*

*<sup>5</sup> "You shall not worship them or serve them...*

Because He alone is God and every other false god is deemed as an idol, He says He will not tolerate dual allegiance.

## Turn to Exodus 34:11-16

*NAU Exodus 34:11 "Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

*<sup>12</sup> "Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst.*

*<sup>13</sup> "But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim*

*<sup>14</sup> -- for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God--*

*<sup>15</sup> otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,*

*<sup>16</sup> and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.*

So, in this category of the **person of God**, we know that He alone is God. This brings us to another essential fact about our God who says "He alone is God."

To preface this next section, let's turn to **John 17:1-3**

*<sup>NAU</sup> John 17:1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,*

*<sup>2</sup> even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.*

*<sup>3</sup> "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

The essence of Christianity is relationship with God. This is what gives us the ability to fulfill our God-given roles.

In the belief of other world religions, God is not knowable in the way He is shown to be in the Bible.

**In Islam:** God's transcendence is so great that he acts impersonally toward what he has created.

Though Muslims explain God in terms of personality, it appears that Allah possesses a nature that is unknowable to his followers since nothing in the finite world resembles him by way of analogy (i.e. father, shepherd)

Though unknowable in essence, Allah does reveal his will, but places the stress on obedience *rather than* relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is there any personal deity in a number of the eastern religions.

<sup>1</sup> H. Wayne House and Joseph M. Holden, *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences*, ZondervanCharts Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006); Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992).

In **Hinduism**, reality is what they call Brahman: the **creative principle** of all life in the universe.<sup>2</sup>

Brahma is the whole of which we are a part. So one does not relate to reality by outward, as to an individual person. Rather, one withdraws inward, through a process of contemplation.

The aim of this process is to lose one's own individual identity and self-consciousness, to be in effect absorbed into the whole.

Nirvana is the stage at which all individual striving ceases, and one becomes simply at rest.<sup>3</sup>

Imagine having to look inward to find your peace.

And the deepest relationship you can have is only with your inner-self. How bleak!

The biblical view is quite different. The Bible presents God as personal. He is an individual Being, with self-consciousness and will, capable of feeling, choosing and having reciprocal relationships with people.

That God has personality is indicated in several ways in scripture. One is the fact that **God has a name**. He has a name which He assigns to Himself and by which He reveals Himself.

When Moses wondered how he should respond when the Israelites will ask the name of the God who has sent him, God identifies Himself as "I AM."

<sup>2</sup> George A Mather, Nichols, *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology Unabridged (1 Vol. Edition)* (Baker Book House, 1996).

By this He demonstrates that He is not an abstract, unknowable Being, or a nameless force.

Nor is His name used merely to refer to God or describe Him. It is also used to address Him.

**Genesis 12:8** refers to Abraham building an altar and calling upon His name.

The particular names that God assumes are indicative of the personal aspect of His nature. They refer primarily to His relationship with people.

Because God is personal (indeed, He is pictured as our Father), the relationship we have with Him has dimension of warmth and understanding.

God is not a bureau or department; He is not machine or a computer that automatically supplies the needs of people. He is a knowing, loving, good Father.

He can be approached, He can be spoken to, and He in turn speaks.<sup>4</sup>

**B. The names of God.** The names of God are one way that God has chosen to relate to us. Hebrew names were not merely labels to distinguish one person from another.

A name was chosen very carefully, and with attention to its significance. The Hebrews considered the name as an embodiment of the one bearing it.

<sup>4</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology Unabridged (1 Vol. Edition)* (Baker Book House, 1996).

There are so many names in the scriptures that God uses for Himself, we will not attempt to cover them all; but by covering a few, we will see why these designations are **essential** for understanding who God is.

### **Elohim**

**Elohim** is a Hebrew plural form used more than two thousand times in the Old Testament and usually termed a “plural of majesty” of the general name for God. It comes from the abbreviated name, El, which probably has a root meaning “to be strong” or “to be preeminent.” It is usually translated “God” in the English translations. Elohim emphasizes God’s transcendence: He is above all others who are called God.

### **Adonai**

The designation Adonai in its root means “lord” or “master” and is usually translated “Lord” in English Bibles. Adonai occurs 449 times in the Old Testament and 315 times in conjunction with Yahweh. Adonai emphasizes the servant-master relationship and thus suggests God’s authority as Master; One who is sovereign in His rule and has absolute authority. Adonai should probably be understood as meaning “Lord of all.” It is also possible to understand Adonai as a personal address meaning “my Lord.”

### **Yahweh**

The name Yahweh translates the Hebrew YHWH. Because the name was originally written without vowels, it is uncertain how it should be pronounced. Hence, the American Standard Version translates it “Jehovah,” whereas most modern translations render it “LORD” (to distinguish it from Adonai, “Lord”). Jewish scholars have generally pronounced it “Adonai” instead of actually pronouncing YHWH, out of respect for the sacredness of the covenant name.

By the name Yahweh, God identified Himself in His personal relationship with His people, Israel, and it was to this name that Abram responded in acknowledging the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:8). By this name God brought Israel out of Egypt, delivered them from bondage, and redeemed them (Ex. 6:6; 20:2). Whereas Elohim

and Adonai were designations known to other cultures, the revelation of Yahweh was unique to Israel.

**Compound Names** There are a number of compound forms of the name of God involving the names El (or Elohim) and Yahweh.

**El Shaddai.** Translated “God Almighty,” it probably relates to the word mountain and suggests the power or strength of God. By this name God is also seen as a covenant-keeping God.

**El Elyon.** Translated “God Most High,” it emphasizes the supremacy of God. He is above all so-called gods. Melchizedek recognized Him as “God Most High” inasmuch as He is possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:18-22)

**El Olam.** Translated the “Everlasting God,” it stresses the unchanging character of God (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28). There are other compound terms that are sometimes mentioned as names of God, but they may simply be descriptions of God:

We’ll look at a couple of these.

**Yahweh-jireh,** “The Lord Will Provide” (Gen. 22:14)

**Turn to:**

*<sup>NAU</sup> Genesis 22:14 Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."*

**Yahweh-Nissi,** “The Lord Our Banner” (Ex. 17:15)

*<sup>NAU</sup> Exodus 17:15 Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner;*

**Yahweh-Shalom,** “The Lord is Peace” (Judg. 6:24)

*<sup>NAU</sup> Judges 6:24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*

**Yahweh-Sabaoth,** “The Lord of Hosts” (1 Sam. 1:3)

## **Communion/band**

**Yahweh-Tsidkenu**, “The Lord Our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).

<sup>NAU</sup> *Jeremiah 23:1* "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> *Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: "You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds," declares the LORD.*

<sup>3</sup> *"Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.*

<sup>4</sup> *"I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD.*

<sup>5</sup> *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.*

<sup>6</sup> *"In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'*