

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry Light Unit 1
Introduction to Theology
Week 1 – Theology Proper

Introduction

Definition:

Why do we need to have an accurate view of God?

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Psalm 149:1-5

(Ex. 33:18) Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"

(Ex. 34:6-8)** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; (7) who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished ... (8) And Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.

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Contrasting Views of God

- **Monotheism (also called "theism"):**
There is one infinite-personal-righteous God. This view of God is found only among religions which are based on the Bible. Judaism and Islam are both monotheistic, but differ from Christianity in many important areas.

Man's problem: true moral guilt before a righteous God.
Solution: Our guilt requires cleansing or forgiveness.

- **Deism:**
God exists, but he is uninvolved in human affairs. Deists recognize that a Supreme Being exists who created the universe, but view him as uninvolved with human affairs. Deism was an 18th century way-station between theism and atheism. Many Americans are still practical deists.
- **Atheism:**
No God exists. Reality is confined to that which can be empirically verified. This view is also called "naturalism," emphasizing its denial of the supernatural. This is a very recent worldview and it undergirds much western scientism.
- **Animism:**
Spirits inhabit animate and inanimate matter. They are the cause of most good and ill fortune, and humans must placate them or control them to succeed in life. Most tribal religions (including Native American spirituality) are animistic. Most animism is occultic in the sense that humans can control the spirit world through attaining certain knowledge, sympathetic ritual, etc.

Man's problem: placating and controlling the spirits.
Solution: ritual sacrifice, occultism, sympathetic magic, etc.

- **Polytheism:**
There are many personal (but not infinite) gods. The Greek and Roman pantheons are well-known examples of polytheism. This belief appears to be a projection of human characteristics (including limitations and character flaws). The gods are personal yet finite anthropomorphic projections of fallen humanity.
- **Pantheism/monism:**
God is the impersonal life-force that permeates the world. God is infinite, yet impersonal. Ultimate reality is oneness; all distinctions (including persons) are illusory. Classical Hinduism and Buddhism are well-known examples of pantheism. Western notions of the ultimate state in pantheistic religions is often mistaken. Nirvana (Buddhist) and Moksha (Hindu) are not personal, conscious states of bliss but a loss of individual personality when we are merged with the all.

Man's problem: the illusion of individuality; ignorance of oneness with all that is. Solution: enlightenment regarding our oneness

- **Dualism:**

Ultimate reality is equal opposing forces or persons. Dualism recognizes the moral and personal distinctions that pantheism denies, but elevates them to ultimate reality. For example, Zoroastrianism's Ahriman and Ohrmazd are opposing persons). Taoism's yin and yang, and Star Wars' "The Force" are examples of theological dualism.

Man's problem: imbalance between forces.
Solution: restoring balance.

- **New Age:**
New Age views of God are often drawn from a variety of influences - pantheism, animism, dualism, occultism and western individualism.

Man's problem: we don't realize that we're already god.
Solution: realize you are God and create your own reality.

- **Postmodernism:**
Ultimate reality is purely a matter of individual/social perception. There is nothing "out there" independent of human/social construction. Therefore, western monotheism and eastern pantheism, though logically contradictory, are mutually "true" in the sense that they are the paradigms through which different societies construct reality. It should be obvious why this view is more sympathetic to eastern religions (which assert that all religions are imperfect attempts to describe ultimate reality)—both deny the ability to have "the truth" about God and reject the law of non-contradiction.

Remember: You will not meet people who are purists in any of these areas but you'll hear hints of many of these views in what they say. Part of our job as evangelists is to help people sort through and understand their own beliefs and see key ways the biblical world view is different.

The Self-Revelation of God

Speculation:

Revelation:

- **General Revelation:**
- **Special Revelation:**

General Revelation	Special Revelation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • available to all people • revealed through creation or from within • less detailed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • available to some individuals • revealed in scripture • more detailed

What can be known from general revelation?

(Rom. 1:19-20) 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.

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(Rom. 2:14-15) Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, (15) since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

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Note:

What are the limitations of general revelation?

