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B0735 – September 9, 2007 – How God Can & Cannot Be Known

THE OPEN VERSUS SHUT EYE APPROACH TO KNOWING GOD

This morning I want to move into How God Can and Cannot Be Known. And what I'm going to do is start with a metaphor here, of a child and his tantrum. This may be somewhat demeaning to some people but I think it's a legitimate illustration. You've all seen a child get so angry or so mad that he's going to throw a tantrum, and he's going to solve his problem, and the way he's going to solve it, he's going to close his eyes and the problem is going to go away. The idea being that he can eliminate reality by shutting his eyelids. Adults do this too but they just use more advanced techniques but here we just want to use a child. That little picture is the picture of the carnal mind at work. That's the picture that Paul captures of the intellect of the fallen man in Rom. 1. He closes his eyes thinking the problem will go away. The fallen mind is in trouble with God, so to insulate itself from the revelation of God in and around it, the only way it can do that is close it's eyes and throw a tantrum. i.e. it destroys the faculty of perception so that the evidence for God is deliberately suppressed and not seen. All the while he thinks he's generated an excuse when faced with God's judgment. That's what the whole argument of Rom. 1 is, when Paul says "No, sorry, you have no excuse, because you've shut your eyelids to truth that's there, and shutting your eyelids to truth that's there doesn't make it disappear, it's still there." So that's why I use this as an illustration.

What I want to show you now is what these "eyelids" are. How to see God with a shut-eyed approach is by refusing to start with the Creator-creature distinction. What the unbeliever and the carnal mind try to do is start from the creature, independently of the Creator. And this has implications in the big questions as we saw last week. Last week we said that the three basic

questions men ask are answered one way or another way. There are not 500 answers to these questions, there are two and only two.

	BIBLICAL	PAGAN
Who Am I?	I am a creature made in God's image and living in His presence	I am a piece of cosmic debris and I am alone.
What Is Truth? How Do I Know?	God and His plan are truth. His revelation.	Whatever I determine is true for me. I am autonomous.
How Should I Live?	According to God's law.	As I decide or according to society or nature.

One question asks, "Who am I?" A basic question. And the answer to that question on the biblical side is "I'm a creature made in God's image, and as a creature I'm subordinate to my Creator and He is my authority." Right here, however I answer that I set up how my mind works, how I'm going to use my mind, and what kind of arguments are legitimate and how my thought patterns work. So I start with the Creator-creation distinction and that sets up how I begin to think about myself, God and the world around me. But if I start with myself and I believe that the universe is just out there, there is no Creator, because I don't want that interruption in my life, I don't want the interference of a Creator to whom I am responsible, so I create a universe in my own imagination, and in that universe, I am just a piece of cosmic debris and I am ultimately alone, because while there are other people there, there's no Person that's guiding the entire universe, it's just a mysterious, dark, chance-driven sea of chaos. Everything's out of control and I'm all alone. This is why people get into drugs and alcohol, these are escapisms and what are they trying to escape. This cosmic nothingness! Drugs are not just a silly thing on the streets, there's a deep problem here, and unless these deep questions are addressed in a heart to heart way, where the Spirit of God is allowed to have His way in the mind, you don't solve the problems. They just go on and on and on and on, you can go through all the therapies you want to and it won't work because it never answers the basic question.

Another question is “What is truth?” or “How do I know?” We said that that can be answered in two ways. It can be answered as a creature where I look to my Creator for the truth. So truth on one hand, on the Creator level is a Person. It’s the person of the Creator, it’s not just a set of principles, it’s not a set of abstract ideals, truth is a Person who has a definite character. We’re going to learn about His character and that He is the source and root of truth, all truth, not just moral truth like “This is right and this wrong,” but mathematical truth, scientific truth, all of that is a reflection and projection of His character, it’s revelatory of Him. On the creature level, truth is His plan and I don’t know something truly until I know that object or concepts place in His plan. From the pagan side, for the creature, truth is whatever I make it, so we’ve got what’s true for me and what’s true for you and everything’s relative and we said the word to describe that is auto-nomous. *auto-* meaning “self” and *-nomos* meaning “law”, self is the law. So, I myself generate the law. In other words, I legislate reality. This is the autonomous mentality and at this point you’ve taken the place of God because God legislates reality, not us.

