

Eight week Course for New Members

**Thursday's
February 1, 2018 - March 22, 2018**

Week Three: 2/15/2018

Lesson Three: What About The Godhead. God the Father

God the Father

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IV. Knowing and Obeying God

Is there a God? If so, what is He like? Does He care about us? What does He require of us? These are questions that everyone must face. The answer to these will determine the direction and goal of each life.

I. Evidence for God's Existence

A. We know there is a God because of the things which He has made.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). When we see a house we know that someone wise enough and strong enough built it. A house cannot exist without a builder. In the same way, when we see the sun, moon, stars, the earth, and all that is in the earth, we know they have a builder. Someone wise enough and strong enough made all these things. Only God has power to create the heavens and the earth. Therefore, we know there is a God when we see the things He has made.

B. We know there is a God because our hearts or conscience tell us.

People have always believed in a God. This has been true in every country and in every age. People have often had false ideas about God but they have always believed in Him. Read Romans 2:14-16

C. We know there is a God because the *Bible Reveals It*.

The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of God. The first statement is: "In the beginning *God ...*" (Gen. 1:1). It assumes it as a fact and asserts that "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God' " (Psa. 14:1). The Bible says that only a fool, ignorant of the facts, would deny God, and then not openly, but secretly in his heart. The Bible is written on the premise that the evidence for God is so strong that no informed person would deny His existence.

However, to those who will not accept the Bible teaching concerning God, it becomes necessary to examine added proof for His existence.

D. We know there is a God because He has revealed Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Bible says: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of

all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2)

E. We know there is a God because *Reason Teaches It*.

The law of cause and effect requires that back of every effect there must be a cause. The world is the effect. What is the cause? Did the world and this universe come into being by chance? Did nothing produce something? Or is there a master mind, which we call God, back of it? Reason would teach the latter. The Bible agrees: "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything" (Heb. 3:4).

F. We know there is a God because *Supreme Intelligence Indicates It*.

When we see a great house, we know there was a wise architect. When we hear a beautiful song, we know there was a composer. When we look at this earth, we know there was a creator. The earth is said to weigh about 6,570,000,000,000,000,000 (six sextillion, 570 quintillion) tons. Its dimensions: 8,000 miles in diameter and 25,000 miles in circumference. Yet the earth is more accurate in its movements than the finest and most delicate watch. The earth travels over 595,000,000 miles in a year's time as it circles the sun, yet it does not vary in the length of time it takes for each trip by as much as one second! If it were to vary one-half a second it would make scientific headlines around the world. It has done this for thousands of years! How can this be explained? A wise and powerful God is the most sensible answer.

G. We know there is a God because *Nature Proves It*.

The Psalmist declared: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands" (Psa. 19:1). Paul, in Romans 1:20, adds "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." As we look at the world about us we can be assured there is a God, and that He is powerful and wise.

People who reject this evidence are without excuse for their disbelief. Someone has written, “If the word ‘God’ were written upon every blowing leaf, embossed on every passing cloud, engraved on every granite rock, the inductive evidence that God is in the world would be no stronger than it is. When the human intellect thinks in terms of finality with the world as its premise, the ‘therefore’ of every syllogism will be ‘God.’ The universe is a big advertising poster spelling ‘God.’ ”

H. We know there is a God because *Intuition Requires it.*

Man intuitively recognizes a higher being and desires to worship it. This is true of the most pagan tribes. Paul found this to be true in Athens (Acts 17:23) among the pagan idol worshippers. Where did man obtain this knowledge and concept of a divine being? The animals do not have it. The fact that man alone of all creation is a religious being is evidence that this knowledge was placed within him by his designer, God. The atheist is unable to explain it otherwise.

