

# The Doctrine of God

## A Overview of the Doctrine of God

### I. The Importance of the Doctrine of God

- A. The doctrine of God is important because the Bible is primarily a book about God, who He is, what He is like, and what He does
  
- B. The most important thing about any one of us is *what we know about God* and *that we know God*
  
- C. Knowing God, who He is, what He does, what He is like and what He requires of us, is the foundation for life and faith, joy, obedience, love and worship.
  
- D. Neglecting the doctrine (knowledge) of God or thinking wrongly about God is a heinous sin.
  
- E. A note on the immensity of the subject

### II. God's Chief End and Man's Chief End

- A. God's Chief End
  - 1. The importance of this subject
  
  - 2. Thesis: God's Chief end is to glorify Himself by enjoying Himself forever (DG, 33; PG 50)
  
  - 3. Defining the Glory of God
  
  - 4. God creates for His own glory and pleasure  
Psa. 19:1; 104:1, 4, 24, 31; 145:3-13; Isa. 43:7; Rev. 4:11

5. God rules and reigns for His own glory and pleasure  
Psa. 115:3; 135:6; Ex. 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; **9:14, 16, 29**; 10:2;  
14:4; 1 Sam. 12:22; Rom. 11:36
6. God sovereignly redeems for His own glory and good  
pleasure  
Isa. 48:9-11; 43:25; 4:23; Ezek. 36:22-23; Eph. 1:3-14;

Summary:

B. Man's chief end

1. All of creation is for His glory Rev. 4:11; Psa. 146:1-6; 19:1-2
2. God created you for His glory  
Isa. 43:6-7; Psa. 8:3-6
3. You are an image-bearer  
Gen. 1:26-27
4. You were created to be a glory-reflector
5. You were created to be a glory-enjoyer  
Psa. 63:1-5
6. My passion must be to

“Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.” Packer.

**Conclusion:** So we engage in theology, in the study of God, for His glory (Psa. 145:5), we do it with delight and joy, drinking deeply at the fountain of His delights (Psa. 36:8-9). In so doing, we are in part doing that which we were created and redeemed to do!

## The Existence of God and a Defense of Christian Theism

### I. The Existence of God

#### A. The existence of God is a worldview question

##### 1. What is a worldview?

*A set of presuppositions (may be true, partially true, false) which form the lense through which we vie, live and interpret life and the world around us (may be conscious, subconscious, inherited, developed, consistent or inconsistent).*

##### 2. Basic worldview questions

##### 3. Worldview assumptions

##### 4. Worldviews and the existence of God

### II. A Defense of Christian Theism

#### A. The nature of knowledge

Epistemology: the theory of knowledge, how we know what we know

##### 1. Rationalism

##### 2. Empiricism

##### 3. Revelation

#### B. The nature of evidence (for the existence of God)

*“As a matter of fact, no man is without presuppositional commitments. As a matter of philosophical necessity, no man can be without presuppositional commitments. And as a matter of scriptural teaching, no man ought to be without presuppositional commitments” (Greg Bahnsen, Evangelical and Inerrancy, 211).*

1. The myth of neutrality
2. The myth of autonomy
3. The traditional evidence (arguments) for the existence of God
4. No naked facts, all facts must be interpreted.
5. The rationalist or empiricist who rests solely upon evidence makes two serious mistakes:
6. Conclusion

C. Defending Christian Theism

1. Worldview approach (Prov. 26:4-5)
  - a) *Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.*
  - b) *Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.*
  - (a) Point of contact (Rom. 1:19-21)
  
  - (b) *Reductio ab adsudurm*
2. The transcendental argument (impossibility of the contrary)

## I. The Names of God

### A. Introduction: The Name(s) of God

1. The name of God has to do with His character, who He is, what He is like.

Gustav Oehler, “God names Himself, not according to what He is for Himself, but what He is for man; and therefore every self-representation of God in the world is expressed by a corresponding name of God.”

2. The name of God is thus vitally linked to His glory, His fame “God’s name is God Himself, God in His self-revelation” (Frame). “In short, Scripture says about the name of God virtually everything it says about God” (Frame).

