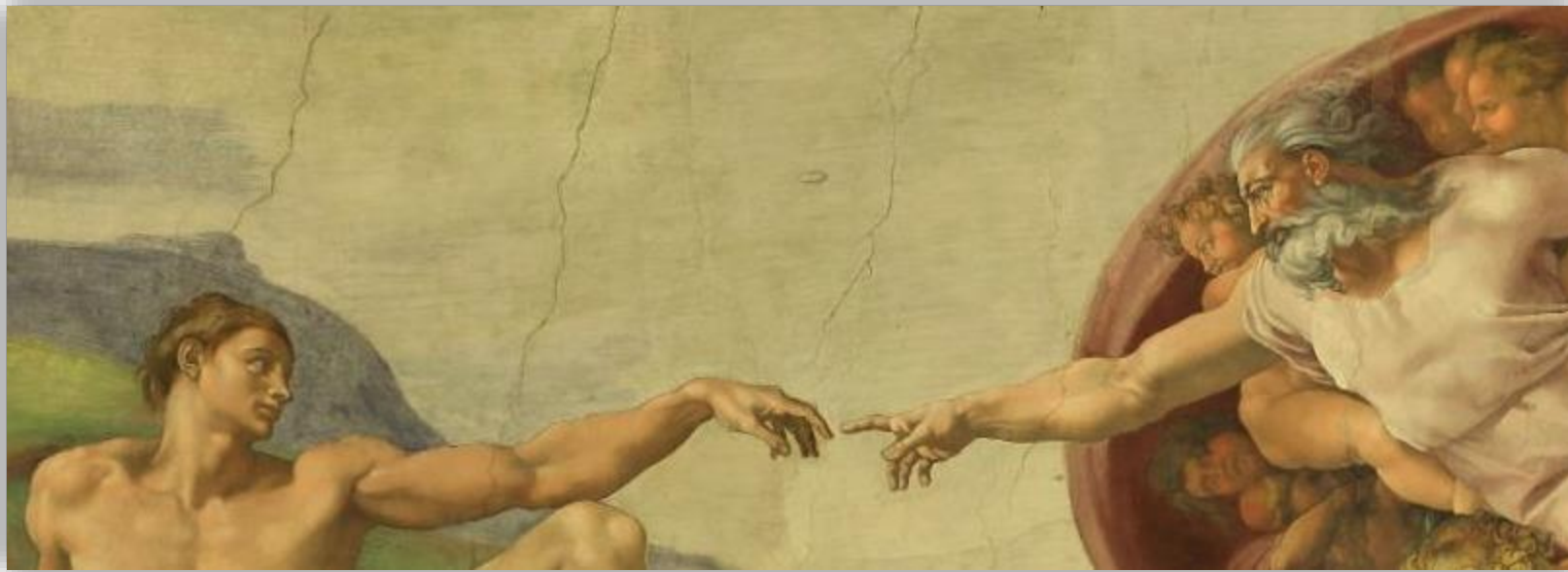


# What God is Like



Theology Series: Theology Proper  
By Aaron S. Copeland

# Existence of God: Bibliography

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# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- **Seven Worldviews**

- Atheism: A world without God
- Agnosticism: A world unable to know God
- Polytheism: A world with many Gods
- Pantheism: A world composed of God
- Panentheism: A world within God
- Deism: A world with an uninterested God
- Theism: A world with an infinite God

See Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8

# Existence of God: Warning

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- **Ephesians 5:6, 7**

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them.

- **Colossians 2:8**

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Atheism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- **Worldviews**

- **Atheism: A world without God**

Defined: Lack of knowledge of God's existence. By this definition, atheism has never existed (Rom 1:18—2:16).

- Explicit Atheism: a denial of God, not ignorance of God
    - Implicit Atheism: God is neither provable or improvable
    - Practical Atheism: live as if God does not exist
      - Faith = Knowledge + Obedience (Colossians 1:9-10): Our path is faith (knowledge + obedience) which leads to gladness and joy (Isaiah 35:8-10).
      - Unbelief = Knowledge + Disobedience (Heb. 3:15-19)
      - What level of commitment are we believers willing to achieve (Ephesians 5:1-21)? Walking in love, in light, in wisdom, in submission to Christ, in submission to the church, in submission to husbands, in service of your wives?

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Atheism** (2 of 7)

- The worldview results of atheism:

- **Politically:** Karl Marx (1818-1883) turned atheism into a political movement; where the state was “god-like” in that man could find meaning by serving the needs of his country.
      - **Socially:** “Man is the measure” ~ Protagoras (490-420 B.C.)  
With evolution presenting a self-creating world, only man has the capacity to solve the problem of evil.
      - **Individually:** Man is not only capable but is “god-like” in his capacity.



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Atheism (3 of 7)**

- Biblical response to atheism (Psalm 14:1-6; 19:1; Rom 1:18-2:11). Examples of exchanging the truth for a lie:

- Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Atheist French Philosopher

- As for me, I don't see myself as so much dust that has appeared in the world but as a being that was expected, prefigured, called forth. In short, as a being that could, it seems, come only from a creator; and this idea of a creating hand that created me refers me back to God. Naturally, this is not a clear, exact idea that I set in motion every time I think of myself. It contradicts many of my other ideas; but it is there, floating vaguely. And when I think of myself I often think rather in this way, for wont of being able to think otherwise.



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Atheism (4 of 7)**

- Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Naturalist and Geologist

- In 1885, the Duke of Argyll recounted a conversation he had had with Charles Darwin the year before Darwin's death: In the course of that conversation I said to Mr. Darwin, with reference to some of his own remarkable works on the fertilization of orchids, and upon the earthworms, and various other observations he made of the wonderful contrivances for certain purposes in nature — I said it was impossible to look at these without seeing that they were the effect and the expression of Mind. I shall never forget Mr. Darwin's answer. He looked at me very hard and said, “Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times,” and he shook his head vaguely, adding, “it seems to go away.”

