

THEOLOGY PROPER (33)

QUESTION #10 - Does the Bible teach that there is one God or three Gods?

If one is honest with the Bible, one must admit that the Bible clearly establishes that there is one God. It is true that something plural is indicated about God, but the Biblical record clearly establishes that **there is only one God!**

(Passage #1)- Ex. 20:2-5 - It is certainly implied in God's command to Moses.

(Passage #2)- Deut.4:35,39 - It is specifically stated in a charge from Moses to Israel.

(Passage #3)- Deut.6:4 - It is specifically stated in instruction from Moses to Israel.

(Passage #4)- Is. 44:6 - It is directly stated by Isaiah in his statement to Israel.

(Passage #5)- Jn.10:30 - It was specifically stated by Jesus Christ.

(Passage #6)- Rom.3:30 - It was the inspired testimony of Paul to the Romans.

(Passage #7)- I Cor.8:4 - It was the inspired testimony of Paul to the Corinthians.

(Passage #8)- Eph.4:6 - It was the inspired testimony of Paul to the Ephesians.

Both the OT. and the NT. directly state and imply that there are not three Gods; there is only one God. Whether or not one accepts this is a matter of faith, but whether or not the Bible teaches this is a matter of fact.

QUESTION #11 - Does the Bible teach that there are three distinct Persons in One God?

Another way to ask this question is: Does the Bible teach the existence of a Trinity? As we have already seen the Bible does make the clear statement that there is only One God. Now the question arises concerning the Trinity. Singularity is clearly taught concerning God, but does the Bible also teach a plurality in connection with God? Charles F. Baker appropriately stated: "That God is both one and three appears to be contradictory at first sight. However, it must be understood at the outset that God is not three in the same sense that He is one He is not three persons and one person, nor is He three Gods and one God. He is three persons in one God." (Baker, p.149)

When we ask, the question does the Bible teach the existence of a Trinity, we are not asking does the Bible teach Tritheism- belief that there are three Gods; we are not asking does the Bible teach Polytheism- the belief that there are many Gods; we are asking does the Bible teach Trintarianism - the belief that there is one God, yet three distinct Persons. The plain answer to the question whether or not the Bible teaches that there are three distinct Persons to the Godhead, yet one God is an absolute, emphatic Yes!

(Fact #1)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of God's Name (Elohim) with the use of a singular verb (Gen.1:1,3,4,5).

(Fact #2)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of plural Pronouns used in singular contexts (Gen.1:26; Is.6: 8).

(Fact #3)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of the Three repetitions of "Holy" used in connection to God's holiness (Is.6:3-note singular pronoun "His").

(Fact #4)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of co-equal Statements concerning co-equal significance (Mt.28:19; Jude 20-21; II Cor. 13:14).

THEOLOGY PROPER (34)

(Fact #5)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of co-equal Appearances. (Matt.3:16-17)

(Fact #6)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of co-equal Worthiness.
(Rev.4:3,5,11/5:5,6,9)

(Fact #7)- This is the only conclusion that makes sense of co-equal Attributes. (Heb.1:12/13:8)

If we are honest with the Bible, we must conclude that the doctrine of the Trinity is a valid doctrine. The Bible reveals something that man's mind could not ever have invented- there is one God, yet there are also three distinct Persons.

Although there is no perfect analogy of the Trinity except the Trinity itself, theologians have given several types of illustrations in the course of church history to enable God's people to better grasp the concept:

- 1) One Sun: comprised of light, heat, radiance or energy.
- 2) One Plant: comprised of root, stem and fruit.
- 3) One Person: comprised of body, soul and spirit.
- 4) One Personality: comprised of intellect, emotions and will.
- 5) One Hand: comprised of index finger, middle finger and ring finger.
- 6) One Universe: comprised of space, matter and time.
- 7) One Space: comprised of length, breadth and height.
- 8) One Time: comprised of past, present and future.
- 9) One Matter: comprised of energy, motion and phenomena.
- 10) One Man: who functions as Son, Husband and Father;
- 11) One Woman: who functions as Daughter, Wife and Mother.

Certainly the thought of a Trinity is not an irrational contradiction to the human mind. There is evidence of the Trinitarian concept in a variety of analogies. However, even more weighty than these illustrations is God's Revelation which clearly teaches the Trinity: One God- comprised of three distinct Persons- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

QUESTION #12- What is an attribute of God?

An attribute has been defined as a quality or characteristic of a person or thing (Webster, p.61). An attribute is essence of something. It is that which makes something what it is.

When it comes to God, attributes are those intrinsic qualities and characteristics which constitute (make-up) and characterize the Person of God, Himself. In other words, the attributes of God are those qualities and characteristics that make God, God.