Ex. 33:17-19; Psa. 79:9; 106:5; 115:1; Isa. 42:8; 48:9-11

Note: My name is Jealous

Ex. 34:14 (Cf. Ex 20:5; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)

3. The dwelling place of *The Name*  
Deut. 12:5, 11, 21; 14:23, 24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2
4. The practical advantages of knowing God’s names

### B. The Proper Name of God: *Yahweh* (hwhy)

1. The revelation of the name *Yahweh* (Ex. 3:6, 13-17; 6:2-9; 14:4; 15:3)
2. The meaning of the name *Yahweh*

### C. *Yahweh* Word Group

1. *Yahweh Nissi*: *Yahweh* is my banner/standard  
Ex. 17:8-15

2. *Yahweh Rapha*: Yahweh heals you  
Ex. 15:26
3. *Yahweh Shalom*: Yahweh is Peace  
Judges 6:23-24
4. *Yahweh Tsabboth*: Yahweh of Hosts
5. *Yahweh Tsidkenu*: Yahweh our Righteousness  
Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16
6. *Yahweh Yireh*: Yahweh will see to it  
Gen. 22:14

D. *El, Elohim* Word Group

1. *El*: the Mighty One, the Powerful One, denotes authority
2. *Elohim*: general term for God, emphasizing His power and transcendence, as Creator and Supreme Being
3. *El Olam*: God the Everlasting One, eternal God, God of eternity  
Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28
4. *El Roi*: the God who sees me  
Gen. 16:7-12
5. *El Elyon, Elyon*: God Most High, absolute transcendence, majesty, incomprehensible, high and exalted  
Gen. 14:17-20; Isa. 14:13-14
6. *El Shaddai*: God the Mighty One  
*Shaddai* – supremacy over all others, power, strength  
Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Ex. 6:3;

E. *Adon, Adonay*

F. The Names of God and the NT

## The Attributes of God

### I. Preliminary considerations

A. The unity and simplicity of God

B. Classification of attributes

1. Classic Lutheran classification:

Negative

Positive

2. Classic Arminian:

Absolute

Relative

Moral

3. Classic Reformed:

Communicable

Incommunicable

4. Millard Erickson's effort:

Greatness

Goodness

5. John Frame's effort:

Ethical

Knowledge

Power

Critique:

C. A note on God's incomprehensibility

Isa. 55:8-9; Deut. 29:29

## II. **Existence, Sufficiency (Aseity), Eternality, Omnipresence**

- A. God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16)
  
- B. Self-existence (Ex. 3:14; Psa. 102:25-27 [Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1]; Rev. 1:8)
  
- C. Self-Sufficiency (Isa. 40:12-17; Psa. 50:10-12; Acts 17:24-25; Rom. 11:33-36)
  
- D. Transcendence and Imminence  
Transcendence: Isa. 6:1-3; 66:1-2  
Imminence: Psa. 34:18a; 73:24-25; Isa. 7:14  
Together: Isa. 57:15;
  
- E. Eternal (Psa. 90:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:17)
  
- F. Omnipresent (Psa. 139:7-12; Prov. 15:3; Isa. 66:1-2; Jer. 23:23-24)
  
- G. Incomparable (Isa. 40:18-26)
  
- H. A note about infinite and perfect



### III. Immutability, Omnipotence, Omniscience

A. Immutability (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Psa. 102:26; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17-18; Jas. 1:17)

B. Omniscience and Omnipotence

1. Omniscience

Premise #1: God has infinite, exhaustive and perfect knowledge.

Premise #2: Everything that can be said of God's knowledge of the past and the present, can also be said of His knowledge of the future, i.e., His foreknowledge is perfect, vast, limitless and exhaustive

The dilemma: If God infallibly and immutably knows my future choices, those choices are certain. The certainty of His foreknowledge appears to undermine our ability to choose to the contrary. God's foreknowledge then appears to nullify human freedom.

