

WHO IS GOD?

- We have read what the Bible says about our salvation and how it is by grace through faith.
- We have also read about man and how there is nothing in man that can save him.
 - The Bible sets forth that man needs to be saved...he needs to be rescued by someone that is outside of himself.
- As was said on page 17, “For when we see God as he has revealed himself, **“What wonderfully impressed us under the name of wisdom will stink in its very foolishness.** Know God. Know yourself. Know yourself to know your need of God. Know God to know you are not gods.” That’s what Calvin means.²¹
- Since we know that we have a desperate and ultimate need for God...we need to ask the next question...*who is God?*

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (THEOLOGY PROPER)

- “The knowledge of God is ultimately the sum of all other doctrines; there is no sense, there is no meaning or purpose, in any other doctrine apart from this central, all-inclusive, doctrine of God Himself. There is no point in considering the doctrine of salvation, nor the doctrine of sin, unless we have started with the doctrine of God.”²²

How does the Bible introduce us to God?

- **Genesis 1-3** not only gives us an account of the beginning of all of mankind but also gives us an introduction to who God is. He is mentioned 32x’s in Gen. 1 alone. What can we learn about God from these first three chapters?
 - God is eternal
 - Genesis 1:1a “In the beginning God...”
 - Always been...never created...never a time when He was not...
 - There was nothing when God spoke something into existence.

²¹ Ibid.

²² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (2003) *Great Doctrines of the Bible* Vol. 1, Wheaton, IL, Crossway p. 47

- God is self-sufficient and creator
 - Genesis 1:1b "...God created..."
 - independent of anything...does not depend on anything for His actual being...He is the source of life for all other living being
- God is all powerful
 - Genesis 1:3 "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."
 - There is a God and He has spoken
- God designs
 - Genesis 1:5 "God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day."
 - Genesis 2:1-2 "Thus the heavens and earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."
 - Physics, laws of nature, humans over animals...He is intentional
- God's standards
 - Genesis 2:16-17 "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'"
 - His standards are a reflection of who He is
- God's authority
 - Genesis 2:7 "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."
 - Genesis 2:15 "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."
 - Genesis 2:21-22 "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man."
 - Genesis 2:9a "Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food..."
 - He created man and woman and placed them where He wanted them to be.

- He placed the waters and land where they would go.
- God's compassion towards man
 - Genesis 2:18 "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'"
 - Genesis 3:21 "The Lord God made garments for skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."
- God's holiness
 - Genesis 1:31 "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."
- God's relational with mankind
 - Genesis 1:26-27 'Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Knowing the incomprehensible God

- "Because God is infinite and we are finite or limited, we can never fully understand God. In this sense, God is said to be incomprehensible."²³
- It is for this reason that God would never have been known unless He revealed Himself.
- Romans 1:19 "because that which is known about God is evident within them; *for God made it evident to them.*"
- Matthew 11:27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and *no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*"
- The knowability of God is not found in the worlds or in man's wisdom.
- 1 Corinthians 1:21 "For since in the wisdom of God *the world through its wisdom did not come to know God*, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

²³ Wayne Grudem (1994) *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, p. 149

- **His greatness is incomprehensible**
- Psalm 145:3 “Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable.”
- **His understanding is incomprehensible**
- Isaiah 40:28 “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.”
- Psalm 147:5 “Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.”
- **Declarations of Scripture**
- Job 11:7-9 “Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea.”
- It is important to note that while God can never be known comprehensively or exhaustively, He can be known truly.²⁴
- **God is knowable by what He has revealed to man:**
- God’s revelation about Himself is true, accurate and trustworthy therefore He can be known truly and accurately
- When the Bible says that God is love (1 John 4:8); God is light (1 John 1:5); God is spirit (John 4:24); God is righteous (Rom. 3:26); these things are absolutely true.²⁵
- God can only reveal these things that are true about Himself.
- His own revelation about Himself can and should be trusted.
- Man was created to live with knowledge of God.
- Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
- We can know God and that He spoke so we can understand.
- **The Bible never seeks to defend or prove the existence of God, it simply states that He is and always has been.**
- 1 John 5:20 “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding *so that we may know Him who is true*; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

