

GOD
Message 7
Isaiah 40:12-31

INTRO: We are seeking to answer the question: What is God like? In the previous message we began considering what He is like from His Greatest name, Jehovah, or Yahway; the self existent One. We said that God does not need anyone or anything to continue to exist. He has self existence within Himself. And since He is unchanging, therefore He never came into existence nor will His existence ever end. He is God. He alone is God! There are no other gods in reality. We have had read for us this morning, Isaiah 40:12-31. To whom shall we liken God? We shall not! There is none like Him! He alone is God!

We ended our last message by considering that God wants us to do everything for His glory, and yet it causes not the slightest trace of sin in Him. For God to be the center of everything; for God to seek glory and honor and power and strength and so on is perfectly perfect. For man to do the same is sinfully sinful.

Paul Washer said when a pastor asked him to speak on the attributes of God he had asked the pastor whether he had thought that through. The pastor asked why, and Paul Washer said, "Because it's quite controversial." And the pastor said, "What do you mean it's controversial. This is God!" And Washer said, "Yes, it's God. But the God many of us Evangelicals have in our minds is not the God of the Bible." Washer realized that when you begin to talk about certain aspects of God, people will begin to say, "Wait a minute. That's not the God I know."

I heard recently that a certain person in discussing excommunication in the Bible said something like this, "The Jesus I know would not excommunicate." We could say about that what Tozer said about God. I gave you this earlier somewhere, "That god isn't the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He isn't the God who laid the foundations of the heaven and the earth; he's some other god. We educated Americans can create gods just the same as the heathen can" (II:7).

I trust that you desire one thing, the truth. And then I encourage you to this: 1 Think. 2 Think and you know the third.

And with that we continue our thoughts on the self existent God. I did not quite finish last message.

1. Self Existence (Cont'd)

So let us come back to this Almighty God who created man for His own glory; His own magnification; His own purposes. But man then goes and sets up his own god, or sets himself up as the I AM and does his own thing and it becomes all about man. That is religion or secularism. That is also where much of modern psychology is. That is where much of the modern church is. It is to try to find out how I can be secure and how I can be significant. But in the eyes of God, that is the essence of sin. It is not about me; it is all about Him!

And so, when the Jewish scribe came to this great name, before he wrote it down he had a bath. And when the Jewish reader of Scripture came to the name "I AM" he said it is too holy for my sinful lips to say, so he read "Adonia." And only once in the year of the Jew did one Jew dare whisper the name "I AM" or Jehovah or Jahway. And when God would send Moses and Moses asked who he would tell the people had sent him the Lord said, "You tell them that 'I AM THAT I AM' sent you." You see, there is no greater name. This name describes the One who is. The One who had no beginning. Let your mind dwell on that. And the One who has no end. And the one who created all things in six days. He is the great I AM.

So you see, Psalm 9:10 says, "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You..." A person's name stands for all that he or she is. In the name "I AM" we learn but one aspect of who God is, and all who truly know what this one name means would surely put their trust in Him! Yet He has many other names.

Now let me ask you a question: Why is it not wrong for God to do everything for His own glory? It is for this reason, that He is fully good. Whenever a being with free will learns to know

God better and worships God for it, it will make that created being better. Whenever a created personal being loses sight of who God is and for what purpose he or she was created, then that personal being begins to flounder and fail of the purposes of God and loses all sense of godly fulfillment and misery sets in.

When we were at Prairie Bible Institute, the baker at the school taught a SS class on the sermon on the mount. I will never forget when he taught on the blessed person of the first part of chapter 5 which begins like this: "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." That word blessed, from its Hebrew idea, I would translate like this: "To be envied are the poor in spirit..." Now I'll tell you that this is the last person the selfish person envies. And I remember this baker saying, "If you seek blessedness, it will recede from you. But if you live your life for the One who made you, you will find this blessedness again and again."

You see, when we live for the purpose God made us for, and that is for His own glory, then it brings fulfillment and satisfaction again and again. As soon as we become inordinately selfish we are unfulfilled and unsatisfied. Much of modern Christian teaching does not bring fulfillment and satisfaction because it is our own good we seek and not God's. Such is the secret of the victorious Christian life.

I want you to see something in that great passage of Philippians chapter 2 (read 5-8). There is a vivid picture of the unselfishness of the man, Christ Jesus. In becoming man, He had to lay His glory aside and experience what man experiences, and He went down, down, and down. The lowest point came when He hung naked on the cruel cross of Calvary. (Let me just slip this in about God here. When He gave His Son on our behalf, He did the most self-less act any person could ever do. And He did it on our behalf not His for the Bible says, "For God so loved the world..." Sacrifice is self-lessness and this is the greatest sacrifice possible!)

So, Christ went down, but it was not over. The highest moment came after He was resurrected! I want you to see it. Let me simply read for you from John 17 briefly, as we see some of His last words to the Father before He was crucified, "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.'"