Resolutions:

1) Compatibilism

(1) Prescience

(2) Middle knowledge

(3) Human freedom and Divine determinism are compatible

## 2) Open Theism

Key OT Text: Psa. 139:1-6, 16 and Predictive prophecy

2. Ominsapience (Job 9:4; 12:13; Psa. 104:24; Prov. 3:19; Dan. 2:20 Rom. 11:33-36; 16:27; Rev. 7:12)

### C. Omnipotence (Absolute Sovereignty)

1. God has supreme and absolute **power**  
Psa. 62:11; 103:19; Jer. 33:17, 26-27; Lk. 1:37; Rev. 19:6

*Power in God may be defined to be the effective energy inherent in His nature by which He is able to do all things. The exercise of that power is dependent upon His will or purpose, and is limited not by what He can do, but by what He chooses to do.*

James P. Boyce

2. God has a supreme and absolute **will**  
Job 42:2; Psa.33:10-11; 115:3; Prov.16:9; 21:1; Isa.14:24, 27; 43:13; 45:7; 46:9-11; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 9:16-21

*The Deity is possessed not only of infinite knowledge, but likewise of absolute liberty of will, so that whatever He does, or permits to be done, He does and permits freely and of His own good pleasure. God's will is nothing else than God Himself willing, consequently it is omnipotent and unfrustrable.*

*Whatever comes to pass, comes to pass by virtue of this absolute omnipotent will of God, which is the primary and supreme cause of all things. Jerome Zanchius*

3. God has absolute **rule and reign**  
1 Chron. 29:11-12; Psa. 47:7-8; 93:1-2; 97:1; 99:1; Isa. 52:7; Rev. 19:6

4. God's power and redemption  
Eph. 1:19-21  
Luke 18:23-27
  
5. God's power and weakness  
1 Cor. 1:18-25

**The Doctrine of God**  
**The Attributes of God**

**IV. Goodness, Holiness, Righteousness, Justice and Truth**

A. Goodness  
Ex. 33:19; Psa. 73:1; 119:68; 145

B. Holiness  
Isa. 6:1-3; 57:15; Ex. 15:11

1 Jn. 1:5

C. Righteousness  
Gen. 18:25; Ezra 9:15; Psa. 71:19; 145:17

Righteousness and salvation – Psa 65:5; 71:15; 98:2; Isa. 46:13;  
51:5, 6, 8; 56:1

D. Justice  
Deut. 32:4; Psa. 7:11; 9:7-8; 96:10-13;

## The Attributes of God

### IV. Goodness, Holiness, Righteousness, Justice and Truth

#### E. Truth

1. Truth and reality  
Jn. 17:3; 14:6; 1 Jn. 5:20
  
2. Ethically reliable  
Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Psa. 12:6; 119:160; Jn. 17:17
  
3. Personally faithful  
Ex. 34:6;

### V. Divine Affections

#### A. God has absolute capacity to feel, He has affections

God's emotivity is his supreme capacity to act responsively and sensationally; to feel pure and principled affections of love and hate, joy and grief, pleasure and anger, and peace; in accord with his supreme, spiritual, and simple Being and impeccable virtue.

(Gregory G. Nichols, Doctrine of God Part 3: The Nature of God: section 2: Unit 8 Lecture 15, Fall 1997)

#### B. God's emotional capacities are invulnerable and perfect

#### C. God's emotional capacity does not threaten His immutability

"The schoolmen, and often the philosophical theologians, tell us that there is no feeling in God. This, they say, would imply passivity, or susceptibility of impression from without, which it is assumed is incompatible with the nature of God. Here again we have to choose between a mere philosophical speculation and the clear teaching of the Bible, and of our own moral and religious nature. Love of necessity involves feeling, and if there be no feeling in God, there can be no love." (Hodge, I., p. 428,9)

A God without an emotional life would be a God without all that lends its highest dignity to personal spirit, whose very being is

movement; and that is as much as to say no God at all." (Warfield, *Savior of the World*, p.117).

D. God has and expresses perfect affections

1. He loves and delights in His Son  
Isa. 42:1; Matt. 3:17; Jn. 17:24
  
2. He delights in justice and mercy  
Psa. 33:5; Isa. 61:8; Jer. 9:24;
  
3. Rejoices in His people - Isa. 62:5; 65:19; Zeph, 3:17; Jer. 32:39-31
  
4. He is pleased/experiences pleasure – Psa. 115:3; Prov. 16:7; Phil. 4:18; 1 Thess. 4:1; Eph. 1:5, 9
  
5. Grieves – Gen. 6:5-6; Judges 10:16; Psa. 78:40; 95:10; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30
  
6. Anger, wrath, detestation – Ex. 22:22-24; Psa. 5:5-6; 7:11; Prov. 6:16-19; Mal. 2:16  
Special note on Psa. 38:1-3
  
7. Compassion, pity – Ex. 33:19; Psa. 103:13; Isa. 49:15-16
  
8. Love - Jn. 3:16; Jer. 31:3; Mic. 7:18-20

This is a significant theological foundation which has huge ramifications.

