

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

Who Is God?

January 31, 2021

Who Is God? This is not a question of WHETHER God exists, but one of who God actually is. I hope this study expands your understanding, helps you grow closer to God, as well as assists you in sharing with others.

Let's start with an illustration

There is an old TV crime show from the 1970s called "Columbo." Detective Columbo wears a rumpled overcoat, smokes a stump of a cigar, and acts confused and uninformed most of the time. Underneath, he is expert at solving very complex crimes. He uses his powers of observation and logic to figure out the chain of events, and the people involved, to analyze exactly what happened. By collecting bits of evidence and studying the witnesses and suspects, he is able to unwind even the most elaborate schemes.

Got it? OK, let's pretend we are detectives, and we are going to use our analysis skills to profile God. We'll look at 'what God does' and the 'evidences' He gives us to understand just who and what we are dealing with. All this evidence will give us a true understanding of His character and actions, and what to expect from him.

Before we get started, I will share that, as a lifelong student and teacher of the Bible, I find one thing that is 100% consistent with people who either disbelieve God, or have a problem with God: They simply don't KNOW God. As a result, what they disbelieve is actually a false notion of God, and not the true God. As a modern culture, we spend more time exploring UFOs, Bigfoot and Santa Clause than getting to know God. Why? Perhaps, as we learn who God really is, that answer will emerge. Let's put on our rumpled overcoat and proceed.

God is a Communicator

The scientist said to God: “We have become so advanced, so modern, so capable, that we no longer need you. Science can even create life without you!”

God said; “OK, how will you create life?”

The scientist replied; “First, we take some dirt, then we.....”

“Stop right there.” countered God. “Make your OWN dirt.”

Before God created it, nothing that we can perceive existed. He created, from HIS OWN resource, all matter, energy, and time. Yes, even time. It’s difficult for mere humans, no matter how well educated, to conceive of God being outside of time. He created all of “eternity” before you were born. He created all of “eternity” going forward. And, He sees it all at once. We humans see it minute by minute, day by day, year by year. God sees the beginning and the end simultaneously. And, He tells us about it in His WORD, the Bible; from creation until the end of this earth’s existence. Yes, it’s in there, and I’ve put some quotations in **bold** as we go.

“You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” James 4:14

I like to illustrate this concept of eternity past, and future, in a classroom by stretching a string from one corner to the farthest opposite corner of the room. The starting point represents eternity going backward from creation and the opposite end represents eternity going forward without end. Then, I put a piece of tape somewhere in the middle to represent the lifetimes of the people present in the room. God sees all of this expanse of time at once. He created time and everything we can perceive. Our lives are but a short blip in this massive expanse, yet, God knew you, and loved you, before putting it all into motion.

All the history in the Bible is accurate. All the prophecies told thousands of years ago have played out, or are currently playing out, just as they were foretold. And, the Bible contains prophecies that have yet to play out. Every serious student of the Bible expresses amazement at how accurately the Bible communicates. Even the Bible, itself is a miraculous book – a topic we will take up in a future study.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Revelation 22:13

OK, detectives, we are starting off with some powerful evidence of who God is. He communicates who He is. He's so powerful that man can scarcely describe Him. He Gave us the Bible to understand Him Fully. Let's keep going.

God is a Loving Creator, and a Loving Father

When God was considering whether to create the universe, the planets, energy, time and life, He had four options:

1. Do nothing. He could have simply abandoned the idea
2. Create an environment that was 100% good all the time. Put humans in that environment and they could only do that which was good.
3. Create an environment in which good and evil can exist together. Put humans in that environment and give them no choice but to do good all the time.
4. Create an environment in which good and evil can exist together. Put humans in that environment and give them freedom of choice.

Now, in which of these four options can RECIPROCAL LOVE exist? A key characteristic of God is love. He wanted his prize creation (humans) to love Him in return. That means free choice is required. So, #4 is the ONLY option that allows humans to truly love their creator and heavenly father in return. #2 & #3 involve no love on the part of the human.

We see this same dynamic in human families. Parents want their children to love them, and they try to let them experience life in its fullness as they mature. The parent knows that locking the child inside the house will NOT ensure that the child will love them in return. It produces a warped, undeveloped child.

A lot of people say; "I just can't accept a god that would allow evil, or suffering, or wars, or poverty.....etc." God gives us the choice! Some choose to rebel against God, then wickedness takes over their lives. Out of love He gives people a choice and, unfortunately, many choose evil. It's not God's will, but rather, the choice of the person....

"Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and

your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.”

Isaiah 59:1-2

Simple concept: Do you want evil and wickedness to stop? Choose God, not evil and wickedness! Don't start by expecting others to do it. Start with yourself.

“How can allowing evil in the world be loving?” Good question; Look back at #3 and #4, above. See the word “could.” God did not create the world with evil in it. He created a world in which evil and good can exist together. He gave humans the choice. You do not plant a garden with weeds in it, do you? But, the fertile soil is a place in which tomatoes and weeds can coexist.....right? As the steward of the garden, you can be diligent and keep it weed free. Or, you can be absent and the weeds will take over!

Detective Columbo sometimes looks at what something IS NOT in order to help him understand what it is. If one argues that, since God created everything - and evil exists - He must have created evil. That does not stand up under intelligent scrutiny. Stick with me, detective:

Did you know that there is no such thing as darkness? We can only measure the varying levels of light, which is energy. Darkness is not energy. Darkness is a word we use to describe the absence of light energy. Darkness is not a thing. Darkness cannot defeat light. Even the faintest light can penetrate every crevice of a room...driving out “darkness.”