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Atheism (5 of 7)**

- Rudolph J. Rummel (1932-2014),

- Prof. Emeritus of Political Science at University of Hawaii

- On “Democide” [murder of any people by their government]:

- The total body count for the ninety years between 1917 and 2007 is approximately 153 million dead at the bloody hands of fifty-two atheists, three times more than all the human beings killed by war, civil war, and individual crime in the entire twentieth century combined.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Atheism (6 of 7)**

- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), Russian novelist, philosopher, and historian

- Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: ‘Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.’ Since then, I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process, I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: ‘Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.’

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Atheism (7 of 7)**

- The church's answer to atheism:
      - The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)
    - The church's empowerment against atheism:
      - The promise of the Comforter (Jn. 14:10-21)
    - A warning concerning a church's practical atheism:
      - The Church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)

# Agnosticism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Agnosticism:** A world unable to know God

Defined: There is a separation between reason and faith; since faith claims cannot be proved or disproved.

- Claims of ultimate reality are based on faith.
    - In this sense, all religions are on one level.
    - Faith is important for ethics to exist, but it is subjective.
    - Agnosticism is an attempt to get around the ethical issues of atheism while still denying God.



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Agnosticism (2 of 2)**

- Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), Nobel Prize in Literature

- As a philosopher, if I were speaking to a purely philosophic audience, I should say that I ought to describe myself as an Agnostic, because I do not think that there is a conclusive argument by which one can prove that there is not a God.

- On the other hand, if I am to convey the right impression to the ordinary man in the street I think I ought to say that I am an Atheist, because when I say that I cannot prove that there is not a God, I ought to add equally that I cannot prove that there are not the Homeric gods.



Polytheism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Polytheism:** A world with many gods

Defined: Reality contains many gods in the visible and invisible realms.

- The gods are not typically omnipotent or all sovereign, but have defined realms of power such as: the sea, the sky, etc...
    - This is a key component of mythological thinking.
    - Biblical examples: Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman religions.
    - Modern examples: Hinduism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- **Worldviews**

- **Polytheism (2 of 2)**

One God versus the many Egyptian Gods (Exo. 7-11; Rom. 1:23)

Worshipping God brings confrontation (2 Cor. 4:1-6)

- Plague of blood against Nile god (Hapi: god of life and abundance)
- Plague of frogs against frog god (Heqet: god of life and fertility)
- Plague of lice against lice god (Geb: god of creation and rebirth)
- Plague of flies against scarab god (Khepri: god who makes the sun rise and brings about reincarnation)
- Plague of death to cattle against cow god (Hathor: goddess of love and protection)
- Plague of boils against medicine god (Isis: goddess of medicine and peace)
- Plague of hail against sky god (Nut: goddess of sky)
- Plague of locusts against god of disorder (Seth: god of storms and disorder)
- Plague of darkness against sun god (Ra: sun god over all of reality)
- Plague of death on firstborn against Pharaoh and the most powerful Egyptian god (Pharaoh: god king. Amen: Ram god, king of all gods and all life in heaven and Earth)

# Pantheism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Pantheism:** A world composed of god

Defined: God is in all. All life is filled with God. (cf. Gen. 1:1-30)

- God and nature share the same essence.
    - God is not a being with personal attributes but is more of a force.
    - Killing any life form is equivalent to killing or disrespecting the god within.
    - Seeks to protect nature as passionately as Christians attempt to protect the unborn.
    - Examples: Hinduism, Buddhism, modern environmental movements, and movies such as *Star Wars* and *Avatar*.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Pantheism (2 of 3)**

Defined: God is in all. All life is filled with God. (cf. Gen. 1:1-30)

- Examples: Hinduism, Buddhism and modern environmental movements.
    - Einstein was a Pantheist by his own admission:

“I believe in Spinoza’s God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with faces and actions of human beings.”

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Pantheism (3 of 4)**

Defined: God is in all. All life is filled with God. (cf. Gen. 1:1-30)

Pantheistic claims:

- If all is filled with God, then the universe has always existed
- If the universe had a beginning, then God had a beginning
- If God had a beginning, He would have had to bring himself into existence.
- Our universe must have come from a polyverse system.
- There is a continuity of the “God-force” throughout the polyverse where every effect can have an infinite number of causes.



Panentheism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Panentheism: A world within god**

Defined: All is in God. All of reality combined makes up god.

- God is unknowable because we simply exist in god.
    - God then can only be thought of as a cosmic force or energy.
    - Biblical examples: Gnosticism (cf. 1 John 4:1-6).
    - Modern examples: New age movement (Deepak Chopra), Star Wars and Avatar.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews
  - A warning (Col. 2:6-9; Eph. 5:1-7)
  - The result (Rom. 1:21-32)
  - God knows all our thoughts and actions (Ezek. 8:1-18)
  - Conclusion (1 Pet. 4:12-19; 2 Cor. 6:14-15)

# Mythology

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology:

Because the existence of God is under attack by naturalistic philosophies from inside and outside the church. His revelation is also under attack and treated as irrelevant by categorizing it as mythology.

- Prior to the 1960's, scholars believed the evidence showed the Bible had a distinct worldview from the surrounding mythological societies of the Ancient Near East.
- Since the 1960's, the evidence has not changed, but the belief has. There are unmistakable differences between the Genesis account and the Babylonian account of the creation for example, so what happened?

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology:

### – The Transcendence of God has been rejected.

- A transcendent view claims that this world is not self-explanatory and is in need of communication from beyond to explain it.
- This means man is not ultimately in control of his own destiny and cannot provide for his ultimate needs but is dependent on someone beyond us.
- With the cultural revolution of the 1960's and 70's, outside authorities including authoritative revelation, were rejected in favor of individual autonomy.
- Outside revelation was no longer an option, so the differences between the Bible and the practices of the Ancient Near East now had to be explained differently.
- This new explanation of the same old data was derived by switching the focus on the data from the “essentials” to the “accidentals.” If you remove an essential feature, the thing will cease to be itself; but if you remove an accidental, there is no change in the object's essential being.
- Before 1960, scholars looked at the essentials and saw a complete distinction between Israel's religion and those of the surrounding regions. After 1960, they focused on the similarities in the accidentals between the two.
- Because of this shift in focus, most scholars now believe the OT to be founded in myth.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology:

- The cause and effect of the Transcendence of God being rejected.
  - Once a person or culture believes that this cosmos is all there is, as is typical of myth, certain things follow regardless of the primitiveness or modernity of a culture.
  - The effects are: devaluing of persons, loss of interest in history, fascination with magic and the occult, and a denial of individual responsibility.
  - This cause and effect relationship will be shown in the OT pagan religions of the Ancient Near East as well as in the United States today.