This skeptical age is rejecting God while wading through an ocean of evidence for Him. It reminds one of the poem by Minot J. Savage:

*“Oh, where is the sea?” the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal clearness through.
“We’ve heard from old of the ocean’s tide,
And we long to look on the water’s blue.
The wise ones speak of the infinite sea;
Oh, who can tell us if such there be!”*

II. Names for God

The most common name for God in the Old Testament is “Yahweh” or “Jehovah.” This means the “self-existent one.” The question is often asked, ‘Where did God come from?’ The answer is that He didn’t come from anywhere or anyone. He exists within Himself and always has. With our limitations we find this hard to grasp, but this is one indication that God is unlimited. When Moses asked God for His name in Exodus 3:14, He said, “This is what

you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” This is another way of saying Jehovah—“the existing one.” This name clearly implies that God is eternal (Psa. 90:2).

The name “Elohim” is applied to God in Genesis 1:1 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. This means “the strong one.” This refers to His omnipotent “all-powerful” nature. This is especially used in connection with creation.

“Adon”—meaning “Lord, Master” is often applied to God in the Bible. This indicates His authority over man as well as all creation.

When you became a Christian, into whose name were you baptized? Into the name of “God”? No. Into the name of “Yahweh”? No. Into the name of “Allah”? A thousand times NO! Well, how about—into “**the name** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?” ABSOLUTELY! You see, in the Great Commission Jesus forever finalized the revelation of the threeness (Trinity) of God when he commanded us to baptize into the **one name** of THE FATHER, THE SON, and THE HOLY SPIRIT (Matt. 28:18-20). This is the Christian’s God!

III. The Nature of God

Physical creation can tell us there is a God. But it remains for the Bible—God’s revelation of Himself—to tell us what God is like in His person. Here are a few of His many attributes.

A. God is eternal!

God has always lived. He will always live. The Bible says of God: "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalms 90:2).

All people who live on the earth will grow old. All will die. But God can never grow old or die. The Bible says:

"You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You

are the same, And Your years will not fail" (Hebrews 1:10-12).

A. *His Unity—One God.*

There is but one God (Deut. 6:4). "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." The American Standard Version more accurately translated it: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." Yet there are three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The term "God" is applied to each of these (1 Cor. 8:6; John 1:1; Acts 5:3–4). The term "God" is used here as an expression of deity rather than as a proper name.

This idea of three persons but one God did not seem to disturb the writers of the New Testament. They apparently accepted it by faith realizing the inability of finite man to fully understand the nature of an infinite God. In some respects man is triune like God. Paul describes man as "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23). Man is a spirit with a soul and lives in a body. Yet he considers himself as one. This, however, is not fully understood by any one. If we cannot understand our own nature we should not be surprised at not understanding the nature of God. We accept Him by faith as we do the majority of things in this world.

B. *His Holiness.*

This is one of the greatest distinctions between the one true God and gods created by man. The gods that men create are sinful and weak like their creators. A study of Greek mythology which narrates the sinful natures of the gods on Mt. Olympus will confirm this. Presumably when man creates a god, he does not create one who will condemn him for his sins.

This is not true of Jehovah. While Israel was surrounded by pagan gods of unholy natures, Jehovah thunders from Mount Sinai, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2). The prophet Isaiah saw in the temple a vision of the Lord with the seraphim crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). The first petition for God in the Model Prayer is "Hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9).

It is the holiness of God that causes him to hate everything

that is sinful and evil and love everything that is pure and good and holy. The Psalmist sang to God, “You hate all who do wrong” (Psa. 5:5). It is God’s perfect holiness that makes it impossible for Him to be tempted by evil, much less to sin (James 1:13).

A woman dressed in a white satin dress abhors dirt much more than a ditch digger does. The cleaner one becomes in soul, the more he/she detests sin. Since God is completely holy, He has a burning hatred of all evil. The destruction of the world by the flood, and the final destruction of the earth by fire are expressions of God’s attitude toward sin because of His holiness.

The term “saint” in the New Testament means a “holy one” or one living a holy life. Every child of God who is living a holy life is a saint. As children of a holy God we are called upon to live like Him. “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy’ ” (1 Pet. 1:14–16).