In order for something to be classified or identified as being something, it must have certain distinct qualities and characteristics peculiar to its identity. These qualities are Attributes.

THEOLOGY PROPER (35)

Augustus Strong said: "Apart from its attributes it (anything) is unknown and unknowable (p.246).

Relative to Theology Proper, there are certain distinct qualities and characteristics that make God, God. These are the attributes that separate God from all other beings and things. The attributes are critical to study because these are the distinctive qualities and characteristics that identify God as God and identify the Trinity as the Godhead. One who has all necessary Divine Attributes of God, must in fact be God.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer observed: "...God may be conceived apart from His attributes; but it remains true that He is known by His attributes and apart from them He would not appear to be what He is." (Vol.1, p.190) Dr. Hodge adds: Without the attributes of God, God "would cease to be God." (p.369)

No human will ever grasp the full magnitude of God's attributes because all humans are Limited and none of God's attributes are limited. In order for a Being to be God, He must have attributes which are far above and beyond any other created being or thing. This reality, in itself, presents a problem for the student of God's word for it causes the student to realize that attributes that make God, God will be somewhat of an abstract idea. Although the finite mind may try and should try to grasp God's attributes as fully as possible, we acknowledge that the finite mind cannot ever totally and completely grasp the attributes of God, for those are those things peculiar to God. God, however, does hold us accountable to study to understand as much as we can about Him, yet even the most dedicated student will be forced to admit we will never grasp everything about the attributes of God, for they are qualities that make God, God!

QUESTION #13- What are the classifications of the attributes of God?

In an attempt to better understand and grasp the attributes of God, theologians have attempted to classify them in a variety of ways. Dr. Hodge said- "The object of classification is order and the object of order is clearness." (Vol.1, p.374) Dr. Chafer hit at the crux of the problem when he observed, "The attributes of God present a theme so vast and complex and so beyond the range of finite faculties that any attempt to classify them must be only approximate as to accuracy or completeness. So, also, the attributes are so interrelated and interdependent that the exact placing of some of them is difficult if not wholly impossible. It is evident that no feature of Systematic Theology has occasioned more confusion and disagreement among theologians than has the attempt to order the category of the divine attributes." (Vol.1, p. 189) Dr. Hodge said among theologians few subjects have received more thought and labor and have produced so little benefit "commensurate with the labor." (Vol. 1, p.374)

It is true that the great theologians have differed in their classifications of God's attributes, however, it is also true that the theologians have all grasped great truth about God through their classifications. Therefore, we cite several classifications of Divine Attributes- all true, all helpful but none final!

THEOLOGY PROPER (36)

The following are some of the ways that God's Attributes have been classified:

- 1) Incommunicable Attributes- Those attributes found only in God.
Communicable Attributes- Those attributes found to a certain degree in other created beings.
- 2) Natural Attributes- Those attributes which naturally constitute God.
Moral Attributes- Those attributes which function as a result of Divine Will.
- 3) Absolute Attributes- Those attributes which pertain only to God, Himself.
Relative Attributes- Those attributes which relate to other created beings.
- 4) Positive Attributes- Those attributes which affirm something positive about God.
Negative Attributes- Those attributes which negate any negative (such as any imperfections or limitations) about God.
- 5) Intransitive Attributes- Those attributes which are within God's own inner Being.
Transitive Attributes- Those attributes which reach out from God and produce certain effects.
- 6) Immanent Attributes- Those attributes which comprise God's inner Being.
Eminent Attributes- Those attributes which relate to creation and are outwardly revealed.
- 7) Non-Moral Attributes- Those attributes that do not involve the moral qualities of God.
Moral Attributes- Those attributes that do involve the moral qualities of God.
- 8) Personality Attributes- Those attributes which are part of God's Personality- intellect, emotion and will.
Constitutional Attributes- Those attributes which constitute the Being of God and are peculiar to Him and are absent in anything other than God.

When contemplating a classification of God's attributes, it needs to be remembered, as Hodge said- "The object of classification is order and the object of order is clearness." (Vol.1, p.374) Any systematic organization which helps the student of the Bible to meditate and contemplate the attributes of God is a positive contribution to a deeper understanding of God. For this reason, we are indebted to the great theologians who have given prayer, thought and study to this subject. **Our conclusion is that all classifications of God's attributes are helpful, but no classification is final.** For the sake of systematic order we will study the attributes under two categories- **1) Incommunicable Attributes-** those attributes only found in God; **2) Communicable Attributes-** those attributes God chooses to a certain extent to be found in His creation. Sometimes these attributes overlap because of their close interrelation- but this is the classification we will follow.