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology:

Defined: “Myth” has been very difficult to define yet very easy to use as a label. It is a loaded word. Defining myth is difficult because the definition keeps changing and becoming broader in scope. Judgment about the historical veracity of reports of reality is typically in view when the label is used.

- A definition should be broad enough to include all of the items that share in a common characteristic yet narrow enough to exclude items that only exhibit one or two of the characteristics.
- There is a recent desire to reach a broad definition in order to break down any distinction between the Bible and the truly mythological.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology:

### Modern Formal Definitions

- “ a purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions, or events and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena.” - *Oxford English Dictionary*
- “Myth is a story of the gods in which results of natural causes are accounted for supernaturally.” – *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*
- “Myth is a story involving a pre-scientific world-view.” – *The New Testament and Mythology*
- There are many other definitions

### Commonality of the Modern Formal Definitions

- The definitions describe how a myth operates in society or they make judgments about its relation to truth or falsehood. Yet none of them attempt to describe the phenomena of myth itself.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Common Features

### Giving Personality to Nature

- Myths are centered around nature and man's insecurity.
- How can man gain some control over the chaos of nature?
- Nature is viewed as having human characteristics. Most of the time it is orderly and predictable (seasons, tides, etc.). Just like humans though, sometimes nature goes berserk.
- Since all things are one (pantheism), then the way to deal with nature is the same way to deal with humans. All over the world, the cultural symbols are stories where the forces of nature are given human personas giving explanation and control of nature itself.
- Other powers such as love, power and war are also given human characteristics.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Common Features

### Attempts to Relate the Actual to the Ideal

- The ancients believed in an invisible, ideal, orderly world of the gods which our visible world dimly reflected. In the invisible realms, chaos is constantly defeated.
- The ancients strived to make the visible world more like the ideal world of the gods by eliminating any form of chaos. Chaos was always ready to present itself in natural, political or social unrest.
- Fertility is the only insurance against the greatest threat to human security – death. How can we ensure fertility of ourselves, our animals, and our crops?
- Our visible world can only relate to the invisible world through myth. By the retelling and reenactment of the stories of the gods. The ideal of the world of the gods becomes the reality here on earth.



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Common Features

### Time and Space are Ignored

- The mythological stories do not relate to any particular time in history but are always represented outside of time.
- The heroes, mythical stories tell about, seem to exist outside of time and space, and not as particular individuals, but as symbols about the aspirations or limitation of the society or race.
- History has no value in myth. It is only the cycles or seasons that have value.

### Central Theme is Continuity

- All the descriptions share a worldview of continuity or correspondence between the world of the gods and the visible realm of people.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Mystery Babylon

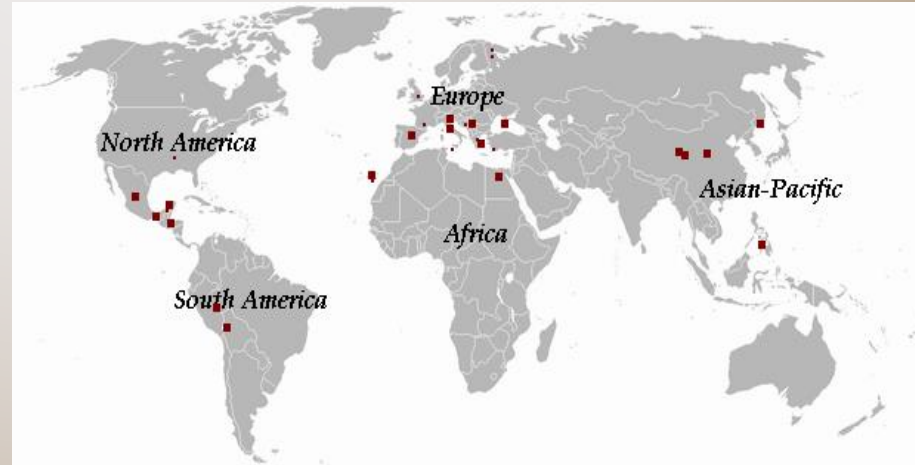
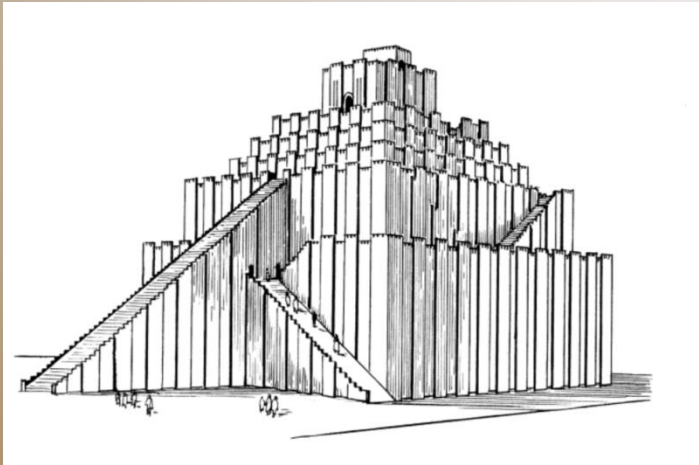
### Mystery Babylon

- Tribulation (Rev. 17:1-6)
- Command to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:1-5; Jer. 50:6-8; 51:45; Gen. 19:15-22)
  - Separation so they will not partake of her sin
  - Separation so they will not share in the plagues to be inflicted on them
- What is the Mystery Babylon?
  - “Her sins reached unto heaven” (Rev. 18:1-5)
  - God does not forget unconfessed sins of the unrighteous.
  - Reached (Gk. *Kollao*) means glued or welded together as bricks in a building.
  - This is an allusion to the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). The very beginning of the ancient Babylonian religions.

