

- I. Session 78: The Omnipresence of God Part 2: Clarification from the Old Testament
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall look to the Old Testament for clarification of what God’s omnipresence means and also what does this mean for our lives.
  - b. Reminder of the definition of the omniscience of God:
    - 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.”<sup>1</sup>
    - 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.”<sup>2</sup>
    - 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.”<sup>3</sup>
  - c. What does the Bible in the Old Testament have to say in further clarifying God’s presence and omnipresence?
    - i. Clarification #1: God being present everywhere does not mean that everywhere, everything and everyone is God.
      1. Feinberg states an important nuance: “To avoid pantheism Christian theists claim that God is present with (or in addition to) every point in space, but not as each point.”<sup>4</sup>
      2. Remember earlier in this series we had a session on the Creator/creature distinction.
      3. God being present among every person does not mean God in essence is human or vice versa: “*God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*” (Numbers 23:19)
      4. God being present everywhere does not mean His creation is God. Scripture clearly prohibits idolatry:
        - a. “*Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God.*” (Leviticus 19:4)
          - i. Idolatry is specifically prohibited.
          - ii. Notice the prohibition involves not making “*for yourselves molten gods,*” showing that molten items in creation are not God/gods.
        - b. ““*You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,*” (Exodus 20:3-5)

---

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 173.

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

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

<sup>4</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 250.

- i. Notice the comprehensive scope of what specifically is described as idols covers anything resembling creation found in heaven, earth and in the water.
    - ii. **Verse 5** tells us not to worship them and that God is jealous if one does worship and serve them. This shows that God is distinct from His creation.
  - ii. Clarification #2: There are different senses meant by God's presence as it is used in the Scriptures.
    1. There are passages that talks about the absence of God.
      - a. *"Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden."* (**Genesis 4:16**)
      - b. *"Do not go up, or you will be struck down before your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. 43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you, and you will fall by the sword, inasmuch as you have turned back from following the Lord. And the Lord will not be with you."* (**Numbers 14:42-43**)
      - c. *"Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?"* (**Psalm 10:1**)
      - d. *"But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."* (**Jonah 1:3**)
    2. In order to avoid a contradiction with passages on God's omniscience (from last session) and the passages above on God's absence, we must make a distinction between the different senses of God's presence.
    3. Also we see there are different senses of God's presence from the immediate context of how God's presence operate within these different verses.
      - a. *"Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden."* (**Genesis 4:16**)→A relational sense since Cain has just sinned by committing murder and God's "absence" here is understood as a punishment.
      - b. *"Do not go up, or you will be struck down before your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. 43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you, and you will fall by the sword, inasmuch as you have turned back from following the Lord. And the Lord will not be with you."* (**Numbers 14:42-43**)→Here we see God's enabling presence understood as God helping Israel since it is the prerequisite for Israel's victory.

- c. “*Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?*” (Psalm 10:1)→ Here we see a relational sense of God’s presence in which the Psalmist is asking where God is in times of his trouble.
    - d. “*But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*” (Jonah 1:3)→ Here we see an ethical sense of God’s presence that Jonah was trying to flee.
  - 4. For further clarification: What we mean by different senses of God’s presence is that God’s presence operates differently in different areas, in different instances and to different people.
- iii. Clarification #3: God’s ontological presence can be distinguished from God’s spiritual presence
  - 1. An example of God’s spiritual presence with humans: “*Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*” (Psalm 51:11)
    - a. Notice the first half of the verse record David begging God not to be cast away from God’s presence.
    - b. The second line clarify what being away from God’s presence means is the departure of the Holy Spirit.
    - c. Thus we see one sense of God’s presence is relational/spiritual.
  - 2. God’s ontological presence refer to God’s being in of itself being present somewhere. There is a sense in which God is omnipresent as we have establish in the last session even towards the wicked and those that don’t have a salvific relationship with God. We can call this enduring presence God’s ontological presence.
- iv. Clarification #4: While we can make distinction between God’s spiritual presence and moral presence, yet they are inter-related.
  - 1. We have already seen passages earlier that sin separates us from God’s relational presence in Genesis 4:16.
  - 2. “*Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name; The upright will dwell in Your presence.*” (Psalm 140:13)
    - a. This verse demonstrates that there’s a moral dimension associated with the spiritual presence of God.
    - b. Notice “*the upright will dwell in Your presence.*”
- v. Clarification #5: God’s spiritual presence is the source of blessing
  - 1. If God is our greatest treasure than being before His presence is our greatest blessing!
  - 2. “*You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever*” (Psalm 16:11)
    - a. Notice that David here says being in God’s presence “*presence is fullness of joy*”

- b. What is the duration of joy when one is in God’s presence?  
“*In Your right hand there are pleasures.*” Did you get that?  
Forever!
- vi. Clarification #6: Yet God’s spiritual presence is frightening
  - 1. ““*Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; When I consider, I am terrified of Him.*” (Job 23:15)
    - a. Notice Job saying He “*would be dismayed at His presence*”
    - b. Job also says “*I am terrified of Him.*”
  - 2. “*Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down, That the mountains might quake at Your presence— 2 As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil— To make Your name known to Your adversaries, That the nations may tremble at Your presence!*” (Isaiah 64:1-2)
    - a. Here we see God’s presence that judges.
    - b. We see the reaction of God’s presence:
      - i. “*mountains might quake*” (v.1)
      - ii. “*the nations may tremble*” (v.1)
- vii. Clarification #7: Despite God’s Spiritual presence being frightening God’s presence is also something a true believer yearns for
  - 1. Don’t forget the point made above above that God’s presence is a blessing.
  - 2. “*Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*” (Psalm 51:11)
    - a. Here we see that God’s presence is something David wants even as He knows the consequences of his sins.
    - b. He does not want God’s presence to leave him!
  - 3. How do we reconcile God’s presence being something that is a blessing but yet frightening but also something still yearn for? We need the Gospel to allow us to bring us near God!
- d. Implications
  - i. Do you believe being before God’s presence is true joy (Psalm 16:11)?
  - ii. What lies do you believe that takes you away from God’s presence and being blessed by His presence?