Then we said “How should I live?” the moral question. How do I live my life? What I’m showing you here simplifies things in learning, because now we don’t have 101 different philosophies of life to learn out there, only two. Every one of the philosophies of life boils down to one of these two views. If you think learning all this is hard try learning all the details of 101 different philosophies of life. So, what I’m doing is making everything easy. Everything is in two categories. Sometimes it takes a little thinking to trace it, but I assure you there are only two answers to life. There’s the answer starting from God as the ultimate authority and the Creator-creature perspective of Gen. 1, or the answer starting from me as the ultimate authority and the Continuity of Being where there’s this mystery surrounding me, I don’t know what’s going on but I make up my universals; I’m autonomous; I generate law, I legislate reality. Those are the only two approaches. When we start talking about God and His existence, before we jump in we want to ask “Where should we start?”

So, the third question, “How should I live?” On the biblical side God defines what I do, so it’s God who gives the ethics, the rules. On the pagan side, the autonomous man who is alone, he generates his own ethics, or as the Bible says it, “they do what is right in their own eyes,” the book of Judges. So that

in a nutshell, that chart is a very important chart; it's one you can use when you analyze literature, you can use it in reading assignments, its one fact that will be a good discipline for you to learn to analyze drama, movies, epics, etc. Take the chart out and start asking the three questions, "How does this author answer this question, this question and this question?" It'll quickly become obvious if you start doing this that they are coming from one of these two places. Unfortunately, what we find is, people sit down not to analyze but to be entertained. They don't want to think they want to be entertained, so you have to discipline yourself, Paul said, "discipline yourselves to godliness." He didn't say it's just going to happen, it takes mental sweat. What I've found is after awhile of doing this you just do it automatically, you can still enjoy the movie, you can still appreciate excellent acting, stunts, dialogue and so forth even if it's deeply pagan. But you'll get sucked in if you don't discipline yourself to grab the key phrases, the key statements and make some mental notes.

HOW GOD CAN AND CANNOT BE KNOWN

Let's see why it's so important to start with open eyes and not closed eyes. The closed eye tantrum approach is this thing on the right, where we're saying that we're alone, we are king, we make our own universals, and we will do what is right in our eyes. Lest this become something strange, let me give you a religious counterpart to this, where it insidiously creeps into evangelism. Often, out of maybe legitimate concerns, because we want to win someone to the Lord, because we want them so bad to become a Christian, what we try to do is dilute the offense of the gospel, and we try to come across with a message that goes something like this—Jesus will take all your blues away, Jesus can help you, Jesus can do this and that, so forth and so forth. So we violate something right off the bat, we start talking about an undefined Jesus. We haven't given any content to J-E-S-U-S, and most people are so illiterate as far as the Scripture goes they have no idea who Jesus is. And if you start presenting Jesus as aspirin, you're just going to sound like a Tylenol commercial. There's a logical progression to get to Jesus and you have to go through that or you get the wrong Jesus. So, you may get converts, but the converts aren't to the Christ of Scripture. I remember, Dr Paige Patterson, some of you have probably heard of him, I think he's the President of the Southern Baptist Convention right now, he was teaching my Inerrancy class in Seminary and he was talking about Baptist missionaries and the

report the SBC receives every year and they'd have like 500,000 converts/yr and someone was complaining that probably all of those are not really converts and he said, "Well, even if 200,000 of those are genuine, that's pretty good." But, I don't think that's the issue at all, I think the issue is, "Did you really give them an opportunity? Did you present Jesus clearly?" Because, if not, you're just going through the same mistake Paul made early in Acts 17 and these people really don't know what you're talking about when you say "Jesus". You don't just go into a tribe with a different language, different culture, different customs and say "Well, Jesus died on the cross for your sins and if you don't believe in Him you'll go to hell." It's nonsense. You may get converts but they won't be converts to the Christ of Scripture. So, no matter how much you love someone, no matter how much you want them to become a Christian, you cannot short circuit the offense of the Creator-creature distinction. They have got to face the fact that we are talking about the Personal Sovereign Creator who alone is the authoritative truth, period. He sustains even our rejection of Him. And that's offensive, but there's no substitute for it.

Let me illustrate this another way. Across the centuries theologians have developed arguments for the existence of God. One of the many arguments for God's existence is called the cosmological argument. I'm going to show you the logic of the argument and I'm going to show you where a systematic mistake is made. All this argument does is cater to the tantrum of the pagan. It does not insist that he open his eyes. Now, not every time this argument is used is it this bad, I'm going to deliberately give you a bad formulation of the argument so you can see the logic.