# Existence of God: Worldviews

## – Mythology: Mystery Babylon

- Tower of Bab-El (the Gate of God): Gen. 11:1-9; 10:25
  - Tower was a ziggurat where the god could ascend and descend to enter the temple which was located next to the tower.
  - They were astrological in nature
  - Babel in sound is similar to the Hebrew word for “confused.”
  - The false religion of Babylon spread to the entire world.
  - The tower was erected by Nimrod, great-grandson of Ham.
  - Peleg (division) was the great-grandson of Shem (Gen. 10:25)





# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Mystery Babylon

- Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12) “To Revolt”

- Known as a mighty hunter [of men]; a tyrant who formed the 1<sup>st</sup> known empire in the world
  - » Mighty (Hbr: *gibbor*) Ps. 52:1-3; 120:4: The word is only used to describe heroes among armed forces.
  - » Hunter (Hbr: *sayid*) Jer 16:16; hunting can mean by military means.
  - » Historically known as the 1<sup>st</sup> tyrant (see Herodotus, Midrash, and Josephus)
- Symbolic of the Antichrist in Micah 5:1-6 (cf. Antiochus Epiphanes in Matt 24:15)
- Known by other names throughout the world as:

<b>Gilgamesh</b>	<b>Orion</b>
<b>Baal/Baalim</b>	Mithra
<b>Molech</b>	<b>Apollo</b>
Melquart	<b>Ra</b>
<b>Adonis</b>	Tammuz
Eshmun	Dumuzi
<b>Dionysus</b>	<b>Osiris</b>
Bacchus	

# Existence of God: Worldviews

## – Mythology: Mystery Babylon

- Semiramis “Queen of Heaven” and “Mother of god”



- Built her religion on the promise of a woman’s seed who was to come. (Gen. 3:15)
- Bore a son, Tammuz, she claimed was through immaculate conception.
- She claimed Tammuz to be the promised deliverer and the reincarnation of Nimrod. (Judges 2:11-14; Jer. 44:17-22; Ezekiel 8:14)
- This formed the mystery religion of the mother, Ashtoreth, and child, Tammuz, seen all over the world. They are also known as:
  - » Assyrian: Ishtar (Easter) and Dumuzi
  - » Egypt: Isis and Horus
  - » Greece: Aphrodite and Eros
  - » Italy: Venus and Cupid
  - » Semiramis: Diana (Ephesus and Asia Minor), Shingmoo (China), Disa (Scandinavia), Isi Indrani or Devaki (India)
  - » Tammuz: Janus (Rome), Crishna or Iswara (India)
- This was a mystery religion because only the initiated were permitted to know its mysteries.
- This pagan system even influenced the church

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Mystery Babylon

- Israel's Relationship with Idolatry: Deut. 4:1-31
- Temple and Rituals (administered by priests who were mystery initiates)
  - Making Polytheistic Idols (Icons) or images:
    - » God would approve of the making of an idol out of clay, metal, wood, or stone.
    - » Rituals were performed to transfer the deity from the spiritual world into the physical world
    - » Mouth-washing ritual enabled the image to eat bread, drink water and smell incense.
    - » Upon promising to take care of the god, the god would manifest himself from the spiritual world and into the image.
  - Defining Sacred Space
    - » Temples
    - » Hilltops/Ziggurats
  - Divination (Deut. 18:9-12/2Kgs 21:6; Lev. 19:31; Isa. 8:19; Acts 19:19)

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## – Mythology: Mystery Babylon

The result of trial-and-error religion with no divine revelation

### “A Prayer to Every God” – Sumero-Akadian tablet

This prayer is, in effect, a general prayer, asking any god for pardon for any transgression. The writer, in his suffering, admits that he may have broken some divine rule. But he does not know either what he has done or what god he has offended. Furthermore, he claims that the whole human race is ignorant of the divine will and thus is perpetually committing sin. The gods, therefore, should have mercy and remove his transgressions.

See next slide for prayer...



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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## *A Prayer to Every God* – Sumero-Akadian tablet (17<sup>th</sup> Century BC)

May the wrath of the heart of my god be pacified!  
May the god who is unknown to me be pacified!  
May the goddess who is unknown to me be pacified!  
May the known and unknown god be pacified!  
May the known and unknown goddess be pacified!  
The sin which I have committed I know not.  
The misdeed which I have committed I know not.  
A gracious name may my god announce!  
A gracious name may my goddess announce!  
A gracious name may my known and unknown god announce!  
A gracious name may my known and unknown goddess announce!  
Pure food have I not eaten,  
Clear water have I not drunk.  
An offense against my god I have unwittingly committed.  
A transgression against my goddess I have unwittingly done.  
O Lord, my sins are many, great are my iniquities!  
My god, my sins are many, great are my iniquities! . . .  
The sin, which I have committed, I know not.  
The iniquity, which I have done, I know not.  
The offense, which I have committed, I know not.  
The transgression I have done, I know not.  
The lord, in the anger of his heart, hath looked upon me.  
The god, in the wrath of his heart, hath visited me.  
The goddess hath become angry with me, and hath grievously stricken me.  
The known or unknown god hath straitened me.  
The known or unknown goddess hath brought affliction upon me.

I sought for help, but no one taketh my hand.  
I wept, but no one came to my side.  
I lamented, but no one hearkens to me.  
I am afflicted, I am overcome, I cannot look up.  
Unto my merciful god I turn, I make supplication.  
I kiss the feet of my goddess and [crawl before her] . . .  
How long, my god . . .  
How long, my goddess, until thy face be turned toward me?  
How long, known and unknown god, until the anger of thy heart be pacified?  
How long, known and unknown goddess, until thy unfriendly heart be pacified?  
Mankind is perverted and has no judgment.  
Of all men who are alive, who knows anything?  
They do not know whether they do good or evil.  
O lord, do not cast aside thy servant!  
He is cast into the mire; take his hand.  
The sin which I have sinned, turn to mercy!  
The iniquity which I have committed, let the wind carry away.  
My many transgressions tear off like a garment!  
My god, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins!  
My goddess, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins!  
Known and unknown god, **my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins.**

**Conclusion: Only a God who reveals Himself assures the forgiveness of sin.**

**Exo 34:6-7; Matt 18:21-22; 1 Jn 1:9**

Deism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Deism:** A world with an uninterested God

Defined: Logic dictates that *Someone* created the world, but after the creation, this God simply walked away.

