

# Cardinal Doctrines For Revival: God

By Tom Hill

**Bible Text:** Isaiah 46:1-8

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Not long ago, I read a religious survey that tallied the American's belief in the existence of God. Amazingly, over 75% said that they believed in God.

That statistic sounds unrealistic when contrasted with the sinful condition in the world. It surely points to the condition that people believe a false view of God. Such a condition does not surprise me.

Worse yet, however, false doctrine about God has invaded the Church of Jesus Christ and corrupted it with an impurity that only spiritual revival can cure.

Abundant evidence confirms that such a condition exists in the Church of Jesus Christ. False doctrine about God does abide in the Church and in individual Christians.

Its presence defiles the Church and individuals. Many clues affirm its presence.

For example, although many declare faith in God, they, in reality, do not believe that He exists. They exercise a practical atheism.

The new knowledge of the day with its concentration upon science and technology eliminates Him. He has become something oppressive upon mankind's ideas and lusts. His law, seen as something nightmarishly burdensome, prevents progress. In reality, then, they become practical atheists. Their actions do not conform to their stated belief.

In similar fashion, believers practice atheism, too. They point to a new era of mankind that demands a new message. This message avoids or eliminates:

1. Biblical doctrine;
2. submission to God and the Lordship of Christ;
3. duty to God by faith and obedience.

Instead, the new message concentrates upon these factors:

1. "How to..." messages; e. g., "How To Build Strong Families," "How To Find Happiness," et. al.;
2. subjectivism by concentrating upon the personal well being of mankind, not mankind's duty to God.

Further, the Church today emphasizes new methods in hopes of maintaining and advancing the Church. This new emphasis reveals itself by concentrating upon the following elements:

1. personality;
2. promotion;
3. programs and productions, with the accompanying stress upon techniques, systems, and organization;
4. property, i. e., the location of the Church building, its facilities, etc.;
5. pragmatism, a "...does it work" or an "...it works" mentality, as if the ends justify the means.

Although intended as attempts to include God, they make Him an appendage. God never works as an appendage to anyone or anything, no matter how noble. He does not, will not, share His glory with another (Isaiah 42.8).

Also, some view God as a philosophical concept. This false doctrine defines God as merely an idea. He has neither life nor personage.

He exists only as a thought or concept, a debatable one at that. He is merely a deduction from evidence or an ideal. He is another name for goodness, beauty, and truth.

To others, God is law or life. He is nothing more than a creative impulse.

Another view of God describes Him as an immanence. It maintains that He exists in everything. The whole of nature is God. Thus, everything is sacred.

Another very common misconception of God perceives Him as a watchmaker. This misconception, a kind of deism, affirms that God created all things, but then He abandoned it to run on its own.

Whatever providence He has, He exerts only in the material realm. He wields no authority or presence in the moral and spiritual realms.

In application, then, a person relies solely upon the mind, which God gave, for direction, insight, and understanding in life and spiritual/moral issues. Mankind does not rely upon God; He shuns involvement with them.

He "...lets mankind do as seems best." He is remote, inactive, and immovable in mankind's affairs, whether Christian or secular.

Finally, some see God as a theological truth. Although it sounds Biblical, it actually describes a detachment from God. It concentrates upon God as a doctrinal Being and disregards Him as a Person.

Thus it emphasizes definitions and doctrines, not personal relationship. In practice, this approach reveals an interest in the dogmas of God but not in the person of God.

It focuses upon knowledge about Him but avoids personal involvement with Him. It settles for the knowledge of definitions and doctrines about God.

As you would expect, these deceptions yield dire consequences. They affect our beliefs and practices toward God and cause false doctrine.

Specifically, these seemingly simple deviations from Biblical orthodoxy lead people into the following sinful practices.

1. They dismiss God and doubt His existence and His person.
2. They doubt God's interest in mankind. Thus, mankind does not, cannot communicate with Him, know Him, or have any personal dealing or interaction with God. Then, they fail to know the person of God and fail to fellowship with Him personally, because they fail to understand and believe His person. They substitute knowledge about God for a living experience with Him.
3. They disregard His involvement with mankind and His intervention into mankind's affairs.
4. They deny God's attributes: His eternal existence, transcendence, sovereignty, love, grace, and mercy, to name just a few of them. He shows a disinterest in mankind's affairs and morals.
5. They deny the value of prayer, calling it a ridiculous waste of time.

Such doubts and debates arise because of unbelief. Unbelief about God grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit. It expels God's glorious presence. Further, doubters lack spiritual power.

Sadly, these claims describe many professing Christians. Thus, the Church faces a crossroads today. She can continue to follow the current course, which leads to spiritual decay and failure. Or She can correct it.

To correct the current course requires a reformation in the Church and believers. It demands a reexamination of the Scriptural truth about God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

He alone reveals the truth to the minds and hearts of mankind. The work of the Holy Spirit will bring repentance from sin for unbelief. Further, He will bring the Church and Christians to complete reliance upon the Biblical truth of God.

Such a reformation in the lives of believers would bring revival to them, and by God's sovereign grace, to the Church of Jesus Christ, too.

To prod you in that direction, I want to examine with you certain absolute Biblical truths about God that we must believe. They stand in direct opposition to these false doctrines of God prevalent in the Church today.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal their truth to your heart and mind. I pray that He will use them to bring about a spiritual revival in your life that will transform you.