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

1. Everything has a cause.
2. Therefore the universe has a cause.
3. That cause is God.

There are more potent forms of this argument;ⁱ I'm using a deliberately sloppy one because I want to show a point. This argument is so easily answered. If I were an atheist and you ever fed me this piece of garbage I would chew it up and spit it back at you and I can do it very easily. All I have to do to negate this argument is to take premise one, "everything has a

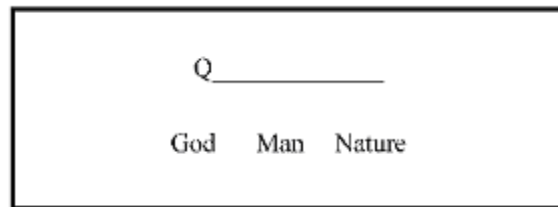
cause,” and plug God in. You say the universe has a cause. Guess what I do? I say God has a cause. Now what are you going to do, because I have just taken your argument that you articulated in step 1 and applied it to God like you applied it to the universe. And from there I can push you back and back, “If God has a cause then who caused God and what’s the cause of the cause of God” and so on and we get into an infinite regression that ultimately ends in mystery. So you haven’t answered anything. And Christians, intelligent Christians have gotten aced in debates this way because a sharp atheist will know his way around this argument. Any intelligent atheist knows how to handle his way around the argument. Anyone who thinks can see the problem with this argument.

What’s wrong with the argument, let’s look at it, because this is one of the things I don’t want you slip into when we get into the attributes of God in the next section. We’re going to be very careful how we talk about our God, and one of the things we’ll be careful of is right here. The issue in this argument is there’s a mistake embedded in this statement—everything has a cause. What’s wrong is embedded in this first word, “everything”. That is a universal and that means that no matter what we are talking about, God, man, creation, it all has a cause. In other words, that first statement applies in the same way to God as it applies to the universe, as it applies to gravity, as it applies to anything. We have erected a universal that is not really a universal. So, this is a fake universal, a universal statement that treats the Creator and the creature identically, and all the atheist does to wipe you out is simply plug God into the equation that you gave him. So don’t give him the equation. The argument is wrong because it presumes that you can make a statement about the Creator and the creature and mean the same thing for both of them.

Whenever we make a universal statement that encompasses both God and man what we are really doing is extremely arrogant. We are so profound in our intellects, and have so many degrees after our names, and we are so stunningly high in our IQ that we can come up with a universal that encapsulates both God and everything else. That’s arrogance not intelligence. Where do we get the authority to make a universal about anything; whether it’s cause-effect, whether it’s love, whether it’s justice, whether it’s right, whether it’s wrong, whether it’s space, whether it’s time, whatever the attribute or characteristic is we do not have the authority to state it as an

abstract quality that applies to the Creator and creature in the same way. If we have the arrogance to do that God is going to take us down just like He did Job, “Who are you that speaks words without knowledge?”

Let’s carry this argument a little further. Here’s a diagram trying to show what I’m getting at.



What we do not want to say is what that diagram says. What we’re doing is we have some quality Q, it can be whatever, it can be truth, it can be justice, it can be space, it can be time, it can be power, whatever the quality. That’s why I just put “Q”. And we’re saying that here’s God underneath, and here’s man, etc. We’re all underneath that (Q)uality, so the (Q)uality takes priority over everything else. Practical illustration, take the quality of number. Here’s where you can get into trouble. Not only do you get in trouble with the atheist but you get devastated by anti-Trinitarians like Unitarians, Muslims, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses...These pseudo-Biblical people come with a definition of ‘threeness’ and ‘oneness’ as a (Q)uality that applies in the same way to God and man. After showing that something cannot be both ‘three’ and ‘one’ in the human realm, they merely apply it to God and thereby ‘prove’ the Trinity doctrine is self-contradictory. It’s very easy to do; it doesn’t take a profound mind to do this. The answer is we disagree at the starting point of the argument. Don’t grant the argument. Don’t let them erect a universal above God and man. If you do you will get aced every time and so much for the Christian Trinity. So, if the problem is how they set up the argument don’t let them set it up that way. The Bible doesn’t set it up that way.

