

*Essentials of Christianity*  
5/2/2010

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

Good morning to you all! Let's turn our attention once again to the subject of the essentials of Christianity. We're currently covering the subject **Theology--the doctrine of God.** .

Under the heading of this category are the following sub-categories that we're covering:

- \* The Person of God
- \* The Attributes of God
- \* The Acts of God
- \* God as Trinity

Today we will begin our time by focusing on the last attribute we'll be covering. Let's look at the scriptures teaching on **The God of Peace** . The Bible declares that God is the God of peace.

This designation for God is very prominent in the NT. I'm not aware of a specific designation for God like this in the OT, though there are certainly numerous references to God's peace in the OT, which I'll be talking about in a moment.

Before we actually talk about the biblical concept of peace let's take a look at some verses that make mention of this attribute of our Lord.

Let's begin in **Romans 15:33; 16:19-20; 2The 3:16; Heb 13:20-21-- turn to: read**

*<sup>NAU</sup> Romans 15:33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

*<sup>NAU</sup> Romans 16:19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.*

*<sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

*<sup>NAU</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!*

*<sup>NAU</sup> Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,*

*<sup>21</sup> equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The God of the Bible is a God of peace. What does this mean? And is it really necessary to designate this as an essential attribute of God? The answer to that question is an emphatic YES!!! Especially in light of what the biblical concept of peace really is.

The OT word for **peace** is one that many of us are probably somewhat familiar with--“**Shalom.**” It’s used throughout the OT in a variety of contexts.

*It is derived from a root that conveys the image of wholeness, unity, and harmony---something that is complete and sound. Although "peace" is essentially a relational*

*concept in the OT, it also conveys the idea of prosperity, health, and fulfillment.*<sup>1</sup>

Mainly (in the minds of most people) it is associated with the absence of strife.

In the last 4+ decades or so in our country, we've had several "peace movements." One of the most memorable ones was the (so-called) peace movement of the late sixties-early seventies. **Remember the peace sign.**

Some of you may be old enough to remember the concert **Woodstock**. That event was billed as "Three Days of Peace and Music."

For those poor souls who were stoned out of their minds while listening to Country Joe and the Fish, this event represented **peace at its finest**.

One of the main thrusts of the event was to protest the Vietnam war.

If peace is merely the absence of war then such an event accomplished its goal. But that's not all peace is.

The word **Shalom** is used in the scriptures in a context for the absence of war; but as we move into the psalms and the prophets we see how multidimensional **biblical peace is**.

One writer put it this way:

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence O Richards, *New International Encyclopedia Of Bible Words* (Zondervan Publishing House).

Human situations in the Bible that are commonly described by the word “peace” range from the cessation of hostilities between nations, the absence of civil or ecclesiastical disorder, and the freedom from dissension between individuals, through positive situations in which an individual has prospered materially, or is healthy, or possesses a tranquil freedom from mental or spiritual disruption, to conditions where there is a minimum of noise or activity. But no situation in the Bible is simply human. In the total range of human activity, the divine influence is evident.

In this way the Biblical notion of peace must be understood. For the NT writers, a more comprehensive spiritual element is added to the OT concept of peace by the awareness that the true ground of reconciliation between God and man, between man and man, and within the individual is exhibited in the total work of Christ; and through the enabling power brought by the gracious visitation of the Holy Spirit, this peace is made a joyous possession of a man.

In every theologically significant use, "peace" is something rooted in one's relationship with God and testifies to the restoration of human beings to inner harmony and to harmonious relationships with others. Our once-shattered lives are again made whole, and we become in Christ what God originally intended us to be. The vital health and wholeness of a restored humanity is available in Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

This is what's behind the concept of peace in its usage as an attribute of God. There can be no true peace unless it comes through a connection to the Living God.

This goes back to what I said earlier; that peace is not just the cessation of conflict. This is why Woodstock was *not* a peaceable event. Outwardly there may not have been physical fighting; but inwardly, the participants: while high on their drugs and engaged in sexual promiscuity, were far from experiencing

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<sup>2</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible* (Zondervan Publishing House).

peace. The drugs masked the reality of the hell they were experiencing.

Speaking of this contrast between **true** and **false** peace (Isaiah said):

<sup>NAU</sup> *Isaiah 57:16 "For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would grow faint before Me, And the breath of those whom I have made.*

<sup>17</sup> *"Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him; I hid My face and was angry, And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.*

<sup>18</sup> *"I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners,*

<sup>19</sup> *Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "and I will heal him."*

<sup>20</sup> *But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.*

<sup>21</sup> *"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."*

A person may park themselves in the lotus position, look inward and disconnect from reality, while enraptured in their state of nirvana; but they have not found peace. They've only masked their turmoil by hiding behind a delusion.