- Became popular alternative to orthodox Christianity during the Age of Enlightenment (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century).
    - Movement consisted of intellectual skeptics.
    - Does not believe in supernatural events such as miracles, the incarnation, and the resurrection.
    - Because God is not invested in this world, miracles are impossible, and man is not accountable to God.
    - Deism exalts man's reason above God's revelation.



# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- Worldviews

- **Deism** (2 of 2)

Notable Deists:

- Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason*, 1807.
    - Thomas Jefferson, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. This became known as the Jefferson Bible.
      - It was purely deistic.
      - began with the Gospels but removed any mention of angels, prophecies, miracles, the divinity of Christ, or His resurrection.

Theism

# Existence of God: Worldviews

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- **Worldviews**

- **Theism: A world with an infinite God**

Defined: God is not only creator, but He is intimately involved with His creation.

- God's non-communicable (non-moral) attributes (Rom. 11:33)
  - Aseity, Infinity, Immensity, Eternity, Immutability, Simplicity
- God communicable (moral) attributes (Lev. 19:2).
  - Holiness, Righteousness, Love, Grace, Mercy, Longsuffering, Goodness, Loving kindness, Truth
- As we grow in faith, we become more like Him, and our sanctification is measured by our attributes growing ever nearer to God's communicable attributes. Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23).

# Proofs for the Existence of God

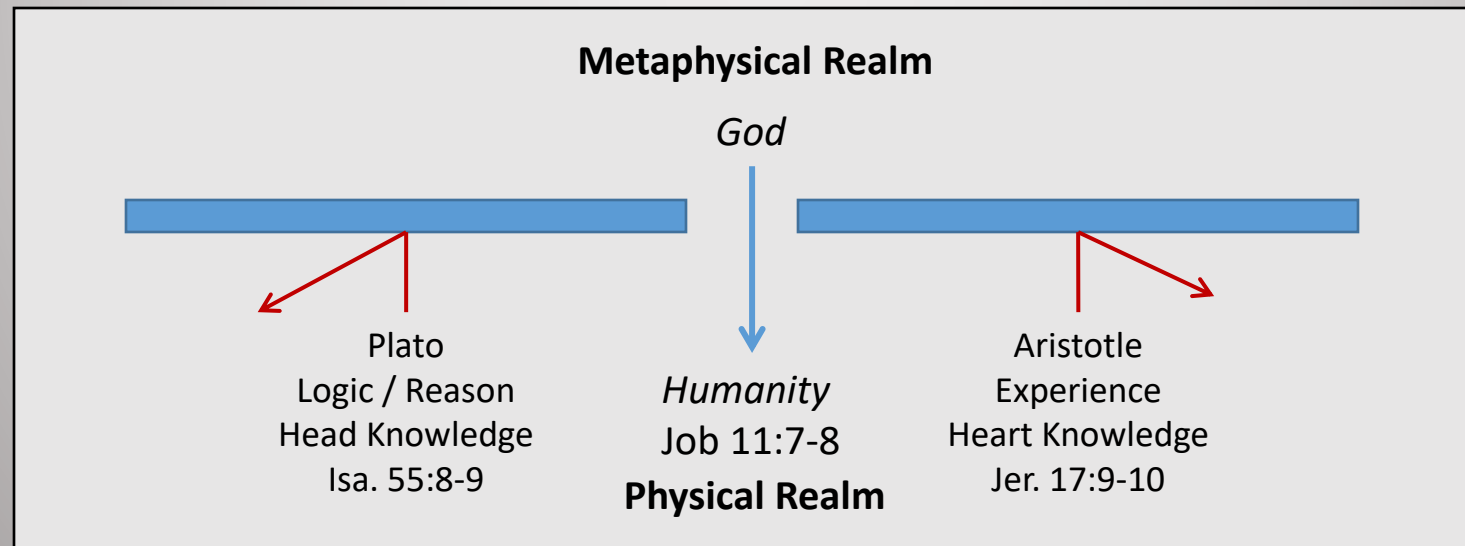
# Existence of God: Proofs

- Theism

- Proofs of the existence of God

The proofs of God are rooted in God's general revelation (nature, history, and conscience) to man. By itself, philosophy fails such arguments.

(See a demonstration using general revelation in Acts 17:16-34)



# Existence of God: Proofs

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- Theism

- **Cosmological Argument:** Study of the cosmos

A personal God created: Gen 1; Jn 1:3; Rom 1:20; Anselm; W. L. Craig

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence
2. The universe began to exist
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence
4. Since no scientific explanation (explanation by physical laws) can provide a causal account of the origin of the universe, the cause must be personal (explanation by a personal agent)

# Existence of God: Proofs

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- Theism

- Cosmological Argument (continued)

- Atheist Response

1. Universe had no beginning
2. Universe was not caused
3. Universe caused itself



# Existence of God: Proofs

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- Theism

- **Teleological Argument: Study of Design**

A personal God designed: Gen 1:27; Psalm 19:1; 139:14-15

1. All designs imply a designer
2. There is great design in the universe
3. Therefore, there must have been a great designer of the universe

<http://www.icr.org/creation-design/>

## Atheist Response

1. Time and chance brought about the universe

# Existence of God: Proofs

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- Theism

- **Ontological Argument: Study of Being (Existence)**

God is the foundation of our ability to reason: Anselm, Dorner

1. Reason thinks of God as existing
2. Reason would not be reason if it did not think of God existing
3. Therefore, reason only exists upon the assumption that God exists.

Our own ability to reason rests in the idea that an Absolute Reason – God – exists.

# Existence of God: Proofs

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- Theism

- Ontological Argument: Study of Being (Existence)

God is the foundation of our ability to reason: Anselm, Dorner

“All that we can reason about infinity and perfection, ideas which lie at the foundation of the Ontological argument, we can ascribe to our idea about God, not because we can demonstrate them, but because our mental constitution will not allow us to think otherwise. Thus, clothing him with all perfections which the human mind can conceive and these in illimitable fullness, we have one whom we may justly call God.” - Strong

# Existence of God: Proofs

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- Theism: Proofs

- **Moral Argument: Study of the Conscience**

A moral God created: Exo 20; Rom 2:14-15

1. Ethics: Right and wrong are bound on every man's heart Note: This is the sense of "ought-ness" ... what we "ought" and "ought-not" do.
2. Therefore, an absolute outside of nature exists, and this absolute is relatable yet superior to all mankind. This absolute is God.