Let me take you to Job 38. I want you to see that God never permits us to set it up wrongly. Job 38:1-4 is a classic kind of confrontation when God speaks to man. I want you to observe carefully because these Scriptures are Scriptures that establish the principle about Q and q that I’ve been talking about. Let me remind you that this is a suffering situation. Job’s world has just come falling down around him and here’s the Lord’s response. Job 38:1-4,

“Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said [2] Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” In other words, “Who are you?” That basic identity question we worked with last week, “Who am I?” and I told you it was not some abstract philosophical question and here it is. What’s God doing here. Obviously He’s not ignorant of who Job is but Job is, Job’s forgotten just who he is just by the way he’s asking God questions. [3] Now gird up your loins like a man,” You are a man Job, you are made in My image and you approach Me a certain way. Let Me remind you of the rules here. “And I will ask you, and you instruct Me! [4] Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth! Tell me if you have understanding.” And He just goes on and on as you can see verse after verse, it’s a series of questions. What’s striking about this is that God doesn’t come up and pat Job on the back and say, “It’s going to be ok Job. I love you.” God doesn’t do that. Instead He peppers Job with one question after another, bam, bam, bam, bam. Why does God use this approach? Why does God use a series of many, many questions? And what is God getting at with the questions? Look at the questions. If you’ll just scan through the questions you’ll see that they all have basically the same answer, always. For example, in verse 4, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” What do you suppose God is driving at? What is God going to establish in counseling Job this way? Obviously what Job has done for 35 chapters, as well as his counselors, is to try to figure out the mystery of evil and suffering, “What’s going on down here God? What have I done to deserve this suffering? How can you allow this to happen to me? Give me a clue here. My pain doesn’t make sense.” So, he’s hitting right on the classic problem in Christianity. Frankly, if I were a non-Christian I wouldn’t even bother with evolution so much as this, the most destructive anti-Christian approach to the gospel. It will hang up more people than any other objection to the Christian faith, the problem of evil. “If you’re really good God then why are you allowing this evil down here?” And Job is devoted to this objection. So its striking, and we ought to remember this, and whenever we have a problem and you’re reading, or discussing with people and you hear an objection to the faith, don’t panic about it, just ask the Lord to lead you through the Bible to where that problem is handled, because we know from Scripture that “all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine,” it’s sufficient for every good work. So the answer has to be somewhere in the Bible. All we have to do is be diligent enough to find the location of it. And here is a classic location of how God answers the problem of evil. First of all, He starts, as He does in verse 1-4 by cutting man down to

size. If nothing else comes out of this, it's obvious that what comes out is that God is God and man is man. What we are faced with is what we have been talking about for several weeks now. God insists on starting the discussion with the Creator-creature distinction. Do you see that? He does not sit down as AN EQUAL with Job and say, "Gee, Job, you got some good points there, now let's sit down and you and I together we'll reason this through." That's not the approach; the approach is "You don't know what you're talking about so listen to Me." That kind of starting point, the Creature-creature starting point is deeply offensive to the carnal mind; it stimulates an intellectual revolt right from the start. A fleshly mind will rebel against the idea that you must listen to God's mind in this matter and your mind is not capable of making sense of it all apart from His starting point. So the discussion starts right out with a radical diminishing of the human mind. This is not ridiculing human thought, it's simply pointing out there's a proper starting point to the discussion.

Let's go on and you'll see how this echoes through the passage. Verse 8, "Who enclosed the sea with doors, when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb," one of the early creation themes that impacts marine sciences and laws of physics like gravity. Verse 12, "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning," in other words, do you control the universe? Verse 16, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea Or walked in the recesses of the deep?" You know, after 50 years of exploring the depths of the ocean we've only looked at 50 square miles, in 50 years and there are 130 million square miles down there. We haven't even scratched the surface of what's down there. Verse 19, "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, [20] That you may take it to its territory, and that you may discern the paths to its home." He goes on and on and on, huge cosmic questions. Verse 31, "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades," in other words what controls do you have astrophysically? Verse 34, "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, So that an abundance of water may cover you?" In other words, do you have meteorological controls Job? Verse 39 gets into ecology, "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions," basically all these questions deal with various areas of human thought, science, research, etc. And yet included in all of this is that God is pointing Job to creation as a reflection of the Creator. This is the glory of God revealed in Creation. In Romans Paul talks about the glory of God, etc. and you wonder what does Paul mean when He talks about the glory of God in