C. His Love.

This is the supreme attribute of God. “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). God loves us. He has proved His great love for us by giving His Son to die for our sins. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [to pay the price—His death on the cross] for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Love comes nearer than any other characteristic to describing the nature of God (cf. Isa. 63:7–9). Love is the matchless motive that sent Jesus to save lost humanity (John 3:16).

The love of God is seen first in His sending Christ to earth to save man (1 John 4:9–10). His love is also seen in His adopting into the family of God those who obey the Gospel (1 John 3:1). His love is superior to any love man might have (Rom. 5:6–8).

We see God’s love in His providential care for all men and especially His care for the redeemed (Matt. 5:44–48; Rom. 8:28).

His repeated forgiveness of our sins comes from His love. King Hezekiah said, “In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back” (Isa.

38:17).

God's love for us inspires in us love for Him. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). His love also motivates us to love one another. "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11; cf. John 14:15).

D. *His Mercy.*

God loves us. Although He hates sin, He is merciful. He will forgive our sins if we truly repent (make up our minds to turn away from practicing sin and turn back to God). "The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy" (Psalms 103:8). God's love is the basis of His mercy as seen in John 3:16. Paul further states: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4–7).

Three great words are closely associated in the Bible: Love, mercy and grace. LOVE is the basis of His MERCY, and God extends GRACE (unmerited favor) because He is merciful.

The greatest expression of God's love, mercy, and grace was when Jesus came to atone for our sins. "This is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). God could have let us die in our sins, and He would have been just in doing it. But God chose to be merciful and save us even though we in no way deserved it.

God shows His mercy daily when He answers our repentant prayers for forgiveness. Our understanding high priest, Jesus, and the throne of grace are always ours "that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16). The Lord is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9, KJV). How wonderful is His mercy!

E. *His Power—Omnipotence...God is all powerful!*

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). We human beings are weak. There are many things we do not have the strength to do. But God has all power. He can do anything. By His great power, God created the heavens and the earth. By His great power, God created man. We can trust the promises of God, for He has the power to fulfill them.

God says in Genesis 17:1, "I am God Almighty." The term "Almighty" means there is no limit to His power. In Revelation 19:6, the heavenly host sang, "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns." It is this limitless power that enabled God to create the world in the beginning and maintain it today. The miracles of the Bible were performed because of God's power. People have difficulty believing the Genesis creation story and the Bible miracles because they have rejected the omnipotent God. Jesus said, "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

F. His Wisdom—Omniscience. God is all-knowing!

God knows everything, for God sees everything. It is possible to hide things from the eyes of men, but nothing can be hidden from God. "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He ponders all his paths" (Proverbs 5:21). "...God is greater than our heart, and knows all things" (1 John 3:20).

Paul sings a hymn of praise to God's wisdom in Romans 11:33, "Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" God's knowledge and understanding are unlimited. "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit" (Psa. 147:5).

God's knowledge is so great that it extends to little, insignificant things as well as great facts. Jesus says He sees the sparrow fall, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered (Matt. 10:30). John writes, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and *knoweth all things*" (1 John 3:20, KJV).

He knows all about us, even our thoughts. "You know when I sit down and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely,

O LORD” (Psa. 139:2–4).

G. His Omnipresence.

God is not a human being as you and I are. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). God does not have weaknesses and sicknesses of the body as you and I do. "...for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have...." (Luke 24:39). Being spirit God can be everywhere, He is always present. Jehovah declares, “ ‘Am I only a God nearby,’ declares the LORD, ‘and not a God faraway? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I can not see him?’ declares the LORD. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ declares the LORD” (Jer. 23:23–24). David in Psalm 139:7–10 could think of no place where he could go and be beyond the love and care of God. We are never far from God, as Paul told the pagan audience at Mars Hill: “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. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being’ ” (Acts 17:27–28).

