

- I. Session 77: The Omnipresence of God Part 1: Old Testament
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall study what Scripture in the Old Testament has to say about God's omnipresence and also what does this mean for our lives.
 - b. What is the omniscience of God? Definitions:
 - i. Wayne Grudem: "God does not have size or spatial dimension and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places."¹
 - ii. John Feinberg: "God's omnipresence, on the other hand, signifies that God is present in the totality of his being at each point in space."²
 - iii. John Frame: "Spatial omnipresence cannot mean that God is a physical substance spread through the material universe. What it means, rather is that God's power, knowledge and ability to act in the finite world are universal."³
 1. Here John Frame is grasping with the truth that God is Spirit and therefore omnipresence cannot mean God is a physical "stuff" in the material universe.
 2. Frame also draws out the implication of what does it mean that God is present everywhere: His power, knowledge and ability to act is a fact in every space of His creation.
 - c. What does the Bible in the Old Testament teach about the omniscience of God?
 - i. "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.*" (Proverbs 15:3)
 1. An aspect of God's omnipresence is that God is able to know every place.
 2. Here we see the verse establishes that "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place.*"
 3. Thus God is "*watching the evil and the good.*"
 4. God might not be present in the sense of physically manifesting Himself in every place since He is Spirit but surely God sees all that takes place in every space is one way He is present.
 - ii. God seeing all is also taught in Job 34:21: "*For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps.*"
 1. Again we see that God watches humanity.
 2. Notice that God's omniscience here ("*He sees all his steps.*") is based upon God's omnipresence to "see" all of man's steps.
 - iii. "*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," 12 Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.*" (Psalm 139:7-12)

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 173.

² John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 249.

³ John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2002), 580.

1. In earlier sessions we have seen that **Psalm 139** is rich with its description of God's attributes including God's omniscience.
 2. Here these verses also describe God's omnipresence.
 3. **Verse 7** begins with two rhetorical questions:
 - a. "Where can I go from Your Spirit?"
 - b. "Or where can I flee from Your presence?"
 4. The answer of course is there is nowhere one can flee from God's presence.
 5. In answering the rhetorical questions God's omnipresence is explicitly stated in **verses 8** in the form of two statements that if the Psalmist were to go to the highest and lowest point physically, God will be still be there:
 - a. "If I ascend to heaven, You are there;"
 - b. "If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there."
 6. One cannot outrun God's omnipresence: "If I take the wings of the dawn... **10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.**" (**v.9a, 10**)
 - a. Using poetic language, the Psalmist describes riding the speed of dawn.
 - b. In essence the speed of dawn is the speed of light.
 - c. Yet with going the speed of light verse 10 tells us "Even there Your hand will lead me."
 - d. You can't escape God's presence with speed.
 7. There is nowhere you can move that is too far from God's omnipresence: "If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, **10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.**" (**v.9b-10**)
 8. Even darkness cannot hinder his omnipresence and omniscience according to **verses 11-12**.
- iv. "Am I a God who is near,' declares the Lord, 'And not a God far off? **24 Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?'** declares the Lord." (**Jeremiah 23:23-24**)
1. These two verses appear in a chapter in which God is rebuking false prophets during the time in which Jeremiah the Prophet ministered.
 2. There are three rhetorical questions asked by the Lord here.
 3. In the first question God asks rhetorically whether He is a God who "is near" or "a God far off?" (**v.23**)
 4. The last rhetorical question answers the first question: "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" (**v.24b**)
 - a. The answer of course is "yes," God does fill the heavens and the earth.
 - i. The context supports this; after all, it is because God fills the earth He is able to hear what the false prophets say in **verse 25**.

- ii. Jeremiah did not write in a vacuum; other parts of the Old Testament affirm that God is all present such as in **Psalm 139**.
 - b. Since God does fill the heavens and the earth that means God is a God who is near.
- 5. The second rhetorical question asks a question concerning God's knowledge: "*Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?*" (**v.24a**)
 - a. Again the answer to this rhetorical question is that God is able to see a man in his hiding place.
 - b. Given God's omnipresence we see it is one basis for why God is omniscient concerning someone in a hiding place.
 - c. Notice the inter-relationship between God's omnipresence and God's omniscience.
- v. "*“Though they dig into Sheol, From there will My hand take them; And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down. 3 “Though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them. 4 “And though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword that it slay them, And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.””*" (**Amos 9:2–4**)
 - 1. Here in the context of **Amos 9** God is describing the truth that His judgment is unavoidable.
 - 2. **Verse 2** describes two places in which people might try to go to flee from God and yet God is able to still go after them there:
 - a. "*“Though they dig into Sheol, From there will My hand take them”*
 - b. "*“And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down.”*
 - 3. **Verse 2** mention of "*Sheol*" and "*heaven*" is similar to **Psalm 139:8** where both places are mentioned except here it is in the context of God's judgement.
 - 4. **Verse 3a** describes if people were to "*hide on the summit of Carmel.*"
 - a. Carmel was a high point in Israel and was 1500 feet high limestone mountain that helped protected from even invaders of the Jezreel valley.
 - b. Yet God says "*I will search them out and take them from there;*"
 - 5. **Verse 3b** describes if people were to "*conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea*"
 - a. This would be a very low point of the Earth in contrast to the high point of Carmel that was familiar to the Jews.
 - b. Yet God says "*From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.*" ← Quite a graphic description!

- c. Of course at that time period it was not yet possible to walk on the floor of the sea and even today it is a dangerous feat that few are qualified to do. The point is the impossibility of fleeing from God.
 - 6. **Verse 4** describes if people *“though they go into captivity before their enemies,”*
 - a. One might think that in captivity with the enemies of God, somehow that would limit His sovereignty or His omnipresence.
 - b. Yet God gives the strongest wording of all the location that one tries to flee, saying *“From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them. 4 “And though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword that it slay them, And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”*
 - vi. Another passage in which there is no place one can flee God’s judging presence: *“Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,” declares the Lord.”* (**Obadiah 4**)
- d. Implications
 - i. Recall **Jeremiah 23:23-24**. Do you think of God as far or near? Be warned: The subject of God is closer than He appears!
 - ii. Does it astound you that God is serious about His Holiness? Note how frequent God’s omnipresence is invoked concerning judging the unrighteous, that they cannot flee. Are you just as serious as God is concerning the importance of holiness?
 - iii. If you are fleeing God, you need to know from what we seen in our study that you cannot outrun God’s presence. Repent to Christ instead and experience His grace and forgiveness!
 - iv. Have you meditated on God’s omnipresence in regards to your sins and the consequences of your sins? This doctrine would motivate you to holiness!
 - v. Does’ God’s presence comfort you as is the intention of this teaching in Psalm 139? Be encouraged that God has not left you behind!