creation. Right here, God Himself is pointing to His own glory in the creation throughout these passages. If you were to turn to Isa 40 you would see God asking the same kinds of questions through Isaiah. Why is God asking those questions? Notice the thrust of the question is to force us to salute, say “Yes Sir.” There’s an authority of His being, and God, in all these passages is refusing to answer anyone on any other starting point than the one we’ve outlined. Don’t you think that that is a model for how we need to deal with people’s questions? The problem is we get trapped because we buy into a question that’s thrown at us, we don’t carefully analyze the question and we go 50 mph into answering a question that was the wrong question to start with. God does not accept at face value our questions. That’s why in the Isaiah and Job passage, and many of these passages, God insists on a Creator-creature starting point. Only with that as the origin of the discussion will He proceed. This is why we’re going to get into the ramifications of this Creator-creature starting point, and why if you start anywhere else you’ll wind up chasing your tail. I’m already illustrated that with the cosmological argument for the existence of God. It has always failed, yet it is the classic argument for the existence of God, you can read it in any Christian apologetics textbook. But it fails most often because of the way it approaches life without starting here [with God]. It assumes that man in his autonomy is able to start with his own rules for the discussion. And God does not start with our rules for the discussion; He starts with His rules for the discussion.

So, God in all these passages, in Isaiah 40, Job 38, whatever the argument is, you will never ever observe in the Bible God setting up an argument that way. That’s a phony way of setting up the argument, it’s the way the non-Christian always sets up the argument, the way the secularist sets up the argument, the way pagans set up the argument. That’s why the Mormons, the Muslims, the Jehovah’s Witnesses set it up that way, and they always triumph. And we wonder, “What happened?” Well, we started the argument the wrong way. Don’t let them start this way. God does not let Job start that way, and Isaiah didn’t let the people in his day, “Comfort, comfort, O ye Jerusalem,” and then he says “I take counsel from no one. I give counsel, I don’t take it.” There’s a difference. And it’s offensive, because the sinner’s heart doesn’t want to bend the knee and submit to that kind of authority.

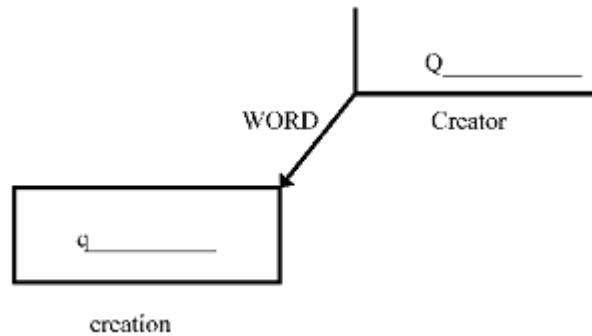
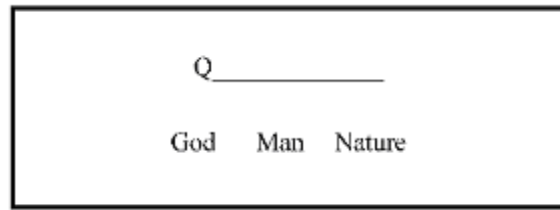
This is why I keep saying, and will say this again and again, we want to share the gospel, we want to be gracious, we want to be reverent but we can’t

compromise truth. And when we go to witness or when we deal with our own hearts, when we battle temptation in our own hearts, there has to be a sort of uncompromising ruthlessness. It's gracious, it's kind, but it's uncompromisingly ruthless in never, ever, permitting the Creator-creature distinction to go away. It is always present.

