

IMPACT

DON'T JUST GET AN EDUCATION. MAKE AN IMPACT.

FOUNDATIONS

God

GOD

God is self-sufficient apart from this world. He is awesome and mysterious. Therefore, we will worship Him with all that we are both privately and corporately, testifying that God, though unseen, is real.

When we truly understand who God is, the only natural response is to worship. Worship begins and ends with God. Worship is not limited to singing songs on Sunday, but worship should be constant. While God is the center of worship, we actively participate in worship by giving of ourselves as living sacrifices in worship to God. When we live for God, place Him first in our lives, find our significance and joy in Him instead of things of this world, that is worship. As we grow in our understanding of the Doctrine of God, we will grow in our ability to worship the only being that deserves our worship.

“...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.” Isaiah 46:9

“The gravest question before a person is: Who is God? Likewise, the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God...Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, “What comes into your mind when you think about God?” we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man...Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God...” (A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*)

God is incomprehensible, but what does that mean?

While the Scripture is clear that God has revealed Himself, it is also true that God hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15). This means that we may know God truly while not yet knowing Him fully because He is absolutely infinite and there is no end of Him, and therefore, He can never be known in totality.

In this sense God is said to be incomprehensible, where the term incomprehensible is used with an older and less common sense, “unable to be fully understood.” This sense must be clearly distinguished from the more common meaning, “unable to be understood.” It is not true to say that God is unable to be understood, but it is true to say that He cannot be understood fully or exhaustively.

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3).

This doctrine of God’s incomprehensibility has much positive application for our own lives. It means that we will never be able to know “too much” about God, for we will never run out of things to learn about him, and we will thus never tire in delighting in the discovery of more and more of his excellence and of the greatness of his works.

If we ever wished to make ourselves equal to God in knowledge, or if we wished to derive satisfaction from the sin of intellectual pride, the fact that we will never stop growing in knowledge of God would be a discouraging thing for us – we might become frustrated that God

is a subject of study that we will never master! But if we rather delight in the fact that God alone is God, that He is always infinitely greater than we are, that we are His creatures who owe Him worship and adoration, then this will be a very encouraging idea. Even though we spend time in Bible study and fellowship with God every day of our lives, there will always be more to learn about God and His relationships to us and the world, and thus there will always be more that we can be thankful for and for which we can give Him praise. When we realize this, the prospect of a lifelong habit of regular Bible study should be a very exciting prospect to us. To study and to teach God's Word in both formal and informal ways will always be a great privilege and joy.

Even more significantly, it is God Himself whom we know, not simply facts about Him or actions He does. We make a distinction between knowing facts and knowing persons in our ordinary use of English. It would be true for me to say that I know many facts about the president of the United States, but it would not be true for me to say that I know him. To say that I know him would imply that I had met him and talked with him, and that I had developed at least to some degree a personal relationship with him.

“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord” (Jer. 9:23-24)

The fact that we do know God Himself is further demonstrated by the realization that the richness of the Christian life includes a personal relationship with God. We have a far greater privilege than mere knowledge of facts about God. We speak to God in prayer, and He speaks to us in His Word. We commune with Him in His presence, we sing His praise, and we are aware that He personally dwells among us and within us to bless us (John 14:23). Indeed, this personal relationship with God the Father, with God the Son, and with God the Holy Spirit may be said to be the greatest of all the blessings of the Christian life.

How is God known?

God is not known by any instrument or human ability. He is known only through self-disclosure, which is called revelation. God reveals Himself by what he has created (General Revelation; Rom. 1:20, Acts 14:7, Ps. 19:1-2).

He also reveals himself by the deeds performed by Him alone and the employment of language (Special Revelation). Language is employed because of human necessity and limited capacity, not a deficiency of God's character.

Special Revelation, represented exclusively in the Bible you own, is particularly important, as discussed last week, because God speaks to us about Himself, our relationship with Him and others and the precious nature of being image bearers reflecting His very character to other humans, as well as, rulers and authorities in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10).

How many Gods are there?

The Bible is abundantly clear that there is only one true God¹ and that all other “gods” are false and therefore mere idols that are not “gods” at all.² However, demons (fallen angels) may also pose as gods and illicit worship, possibly even through counterfeit signs, wonders and miracles.³

The Old Testament contains a number of clear statements that there is only one God.⁴ Likewise, the New Testament clearly states that there is only one God.⁵

Scripture clearly teaches that there is no one like God.⁶ Scripture also teaches that any claim to be like God is a satanic lie.⁷

Is the Father God?

Throughout the Scriptures, the Father is unequivocally called God.⁸

Is Jesus God?

Jesus Christ is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures.⁹ This fact of Jesus’ deity was spoken clearly by Himself and recognized as a claim to be God by the Jewish leaders without Jesus’ apology or correction.¹⁰ The Scriptures are also clear that Jesus was fully human.¹¹ The idea that Jesus is both fully God and fully Man at the same time is called the deity of Christ.

Is the Holy Spirit God?

The Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament He is all-powerful,¹² eternal,¹³ all knowing,¹⁴ creator,¹⁵ and all present.¹⁶ In the New Testament, He is also clearly declared God.¹⁷

¹ 2 Chr. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:20-21

² Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Psa. 96:5; Isa. 29, 37:19, 41:23-24; Jer. 2:11, 5:7, 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4, 10:19-20

³ Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:37; I Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8

⁴ Deut. 4:35 4:39, 6:4-5, 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22, 22:32; Ps. 86:8-10;
Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8, 45:5, 14, 21-22, 46:9

⁵ John 5:44; Rom. 3:30, 16:27; I Co. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 1:17, 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25

⁶ Ex. 8:10, 9:14, 15:11; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chr. 17:20; Psa 86:8; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Isa. 9, 25, 40:18, 44:7, 46:5; Jer. 10:6-7;
Micah 7:18

⁷ Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:14; John 8:44

⁸ John 6:27, 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3

⁹ Matt. 28:9; John 1:1-4, 1:14, 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 12:37-41 cf. Isaiah 6:9-11, 20:28-29; Acts 20:28;
Romans 9:5; Col. 1:16-17, 2:8-9, Php. 2:10-11; Heb. 1:8; 1 Co. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 6:15; Titus 2:13; I John 5:20;
Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13-16

¹⁰ Matt. 26:63-65; John 5:17-23, 8:58-59, 10:30-39, 19:7

¹¹ Isaiah 7:14, 9:16; Rom. 8:3; I John 4:2

¹² Micah 3:8; see also Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:13, 19

¹³ Heb. 9:14

¹⁴ Isaiah 40:13-14; see also 1 Cor. 2:10

¹⁵ Gen 1:2; Ps. 104:30

¹⁶ Psalm 139:7

¹⁷ Acts 5:3-4; see also John 14:16; 2 Co. 3:16-18

The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved,¹⁸ resisted¹⁹ and insulted.²⁰

Are the Father, Son, and Spirit different persons?

Though one God, the Father, Son and Spirit are distinct persons, The Father and Son are two persons in frequent salutations²¹ as well as in other Scriptures.²² The Scripture is also clear that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not the same person.²³ Likewise, the Father is not the Holy Spirit.²⁴

What is the Trinity?

While the word “Trinity” does not appear in Scripture, the concept very clearly does. Church father Tertullian (155-220 A.D.) was the first to use the word trinity. To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods or that one God merely manifests Himself as either Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on various occasions. To say that God exists as a Trinity is to say that there is one God with a unified essence who exists in three equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By person it is meant that God thinks, feels, acts and speaks. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) summarizes the doctrine by saying, “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.”

Here are a number of passages from Scripture where we see a distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- Isaiah 48:16b – And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with His Spirit.
- Matthew 3:16-17 – As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”
- Matthew 28:18-20 – Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- Romans 14:17-18 – For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

¹⁸ Eph. 4:30

¹⁹ Acts 7:51

²⁰ Heb. 10:29

²¹ Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2, 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3

²² John 3:17, 5:31-32, 8:16-18, 11:41-42, 12:28, 14:31, 17:23-26; Gal. 4:4; 1 Jn 4:10

²³ Luke 3:22; John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7; 1 John 2:1

²⁴ John 14:15, 15:26; Rom. 8:11, 8:26-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Gal. 1:1

- Romans 15:16 – ...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- I Corinthians 2:2-5 – For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.
- I Corinthians 6:11 – And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- I Corinthians 12:4-6 – There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
- II Corinthians 1:21-22 – Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
- II Corinthians 13:14 – May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- Ephesians 2:18 – For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- Ephesians 3:16-17 – I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love...
- Ephesians 4:4-6 – There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- Colossians 1:6-8 – ...All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.
- I Thessalonians 1:3-5 – We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.
- II Thessalonians 2:13 – But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

What are God's attributes?

God is not an idea or a proposition but instead a living and free person who is completely other, or holy. Speaking about this entirely other God is difficult and so Christians often speak about God in two main terms:

- His attributes that he has revealed to us in Scripture
- Attributes that that he has revealed through our relationship with Him

First, His attributes are not something merely attributed to Him but qualities inseparable from His very Being. In every way that God exists, He exists without limit, that is, in perfection. God's attributes can be divided into two categories: shared and unshared. His **Unshared Attributes** belong only to God, while His **Shared Attributes** are found in people to a limited degree since we are created in His image and likeness.

Secondly, we know God by our experiences through relationship with Him: when we recognize His presence all around us; when we recognize His provision in our lives; when we confess our sins and accept His grace to live by faith. In His loving friendship we come to a fuller realization of who He truly is as revealed in Scripture.

Unshared attributes

- **Omnipresence** – God is everywhere at all times.²⁵ Application - Since God is present everywhere at all times, it is foolish to think we can avoid Him or hide our sins from Him (Job 34:21-22). Also, it is comforting to know that He is there in times of trouble (II Kings 6:14-17).
- **Omniscience** – God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future and everything actual or potential.²⁶ Application - It is comforting to know that God knows all about us, yet still loves and forgives us. Since God knows everything, nothing can separate us from Him, nothing can surprise Him, and He knows our all our needs.
- **Omnipotence** – God is all-powerful and able to do all that He wills.²⁷ Application - It is God's power which guarantees us assurance of our salvation (Rom. 8:35-39; see also 1:16). Also, we can trust God to work out our seemingly impossible situations.²⁸ No being visible or invisible, committee, nation or federation can add or detract from God's power. God is not aided or defeated by opposition from what He chooses to do. What God has decreed will be.
- **Immutability** – God does not change.²⁹ Application - God has decreed the right order to the universe. He has set a course for His story, which He will not edit later. He has made promises, which He is sure to fulfill. He has chosen you to be part of Christ's household, not as slave but as son or daughter with a shared estate with Him, which He will not rethink later and change. So, it is comforting to know that God remains the same even when we change. Also, it is reassuring to know that we can trust what God has said because His Word never changes.

