

## God the Father--YHWH

In order to study the nature of God the Father, it is first necessary to investigate the proofs for God's existence. The traditional rationalistic proof is the cause/effect argument that everything that we see has been caused by something. If you take that back as far as you can go, eventually there must be an original cause for the cause. God existed outside of time as we know it so He is the original Great Designer who caused all of creation. Anyone can look at nature and life and see that it has an observable design and purpose, so there must be a Designer. The anthropological argument is that man is a moral, intellectual being with religious instincts and a conscience that reflect his Maker. Paul uses this argument in Romans 2:15 saying man shows "the work of the Law (of God) written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness".

We would certainly expect the Scriptures to affirm the existence of God, and so they do in many passages like the entire book of Exodus. God spoke to Moses in chapter 3, and all through the book God was making His presence known, doing miracles, and giving instructions. Later in the history of Israel, God spoke through the prophets repeatedly as He did through Isaiah saying, "You are my witnesses declares the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I Am God, I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides Me." (Isa.43:10-11)

The existence of God is supported by human intuition as Solomon said in Eccl.3:11, "God has set a sense of eternity in the hearts of men." Paul said it in Romans 1:19, "that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it known to them."

The Scriptures make it clear that the God of Israel is the one and only true God. The very name I AM has the connotation that there is none like Him, and He alone is self-existent and eternal. He alone is self sustaining, dependent on nothing else in His being. The story of the Exodus proves this out as YHWH (the consonants for I AM) alone emerges over all the Egyptian gods as YHWH does miracles that prove His power over each of the supposed gods of Egypt. The text repeatedly gives the purpose statement of the miracles as "so all will know that YHWH is God alone". The question remains then "What are all these other gods that sinful mankind has been worshipping throughout history? Paul explains it in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, "we know that there is no such thing as an idol, and that there is no God but one."; then in ch.10:20, "the things they sacrifice are to demons and not to God". I always get a kick out of Isaiah's take on idols in Isaiah 44:9-20, where he remarks that men go chop down a tree that God created, then they use half the wood for fires to keep warm and to cook food with, then make furniture with part, then take the rest and fashion idols which they later bow down and worship. You have to admit that God must get a laugh out of most of the stuff arrogant people do apart from Him.

## The Greatest Name

Historically names ascribed attributes to people as to what they did or what they looked like, or what they had accomplished. The most profound name that is rich with meaning is definitely YHWH, the name of the one true God. The Psalmists constantly record that

the name of God is everlasting, great, awesome, holy, powerful, and majestic. In Exodus 34:6-7, the glory of God passed before Moses and God proclaimed His name as He said, "The Lord, the God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (justice)" Some of the other names used for God in Scripture are: the Ancient of Days, Everlasting God, God of all comfort, God of Glory, God of gods, Lord of lords, the God of justice, peace, and truth, Abba (Daddy), the Alpha and the Omega, and the Good Shepherd.

### But How Does God Make himself Known to Me ?

Even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century after Christ, God is revealing Himself in many ways. Romans 1:18-32 tells us that God is constantly revealing Himself in three ways: within our hearts, as we observe nature and the immensity of the universe, and a moral sense that God gave to humans that are created in His image. Psalm 66:5 invites us all to come and see the works of God, not just in creation, but God is constantly doing good works for His people, as Paul wrote, "all things work together for good to those who love the Lord". We have the eyewitness accounts in the New Testament of what Jesus said and did. Paul said to the church at Corinth that there were over 500 witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, most of which were alive at the time of his writing so they could verify it. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, and James all testified to the deity of Christ, His miracles, and all the works of God in Christ. These were good sincere men that died for their testimony, and they would have hardly died for a lie. Peter wrote of hearing the voice of God from heaven affirming Jesus in his second epistle, "we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased', and we ourselves heard the utterance made from heaven". The Scriptures tell us, and we experience, the internal assurance of God within us, as Paul wrote in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The very fact of the unique bond between Christians testifies to God as John wrote, "God's love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit". We have the transference of God's love in us as Rom.5:5 says, "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit".

### The Attributes of God

The attributes of God are the qualities and characteristics of God. Love is the best known and most overriding attribute of God. In 1 John 4:8-10 we read that "God is love; by this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." God's love is unconditional and sacrificial which makes it supernatural. We don't experience this kind of love apart from God. People say they love each other, but it is conditioned on the subject. You love your spouse, but if he/she acts up bad enough, you will flee. Even your

children are greatly loved, but at some point bad enough behavior could turn you against them. Only God can perfectly love unconditionally. The greatest example of God's love is the sacrifice of His beloved Son for us. Can you even imagine love sacrificial enough to cause you to give up your child for some jerk who does not deserve it? That is off the charts of human experience.

Among the other unique attributes of God are His eternal nature, His pure goodness and righteous, and His holiness. God alone is self-existent and eternal. The rest of us had a beginning and were created, but God has always been and always will be. God is also perfectly good, righteous, and holy. We try to judge men according to how they "stack up" to each other, but no one is perfectly holy but God. He alone cannot lie, steal, be jealous, covet, or sin in any way.

God is also perfectly gracious and merciful. Mercy is not giving people what they deserve, and grace is giving people free gifts they don't deserve. God's grace and mercy are apparent throughout the Old Testament which is a historical record of the unceasing failure of Israel to keep the commandments of God. Nevertheless, God consistently was ready to show them mercy and give them grace whenever they were repentant and asked forgiveness. In the New Testament, God's mercy and grace are obviously shown through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. All He requires is the belief in and acceptance of the atoning work of Jesus done on their behalf.

The Psalmist, David, did a wonderful job of celebrating the attributes of God in Psalm 139. In verses 1-6 we read of God's omniscience. God knows everything about me inside and out. God knows everything I am thinking, everything I do, and everything I am going to do. His "knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it." In v.7-12, we read of the omnipresence of God. Wherever we go, God is there. I cannot escape Him no matter where I go—to the highest heaven or to the lowest grave. Night and day He is there. Then v. 13-16, David tells us of God's omnipotence. The all powerful God designed and created us all. He uses the imagery of the weaver to explain that God made us from scratch and we are "fearfully and wonderfully made". If you have ever studied anatomy you are no doubt amazed at the complexity and intricacy of the human body. Just think what would happen if God had designed your eyebrows to grow down? I hope that image is as funny to you as it is to me, but my point is that every little detail has order and a purpose. God even knows the days of my life and when it will be over (v.16).

#### Are Justice and Mercy Compatible ?

How can anyone be perfectly loving, gracious, and merciful, but also perfectly holy and just at the same time? God cannot overlook sin so there must be justice, but the Bible says that God is love, and God is gracious and merciful. God had a predetermined plan that only He could carry out for both justice and mercy to be accomplished through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus alone was suitable to accomplish this as the only person who was sinless and able to make a sacrifice of infinite value on our behalf. We praise God for, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom.5:8)

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