Turn to Prov. 26:4. Vv 4-5 is one of those paradoxical statements, I'm only going to cover verse 4, you'll say but look at Prov. 26:5, which is the opposite of Prov. 26:4. "Yes," but we can worry about that another day, it's not a conflict, it's looking at it from a different perspective. I want you to observe Prov. 26:4 it's a warning that applies to paganism in general around us. "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him." You don't answer a fool according to his folly. If this guy has set up the argument this way, that's folly. You don't answer a fool according to his folly! Beware of how you set up the argument. When we get into Gen. 3 we'll see what Satan pulled on Eve, right from the start Satan pulled it on Eve, he set up the argument and she just went on with it. He's slick, Satan is slick, the most brilliant creature who ever lived. And we kid ourselves if we don't think we're up against a very intelligent being, a brilliant being. So the Bible warns us, "never answer a fool according to his folly." Quite obviously you can't answer someone if they haven't asked you a question. So verse 4 presumes that the fool has come to you and made some sort of initiative towards you, and at that point you have a choice of buying into the way he set it all up, or like God comes to Job, you say "Whoa, wait a minute," at least you do this in your heart, "Lord, is this right, is there a mine field here, am I walking on solid ground when I reason this way, what's under here." Be suspicious of questions. For example, if someone asks you, "Why don't you go over to Fredericksburg High School and debate the school board on the question of whether creationism should be taught in the school?" negotiate the question, say I'd rather debate another topic, "Can truth be taught in Fredericksburg High School?" All of a sudden, when you phrase the question this way, doesn't that change things a bit? Now we're getting nasty. Quite frankly, for the pagan, to bring up truth is pornographic. It's that offensive. But you've got to set up the questions in such a way that they honor God. If they say "No" then what is the educational system there for anyway. If they say "Ok" then we can get somewhere. But don't agree to a wrong question. Don't get sucked in.

Now, the proper approach. We've seen the wrong way to set up an argument, so let's come to the proper way of setting up the argument. Turn to Isaiah 40:25, there's a little word I want you to notice in that text, and it's that word that we've really been secretly been aiming at morning. Look carefully at what God is talking about in light of what we just said, "To whom then will you liken Me that I should be his equal?" Do you see that word "equal", it's the Hebrew *sawa* and it means "level". What have we been talking about? Two levels vs one level and God says through Isaiah "To whom then will you liken Me that I should be on his level?" God's saying, you can't do that, I'm on my own level. I'm unique. Verse 26, "Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing." Skip down to verse 28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the creator," see the word creator here, "the creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired..." here's the word I want you to notice, watch this, last clause v 28, "His understanding is inscrutable." Some translations "unsearchable" or "no one can fathom". So we have a variety of translations but you can pick up the flavor of what's being claimed here, God is incomprehensible.

Let's look at that again in v 28, "His understanding," not ours, "His understanding," His mind, His way of thinking, "is inscrutable." What does that mean? Let's look at this in terms of our diagram. The question isn't set up this way (left).



The way God sets the question up (right) is that He insists that He is different, we are the creatures, down here in creation, He is the Creator, infinite in size, infinite in magnitude, and whatever (Q)uality we ascribe to Him is not the same as the (q)uality that occurs with us. In other words, there's no (Q)uality common to God and man in an identical way ($Q = q$). Similar, yes, ($Q \sim q$) but not identical.

Isaiah 55:8, all of this follows from creation. If God is not the Creator, this is not really so, in which case God is more intelligent than we are, God knows more than we do, and it's just a quantitative difference, but that's not what the Bible is saying. God is not saying in Isaiah 55:8 that He merely knows more. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than yours, and My thoughts than your thoughts." There's a qualitative difference in the thoughts of God. He is incomprehensible, and that's a word we use again and again; we use it to protect ourselves and the way we speak of our God. He is incomprehensible! Now, don't panic, that does not mean that you can never know Him. Let's be careful with our vocabulary. Write down the word and next to it write a qualifier. It does not mean you can't know God, because obviously the Bible says you can know God. What incomprehensibility means is that you can never know Him exhaustively. You can never know Him totally to the ends of His being! Isaiah 55, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." As creatures we never completely grasp the nature of God, He is always awesome.

Do you know what this does? It sets up the very reason we worship Him. And we will always worship Him because He's incomprehensible. All idols by definition are comprehensible because they're created but He's incomprehensible. That's why we worship Him and not idols. This works its way out in our worship. One of the classic Christian virtues tied up with worship is humility. And it's His incomprehensibility that sets up the environment for us to worship in humility. Because He's incomprehensible I am humble because I'm forced to realize that no matter how great I think my thoughts are, they are not His thoughts, and His ways are always higher than my ways.