²⁵ Psalm 139:7-12; see also Jer. 23:24; Prov. 15:3; Deut. 31:6; Col. 1:17

²⁶ Psalm 147:5, see also Is. 40:12-14, 46:10; Ps. 139:1-6; Job 42:2; Heb. 4:13

²⁷ Job. 42:2; see also Ps. 147:5; Mt. 19:26; Eph. 3:20

²⁸ Gen. 18:14; see also Jer. 32:17 & 27; Luke 1:37

²⁹ Malachi 3:6; see also Num. 23:19; Ps. 102:27; Rom. 11:29; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17

- **Eternality** – God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time.³⁰ Application - God endows you with eternal life made possible because God Himself possesses it unequivocally. It is, therefore, comforting to know that God sees things from an eternal perspective. Despite what might happen to you in this life He has secured an eternity with Him.
- **Sovereignty** – God is supreme in rule and authority over all things,³¹ though He does allow human freedom (Gen. 50:21, 22). Application - The freedom of God to rule without opposition is the security we have to trust Him through terrible trials. No attribute can supply the security and comfort like God’s sovereignty because within our trials is the reminder that God is working out all things for our eventual good.³²

Shared attributes

- **Spirit** – God is invisible and immaterial.³³ A Spirit is personal with a mind (Ps. 139:1-4), emotions (Eph. 4:30) and a will (John 6:40). Application - It is encouraging to know that since we are created in the image and likeness of God we have a spirit and will go on to eternal life if we know Him.
- **Holiness** – God is absolutely separate from any evil.³⁴ Application - The Holiness of God is both fearful and awe-inspiring. Since He is absolutely holy, it is only through His holy work that we can come into a relationship with Him and one day enter into His presence. Also, we are made holy by His sanctifying work in our lives (I Peter 1:2; II Cor. 3:18).
- **Love/Goodness** – God alone is perfectly good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love.³⁵ Application - All that we do in life should be motivated by our love for God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). Also, we must remember that love may involve rebuke or chastisement when we sin (Hebrews 12:6; Prov. 13:24).
- **Truth** – God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth.³⁶ Application - It brings great confidence and comfort to know that we can completely trust God and His Word.
- **Justice/Righteousness** – God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of His character.³⁷ Application - It is comforting to know that God deals fairly with all people, not allowing the guilty to go unpunished, but providing love and mercy to those who turn from sin and to Him for forgiveness.

³⁰ Psalm 90:2, see also 93:2, 102:12; Eph. 3:21

³¹ Psalm 103:19; see also II Sam. 7:28; I Chron. 29:10-13

³² Romans 8:28, see also account of Joseph in Genesis 50:20

³³ John 4:19-24, see also John 1:18, 3:1-10, 14:16-17, 16:12-16; II Cor. 3:15-17; I Tim. 6:15-16

³⁴ I Peter 1:16; see also Ex. 3:5; Lev. 19:2; Psa. 5:4-6, 99:5; Isa. 6:3, 8:13, 57:15; Hab. 1:12-13; I Jn. 1:5; I Pet. 1:14-19

³⁵ I John 4:8-16; see also Ex. 34:7; Ps. 84:11; Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:4-7; Gal. 5:22

³⁶ Jn. 17:17, see also John 14:6; Titus 1:2; Num. 23:19; II Cor. 1:20

³⁷ Exodus 34:7; see also Gen. 18:25; Deut. 32:4; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:11

- **Mercy** – God does not give some people what they deserve because He is loving and gracious.³⁸ Application - Jesus' dying for and becoming our sin and saving us from the deserved wrath of God, was the ultimate act of mercy for which we should be eternally grateful. Due to His mercy, we should be eagerly merciful to those whom we meet.
- **Beauty** – God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. God made men and women in His image and likeness to also create works of beauty.³⁹ Application - In response to God's beauty we should take time to enjoy the beautiful creation He has surrounded us with. We should also appreciate the reflection of His beauty that we find in the arts and creative process, recognizing that creating is a part of being made in the image and likeness of God, an act that gives Him glory.

Summary:

All the attributes are knowable in part because they are revealed in scripture.

Each is fully active and powerful.

Each is full in harmony with another.

Each can be fully expressed simultaneously with another without conflict.

The capacity to understand how this is possible is incomprehensible. It belongs to God alone.

Sources

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For further reading

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[http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1995/1580_Are_There_Two_Wills_in_God/)

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³⁸ Titus 3:5; see also Eph. 2:4-7; Ex. 34:6-7; Matt. 18:23-35; Rom. 12:8

³⁹ Psalm 27:4, see also Psalm 50:2; Isaiah 33:17; Ecc. 3:11

APPENDIX 1

What does it mean that God is in control?

