

Paradise Lost and Restored: Who is God? (Part 1)

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA March 30, 2014

I. Introduction

Who is God to you? Is He an impersonal force over this universe? Or perhaps He's personal, but like an absent Landlord, He's never around. Maybe you don't believe in God or maybe He exists, but who can know for sure. What if God did exist and what if He was very personal and what if He wanted to get to know you so that He could help you....would you like to know that God?

II. Man's Idea of God vs. God's Idea of God, One Leads to Confusion, the Other to Salvation

Man's idea of God, there are various theories about God: (1) there's one ultimate but impersonal force in the universe, (2) there are two equal but opposing forces in the universe (good vs. evil; mind vs. matter; spiritual vs. physical), (3) man is his own god; he's the ultimate being and life centers around him, (4) there is no God, (5) if there is a God, He cannot be known for certain, (6) there are natural, materialistic forces/laws in the world which explain everything, (7) God is everything and everything is God, (8) there are many gods, (9) you can mix and match the many different beliefs and practices about God, (10) God created everything but He doesn't interfere nor is He personally involved with His creation which continues and functions based on God's natural laws, and (11) there is one personal God who is both outside the universe yet He is everywhere; He is the sovereign creator, ruler and sustainer of the universe.

God's idea of God, His theological side, the world around us reveals there is a God. From DNA to the largest stars in the universe, all of it testifies to God's existence, Romans 1:19–20. But in order for us to know more about Him, God has to reveal Himself. That is, creation can only take you so far. After that, you need God to tell you who He is and what He's about. In fact, if you want to know who you are and what you're about, you need to consult God about this too. Fortunately, all this information is found in the Bible. If you've ever read the Bible, you've noticed that God never argues for His existence. Throughout the Bible His existence is always assumed. In fact, God goes further and says that everyone knows He exists, Romans 1:19–21.

So, who is He? This is not an exhaustive definition, but God is: *Life itself*, Genesis 1; 2:7 (Job 34:14–15; Isaiah 42:5; John 5:26). *Perfect*, Deuteronomy 32:4 (Psalm 18:30). *Infinite* and *Eternal*, Psalm 90:2 (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14; Acts 17:24–28; 1 Timothy 6:13–16). *Holy*, Leviticus 19:2 (1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:9; Isaiah 6:1–5). *Changeless*, Psalm 102:25–27 (James 1:17). *All-powerful*, Genesis 1. *Everywhere-present*, Psalm 139:7–12. *All-knowing*, Psalm 139:1–6 (Matthew 6:8; Colossians 2:2–3). *Sovereign*, Daniel 2:20–21 (Daniel 4:34–35). *Spirit*, John 4:24. *Light*, 1 John 1:5 (Genesis 1:3; John 1:4–5; 2 Corinthians 4:4–6). *Truth*, Psalm 119:160 (Titus 1:1–2). *Good*, Psalm 100:5. *Just*, Psalm 89:14 (1 Peter 1:17). *Wrath*, Romans 1:18. *Righteous*, Psalm 145:17.

God goes by many names. These three are commonly used in the Old Testament: Elohim which means "*mighty one*," Genesis 1:1. Yahweh or Jehovah which likely means the "*self-existing one*," Genesis 2:4. Adonai which means "*sovereign ruler*" or "lord," Genesis 15:2. In the New Testament the main ones used are: Theos which means "*god*," Matthew 1:23. Kurios which means "*lord*," John 1:28. Despotes which means "*master*," Luke 2:29.

Finally, God is *three distinct Persons yet He is one* God, John 6:27; Colossians 2:9; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6.

God's idea of God, His personal side, when we look at God through a theological lens with words like omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and immutability, we can start to view God as ever-present but also as ever-judgmental. Thus, He starts to become an ever-present Judge we fear. And when we see Him this way, we miss who He really is. Is He all-powerful and all-knowing? Absolutely! But all that power and knowledge is not without a consciousness that can relate to us on a personal level. This is why God sees, speaks, and hears, Exodus 3:1–14. It is also why He feels, Genesis 6:6. This is why God is: Faithful, Genesis 3:15; Luke 3:23–38, Merciful, Ephesians 2:4–5, Gracious, Nehemiah 9:17–19, and Forgiving, Colossians 2:13. Thus, at the core of His being, God is Love, 1 John 4:8–10. So, yes, God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, but He's also the Father of mankind, Acts 17:26–29. He wants to be a Loving Father to us all, in fact, one of His names is Abba which means "daddy," Mark 14:36.

And if you want to know just how personal God is, all you have to do is look at Jesus because God is also Jesus, Colossians 2:9. You see, God is not an omnipotent being in the sky who judgmentally looks down on you. No, that all-powerful and all-knowing being is close and He became flesh and blood. He stepped into your world to show you that He wanted to identify with you. His desire is to dwell with you so closely that He wants to give you His Spirit, Romans 8:9–11. What He's offering you is a never-ending relationship where you and Him become one, John 17:3; 20–21. And whatever you need to be truly fulfilled, He gives you, Colossians 2:10.

Adam and Eve had this. They experienced this oneness, this fulfillment, this love with God in the beginning, Genesis 2. But then they lost it, Genesis 3. However, God made a promise to us to give it back by means of His flesh and blood, Genesis 3:15. And now He has through His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, God did not, as some think, create this universe, wind it up and walk away. No, instead He's so personally involved with His creation that He became one of His creatures, He became man. He did it in order to rescue us from everything that is in with our lives, to cover the "nakedness and shame" that began in the Garden of Eden and has plagued us ever since.

The God of the universe becomes man to speak with a desperate woman, there was a woman who thought that her salvation, the answer to all her problems, was in the love of a man. If she could just find the right man and marry him, it would solve her identity crisis and her "nakedness and shame" would go away. The only problem was that she had tried six men and her "nakedness" hadn't gotten better, in fact, it got worse. This is why the God of the universe purposely went through "enemy territory," Samaria, on His way to Galilee. He needed to have a personal conversation with a Samaritan woman whose life was not going well, John 4.

When Jesus gets there, He's a relative stranger to her but He asks her for a drink. Everything about this meeting prevents Jesus from having this conversation: she's a woman alone, He's a Rabbi alone. She's a Samaritan and He's a Jew. She notes the problems in protocol but He begins to reveal who He is, someone who could end her thirst for men. She thinks He's speaking about human water, but He tells her that He's talking about a living water that will change her life. She keeps going down the path of literal water, but He keeps pointing to the problem that's plagued her all her life. She tries to avoid her "nakedness" by talking about theology, but He brings her back to the answer—oneness with God—and she finally relents and lets God enter her life.

III. Conclusion

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.