Jeremiah spoke out against the false peace of his day.

<sup>NAU</sup> *Jeremiah 6:13 "For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely.*

<sup>14</sup> *"They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace.*

The Living God is the only true source of peace, and He is the initiator of peace. We are the ones who are at war, we are the ones who have the problem, not God.

Through God's grace, He helps us, fallen creatures that we are; by reconciling us to Himself. The God of peace helps us to experience His peace.

*NAU Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*NAU Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,*

*<sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,*

*<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

*<sup>17</sup> AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;*

One more aspect of this peace that is part of God's nature (since there's such a tendency to focus in the tranquility that it produces) is the fact that it produces orderliness; it provides **stability** in addition to **tranquility**.

Consider these final verses on the subject.

*NAU 1 Corinthians 14:33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

Context: the control of the spiritual gifts.

*<sup>NAU</sup> Colossians 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

*<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

More insight into what the attribute of peace in God's character accomplishes when we see what it is to do in us.

Albert Barnes- The word rendered here "rule" is commonly used in reference to the Olympic and other games. It means, to be a director, or arbitrator of the public games; to preside over them and preserve order, and to distribute the prizes to the victors. The meaning here is, that the peace which God gives to the soul is to be to us what the umpire, or governor at the games was to those who contended there. It is to preside over and govern the mind; to preserve every thing in its place; and to save it from tumult, disorder, and irregularity.

The thought is a very beautiful one. The soul is liable to the agitations of passion and excitement-like an assembled multitude of men. It needs something to preside over it, and keep its various faculties in place and order; and nothing is so well fitted to do this as the calm peace which Christ gives, a deep sense of the presence of God, the desire and the evidence of his friendship, the hope of his favor, and the belief that he has forgiven all our sins. The "peace of God" will thus calm down every agitated element of the soul; subdue the tumult of passion, and preserve the mind in healthful action and order-as a ruler sways and controls the passions of assembled multitudes of people.<sup>3</sup>

## ***The Acts of God***

That concludes the attributes of God. Next, let's take a look at another essential component of Christian Theology.

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Barnes, D.D., *Barnes Notes* (Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft, 1997).

## The Acts of God. What is essential to believe about the **Acts of God; the things He has done?**

What I really want to do is focus primarily on one singular act of God. I chose this as a heading because it's common to do so, but for our purposes we're going to be zeroing in on one thing.

Before doing so I want to establish the basis for the category we're about to cover.

Theologians have a word they use when they talk about why it is God *does* everything He does. It is a word derived from several scriptures passages, and that word is **“Decree.”**

*<sup>NAU</sup> Ephesians 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*

It's the last part of that verse (among others) that supports the concept of God's decree.

The decrees of God is simply the fact that his eternal purpose's, according to the counsel of his will, for his own glory, has been foreordained to come to pass.

His decrees have two aspects:

(1) The directive will of God. There are some things in which God is the author; that He actively brings about the events.

(2) The permissive will of God. Even though God has determined all things, He may actively bring them about Himself, or He may bring them about through secondary causes. Sinful acts, for example, do not frustrate the plan of God, but neither is God the author of them. They are within the scope of God's decree and are part of His eternal plan

and purpose, but man is nonetheless responsible for sinful acts. Hence, “a distinction must be made between the decree and its execution.”

I know there’s a lot in this, but we’re only using this as a spring board to something else.

This means that God designed things with a goal in mind.

### ***God is Creator***

This fact is the support for one single “act of God” we’re covering today: that **God is Creator.**

Many of God's attributes are centered around how He manages His creation. But equally as essential as His holiness, His love, His transcendence, etc., is God as Creator.

Is it really essential to believe that God is Creator? YES! Can't we accept the existence of God without being dogmatic about origins? The answer is NO!

We start this segment of our study at the beginning--the genesis; in the Book of **Genesis 1:1--turn to: read.**

*<sup>NAU</sup> Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Interestingly, Pastor Mark taught on the subject creationism this past Wed. Since he stole some of my material I'm going to steal some of his (jk).

Mark made the statement that the *"subject of God as Creator is utterly foundational to the entire understanding of God and His will and divine plan."* This statement is a fact.