## The Eternal Decree of God

### I. Definitions:

The Shorter Catechism Q. 7, What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

### II. Some Precautions

A. We cannot say everything that needs to be said.

B. We must ever keep before us that the God we are studying is beyond us!

C. We must approach these truths with sense of humility, longing to know our God and Father better, not to have our curiosity satisfied.

### III. Unpacking the meaning of the Decree of the Sovereign God

A. God’s eternal decree finds its starting point in the mind of God

B. Dependent on God alone

### IV. God’s decree is governed by His own nature

A. Wisdom - Prov. 8:22-23

B. Holiness - Deut. 32:3-4

C. Eternality - Psa. 33:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20; Eph. 1:4

D. Immutability - Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17

E. Independence - Acts 17:25, 28

F. Goodness - Psa. 119:68

G. Christo-centric - Eph. 1:9-10

### V. God’s decree encompasses all things “Whatsoever comes to pass.”

Eph. 1:11; Psa. 103:19; Rom. 8:28

(Execution of the decree)

1. Creation, providence
2. Salvation
3. All the acts of sinful men



## **VI. Qualifying the Decree of the Holy and Wise God**

A. God decrees in such a way that He is not the author of sin

1 Jn. 1:5; Jas. 1:13

B.B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 283-284 (see back)

B. Two Examples : Gen 50:20; Acts 2:23

J. Edwards, 529 (see back)

C. Sovereignty and Moral Responsibility

1. The problem

2. The solution

J.I. Packer's "Antinomy"

Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23

A Significant (yet often overlooked) Passage to Consider:  
Isaiah 10:5-19

I. The Lord's Sovereignty and Assyria's Responsibility (10:5-11)

II. The Lord's will and the Assyrians' will (12-15)

A. The certainty of the Lord's purpose (12a)

B. The certainty of the Lord's judgment (12b)

C. Assyria's moral freedom (13-14)

D. God's perspective on Assyria's will (15)

III. The Lord as the consuming Judge (16-19)

## **CONCLUSION**

## God's Work of Creation

### A Biblical Theological Introduction to Creation

- 1) That God created, by fiat, the heavens and the earth, is a biblical given which pervades all of Scripture.
- 2) Creation in relationship to the Decree  
LC, Q/A 14  
Q. *How does God execute His decrees?*  
A. *God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will.*
- 3) Creation is a witness to God and His character  
(see Mark Futado, *Creation, Witness to the Wonder of God*)
- 4) Creation as Christological witness and protology  
(Warren Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis*)

*In God's way of doing history, the last things are as the first (ta escata w`j ta prwta).*

### A Contemporary Introduction to Creation

As biblical Christians, we need to understand the biblical teaching on creation for a number of reasons:

- 1) The pervasiveness of Naturalism  
  
(see Philip Johnson's books, esp *Darwin on Trial*; Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*; Michael Denton, *Evolution, A Theory in Crisis* for a few devastating critiques of Darwinism).
- 2) The perversion of Environmentalism
- 3) The reminder that God is Life-giver and Lord over all creation  
Gen. 2:7; Job 33:4; Psa. 47:2; 97:9
- 4) The maintenance of the Creator-creature distinction and relationship  
Ecc. 12:1; Job 4:17; Psa. 95:6; Isa. 29:16; 45:9; Rom. 1:25

- 5) The recognition of and submission to Creation order and ordinances  
(see John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*)  
Gen. 1-2
  
- 6) The responsibility of dominion and stewardship  
(see Calvin Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness*; [www.cornwallalliance.org](http://www.cornwallalliance.org)).  
Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; Psa. 8:3-8

### **A Theology of God's Work of Creation**

- A. Creation is a Trinitarian Work
  
- B. Creation is a free work
  1. Not a necessary work
  2. A free and purposeful work
  3. Creation is the overflow of God's goodness
  