²⁴ *Biblical Doctrine* pp. 146-147

²⁵ Dr. Matt Waymeyer

- Jeremiah 9:24 “but let him who boasts boast of this, *that he understands and knows Me*, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.”
- There is general revelation and the need for special revelation to know God.
 - This is of the utmost importance for the Christian to understand for all aspects of their life. How can one truly know God and what knowledge brings them to salvation?
- This is where we would have to answer several questions, *can man be saved apart from special revelation? Is seeing God’s creation and/or our own inner conscience enough for us to be born again? Can my intellect and reasoning bring me to a right knowledge of God?*
- God is knowable because He made Himself knowable.
- We talked about this last time but it is very helpful to keep in our minds.
- **General revelation:** in my opinion, there is no better place to see the stark contrast between General and Special Revelation than **Psalm 19**.
- **Verses 1-6** speak of how we know God through nature
- **Verses 7-14** speak of how we know God through His word
- Not only do we have **Psalm 19**, Romans 1:18-20 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, *because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.* 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.”
- Between **Psalm 19** and **Romans 1**, we see that God has revealed Himself in both creation and our conscience. That is why man will stand before God without excuse as God either condemns him or redeems him.
- As Strong points out “The existence of God is a first truth; in other words, the knowledge of God’s existence is a rational intuition. Logically, it precedes and conditions all observation and reasoning. Chronologically, only reflection upon the phenomena of nature and of mind occasions its rise in consciousness.”²⁶

²⁶ A.H. Strong (1985) *Systematic Theology* Valley Forge, PA, Judson Press, p. 52

- Part of General Revelation is man himself; as we were all created in the image of God. Human nature is imprinted with a representation of God.
- Even though man is fallen and in a sinful state, he still bears marks of being created in God's image.
- Furthermore, Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 3:11** "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end."
 - "We feel like aliens in the world of time and yearn to be part of eternity. We feel the need for ourselves and our work to be eternal and yet are grieved to be trapped in time. We also desire to understand our place in the universe against the backdrop of eternity. But we cannot find out what God has done from beginning to end. That is, we are not able to discern any plan or pattern to all of this. God's purposes are outside our realm of control or investigation. We thus have a sense of alienation and bewilderment in time."²⁷
 - As he says, *we desire to understand our place in the universe against the backdrop of eternity*. In today's culture, the search for purpose and meaning is at an all-time high.
 - God put this in mankind so that they would search for Him.
- As Calvin says regarding man "[he] is a rare example of God's power, goodness, and wisdom, and contains within himself enough miracles to occupy our minds."²⁸
- General revelation is not something that is potential, as if the person has to recognize it in order for it to *be* revelation.
- General revelation is actual revelation. As Psalm 19:1 says...*the heavens declare*...The responsibility is not on God to reveal Himself so that people will know, He has already.
- **This is why people, all people, will stand before God without excuse. Nobody will be able to say that they did not know.**
 - God is knowable through the person and work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- **Special revelation** is revelation that identifies the source of wisdom, salvation and joy not as general, but being the actual Word of God.

²⁷ Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 299.

²⁸ John Calvin *Institutes of Christian Religion* Book 1, Chapter 5, section 3

- It is *special* because it is not granted to all mankind through natural means, but to select people through supernatural means who then, in turn, tell it to other people.²⁹
- **Christ is the mediator of divine (special) revelation:**
- Jesus said in Matt. 11:25-27 “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that *You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants*. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and *no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*.”
- Jesus and Peter in Matt. 16:15-17 “He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. “And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, *because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven*.”
- Special Revelation only takes place through the Son according to the Father’s will, revelation is an act of divine sovereignty, in which the Father hides himself from some sinners but reveals to others, not according to their worthiness but according to his good pleasure.³⁰
- Matt. 13:11 “Jesus answered them, “*To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted*.”
- **The Holy Spirit is the effective agent of Special Revelation in the Son.**
- 2 Pet. 1:21 “...for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men *moved by the Holy Spirit* spoke from God.”
- The church and both Special and General Revelation.
- General Revelation is there to show that there is a divine being. This can be used by Muslims, RCC, LDS, SDA, Deists and anyone else who desires to show a *higher power*.
- This is not the God of the Bible, the Christian God. While *proofs* of God have their place, it is not in the salvation of souls. We do not seek to prove the Bible or prove that God exists with the hope that one would be saved.

²⁹ J. Beeke *Reformed Systematic Theology*, p. 264

³⁰ Ibid. p. 267

- Remember back to Genesis 6:5 “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the *thoughts* of his heart was *only evil continually*.” Man cannot reason or logically think through a way to God. We are fallen, in every way.
- We must rely on the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to regenerate people from death to life. Jesus said “John 6:47 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.”