This is going to precipitate an interesting thing in your Christian life because when we come into trials in life we always want to know, "Why did God let this happen?" Did you ever notice in that passage, if you haven't noticed I urge you to read Job 38-41 because Job wants to know too, "Hey, I'm getting creamed down here God, give me a clue." And isn't it funny when God shows up He doesn't say, "Job, see what I was trying to do to with your kids was this and what I was trying to do with your wife was this and what I was doing with your friends was this..." There's none of that when God comes to Job. How come? Give the guy a clue here. Rather than do that what God does is set Himself apart from Job. He pushes Job back and when all is said and done what has happened to Job? Did Job get the message? Turn back to Job. God is on a mission and that mission is "Job, you've got to learn baby, that to come to Me you've got to come on My terms. Two verses I want you to see, Job 40:3, after he gets to this point in the confrontation, "Then Job answered the LORD and said, [4] Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. [5] Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add no more." And God continues the treatment, therapy continues. Go over to Job 42:1-3, "Then Job answered the LORD, and said, [2] I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. [3] Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?" and look at his admission, here's the virtue of humility, responding face to face with the incomprehensibility of God, he says "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." He was trying to create his own universals, and God doesn't call us to do that. He calls us, in a humble way, to trust Him because His character is trustable. We place our trust in the character of God. We do not trust in the capabilities of our intellect to fathom Him. And this is always the battle in a practical

way in our lives. We always want to figure it all out, and it's not wrong to exercise our minds. There's enough in Scripture to exercise our minds; if you want to exercise your mind, try the Hypostatic Union on for size. There's plenty in here to exercise our minds with. But when it comes right down to the faith walk of a Christian, basically I have to trust His character, "I don't know what He's doing in my life, I have glimpses of it, but I don't know the whole story."

Therefore, what I've tried to do in this is to show that when we speak in the next lessons about God and His (Q)ualities, we're going to talk about His love, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, etc., and we're going to talk about the creature analog to that down here in us. And we're going to sharply distinguish between God's (Q)ualities and our (q)ualities, and how we learn about Him down here. The pagan position, when he comes to talk about a (q)uality of God, he insists that we speak about God in the same way we speak about man and we erect these universal standards that encompass both God and man ($q = q$)ⁱⁱ and if this is not true you can't know anything about God but what the Bible says is that the (Q)ualities of God are *similar* to the (q)ualities of man, not identical but similar. There's a similarity by virtue of the fact that we are created in His image. So we can know God. We're designed to know Him, but our knowledge of Him is the knowledge of a creature. We are not made Gods to know Him as God. We are made as men to know Him as creatures can know Him. Do we know Him truly? Yes, we do, but we'll never know Him exhaustively. We'll never know Him as He knows Himself. He is so incomprehensible that it means that if we've been in heaven 10,000 years we still have an infinite amount to learn from Him, and He has an infinite amount, inexhaustible amount of new things to show us, forever and ever and ever and ever. This is why heaven isn't boring. There will always be some new thing and we're kept thinking, "What's next". It's like sitting down for dinner and it's a new dish every day. There's an inexhaustible supply, His revelation is endless. We never get to the point where we can close the book on God's revelation and say, "Well, we know it all?" even in heaven, because our God is that immense. You can know everything that can be known as a creature and still not duplicate in your mind what is in His mind because His thoughts are not your thoughts.

Next time we're going to deal with the attributes of God, and I trust that it will be a little more practical than Q and q but I had to go through that

because I want you to carefully understand that we are not talking about abstract qualities. We are talking about a person's character here. And He's an infinite Person and we talk about Him with awe and with majesty because we can never encapsulate Him in our understanding. We just take from Him what He shows us and that and that alone is all we have. But it's enough, because all we need to do is know enough to trust Him. Revelation is sufficient, but in one sense revelation is never ever complete.

ⁱ For example, William Lane Craig formulated the Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God as follows:

1. Everything that exists has an explanation of its existence, either in the necessity of its own nature or in some external cause.
2. The universe (including any singular state) exists.

It follows from (1) and (2) that the universe has an explanation of its existence. Premise (3) states:

3. The universe (including any singular state) does not exist by a necessity of its own nature.
4. Therefore, the universe has an external cause.

ⁱⁱ In philosophical circles there are three positions on how God can and cannot be known: 1) Univocal means when we speak of God and man we speak in terms of identity. What is attributed to God, say love, must be identical to man's love (i.e. $Q = q$). 2) Equivocal means when we speak of God and man we speak with two different languages. What is attributed to God, say love again, is something totally different than when we speak of man's love (i.e. $Q \neq q$). 3) analogical means when we speak of God and man we speak in terms of similarity but not identity. What is attributed to God, say love, is something similar to man's love but not identical (i.e. $Q \sim q$). Only the third position does not breach the Creator-creature distinction thus allowing us to know Him truly yet not exhaustively. This third approach is the one I am purporting.

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