Jesus had set that glory aside for a time. But now in Philippians we see the fulfillment of His request of the Father in John 17. Look at Philippians 2:9-11 (read). The name which is above every name, I believe, is not the name 'Jesus'. There are all kinds of people who have been called Jesus, both before His time and after. Did they share the highest name with Him? No! The name He received was the name above all names, the name "I AM"!! And this name was 'given' to Him by the Father. The original language says it was 'graced' to Him!

Now, putting these two passages together, I want us to see something amazing. In Philippians 2:7, when it says He made Himself of no reputation, the word is *kenoo*, meaning 'to empty'. And the question is, of what did He empty Himself? I think the answer is that He emptied Himself of His glory. If He had not emptied Himself of all His glory, no one could have looked at Him and lived. Just before Jesus was crucified, He gave His final prayer, which is truly the Lord's prayer. And in this prayer He said, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was." So, it seems clear that He emptied Himself of His glory.

But I want you to notice something I had never noticed before. I always thought He emptied Himself or divested Himself of His glory when He became man. That would then have been when He was born in Bethlehem. But according to the verse we just read, He emptied Himself before the world was. And why was that? Well, listen to Revelation 13:8, "...whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He was slain from the foundation of the world. And when was that? Well, it does not say from the foundation of the earth, but of the world. This usually refers to the sum total of lost sinners, "...for God so loved the world...". And when was the world founded? When Adam and Eve sinned. And there the first animal, no doubt a lamb, shed its blood to cover their sin. And that lamb was a substitute for the true Lamb of God. It was then, that He laid His glory by. And it would be laid by until after His resurrection, and then God again bestowed on Him the name which is above all names, Jehovah!

And when it says that all will bow at the name OF Jesus, I believe it speaks of the name that belongs to Jesus, which is the name Jehovah! Oh, for a time He set aside all the glory He had with the Father before the world came into being. But after His resurrection, He was graced once more with the name above all names! He is Jehovah God, the great I AM!

2. Spiritul

So we have considered that God is the self existent One. Now we want to consider His mode of existence and so we consider the attribute of His spirituality. God is Spirit. He is not material. I have looked for an illustration to give us a concept we can grasp in order to give us some idea of that which is spiritual. You see, that which is spiritual is non-material. Not even the air or wind is a good illustration of that which is spiritual, although there are aspects that are the same. Jesus said in John 3, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but

cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes." Wind is invisible and it has this similarity to that which is spiritual. But wind or air is a substance and that which is spiritual does not have substance. Because air has substance you can pump tires full of air and place thousands of pounds on it. The very best I can give to illustrate spirit is electricity, and elements of electricity remain a mystery to electricians, though they can harness it. You see, electricity has no material substance and spirit beings have no material substance either (Read Luke 24:36-40).

Now, there are two major classes of spiritual beings. the first of course is God. John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit..." Angels are the second class of spirit beings. Hebrews 1:7 says God made angels spirits. The difference is that angels are created, but God is uncreated. Furthermore, angels are limited to place. They cannot be at many places at one time. If they reside in La Crete they cannot be in Edmonton at the same time, though they can probably be there in a very short time. This is true for all classes of angels, even fallen angels including the devil.

So in considering the substance or essence of which God is made up, let us take man for a moment, to contrast God with. Man is a physical being. He is made up of flesh and bones and fluids. All these are material entities. Man takes up physical space but only so much space. In the physical, man can be dissected and examined with the senses such as the eyes. He has physical substance. Yet man has elements to him that are not physical and from these we can begin to understand God. Man is made up of three major components. These are body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). The body is physical. But man has a soul and a spirit and these are non physical. They are the spiritual aspects of man. Doctors can dissect any person right after death and they will find absolutely nothing missing, because all they can analyze is the physical realm. When the spirit leaves the body, the body has undergone

what we call death and it is no longer animated (see James 2:26).

Shortly after the resurrection of Christ He appeared to the two sad disciples as they made their way to Emmaus. And shortly thereafter, as the disciples met Jesus stood in the midst of them. So let us read what happened (Luke 24:36-40). They were afraid because they thought they had seen a spirit, or as we might call it, a ghost. Now a spirit being is invisible. However, at times, they may take on a visible form, but there is not substance to the form. And so, Jesus, to show them that He was not a spirit invited them to look at Him and touch Him. Then He said this, "...for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see Me have." A spirit being is non physical. God is a spiritual being. Angels are spiritual beings and demons are spiritual beings. There are angels in our presence right here, but we cannot see them.

Man, as far as his body is concerned, is a physical being. The physical part of man, doctors deal with. But when man has a problem that is not physically related, the doctor's expertise comes to an end. In such cases one is usually referred to a psychiatrist. But it is not the psychiatrist that has the answer to such problems, it is God. In such problems is where God's expertise is essential. So, God is not a physical being, He is a spiritual being. I think the greatest Scripture on this is John 4 (read 1-24).