God is unlimited by time because He is eternal, unlimited in power since he is omnipotent. His omniscience means that he is unlimited in knowledge, and His omnipresence informs us that He is not limited by space. “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God!” (Deut. 10:17).

H. His Faithfulness.

“Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deut. 7:9, ASV).

In the midst of constant change in every area of life it seems that nothing is stable. All of life seems built on shifting sand. But not so with God! Alexander von Humboldt, the explorer, related his experience with an earthquake in South America. As the earth beneath him rocked like a boat in the water, trees fell, rocks rolled; he felt that nothing was stable or dependable. Then he looked upward. The sun was still there, the sky was undisturbed. How like life that is! The things of this earth do change—God does not.

David says, “In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end” (Psa. 102:25–27).

The faithfulness of God is rooted in His immutability—His unchanging nature. Jehovah says, “I the LORD do not change” (Mal. 3:6). His methods and covenants with men may change, but His principles and character do not. Because He does not change, man can place his trust in every promise He makes. The omnipotence of God further assures His faithfulness. Men may not keep promises because they are unable through weakness to carry them out. God can perform anything He promises to do.

The Hebrew writer therefore could say with confidence, “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is *faithful*” (Heb. 10:23, emphasis added).

I. God is unchanging!

Everything in this world changes. Governments change when nations become independent and new leaders replace old leaders. Ways of living change. Habits and customs of people change. The weather changes. Styles of clothing change. Even our bodies change as we grow older. But God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. "For I am the Lord, I do not change..." (Malachi 3:6).

J. God is light!

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). There is no darkness (sin) in God. Therefore (for this reason) we can trust Him for He will not deceive (lie to or mislead) us.

K. God is holy!

"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

L. God is righteous!

God cannot do any wrong. He hates all sin. "For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright" (Psalms 11:7).

IV. Knowing and Obeying God

As we consider how great God is, we would agree with God's words in Jeremiah 9:23–24: " 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for in these I delight, declares the LORD.' "

Man's highest aim in life should be to "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

QUESTIONS—GOD THE FATHER

TRUE-FALSE

- ___ 1. The Bible assumes the existence of God.
- ___ 2. For every effect there must be a cause.
- ___ 3. There is little evidence from nature to tell us of God.
- ___ 4. It is easy to understand that God has always been.
- ___ 5. The Christian accepts by faith the nature of God.
- ___ 6. Man has no knowledge of God until he/she reads the Bible.
- ___ 7. Omnipresence means unlimited in space.
- ___ 8. Immutability refers to God's unchanging nature.
- ___ 9. The gods that men create are powerful and holy.

___ 10. The New Testament teaches that every one is a saint.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. In John 3:16, God's attributes of _____ and _____ are seen.
2. God's faithfulness is assured by His _____ and _____.
3. God's love for us should beget in us a love for _____ and for _____.
4. God's _____ is defined as unmerited favor.
5. God is not tempted by evil because of His _____.

Three Great Facts about God

By Wayne Jackson

How often do you take time to simply “meditate” upon God? Here are three important truths about God that you should consider and appreciate.

God: He Exists

Most people believe in God’s existence because, using their common intelligence, the evidence points in that direction. But can God’s existence be **proved**? His existence cannot be proved empirically (i.e., scientifically) as one might prove that water freezes at thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit. But if one uses his logical ability, he can make a case for God’s existence that is compelling—indeed irrefutable.

Throughout the history of mankind most people have believed in the existence of a superhuman, personal power. If one concedes that humans generally are rational, this universality of conviction must rest upon some reasonable basis. There are several lines of evidence that point to God.

Cause and Effect

In logic there is a principle that states: every effect must have an adequate cause. This is the basis of all science. This “law” of correct thinking bears a relationship to the origin of the universe. It is well established that the universe has not existed forever. Dr. Robert Jastrow, internationally known space scientist, declared that “modern science denies an eternal existence to the Universe.”