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Special Revelation: The unity & diversity of God

What is meant by the “trinity?”

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(Millard Erickson) "Those aspects of God which we never fully comprehend should be regarded as mysteries that go beyond our reason rather than as paradoxes which conflict with reason."¹

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The father is described as God (Matt. 6:26,30), Jesus is God (Heb. 1:8; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9), the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3,4; 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:19,20; 2 Cor. 13:14; Jn. 16:9-11), but God is one (Deut. 6:4).

Scripture's emphasis on the UNITY of God

(Deut. 6:4) Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

(Isaiah 45:5) I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.

(1 Timothy 2:5) For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

(James 2:19) You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker, 1st edition) p. 338.

Scripture's emphasis on the *diversity* of God.

Old Testament:

(Genesis 1:26,27)** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

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(Joshua 5:13-15) Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"(14) "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"(15) The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

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(Isa. 48:12-16) Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. (13) Surely My hand founded the earth, And My right hand spread out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand together. (14) Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall carry out His good pleasure on Babylon, And His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. (15) I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. (16) Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit.

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New Testament:

(Matt. 28:19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the *name* of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit ...

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Analogies:

- **Diagram:**

- **Other Illustrations:**

Identical twins

Water's "triple point"

Marriage

Summary: Why is the trinity important?

The Trinity...

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The attributes of God

Omniscient (Unique)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence: (Ps. 147:5; Isa. 40:28)

(Psa. 147:5) Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Application:

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Omnipresent (Unique)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence:

(Psa. 139:7-10) Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? (8) If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. (9) If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, (10) even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

Application:

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Omnipotent (Unique)

Definition:

Note:

Scriptural Evidence: (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17)

(Jer. 32:17) "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you."

Application:

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Sovereign (Unique)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence: (Gen. 14:19; Acts 17:24-28; Ps. 24:1ff)

(Acts 17:24-28) "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. (25) And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. (26) From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. (27) God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. (28) 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"

Application:

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Loving (common)

Definition:

Note:

Scriptural Evidence: (1 Jn. 4:8,16; Isaiah 30:18-21;49:14-16)

(1 Jn. 4:8,16) Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love . . .(16) And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Application:

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Righteous (common)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence: (Mark 10:18; Job 34:10; Hab. 1:13)

(Hab. 1:13) Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.

Application:

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(Ravi Zacharias) "Not all atheists are immoral, but morality as goodness cannot be justified with atheistic presuppositions. An atheist may be morally minded, but he just happens to be living better than his belief about the nature of man warrants. He may have personal moral values, but he cannot have any sense of compelling and universal moral obligation. Moral duty cannot logically operate without a moral law; and there is no moral law in an amoral world." (Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage* [Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1990], p. 61,62)

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Immutable (unique)

Definition:

Note:

Scriptural Evidence: (Heb. 13:8; James 1:17; 1 Sam. 15:29)

(1 Sam. 15:29) He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.

Application:

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Veracity (common)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence: (Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim 2:13)

(Heb. 6:18) God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

(Titus 1:2) . . . a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time . . .

Application:

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Self-Existent (unique)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence: (Ex. 3:14; Jn. 8:58; Isa. 40:28; Acts 17:25)

(Ex. 3:14) God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Application:

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Just (common)

Definition:

Scriptural Evidence: (Rom. 2:1-5; Gen. 18:25; Ps. 19:9)

(Rom. 2:2,5) Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth . . .(5) But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

(Gen. 18:25) Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Application:

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Eternal (Unique)

Definition: God is a being who always has and always will exist

Scriptural Evidence: (Ps. 90:2)

(Psalm 90:2) Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Application:

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NOTE:

Memory Verses

Ex. 34:6-8** - God's character is awesome and worthy of worship. God is both just and merciful in his dealings with humans.

Gen. 1:26,27** - God exists as more than one Person.

Assignment

- Complete the *Genesis 3-11 Assignment*.
- Begin working on the *Church Visitation Assignment*. This assignment is due on the final week of class and required to pass the course.