# Attributes of God

# Existence of God: Attributes

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- Theism

- Attributes of God:

- **God's non-communicable/non-moral attributes** (Rom. 11:33)
      - Aseity, Infinity, Immensity, Eternity, Immutability, Simplicity
    - **God communicable/moral attributes** (Lev. 19:2).
      - Holiness, Righteousness, Love, Grace, Mercy, Longsuffering, Goodness, Loving kindness, Truth, Creativity, etc
    - As we grow in faith, we become more like Him, and our sanctification is measured by our attributes growing ever nearer to God's communicable attributes. See Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23).

Aseity



# Existence of God: Attributes

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- Theism

- **Aseity:** God is self-existent

- Dan 4:35; Rom 9:15-16; Eph 1:5, 9, 11; Rev 4:11
    - Psa 115:3; Job 42:2
    - Rom 11:33-34; Isa 55:8
    - Aseity is an extension of the proofs for God
      - Shows a necessary being must exist
      - If He does exist, He would need the attribute of aseity
      - The Bible confirms God's independent existence

**Infinity**

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Infinity:** The maximal degree of something. All of God's attributes share this attribute.

- Psa 145:3 “unsearchable” (Heb: *en heqer* = no searching can reach its depths)
    - Job 5:9; 9:10 “number” (Heb: *mispar* = infinite)
    - Psa 147:5

Immensity

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Immensity / Omnipresence**

- God is present in the universe in some senses and absent in other respects
      - Does God indwell nonbelievers as well as believers?
      - What does it mean for God to come down from heaven to earth to do something if He is already present there?
      - Does God exist in Hell?

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Immensity / Omnipresence**

- God is present in the universe in some senses and absent in other respects

- God's Absence from our Universe**

1. God is not present everywhere physically (Jn. 4:24)
2. He does not ontologically exist in one spot (Ps. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-34; Acts 17:27-28).
3. He does not exist as each point in space (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3). God is not pantheistic; He created the world external to Himself.
4. God's ontological presence is not the same as His ethical, moral and spiritual presence which are relational in nature (Gen. 4:16; Num. 14:39-42; Ps. 10:1; 2 Thess. 2:3-12).
  - » Unbelievers: Not in relationship and mostly oblivious of God's ontological nearness.
  - » Lack of presence signifies broken relationship (Gen 3:8)
  - » Lack of presence brings judgment (Lev 22:3; Jer. 23:39)
  - » Through judgment God's presence becomes known to unbelievers (Ps 97:5; Isa 64:1-2)
  - » His wisdom confounds the world who think themselves wise (1 Cor 1:29)

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Immensity / Omnipresence**

- God is present in the universe in some senses and absent in other respects

- God's Presence**

1. God is ontologically present everywhere simultaneously
2. God also exists everywhere morally, ethically, and spiritually with all people who share relationship with Him by faith. Because of this, God's people are often aware of or sense God's presence in ways that unbelievers do not.
  - » Blessings of God's presence (Ps. 16:11; 51:11)
  - » God's presence enables us to worship (Ps 95:2; 100:2; 140:13)
  - » God's presence restores (Acts 3:19; Jn 14:23; 17:21, 23)
  - » God in the church (Matt 18:20)
  - » God presence empowers us in our mission (Ex. 33:14-15; Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8)
  - » God's presence secures us as blameless (Jude 24)



# Immutability

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Immutability**

- The unchanging nature of God
      - Christians are reassured that God consists of wonderful perfections, but what if our King could lose or change some of those perfections?
      - Classic theism holds that since God is absolutely perfect, He cannot change.
      - The classic sense of immutability (Aquinas and Anselm) holds that since God cannot change, He remains impassible (Impassibility will be visited later).
        - » Westminster Confession 2.1: “God is without body, parts, or passions, immutable...”
    - Scriptures showing an unchanging God
      - Unchanging in person or constitution: Ps 102:24-27 (Heb 1:10-12); Heb 13:8
      - Unchanging in purposes: Num 23:18-20; Eph 1:11; Isa 14:24-27
      - Unchanging in will (decree): Jas 1:17-18; Prov 19:21; Ps 33:11-12; Isa 46:9-10
      - Unchanging in ethical rules: Mal 3:4-6; Jas 1:17; Heb 6:17-19; Ps 103:17

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Immutability**

- Scriptures showing the changes of God
      - Changing Relationship: Exo 32:14 (see also Acts 9; Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 15:35)
        - » God must punish sin (God’s unchanging moral governance – His justice)
        - » God gave unchanging promises in the Abrahamic covenant (God’s unchanging covenants)
        - » If a sinner repents, God promises to forgive and bless (God changes in relationship)
        - » Result: God changes in relationship because of his other unchanging attributes
      - Conditions show change: “If you do X, I will do Y.” Deut 28:1-2, 15.
        - » This is not an example of change, but an example of God’s will and foreknowledge.
        - » In no sense does God change in His person, purposes, will, or ethics because of this.

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Immutability**

- Scriptures showing the changes of God (continued)
      - Changes in administrative order (dispensations)
        - » Changes in ceremonial rules (circumcision, sacrifice, kosher kitchens. etc...).
        - No changes in His timeless ethical rules.
      - » Changes in punishments for breaking ethical norms (death penalty ,etc.).
        - Punishments are not ethical obligations to live by.
      - » Changes in the administration of God’s one method of salvation
        - Children of Abraham through physical descent vs. spiritual adoption.
        - No changes to his purposes to save people.
        - No changes to His decree (no more or less will be saved than before).
  - Conclusion
    - God does not change in His person, purposes, will (decree), or ethics
    - God can change in His relationships and administrative order.

**Impossibility**

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Impassibility:** God is without passions

*Passion:* An instance of powerful or compelling emotion or feeling

- *Westminster Confession (1.2):* Correct

“There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most.”