If the universe has not existed forever, how can its origin be explained? There are only two possibilities: it was self-created; or it was created by something or someone other than itself, and of a nature different than the **material**. However, no material thing is able to create itself. If that were possible, there would be evidence of such. But the First Law of Thermodynamics argues that matter is not now being created. Since matter could not have formed itself, it must have a **non-material** source, i.e., a “mind” cause. Great thinkers have concluded that this Mind is God.

Design

There is another logical principle called “the law of teleology.” It contends that when an object reflects a purpose, goal, or design, it must have had a designer. Things do not design themselves. A pair of pliers has two handles (with grippers), a bolt, and a nut. Everyone recognizes the design in this simple tool, and rightly concludes that it did not make itself.

There are millions of examples of design upon the earth. Consider the human body. The body has a number of intricately designed living systems that function in amazing harmony to facilitate the existence of the human person.

Life itself is a mystery that cannot be explained naturally. The late Dr. Edwin Conklin, a former professor at Princeton University, compared the so-

called “accidental” creation of life to the equivalent of an explosion in a printing shop producing an unabridged dictionary!

The human body is a highly organized machine consisting of some sixty trillion cells, each a tiny factory with many components that must work in harmony with precision and skill. Is this just an accident? Certainly not! Only the most gullible could believe that.

The average adult has some 206 bones. These provide an internal framework for the body, protecting the vital organs. They also function as levers, attachments for muscles, and they produce chemical elements for the welfare of the body. If a house cannot build itself, could mere “nature” build a human body?

The circulatory system contains some one hundred thousand miles of pipeline (arteries, veins, and capillaries), which course through the body, providing the cells with food and oxygen and removing wastes. Does anyone imagine that the pipe system beneath the city of San Francisco fashioned itself strictly by chance?

The nervous system consists of the brain, spinal cord, and the nerves—a tremendously complex arrangement (more complicated than the phone system of a major city) that transmits information by means of nerve impulses at the speed of 300 miles per hour from the brain to various parts of the body.

The brain itself is a vast library of information. Carl Sagan, an atheist, estimated that the human brain has the information equivalent of a library of some twenty million books. Does anyone believe that the Library of Congress came together by chance? Reflecting upon the brain, Oxford atheist professor, Richard Dawkins, in commenting upon the complexity of the brain, exclaimed: “If anyone doesn’t agree that this amount of complex design cries out for an explanation, I give up.” Unfortunately, he had no explanation.

Moral Sensitivity

There is, within all human beings, a sense of ethical “oughtness,” i.e., the awareness that there is a difference between “right” and “wrong.” Men may disagree on what constitutes right and wrong, but the concept of morality itself is universal. How can the presence of moral sensitivity be explained? There are but two possibilities: the “conscience” (i.e., the notion that right and wrong exist) either was implanted by the Creator at the time of humanity’s genesis, or else it merely “evolved,” and is a self-imposed ideology.

If man’s measure of good and evil is a self-manufactured impulse, then every person becomes his own “god,” setting the rules of conduct as he sees fit. While it is the case that morality is essential for the order and preservation of society, that by no means restrains the rebel who thinks he can violate common law and do as he pleases; and if he manages to escape

the temporal consequences of lawlessness, he believes he has no moral culpability. Atheist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre had it right: “Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist.”

The evidences for God’s existence are vast. Believe!

God: He Cares

For many people, the great obstacle to belief in God is the problem of suffering. If humanity suffers, can there be a God who really cares? Because men cannot subject all suffering to meaningful analysis, the assumption sometimes is made that there cannot exist a benevolent God.

The problem is framed like this: if God wishes to prevent evil, but cannot, he is not all-powerful; if he can prevent suffering, but will not, he is not good; if he has both the power and will to eliminate suffering, then **why** is such in the world? The fallacy of the argument is in the assumption that there is no good purpose to be served by allowing suffering in the world.

No one should be so presumptuous as to assert that man can **completely** understand the problem of suffering. Humanity is not privy to the entirety of the mind and purposes of God (Romans 11:33). Enough answers are provided in the Bible, however, to allow us to accept that inexplicable percentage on the basis of faith.