- C. The Triune God takes His pleasure in His creation
  
- D. Creation: How and When  
(see *The Genesis Debate: three views on the days of creation*; Douglas Kelly, *Creation and Change*)
  1. Creation *Ex Nihilo*
  2. The six days of creation

### **A Christian Response to God's Work of Creation**

- A. We ought to love creation in a God-centered manner
  
- B. We ought to enjoy God's good gifts
  
- C. We ought to take our stewardship of creation responsibly
  
- D. We ought to look forward to the New Heaven and the New Earth

## God's Work of Providence (Job 12; Psa. 104)

### Introduction

#### Larger Catechism, Q/A. 18

Q. *What are God's works of providence?*

A. *God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to His own glory.*

#### Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A. 27

Q. *What dost thou mean by the providence of God?*

A. *The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.*

### I. God is Perfectly Working Out His Plan Through Sovereign Providence

A. Providential control over nature

Matt. 5:45; Amos 4:7; Acts 14:17; Psa. 104:14; 148:4-8; Job 36:32

B. Providential control over animals

Matt. 10:29-30; 6:26; Psa. 104:21

*His all-wise providence has appointed beforehand what bough the bird shall perch upon; what grains it shall pick up; where it shall lodge and where it shall build; on what it shall live and where it shall die.* Augustus Toplady

C. Providential control over the nations

Dan. 2:20-21; Psa. 33:10; Rom. 13:1

D. Providential control over the decisions and actions of men

Prov. 16:9; Prov. 21:1; Psa. 105:25;

*As rational agents we think, consult, act freely. As dependent agents, the Lord exercises his own power in permitting, overruling, or furthering our acts. Thus man proposes; God disposes. Man devises; God directs. He orders our will, without infringing our liberty, or disturbing our responsibility.* Bridges, 232.

Gen. 20:1-6; Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Jud. 14:1-4; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kgs. 12:15; Esth. 6:1-3

E. Providential control over "random" events

Prov. 16:33; 1 Kgs. 22: [34]

*It teaches us, that things that we conceive to be accident are really under Providence. 'What is chance to man is the appointment of God.' . . . The instructive lesson to learn, is that there is no blank in the most minute circumstances. Things, not only apparently contingent, but depending upon a whole train of contingencies, are exactly fulfilled.* Bridges, 253.

### II. God Decrees and Works through Second Causes

A. Exclusion of "chance" as a real causing agent

Belgic Confession

*We believe that the same God, after he had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that he rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without his appointment*

Sproul

*If chance existed, it would destroy God's sovereignty. If God is not sovereign, He is not God. If He is not God, He simply is not. If chance is, God is not. If God is, chance is not. The two cannot coexist by reason of the impossibility of the contrary.*

*I say that chance has no power to do anything because it is simply not anything. It has no power because it has no being. Nothing cannot do something. Nothing is not. What are the chances chance can do anything? Not a chance. It has no more chance to do something than nothing has to do something.*

Ecc. 9:11

*On the lips of an Israelite 'chance' means what is unexpected, not what is random. The Hebrew word means "something that happens." Michael Eaton*

**B. Affirmation of second causes**

1. Second causes are the means to reaching the end.  
They are necessary (for the accomplishment of the end)  
They are free (there is no external coercion by God)  
They are contingent (as they happen in history, time and space, they are in cause and effect relationship with everything else).
2. God's providence does not violate second causes, it establishes them.
3. Concurrence  
2 Sam. 24:1, 10; 1 Chron. 21:1  
God's activity is simultaneous and co-extensive with man's activity and yet at the same time determinative.
4. Examples of second causes  
Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:22-23; 4:28;  
\*\*Acts 27:21-32

**III. The Providence of God and My Life**

- A. I am fully responsible for all my actions (2 Cor. 5:10)
- B. My actions, as second causes, have significance (2 Tim. 1:10)
- C. My actions are governed by the revealed will of God, not His providence (Deut. 29:29; 1 Sam. 24:1-7)
- D. Divine providence is not meant to paralyze me, it is meant to empower me!
- E. Divine providence is not meant to paralyze me, it is meant to comfort me.  
Sarah Edwards

*What shall I say? A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod, and lay our hands on our mouths! The Lord has done it. He has made me adore His goodness, that we had him so long. But my God lives; and He*

*has my heart. O what a legacy my husband and your father has left us! We are all given to God; and there I am, and love to be.*