Likewise, there is no such thing as cold. We can only measure heat energy. If there is a lot of heat energy, we call it HOT. If the energy is low, or non-existent, we have a word; “cold.” But, cold, like darkness, is not a thing. Cold is the word we use to describe the absence of a thing; heat energy.

Likewise, God is creative and loving energy. We see the vastness of what He has created. We see the love He put into His creation in the way that life multiplies itself, the way that parents love each other, and their children, etc. When the human heart contains God, by choice, we can observe the loving words and actions of people in a myriad of ways.

When a human chooses to reject, or rebel, against God, his/her life lacks God's love energy. This “cold” and “darkness” are actually a vacuum within the person, which displays itself in the form of evil, wickedness, selfishness, etc. Don't blame

God for the evil in the world. We each have a choice; to love, or reject God. The consequences are simply the natural result. It's like the garden you either tend well, or let go. Will the weeds take over? Your choice.

“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the Lord. “These are the ones (the people) I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at (respect) my word.”
Isiah 66:2

Our evidence is growing; God chose to create us and put us in an environment in which we have choice; God or evil. Our choice indicates our love and respect for God. God created us to be with Him. It is our choice of 'no God' in our life that produces wickedness and evil.

As is often part of Det. Columbo's analysis process, the real suspect starts to emerge....and it's not always the LIKELY suspect. OK, detectives, we now understand how evil and wickedness grow in the world.

Sure, all God would have to do to stop evil is to use his power to wipe it out, but would that not be a manifestation of #3? In fact, if God reached down from heaven and removed all the sinners from the world....would you be one of them? HMMM.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Yes, even when God allows evil...due to human choices...it serves a purpose. Perhaps it is you and I who should become what God wants us to be, first?

There's more evidence of who our God is. Let's keep going....

Whose Image Is on YOU?

God created you. In the beginning, He created our first set of parents.

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

Then, he put into these parents the same kind of reproductive capabilities he put into all of His life creations.

“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.” Genesis 1:28

In all of this, He already knew YOU from before the creation of the earth! Imagine; God planned for you. He knew you when you were conceived.

“For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will,” Ephesians 1:4-5

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” Jeremiah 1:5

You are created in God’s image. This means you have intelligence, talents and unique gifts, the capacity to love, the ability to think on your own, etc. You are a free agent, and can decide how do live your life. You also have a God-shaped open space inside you that can either be filled by God, or filled by selfishness, lies, deceit, etc. It’s your choice. God gives you this choice out of love, hoping you’ll love Him in return.

There is another characteristic of God that is in you; a soul. God is a physical person. We know this because we are made in His image into a physical person. God is also a spiritual being; meaning He is timeless. Humans, also have souls. It is the spiritual element of our being that is timeless. Many humans are not aware of their souls until they start communicating with God. Your soul is like the electricity that is in the wires in your house; you take it for granted, it’s invisible, yet, it is a great source of energy.

“So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” 1 Corinthians 15:45

“The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, Searching all the innermost parts of his being.” Proverbs 20:27

So, God has known you from before the creation of the earth. He has set in motion the creative processes that led to your birth and life. He has a purpose for you in this earthly life that will prepare you for your eternal life. Your soul is the energy that is life inside our earthly body that will live on in eternity. God loves

his humans so much that He wants each of us to CHOOSE him, here and now, and then live with Him for the rest of eternity.

OK, detective, is your evidence bag getting full, yet? Let's get to the punch line...

God Has A Purpose for Your Life

I can hear Det. Columbo now, as he scratches his head through disheveled hair; "Ahhh, just one more thing. I gotta believe there is something I haven't discovered yet." As he paces around the room full of suspects, he says; "There's just gotta be a REASON for all of this. The part I don't get...is....the MOTIVE! If I can just figure out the motive...."

Have you analyzed this part, yet? What's the motive? Why.....WHY is God doing all this?

Well, we are made in the image of God, so let us use simple observation and logic to point the way. Do you have a pet? If so, why? Is it not because you love the pet...and it loves you back? Doesn't it warm your heart when you can do something for your pet and they show joy, appreciation, and obedience to you?

"The LORD has made all for Himself" Proverbs 16:4

Are you a parent? WHY?? That's a life-time commitment! You did it out of love for your spouse, first, then you love that child even more than your own self. How does it make you feel when your child hugs you? How does it make you feel when they give you a drawing, or a mug or T-shirt that says; "World's Greatest Mom, or Dad?"

We can understand God as a father when we look at ourselves in a similar role.

And, what are you motivated to do with, and for, your pet or child when they show love and respect toward you? Yeah, you want to bless them all the more! God wants this WITH you. He wants to bless you with the life He has planned for you. Then, He wants to bless you all the more.

"Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the lord, the first, and with the last; I am he." Isaiah 41:4

That does NOT mean “no fun, no enjoyment.” It means you will live life fuller because you are more complete.

In His greatness and power, God created everything – Creator. In His great love, God created humans – Father. In his great love, God also gave humans free will – for reciprocal love. God’s motive for all this is so that all of His creation will testify WHO HE IS. So that all of creation, even humans, would glorify God fully; serve as a witness of His greatness and love, and to LOVE HIM IN RETURN (for all this life and into eternity).

We are not capable of running our lives in the way we were designed....from before the creation of the earth....entirely on our own – without God in it. God wants you entirely fulfilled in HIM so that you can GLORIFY Him. When you glorify God with the life He has for you, you will naturally draw others to make the same kind of decision.

One of the things God wants of us is to reproduce. We reproduce, not just by having children, but by living fulfilled lives in the presence of others.

So, detective, we’ve gotten the story straight.

Who is God? He is the Father who loves you enough to let you choose!