First, when one raises the question of suffering, he is appealing to some universal **system of justice** which suffering allegedly violates. But, if there is no God, hence no universal system of “rightness,” why would suffering be deemed evil? Consider carefully the following.

God is a being of love (1 John 4:8,16). But love allows freedom of choice, and where there is freedom, there is the **possibility** that **finite** beings will make wrong choices. Wrong choices can entail suffering. If all choices, good and bad, produced the **identical** effect, how would one ever learn to choose the former and reject the latter? Or even want to? Thus, where there is freedom of will, there is the inevitable consequence that finite beings must be allowed to suffer the consequences of their choices.

The Consequence of Choice

There are multiple causes of suffering in the world. We frequently suffer due to our **personal wrong choices**. If a man steals and goes to prison, whose fault is it (cf. 1 Peter 4:15)? Much suffering is a consequence of **other people’s** misuse of choice. Would we covet freedom for ourselves, yet deny it to everyone else? An innocent person may be killed in an auto wreck involving a drunk driver. We sometimes pay the price for others’ freedom to make decisions.

Some suffering is the result of freedom as abused by **former generations**. We reap the benefits of the labor of earlier generations (e.g., scientific discoveries); can we avoid reaping the **evils** as well? Innocent children starve in some countries because their ancestors rejected God and decided to worship cattle instead.

There is much suffering in the world today as a consequence of catastrophic phenomena (hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.). But what is the cause of the violent conditions plaguing our planet? It is the drastically different geophysical features of the earth (e.g., mountain ranges, varying pressure areas, etc.).

It has been observed in the fossil record, however, that the ancient earth was not convulsed with volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, etc. Dr. Robert Jastrow declared that the early earth had a “mild and constant climate” where the elements “were in perfect balance.”

Many scholars believe that a universal flood rearranged the features of our planet so that we have inherited the consequences of that disaster. The biblical Flood, which came as the result of human rebellion, is the perfect explanation for this condition.

Natural Law

It must be noted that we live in a world regulated by **natural law**. Thus, a certain amount of suffering is inevitable. If the law of gravity behaves consistently, a building may fall, killing or injuring someone. Such events could be prevented only if God continually intervened, suspending natural laws. But this would render the law-system of our planet completely undependable and make life a sphere of utter confusion. Such a haphazard system would argue more for atheism than for theism!

As much as we recoil at suffering, it is beneficial in various ways. What if we could experience no pain? Does not pain dispatch us to the physician for treatment and cure?

Suffering and Character

Is it not true that suffering helps to cultivate the noblest qualities of which man is capable? If there were no suffering, traits such as patience, bravery, and compassion would not exist. Where there is only sunshine, and no rain, nothing but a desert exists. Suffering serves to remind us that this world was not designed to be man’s final abode. We are to consider ourselves strangers in this world (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). Suffering should nudge us towards a better existence.

Finally, suffering per se cannot be contrary to the goodness of God. This is revealed by the fact that **even Christ was subjected to suffering** (Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21 ff).

It is clear, therefore, that enough of human suffering can be reasonably explained to negate the atheistic charge that misery is incompatible with the existence of God. If man will use the wisdom with which the Creator endowed him, he will be able to use the adversities of life to help fashion the kind of character with which the Creator is pleased, and by which he is glorified.

God: He Has Spoken

If God exists, and if he created the human family, one would expect that he has communicated with those made in his very image (Genesis 1:26-27). The truth is, God has spoken. He has spoken **abstractly**, and he has communicated **concretely**.

Abstract Revelation

Abstract revelation has to do with God's presence as made known through his handiwork. David, king of Israel, declared: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). The visible universe eloquently testifies of the power and wisdom of its Creator (Romans 1:20).