Throughout much of history, but even more particularly today, the scientific community has had much conflict with the testimony of scripture.

There have been many benefits derived from the scientific community. But man's ability to experiment, learn, test and come up with solutions to things lies in the fact that God gave us the ability to do so when He commanded Adam and Eve in Genesis--  
**turn to-- Gen 1:27-29: read.**

*NAU Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

*28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

*29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;*

Before we look at some comments about this essential quality of God's acts, let's look at what He says about His act of creation. I had to be very selective about the verses I picked because the Bible has so many of them we never would have finished today (or next week).

Starting with: **Turn to**

*NAU Psalm 24:1 A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.*

*2 For He has founded it upon the seas And established it upon the rivers.*

*NAU Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.*

<sup>NAU</sup> Psalm 102:25 *"Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.*

<sup>NAU</sup> Psalm 146:5 *How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God,*

<sup>6</sup> *Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever;*

<sup>NAU</sup> Isaiah 45:11 *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.*

<sup>12</sup> *"It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands And I ordained all their host.*

<sup>NAU</sup> Isaiah 45:18 *For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), "I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

<sup>19</sup> *"I have not spoken in secret, In some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek Me in a waste place'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, Declaring things that are upright.*

<sup>20</sup> *"Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, Who carry about their wooden idol And pray to a god who cannot save.*

<sup>21</sup> *"Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.*

<sup>22</sup> *"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.*

<sup>23</sup> *"I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.*

Here is a run down of the biblical tenets on the doctrine of creation.

1. Nothing in the material universe is eternal.
2. God created all things in heaven and earth
3. In this creation, He brought into existence that which before had no existence.
4. Thus, creation, properly speaking, is the doctrine that by His own will and word, the Eternal, Sovereign, and Almighty God called into existence such things as He pleased without the use of preexisting materials (Ex-Nihilo: Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing.").

*NAU Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

*NAU Genesis 1:6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."*

*NAU Genesis 1:9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.*

*NAU Genesis 1:11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so.*

From this it is evident that the entire material universe, in all its parts, is neither uncaused, nor accidentally caused. **It is God-caused.** Such a statement at once brings us into conflict with the theory of evolution, for at the bottom of that theory lies the notion that something other than God is eternal.

One eminent scientist put it this way: "In the beginning... hydrogen!" From such an auspicious beginning, all other things are said to have evolved, following a course which was not predetermined by any rational power but which nevertheless became more and more complex.

Such, in the most basic terms, are the two views of the origin of things-- though, in truth, what God reveals cannot be termed a "view," and what man proposes to replace God's revelation is hardly worth calling a "view," since the word carries in it the idea of something seen.

Obviously rebellion against God is an expression of blindness, not of sight.

One account of mans willful blindness, the evolutionary notion has gained wide acceptance as the scientific statement of the case, while the biblical revelation has been shrugged off as blind religious faith, unworthy of serious consideration.

It is clear that this is because of willful blindness. By the plain testimony of God's word and by the concrete findings of modern physics, the theory of evolution is determined to be most UNscientific.

Of course, the only way we can really know anything about the origin of things is by divine revelation. No man was there to record the event for us. Science, properly so called, can deal only with what is observable and repeatable and so cannot make any statements on the subject of origins; a subject outside its province.

In the Bible, we have the divine revelation, and it gives us God's truth about His creation.<sup>4</sup>

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Let us also consider the following:

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Ambassador Emerald Intl., 2002).

God as creator is established at the outset of the Bible, leaving no room for doubt.

The importance of biblical creationism is that it answers the fundamental questions of human existence. 1. How did we get here? Where did we come from? 2. Why are we here? Do we have a purpose, and what is the cause of all our problems? Are the issues of sin and salvation important? 3. What happens to us when we die? Is there life after death?

Genesis 1:1 gives us three great truths which are the foundations of biblical creationism and the Christian faith. First, we learn of the oneness of God. This stands in contrast to the polytheism and dualism of modern humanist philosophy. Second, we learn of the personality and attributes of God in contrast to pantheism, where God is imminent in the world but is not transcendent to the world. Last, we learn of the omnipotence of God in contrast to the idols that modern humanists hang on to and worship. This one verse tells us that God is eternal—He was before, is now, and always will be—and that He created all that is out of nothing by His spoken word.<sup>5</sup>

**Close with some scriptures:**

**Job 12:7-10; and lastly...**

**Job 28:1-28**

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<sup>5</sup> CARM.org