3. Invisible

So we have seen that God is a spiritual being. Now we want to consider from that, that He is therefore invisible. Listen to these verses:

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Romans 1:20 says this: "For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." Now notice that God's invisible attributes are clearly seen! Isn't that interesting. How can His invisible attributes be seen? Well, the very next words explain this. They are understood by the things that are made! So we look at the great expanse of simply the milky way in which we live, and we clearly see the attribute of God's incredible power! Look at all the species of animals or fish or birds or insects, and you clearly see His creativity! We clearly see this simply from the things He made.

But let us go to a more difficult subject. Listen first to these verses: John 1:18 "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*."

And then

1 Timothy 6:16 "...who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen."

Now some passages in the Old Testament sound as if there are people who have seen God. Listen to these verses. Isaiah said in chapter 6:5 "Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

Did people see God and live, or did they not? Well, we have read verses already that say God is invisible. How can some claim they saw God? Well, sometimes when people saw the angel of the Lord, they viewed that as seeing God. This was the case with the mother of Samson and her husband (read Judges 13:1-6). Now this angel of the Lord, is what is sometimes called in theological terms, a Christophany. A Christophany is a physical

manifestation of Christ before He was born. As angels sometimes take on human forms, so it seems Christ did on numerous occasions. Now I want you to notice how Manoah viewed this event (read verses 21-22). Manoah viewed seeing the angel of the Lord as seeing God. In Judges 6:22 we read this, "Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, 'Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face."

So, what does it mean when it says no one has seen God? Well, God said to Moses in Exodus 33:20, "You cannot see My face and live." These texts tell us that no one can see GOD'S FACE and live. In the face a person's character is revealed more than anywhere else. You might recognize a person by their hands or feet etc... but nowhere will you recognize a person more than in the face. The face is a mirror of the soul.

But when it says no one can see God and live, that creates another difficulty. Turn to Genesis 32:30, "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.'" Did he truly see God's face, or was this a Christophany as well? Well, look at verse 24 (read). You see, no doubt this is a Christophany.

Turn with me to one more passage (read Exodus 33:12-23). Now in this passage it seems as if God takes on a physical appearance. This does not seem to be a Christophany but God Himself taking on a physical appearance. But when it came to seeing Him, He did not allow Moses to see His face, for He had said no man could see His face and live. You see, it is in the face that a person is revealed more than anywhere else.

When I was in the excavation business, I was hired by the BC Hydro electric company. And I worked in one of those stations that you see from time to time from the highway, where all those big electrical tubes and wires and insulators are fenced in. Now there is a lot of electricity in a place like that. If I remember correctly, just

simply touching a ground wire buried under the ground can kill you. Now I was to dig under one of those electrical busses about 4 or 5 inches thick that ran overhead. Before I dug, the hydro man came and leaned up against the machine as if he had all the time in the world, and he began to explain what would happen if I should by accident get the boom of the machine too close to this big electricity conductor. He said the electricity would arch through the machine. Then he said, "If that should by chance happen, never, never jump out of your machine. If you do, the moment you touch the ground, you will be fried to a crisp on the spot!" Then He said, "You can be in the sphere of millions of volts of this electricity, and it will not hurt you. But the moment you ground out, you will die."

Just as it is possible to live in the sphere of thousands and thousands of volts, so it is possible to see aspects of God when He is physically manifested in some ways. But just as one would be consumed the moment one touched the ground when in the presence of all those volts, so one cannot see God's glory displayed in His face, and live.

In John 14, just before Jesus was crucified, Jesus told the disciples about the place He was going to prepare for them in heaven. And Thomas wanted Jesus to show them His Father (read John 14:9). How could Jesus say that anyone who has seen Him, the Son, has also seen the Father? Well, I think this speaks of God revealed in the life of Christ. Jesus Christ did not display all the glory of the Father. He displayed what God is like in character.

So did anyone ever see God? Well, aspects of God, yes. But did anyone ever see the face of God, or His full glory? Answer: No!

CONCL: So let us conclude this morning. We have learned that God exists in and of Himself and He needs nothing outside Himself to maintain His existence. We have seen as well, that He is a spiritual being. There is no material substance to Him. And then we considered that He is

invisible. Man cannot detect God by the sense of sight. From these attributes we are going to go on to see that God is a 'living God'. This is tremendously significant. Maybe this week you want to study your Bible on the aspect that He is a living God. And then, you may wish to tax your brain and see if you can define the word 'life'. If you find a good definition and you want to add to what I have or change what I have come to, I will be glad to take any suggestions.

God, Almighty God. The God of the Bible. The self existent One. The God who is beyond the senses because He is spiritual. This is our subject. May God bless you as you dwell on Him!