So the question before us is, “What does it mean that God is in control?” In other words every Christian agrees with the statement that God is a king that rules over the earth. But clearly everyone does not agree on how God rules over the world and what the implications are for our life. In the history of the church there have been seasons of great disagreement concerning this issue. It is not easy to understand, and once understood it is not always easy to digest. There is no simple solution. But this is an issue that has significant ramifications for other Christian doctrines as well as for our lives. Our responsibility is to prayerfully study the biblical evidence and come to some personal conclusions within the context of our community.

We want to be clear when we say that we believe the view of God’s providence outlined here most accurately reflects the teaching of the Bible. Furthermore, we believe that misunderstanding this particular doctrine results in all sorts of distortions of God’s character. When God’s character is distorted, people develop unhealthy conceptions of how He works in the world and consequently experience needless anxiety and confusion in their lives.

A. Preservation:

God created everything that exists and maintains the properties with which he created them.

- Hebrews 1:3 - The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
- Colossians 1:16-17 - For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
- Job 34:14-15 - If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to the dust.
- Psalm 104:29 - When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

These verses indicate that if Christ were to cease in his continuing activity of sustaining all things in the universe, then all except God would instantly cease to exist.

Implication: God’s preservation of the world gives us a basis for scientific inquiry since God has made and continues to sustain a universe that acts in predictable ways. An experiment that yields a specific result today will (all things being equal) yield the same result at a time in the future.

Now that we have established that God not only creates everything that exists, but also sustains and actively enables it to continue to exist, we are still left wondering to what extent does God direct his creation. In other words does God create and sustain but then step aside and watch

(deism) or is he intimately involved in every aspect of human affairs. This question takes us to the second section.

B. The extent of God's providence.

Providence is the beneficent outworking of God's sovereignty (his rule) whereby all events are directed and disposed to bring about those purposes of glory and good for which the universe was made (Nigel Cameron in *New Dictionary of Theology*).

God's control over the universe is what distinguishes him from idols and other gods.

Psalm 115:1-11 - Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. O house of Israel, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. You who fear him, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield.

The point of Psalm 115 is that what distinguishes God from the idols is that the true God does whatever he pleases. Doing what he pleases is essential to being the true God. A god that cannot do whatever he pleases – a god that cannot get what he wants – is not a god at all. The prophet Isaiah makes the same point.

Isaiah 46:1-10 - Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. "To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles. "Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Again, in its context this verse is saying that what sets God apart from the idols of the nations is that he alone establishes his will and can guarantee that his good pleasure will be accomplished.

Concurrence: God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do. The following verses assume dual causation. On one level there is a reasonable and accurate explanation of why certain things happen. On another level God is seen as the cause behind the same event. The view of scripture as having both a

divine and human author is built on this idea of concurrence. If you remove God as author, we have nothing more than a well-written human document. If you remove the human author, then we have no way of explaining why each author has a certain literary style and perspective that is unique to them. We need to keep in mind this idea of concurrence as we read the following verses explaining how extensive God's control is. If we don't we may begin to wrongly think that our actions are unnecessary or insignificant. However the Bible never presents God's sovereignty in such a way as to make us think that.

1. He rules over the natural world:

Psalm 135:6-7 - The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths. He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

Job 37:6-13 - He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.' So that all men he has made may know his work, he stops every man from his labor. The animals take cover; they remain in their dens. The tempest comes out from its chamber, the cold from the driving winds. The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them. At his direction they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever he commands them. He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth and show his love.

Matthew 5:45 - He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 10:29 - Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.

2. He rules over the nations:

Job 12:23 - He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them.

Acts 17:26 - 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.

3. He rules over the lives of people:

Proverbs 21:1 - The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will (NRS).

Psalm 119:36 - Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

Jeremiah 1:5 - "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Proverbs 16:9 - In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Ezra 1:1 - In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing.

4. God rules even over small events so that there is no detail that escapes his will:

1 Corinthians 4:19 - But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have.

1 Corinthians 16:7 - I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.

James 4:15 - Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

5. His rule goes beyond the outward actions of a person and extends to their desires:

Genesis 20:6 - Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her."

Exodus 34:23-24 - Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.

Psalms 37:4 - Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

6. God even rules over evil:

God never directly does anything evil but he does bring about evil through the free actions of his creation. This is sometimes referred to as secondary causation. So although God is ultimately behind evil, he is not behind it in the same way he is behind good. The Bible is very clear in saying that we are always responsible for the evil that we do.

Genesis 50:20 - You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Eight times the book of Exodus says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8).

Exodus 14:17 - I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.

Psalms 105:24-25 - The LORD made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes, whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants.

1 Samuel 2:25 - "If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.

2 Samuel 12:15 - After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill.

Job 1:21-22 - and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Job 2:10 - He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Amos 3:6 - When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?

Isaiah 45:7 - I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

Lamentations 3:38 - Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?

Acts 2:23 - This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Acts 4:27-28 - Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Summary: The point of these verses is that the Bible teaches that God's rule extends over all things. That means that in some way God is the ultimate cause behind everything that happens. God's will is never frustrated. He is not hemmed in or obligated by someone else or by circumstances. In an ultimate sense, God always gets what he wants.

Application: This view of God makes sense out of Romans 8:28 -- *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

If God didn't control all things, then He wouldn't be able to use all things for good. The message of God's exhaustive rule is good news.