- *Christianity Today:* Incorrect

“If love implies vulnerability, the traditional understanding of God as impassible makes it impossible to say that “God is love.” An almighty God who cannot suffer is poverty stricken because he cannot love or be involved. If God remains unmoved by whatever we do, there is really very little point in doing one thing rather than the other. If friendship means allowing oneself to be affected by another, then this unmoved, unfeeling deity can have no friends or be our friend.” - Dennis Ngien, “The God Who Suffers,” *Christianity Today* (3 Feb 1997), 38.



# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Impassibility:** God is without passions

- We cannot comprehend this topic completely
      - Rom 11:34 “For who hath known the mind of the Lord?”
    - We too often think of God in human terms
      - Psa 50:21 “You thought that I was just like you, I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes.” (NASB)
      - Isa 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
      - Eph 3:19 “And to know the **love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”
      - How the Bible defines love vs. how we experience the passions associated with it:
        - » God’s love never wavers as does human love
        - » 1 Cor 13 The biblical definition of love has nothing to do with passion.
        - » Scripture and not our experience should shape our understanding of God’s affections.



# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Impassibility:** God is without passions

- We too often think of God in human terms (continued)

- What does it mean for God to become so angry that he threatened to annihilate Israel and void the Abrahamic covenant? (Exodus 32:10-11)

- » God is not literally subject to fits and tantrums because His wrath against sin is something more than just a bad mood. So this passage is not meant in a strictly literal fashion.

- James 1:17 shows God could not have been wavering on whether to keep His covenant with Abraham.

- Num 23:19 shows that Moses could not have literally provoked a change in the mind of God.

- » While the passions spoken about cannot be taken in a strictly literal fashion, they are very meaningful in showing us that even though God is impassible, He is not uninvolved and indifferent to us.

- God uses figures of speech so finite man can understand something about God whose mind is beyond all human understanding.

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- **Impassibility:** God is without passions

- How is God impassible?

- The fact that God doesn't change His mind does not mean He is devoid of thought.
      - The fact that He isn't subject to involuntary passions doesn't mean He has no affections.
      - It means God's mind and God's affections are not like human thoughts and passions.
        - » God is never out of control.
        - » "God's joy is permanent, clouded by no involuntary pain." – J. I. Packer
        - » God's affections are active and deliberate.
        - » "God's experiences are foreknown, willed and chosen by Himself, and are not involuntary surprises forced on Him from the outside." – Peter O'Brien
        - » "They are expressions of God's spiritual desires and wishes." – R. L. Dabney
        - » By explaining *passion* as involuntary and irrational, and explaining *affection* as volitions and dispositions under rational control, Johnathan Edwards could summarize that God is "without passions" but not "without affections."

# Love & Immutability

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- Immutability & Love: How can an unchanging God love?

- **Love: What is it?**

- *Eros Love*: Plato said love (*eros*) was a desire for something we lack. Man is not perfect; therefore he has potential to love God and others. In loving, man becomes more whole, so that he becomes more perfect but never achieving total perfection. In this way, how can a perfect God who lacks nothing love us?

- 1. Solution #1: God must be more immanent in a way that allows God to enter into the give-and-take relationship of this love with man. Many heretical views have come from the church that try to limit God's perfection in order to allow for an *eros* love relationship between man and God.

- » Process Theology

- » Openness Theology

- » Liberation Theology

- » Feminist Theology

- 2. Solution #2: *Eros* love does not convey a proper understanding of God's love.

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- Love (Cont.)

- *Transcendent God Only: Agnosticism, Deism (slide #3)*
      1. Man would have no way of knowing God exists.
      2. God cannot love man if he never reveals Himself to us.
    - *Immanent God Only: Pantheism, Panentheism, Polytheism (slide #3)*
      1. God is mutable. Therefore, God can affect man, and man can equally affect God.
        - » Gods of Nature: Man takes care of nature, and nature takes care of man
        - » Gods of images: Man takes care of idols, and the idols takes care of man
        - » Gods of self: I meet God on my terms, and God meets me on my terms.
      2. Because God and man need each other, a mutual *eros* love can exist.
    - *Fully Transcendent and Immanent God: Theism (slide #3)*
      1. God is immutable (cannot change). Therefore, man cannot affect God.
      2. Man is mutable (can change). Therefore, God can affect man.
      3. This seems to result in only a **one-way** relationship that hardly conveys our common understanding of a **mutual** love relationship. Is theism wrong?

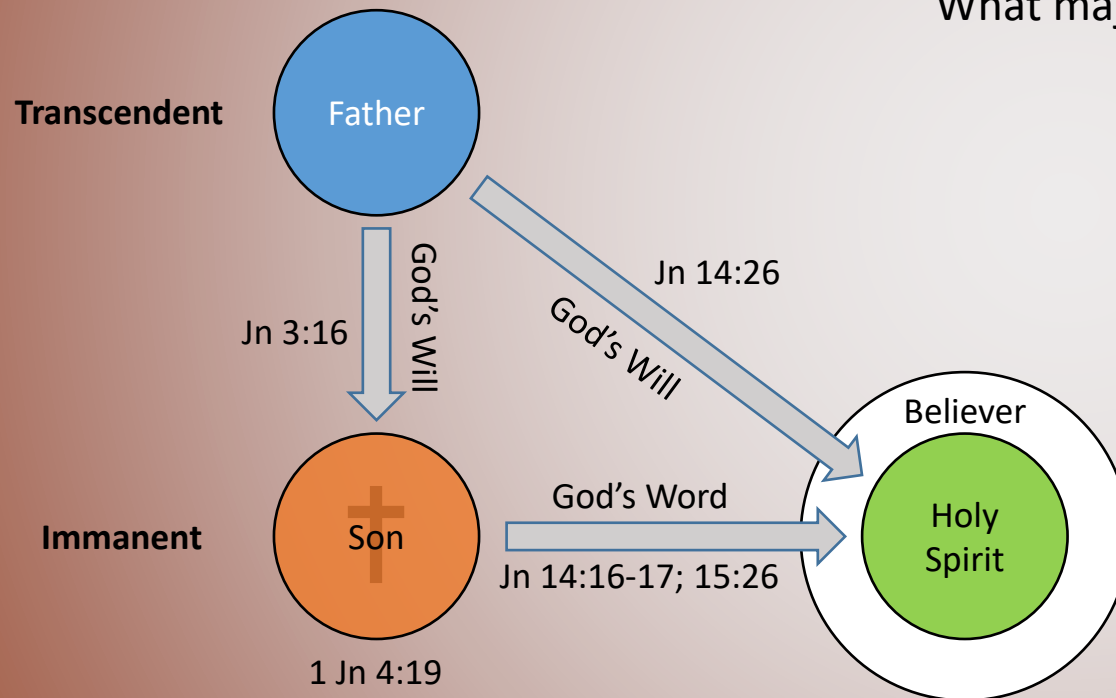


# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

- Theism

- **God's *Agape* Love Towards Man: 1 John 4:4-21**

What major theme of love comes from our biblical, theistic God?