The ancient Greeks called the universe the kosmos (cf. English "Cosmos"), a term suggesting that which is characterized by **order**. Balbus, a Greek writer, asked:

Can one behold heaven, and contemplate what passes there, without discerning with all possible evidence, that it is governed by a supreme intelligence?

Interestingly, when atheist Carl Sagan wrote a book about the spectacular nature of the universe, he titled it, Cosmos—not Chaos!

The universe (and it is a **uni**-verse; not a multi-verse) is like a gigantic machine that has been intricately engineered. The term "astronomy" derives from two original terms signifying "star law," which hints of the laws that govern the heavenly bodies. Where there is law, there must be a lawgiver. It is only because of the mathematical orthodoxy of the Universe that astronomers can predict lunar or solar eclipses years in advance, or launch a spacecraft to the moon and land it with pinpoint precision.

The earth is moving in an almost six-hundred-million-mile-long orbit around the sun at a speed of one thousand miles per minute. Its track is elliptical in design. Thus, at times it is closer to the sun than at other times. When closer to the sun, it moves faster; when farther away, slower. As the earth moves in its gigantic race-track-like orbit, it digresses from a straight line one-ninth of an inch every eighteen miles. If the turn were only one-tenth of an inch, our planet would freeze; if the adjustment were one-eighth of an inch, the earth would burn to a cinder. There is balance; someone designed it just right. That One was God.

By means of abstract revelation one can know that the Creator is powerful. The universe is estimated to be some twenty billion light years across (the distance light can travel in twenty billion years at the rate of 186,000 miles per second). Of course its extremities have not been fathomed. But the size speaks to the power of its Creator. The precision design reveals his wisdom.

Concrete Revelation

To really know God, however, and his will for humanity, requires more than abstraction; it requires **concrete** data. In ancient times God spoke to select persons directly—men like Noah, Abraham, and Moses—and through them he communicated his will verbally. Language is the vehicle of precise communication. Through Moses a written law was given to the Hebrew nation (ca. 1500 B.C.), a people divinely selected and ideally situated to influence the nations of the antique world, which they admirably did.

At precisely the most opportune time, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a revelation of himself (John 1:18; cf. Galatians 4:4). That Christ existed is almost universally conceded; history overflows with the evidence. Friend and foe (e.g., philosopher Ernest Renan) alike have applauded his character. To study the life and attributes of Jesus is to get a picture of the Father himself, as conveyed in human form (John 1:14; 14:9).

Out of that Judaeo-Christian background comes the most amazing Book the world has ever known. It is called the **Bible**. It was composed over a span of some sixteen centuries—from Moses at Sinai to John the apostle on the island Patmos—a library of sixty-six books with a united theme: the Messiah is coming; he has arrived; he will return. That Messiah was Christ, the Lord.

The biblical documents are characterized by an amazing variety of evidences that authenticate the Book's claim of divine origin. For example, there are more than eight thousand prophetic utterances in the Bible that speak specifically of events far beyond the scope of the spokesman—things he could not possibly know by human intuition. There are predictions regarding the rise and fall of nations (see Daniel 2) and declarations regarding specific rulers (see Isaiah 44:28-45:4). There are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Prophetic utterances are proof positive of the divine origin of the biblical documents. Search the internet for "Messianic Prophecies in the Old Testament."

The meticulous accuracy of the biblical library is likewise inexplicable in terms of human origin. For example, in the book of Acts, Luke, the author, mentions thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine Mediterranean islands. In addition, he alludes to ninety-five different people, sixty-two of which are not mentioned by any other New Testament writer. Twenty-seven of these are unbelievers, chiefly civil or military officials. In not a single instance does he slip and make a factual mistake, though the political climate of that region in the ancient world was in a constant state of change.

The Bible is truly a remarkable Book. Study it carefully and honestly and make application to your life. You will never regret such a decision.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Romans 11:33; 1 John 4:8, 16; 1 Peter 4:15; Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21; Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20; John 1:18; Galatians 4:4; John 1:14, 14:9; Daniel 2; Isaiah 44:28-45:4

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