An Anticipated Question: It won't take long for someone to raise an obvious question. The question goes something like this, "How can God always get what he wants if there is evil, sin and unbelief in the world?" The answer to the question relates at least in part to the fact that there are two wills in God or two different ways for God to will things. The Scripture is comfortable asserting that God desires one thing to come to pass while bringing about something entirely different. For centuries theologians have discussed this phenomena under different titles such as: sovereign and moral will, efficient and permissive will, secret and revealed will, and decretive and perceptive will.

C. Biblical examples demanding two wills of God:

1. The clearest example of this is the betrayal of Jesus.

Luke 22:1-4 - Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

The entire process of Jesus' execution was saturated in sinful choices: Herod's contempt for Jesus (Luke 23:11), Pilate's spineless decision (Luke 23:24), the Jews' yelling "Crucify! Crucify him!" (Luke 23:21), and the Gentile soldiers' mockery (Luke 23:36). Yet in Acts 4:27-28 the author, Luke, expresses his understanding of God's sovereignty in these acts by recording the prayer of the Jerusalem Christians:

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Acts 2:23 - this Man, delivered over by the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death (NASB).

The betrayal of Jesus was sin, and it involved the instrumentality of Satan; but it was part of God's predetermined plan. Therefore, there is a sense in which God willed the delivering up of Jesus, even though the act was sin.

2. Another evidence to demonstrate God's willing a state of affairs in one sense that he disapproves of in another sense is seen in the Exodus account of God hardening Pharaoh's heart.

Exodus 8:1 - Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.'"

Exodus 4:21 - The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."

Notice that God prevents from happening what he in one sense wills, and the thing that God does bring about involves sin. This is why theologians can speak about the "will of command" ("Let my people go!") and the "will of decree" ("God hardened Pharaoh's heart").

3. Another example is found in the Gospel of Mark.

Mark 1:15 - "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

But then Jesus explains his purpose for speaking in parables.

Mark 4:11-12 - He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never

perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”

God’s will is that people turn and be forgiven (Mark 1:15), but he acts in a way to restrict the fulfillment of that will.

4. Another line of evidence for two wills of God is seen in how he deals with the wicked.

Ezekiel 18:23 - “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” declares the Sovereign LORD. “Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”

Deuteronomy 28:63 - Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.

So in some sense God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23) and in some sense he does (Deuteronomy 28:63).

How do these two wills fit together? Borrowing from Jonathan Edward’s Concerning Divine Decrees, we would submit this solution. God’s mind is infinitely complex so that he has the ability to look at the world through two different lenses. He can look at the world through a narrow lens or through a wideangle lens. When God looks at a painful or wicked event through his narrow lens, he sees the tragedy or the sin for what it is in itself and he is angered and grieved. But when God looks at a painful or wicked event through his wide-angle lens he sees everything leading up to it and everything flowing from it. He sees all the connections stretching into eternity. This mosaic, made up of the connections, is what God delights in. Edwards also refers to the infinitely complex emotional life of God that is well beyond our comprehension. For example, who can comprehend that in a moment the Lord hears the prayers of millions of Christians around the world some from the brokenhearted and others from those bursting with joy? How does the Lord weep with the weeping and rejoice with the rejoicing all at the same time? How can the Lord be angry with sin every day (Psalm 7:11) and rejoice because somewhere a sinner is coming to faith in Jesus (Luke 15:7)? Who is to say what set of complex emotions is not possible for God? All that we have to go on is what he has chosen to reveal to us in the Bible. From that we walk away knowing that there is some sense he does not experience pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:32) and some sense in which he does (Deuteronomy 28:63).

D. If God’s rule is exhaustive – if he is the ultimate cause of all things – then do human beings have any real freedom?

The answer to that question is clearly yes. Everywhere, the Bible assumes that people make real choices with real consequences for which they held responsible. Any position that denies that human beings have real freedom is clearly an unbiblical position.

Luke 10:28 - Jesus responds to the scribe’s declaration to love the Lord with the words, “Do this and you will live.”

Deuteronomy 28 is a chapter that discusses the results that will flow from the people's choice to obey or disobey God.

To continue to list verses that show that humans have the ability to make real choices is unnecessary because it is so intuitive that most people start with it as a given. In fact it would be impossible to live in this world for very long if a person were to decide that their choices were not real.

At this point we are left with some inescapable conclusions:

1. Everything that exists was not only created by God, but is also actively sustained and held together by God.
2. God's rule is absolutely exhaustive so that nothing happens apart from his divine direction.
3. Human beings have the freedom to make real choices with real consequences that they will be held accountable for.

E. Three questions that arise from the above presuppositions.

1. How can human beings be free if God has predetermined everything that comes to pass?
 - This question assumes that two statements are true: We are free and God is the ultimate cause behind all things. But to understand these statements, one must ask what does it mean to be free?
 - Libertarian Freedom says that a person is free if and only if someone or something else does not decisively incline the person's decision-making abilities.
 - Compatibilistic Freedom says that a person is free as long as they are not forced to act contrary to their desires.

The Bible doesn't give a definition of freedom so as readers we have to discern which view of freedom the Bible assumes. Our understanding of the Bible leads us to believe that as a whole it presupposes that both of the following are true:

- God is exhaustively sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.
- Human beings are morally responsible creatures— they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.

The view that both of these are true simultaneously is called compatibilism.

(This section on compatibilism is derived from D.A. Carson's work *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*).