I call your attention to a passage of Scripture from the Old Testament that reveals these crucial truths about God. You will find it in Isaiah 46:8-11:

“Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. {9} Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, {10} Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: {11} Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

In this passage, God reveals numerous attributes of Himself that destroy and defeat the false reasoning of mankind. The following descriptions briefly summarize them.

### **A living God**

Initially, the passage makes known the living reality of God. In verse 9, the reference clearly states:

“...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, there is none like me...”

God boldly declares His existence and then proceeds to prove it. He reveals Himself as the Almighty, the Mighty One. He further identifies Himself as the supreme God. Then, lest someone would misinterpret these statements, He points out that none others exist. Thus, He is not merely the highest of several gods. Rather, no other ones exist.

There is no other god in existence; other so-called gods are nonentities. Further, these other imitation deities do not compare to Him, in existence or in worth.

Therefore, He is the self-existent Creator, the self-sustaining and eternal One, without beginning or ending, self-consistent and unchangeable. He alone gives existence to things, creates, and brings into being things that are not.

In essence God says: “Yes, there is a God, one God, and I am He.”

He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end. He stands first in cause, in place, time, and rank, before all things.

He stands as the last end, literally the west if you are facing the east, with nothing in between. All things are through, of, from, and for Him. (See Isaiah 44.6; 48.12.)

### **A declaring God**

From this beginning, God then proceeds to confirm Himself as God. He provides evidence. You will notice in verse 10 that God declares all things that come to pass.

To declare, as given here, means to manifest or make known, to announce, or to predict. It goes beyond mere foreknowledge and prediction of events.

In its fullest sense, it means to design the events, to decree that they will come to pass, and to direct the events into existence.

It, then, reveals God's control of His creation and providence and dominion over His creatures for His purposes. The passage confirms these very truths.

Notice first in verse 10 that God reveals when He declared these things to come to pass. He decreed them from ancient times, or in the front part, as it literally says.

Before time and place, in eternity past, the Sovereign God designed them. Further, He planned things not yet in existence before they occurred. (See Isaiah 44.7; 45.21; Acts 15.18.)

Second, verse 10 identifies the source of these decrees. They originated with God's own counsel and pleasure. He made His declarations according to His plans, purposes, desires, and delight.

Thus all of God's attributes mingle with and contribute to His design. His holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and wisdom (to name just a few) helped shape God's purposes. (See Psalm 115.3; 135.6.)

Third, verse 10 further shows the extent of God's decrees. They include those things from the beginning to future events in succeeding ages until the end of the world. In particular, His decrees extend from the start of an event unto its ultimate conclusion. (See Isaiah 41.22; 42.9.)

Finally, verses 10 and 11 record the certainty of God's purposes. They are reliable and accurate. They shall stand, certain, fixed, unchangeable, undefeated, complete. (See Proverbs 19.21; 21.30; Isaiah 43.13.)

God says:

“...I will do all my pleasure...I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

God's self-revelation, then, shows Him as designer and creator. He predetermines, decrees, states the order, and commands it to happen.

Then, He calls it forth into being and moves in history to make it happen. He does it all for His own glory, honor, and praise.

In so doing, He defeats the fallacies inherent in the beliefs of the eternal existence of matter and of the evolution of all things from original matter. Further, He distinguishes between creation and that which results from creation, generation and reproduction.

He, too, refutes the notion of God as an absentee watchmaker who started it all but then retreated from His creation.

### **An acting God**

You can not read the passage before us without concluding that God acts. He is an acting, intervening Person: determining, declaring, performing, desiring, creating, and fulfilling all that He pleases.

So He is not a thought, a philosophical concept, a theological doctrine, or an impersonal, inactive creative force. Contrary to these delusions, God not only takes an interest in His creation, but He intrudes into it.

He reveals Himself as a personal Being with a distinct concern for mankind's morals and actions. Because He is personal, mankind can know Him, sustain particular dealings with Him, and become responsible to Him.

Therefore, He is pre-eminent above His creation. He exists above it and is independent from it. He alone stands supreme and transcendent above mankind and the material universe.

Mankind's nature shows him finite, dependent, incomplete, and inherently evil. On the other hand, God's nature reveals Him as infinite, self-sustaining, complete, and pure. (See Isaiah 55.8-9.)

Why does God reveal Himself in this fashion? He gives mankind this revelation that we might know the truth about Him. These truths give mankind knowledge about the character and nature of God. I pray that the Holy Spirit has opened your eyes to understand them.

Second, He reveals them by His Spirit that He might convict you of your sin. Where has the Holy Spirit identified where you have believed false doctrine about God?

Where has the Spirit shown you where false doctrine has caused you to sin against God?

Unbelief, through ignorance or the will, deprives you of spiritual power and God's glorious presence. It quenches the Spirit, too.

Third, these truths bring reproof that leads to repentance.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit can use these truths to conform you to them. He can mold your thoughts, opinions, and beliefs to God's word. In addition, the Spirit can adjust your life so that your behavior squares to the truth in full obedience to God. Your life will glorify God as the Spirit conforms you to the image of Christ.

I pray that the Holy Spirit has shown you your true condition before God. I pray that the Holy Spirit will apply these Biblical truths in your life and that you will find relief through the blood of Jesus Christ.

May the Spirit come to you in grace and begin a spiritual transformation in your life today.