Biblical evidence supporting compatibilism:

a. The story of Joseph (Genesis 35-50)

The Brother's Actions are found in Genesis chapter 37. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him because his father favored him above the rest of them. And to make matters worse, Joseph found it necessary to tell his brothers about his dreams in which they bowed down to him as their master. In response to this, his brothers sold him into slavery and told their father that a wild animal killed him.

But God had different plans for Joseph and he became the ruler of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) himself. But Joseph's statements to his brothers once it was discovered that he was alive support Compatibilism.

Genesis 45:5 - And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

Genesis 50:19-20 - But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Joseph does not say that his brothers sold him into slavery and that God somehow turned it around to make a bad situation good. God's intent the whole time was to save many lives through this situation. There were two actors in this situation: Joseph's brothers and God. In the same sentence Joseph can say that his brothers and God sent him to Egypt without any hint of contradiction. The brothers were held accountable for their actions because they made a free choice to act in a sinful way, but that does not negate the super-intending role that God played. We walk away from this passage knowing that God is in control and the people involved were free.

b. Leviticus 20:7-8

Leviticus 20:7-8 - Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

It is the people's responsibility to choose to be holy. They were held accountable for their choices. Freedom is presupposed. At the same time, it is clear that God is the one who makes people holy. He is sovereign over our moral and spiritual life. The Bible doesn't defend a certain view of freedom it simply assumes that human freedom and divine sovereignty are compatible.

c. 1 Kings 11:11-13, 29-39; 12:1-15

In 11:11-13, God tells Solomon that after his death he will tear the kingdom away from his son. When the story plays out after Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam reacts harshly when the people ask for a lighter workload and tax burden. Instead of helping the people, Rehoboam represses the people more. 1 Kings 12:15 tells us who was behind Rehoboam's decision: *So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.* God was sovereign in directing Rehoboam's heart (Proverbs 21:1) and yet Rehoboam was held accountable for his foolish actions.

d. Philippians 2:12-13

Philippians 2:12-13: Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

In order to see what this passage teaches, it is essential that we understand what it isn't teaching. It isn't teaching that God has done his part in your salvation, and now the rest is up to you. Nor does it suggest that because God is working our choices are irrelevant. Without question the Philippians were responsible to work out their salvation. The assumption is that choice and effort

are required. They are to pursue the same attitude as that of Christ (2:5) as well as to obey without complaining or arguing (2:14). However, their freedom in no way negates God's sovereignty. He causes them to both will and to act. God's rule over the spiritual lives is compatible with their necessary response. God's work in their lives is an incentive for them to pursue godliness.

What kind of freedom does the Bible assume? A freedom that fits with both of these statements being true:

- God is exhaustively sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized or mitigated.
- Human beings are morally responsible creatures—they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.

In order for these two things to be true, we have to define freedom as acting according to our desires or wishes. If a person were absolutely free (in other words they were in no way inclined by God to do something) then it is difficult to understand how God could cause all things to work for our good or guarantee that his promises will be fulfilled.

Impact believes and teaches that God's rule is exhaustive – that he is the ultimate cause behind all things AND that human beings are free to make real choices? Some will object and say that humans cannot be free if God has predetermined their actions. To those objectors we would pose the following questions:

- If freedom and sovereignty are not compatible, then will we be able to freely love the Lord in heaven? After all, most everyone would agree that there is no chance of sinning and being removed from heaven. If there is no chance of sinning then that must be because God has so changed us that we will not want to sin. If he has done that, then according to the objectors we cannot be free. Yet, surely we will freely love the Lord in heaven.
- If freedom and sovereignty are not compatible, then how can God promise that he will eventually triumph over evil? According to the objectors God cannot cause a person to do what he wants them to do. Therefore it would be impossible for God to guarantee a certain future. After all people could continue to act in a rebellious way and evil win out over good.

2. How can God be ultimately responsible for evil, yet not be stained by its guilt?

The short answer is we don't know. This is, at this point, an unanswerable question. We unapologetically appeal to a certain sense of mystery. The reason that we are unapologetic is that as Christians we expect God's ways and thoughts to be higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). In addition the Bible clearly states that it doesn't tell us everything we would like to know, but only what God deemed necessary (Deuteronomy 29:29). We have to be content without knowing all that we would like to. However, there are a few things that we can say.

First, it is imperative that we understand that the Scripture clearly states that God never does evil and is never to be blamed for evil (see James 1:13-14; Deuteronomy 32:3-4; 1 John 1:5; Habakkuk 1:13; Revelation 15:3-4).

Second, it appears that while God is ultimately behind evil he is not behind it in the same way that he is behind good. In other words there is an asymmetrical relationship between God's sovereignty over good and evil. He is always portrayed as being directly behind good and only distantly behind evil. God never does evil willingly or from the heart (see Lamentations 3:33). We must fall back on what is clear. It is clear that God stands behind evil in such a way that it doesn't take place outside of his sovereign rule (direction). In some way he is behind it (see support in part one), and yet he is never morally responsible. Evil is always chargeable to the person committing it. On the other hand, God is always behind good in such a way that it never takes place outside his sovereign direction and he is always directly responsible for it. If that sounds as if God is getting off easy, all we can say is that he is God and there is no other.

Third, it seems that God accomplishes his purposes for evil through the free actions of people as well as secondary causes. In this context, secondary causation means that God is ultimately behind evil but that he never does evil.

2 Samuel 24:1 - Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah."

1 Chronicles 21:1 - Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.

These two passages are from parallel accounts describing the same event. Taken together, it seems clear that God was ultimately behind this sinful choice of David. In order to accomplish his purpose God used Satan to incite David to sin. Was God behind the sin of taking a census? Yes. Did God directly cause it and therefore open himself up to a charge of doing evil? No. How does all of this work out? We don't know. What is clear is that through the means of secondary causes God can use evil to accomplish his purpose without being morally responsible for it.

3. Why did God create evil in the first place?

The problem of evil is a difficult one. There are no simple solutions. Every Christian has to wrestle with it. There is no theological position that is safe from difficulties. Every Christian would acknowledge that God could have created a world without evil if he had wanted to. So those who deny God's exhaustive rule over his creation must still tell us why there is evil. Their answer usually is that evil is necessary if humans are going to have freedom. In other words, humans cannot be free unless there is the possibility that they will choose to do evil. They are saying that God had to allow evil if he was going to get the "greater good" of having free creatures. We would agree that God created evil in light of a greater good, but we would differ as to what that greater good is. While some might say that the greater good is our freedom, I don't think that given the evidence for compatibilism we need to have evil for freedom to exist. Instead we think that the greater good that motivated God to create evil was his own glory.

Romans 9:17-24 - For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Admittedly we are beginning in the middle of a very tightly written argument that comprises all of chapter 9. When we pick it up in verse 17, Pharaoh is presented as one who was raised up by God to display his glory. As we have already seen, the Scripture is clear that God hardened Pharaoh's heart causing him to disobey his commands. Through the ensuing plagues and exodus the glory of God's strength, power and grace were manifested in a special way. Now Paul anticipates a question concerning the fairness of God's action (19). In verse 21 Paul declares God's sovereign right to do as he pleases. Then in verses 22 and 23 he offers a possible reason behind God's actions. We need to pay attention to the phrase "what if." It indicates that Paul is not giving us an exhaustive answer as much as he is giving us some tracks to run on and think about the "whys" behind God's work. The motivation behind God's action, according to Paul, may be the demonstration of God's own glory.

In other words, perhaps God is glorified the most when both his grace and wrath are displayed. Maybe our questions of evil and suffering have been too human centered. By that I mean that perhaps we have thought and acted as if we are the center of the universe and that the answer to every question must be focused on us. Paul suggests that it is God and not us that universe revolves around. He suggests that the existence of evil may have a God centered solution as opposed to a human-centered one. In summary we would argue that the Bible teaches that evil exists because it serves God's greater plan of glorifying his name.

In this section we have explored the three questions that stemmed from recognizing that the Bible teaches that God's rule is exhaustive. But we still leave with questions. We still do not exactly know how God can ordain that we do evil willingly and yet not be blamed for evil. And we do not know exactly how God can cause us to choose something willingly. The answer to both questions is somehow found in God's infinite greatness and the effect of not having the answers is to increase our appreciation for that greatness. It seems to us that this is a far better resolution than in an attempt to explain everything; one ends up denying the clear teaching of the Bible.

APPENDIX 2

What are the names of God?

In Scripture, a person's name is closely linked to the person's character and purpose. This is true of the names of God in Scripture. All the names of God reveal but a glimpse of God and his character. We know that even with many names of God, there is no name that will ever be able to completely describe or understand the fullness of God and his character.

Primary Old Testament Names.

1. **Jehovah** (YHWH) meaning **Self-Existent One** (from Ex. 3:14, "I am that I am"). The characteristics of this name are in the relationship between the true God and His people and, when used, emphasize God's holiness, hatred of sin and love of sinners.
2. **Elohim's** meaning is **Strong One** (Gen. 1:1). The characteristics are used of the true God and of false gods. It is a plural word and is the plural of majesty. The plural does allow for the subsequent revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament but does not teach the Trinity per se. This name is often used when pertaining to God's sovereignty and work (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 32:27; Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:18; Deut. 5:23, 8:15; Ps. 68:7).
3. **Adonai**, meaning **Lord** or **Master** marks him out as a ruler (Joshua 5:14; Isaiah 6:8-11). The characteristics of this name are used of men and of God and indicate the master-servant relationship.

Compound Old Testament Names.

1. With the name El.
 - El Elyon, translated the Most High, exalted one (lit., the strongest strong one, Gen.14:19; Ps. 9:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 25; Isa. 14:13-14).
 - El Roi, the Strong One who sees (Gen. 16:13).
 - El Shaddai, the Almighty God, points to his gracious power (Gen. 17:1-20;28:3; 35:11; Ex. 6:31; Ps. 91:1, 2).
 - El Olam, the Everlasting God, the unchanging God (Gen. 16:13; Isa. 40:28).
2. With the name Jehovah.
 - Jehovah Jirah, the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:13-14).
 - Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner (Ex. 17:15).
 - Jehovah Shalom, the Lord is peace (Judg. 6:24).
 - Jehovah Sabbaoth, the Lord of hosts (1 Sam. 1:3).
 - Jehovah Maccaddeshcem, the Lord your Sanctifier (Ex. 31:13).
 - Jehovah Raah, the Lord is my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).
 - Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6).
 - Jehovah El Gmolah, the Lord God of recompense (Jer. 51:56).
 - Jehovah Nakeh, the Lord who smites (Ezek. 7:9).
 - Jehovah Shammah, the Lord who is present (Ezek. 48:35).

Names of God in the New Testament

When looking at the names of God in the New Testament, Jesus Christ emerges as the predominant name. Jesus claimed to be the revealed name of God in John 17:6. Jesus is the culmination of the promise that God would dwell with His people. Jesus: Derived from the Hebrew “Joshua” (Y’shua) or “Je-Hoshua” meaning Jehovah Is Salvation. “I AM”: Jesus upset his generation especially when He said, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” John 8:58. Note also his claim to be Jehovah in such phrases as “I AM the Light of the world,” “the bread of life,” living water,” “the Resurrection and the Life” and “the Way, Truth and the Life” in John’s Gospel. From the Hebrew Old Testament verb “to be” signifying a living, intelligent, personal being. Christ: is equivalent to the Hebrew ‘Messiah’ (Meshiach), “The Anointed One.”

What are some poetic images of God?

There are two areas in which God is spoken of in poetic images:

- human experience (anthropomorphic)
- experiences taken from creation

The anthropomorphic poetic images of God - God is called:

- Bridegroom (Isa. 61:10).
- Husband (Isa. 54:5).
- Father (Deut. 32:6).
- Judge and King (Isa. 33:22).
- Man of War (Ex. 15:3).
- Builder and Maker (Heb. 11:10).
- Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

The poetic images of God from creation - God is compared to:

- A lion (Isa. 31:4).
- An eagle (Deut. 32:11).
- A lamb (Isa. 53:7).
- A hen (Matt. 23:37).
- The sun (Ps. 84:11).
- The morning star (Rev. 22:16).
- A light (Ps. 27:1).
- A torch (Rev. 21:23).
- A fire (Heb. 12:29).
- A fountain (Ps. 36:9).
- A rock (Deut. 32:4)
- A shield (Ps. 84:11).

The poetic images of Jesus Christ

- Shepherd of the Sheep (1 Pet. 5:4).
- Master (Jn. 13:13).
- King of kings (Rev. 19:16).
- Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).
- Bishop and Guardian of our Souls (1 Peter 2:25).

- Daystar (Rev. 2:28).
- Deliverer (Rom. 11:26).
- Advocate (1 John. 2:1).
- Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45,47).
- Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13).
- Vine (Jn. 15:5).
- Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).
- Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14).
- Firstborn (Rom. 8:29).
- Head of the Body (Col. 1:18).
- Physician (Lk. 4:23).
- Rock and Stone (1 Cor. 10:4).
- Root of Jesse (Rom. 15:12).
- Potentate (1 Tim 6:15).
- Chief Apostle (Heb. 3:1).
- Great High Priest (Heb. 3:1).
- Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith or Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2).
- Lamb of God and Lamb Slain before the Foundation of the World (Jn 1:36 & Rev. 13:8).
- Lord God Almighty (Rev. 4:8).

There was an extreme reverence for using or honoring the name of God. That is why we hear Jesus tell us to start our prayer “Hallowed be your name” (Matt. 6:9). Our desire is that people would pray and speak of God in a similar way that is not only honoring to Him but also true to His character.

APPENDIX 3

Traditional “proofs” for the existence of God

The traditional “proofs” for the existence of God that have been constructed by Christian (and some non-Christian) philosophers at various points in history are in fact attempts to analyze the evidence, especially the evidence from nature, in extremely careful and logically precise ways, in order to persuade people that it is not rational to reject the idea of God’s existence.

Most of the traditional proofs for the existence of God can be classified in four major types of argument:

- 1) The cosmological argument considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause. Therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must also have a cause, and the cause of such a great universe can only be God.
- 2) The teleological argument is really a subcategory of the cosmological argument. It focuses on the evidence of harmony, order, and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose. Since the universe appears to be designed with a purpose, there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way.
- 3) The ontological argument begins with the idea of God, who is defined as a being “greater than which nothing can be imagined.” It then argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist.
- 4) The moral argument begins from man’s sense of right and wrong, and of the need for justice to be done, and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will someday mete out justice to all people.

Because all of these arguments are based on facts about the creation that are indeed true facts, we may say that all of these proofs (when carefully constructed) are, in an objective sense, valid proofs. They are valid in that they correctly evaluate the evidence and correctly reason to a true conclusion – in fact, the universe does have God as its cause, and it does show evidence of purposeful design, and God does exist as a being greater than which nothing can be imagined, and God has given us a sense of right and wrong and a sense that his judgment is coming someday. The actual facts referred to in the proofs, therefore, are true, and in that sense the proofs are valid, even though not all people are persuaded by them.

But in another sense, if “valid” mean “able to compel agreement even from those who begin with false assumptions,” then of course none of the proofs is valid because not one of them is able to come to agreement from everyone who considers them. Yet this is because many unbelievers either begin with invalid assumptions or do not reason correctly from the evidence. It is not because the proofs are invalid themselves. The value of these proofs, then, lies chiefly in overcoming some of the intellectual objections of unbelievers. They cannot bring unbelievers to saving faith, for that comes about through belief in the testimony of Scripture. But they can help overcome objections from unbelievers, and, for believers, they can provide further intellectual evidence for something they have already been persuaded of from their own inner sense of God and from the testimony of Scripture.