- The transcendent Father loved us by giving His Son for us.
- The Immanent Savior gave His life for us before we loved Him (1 Jn 4:19)
- After Son's resurrection and ascension, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to those that believe.

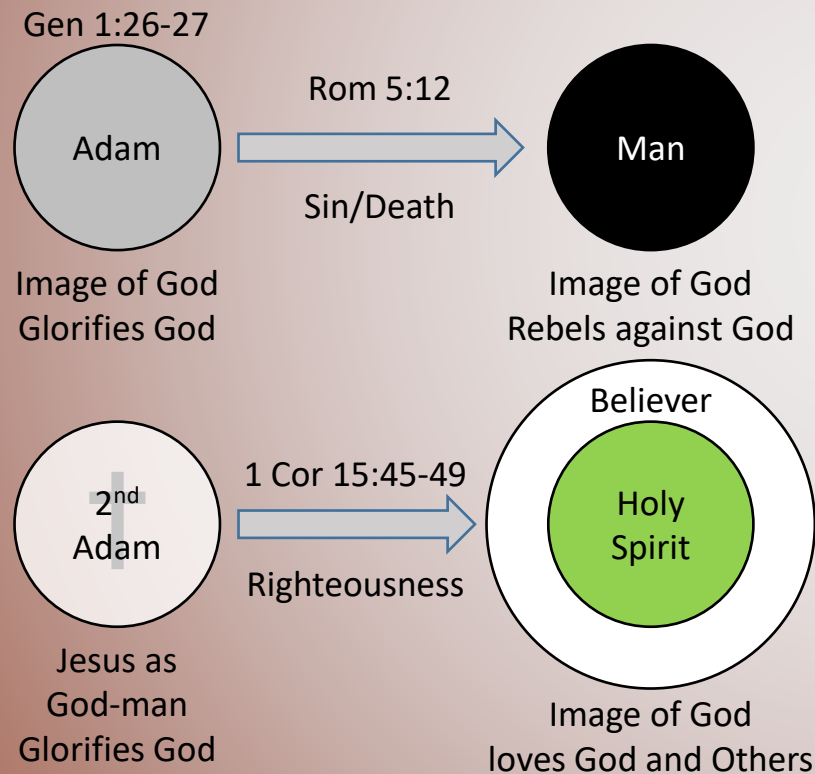
Only a fully transcendent and immanent God's *agape* love (as a choice of sacrificial gift) can transcend the self-centered *eros* love of man.

*Agape* love is a gift love that is sacrificial, undeserved, and comes from a choice to give.

# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

- Theism

- **Man's *Agape* Love Towards God: Matthew 22:36-40**



- Adam was made in the image of God.
- After the fall, Adam's sin/death was imputed to all men so that their image of God was an enemy to God.
- Jesus' gospel work made Him the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam whose righteousness/life is imputed to all that believe.
- The righteous believer indwelt by and submitted to the Spirit is able to *agape* God and his neighbors (2 greatest commandments) with his entire being, choices, possessions, and time.

Rather than making God more immanent so we can love God on human terms of *eros* love, a fully transcendent and immanent God can lift us up to His transcendent *agape* love.



# Existence of God: Non-Communicable Attributes

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- Theism

- Love (Cont.)

- *Theistic Agape Love and Unbelievers*

1. Unbelievers cannot love God (Rom. 8:6-8).
2. Unbelievers are loved by God (Jn 3:16).
3. Unbelievers can be loved by Believers.

- *Theistic Agape Love and Marriage (Matt 19:1-8)*

1. The marital foundation is not a 50%-50% give-and-take *eros* love with each other. Many counselors, upholding an *eros* love, think that if a person is no longer getting what they need in a relationship to grow, then they should leave the marriage. *Eros* love is the foundation of divorce.
2. The marital foundation is a 100%-100% gift of *agape* love to each other.
  - » It is not rooted in feelings; it is rooted in a choice to make the other person preeminent.
  - » It is a gift of sacrificial love to the other person even though they may not deserve it
  - » Can only occur in complete humility to the Holy Spirit's emanation of *agape* through us.
3. It is not meant for man and wife to be unequally yoked (1 Cor. 6:14-18).

# Existence of God: Attributes

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- Theism

- **Love (Cont.)**

- *Theistic Agape Love and Believers*

1. Believers are loved by God.
2. Believers can only love God through obedience (John 14:15).
  - a) Obedience is \_\_\_ (Romans 12:1).
  - b) God \_\_\_ obedience (Exodus 19:5; Luke 11:28; James 1:22-25).
  - c) Obedience \_\_\_ our love (1 John 5:2-5; 2 John 6, 9).
  - d) Obedience demonstrates \_\_\_ (1 John 2:3-6).
  - e) Obedience is \_\_\_ (1 Samuel 15:22-23).
  - f) Disobedience leads to \_\_\_ (Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:22).
  - g) Obedience results in \_\_\_ (Psalm 119:1-8; Isaiah 48:17-19; 2 Corinthians 7:1).
3. Believers can love others.

# Existence of God: Attributes

---

- Theism

- Attributes of God:

- **God's non-communicable/non-moral attributes** (Rom. 11:33)
      - Aseity, Infinity, Immensity, Eternity, Immutability, Simplicity
    - **God communicable/moral attributes** (Lev. 19:2).
      - Holiness, Righteousness, Love, Grace, Mercy, Longsuffering, Goodness, Loving kindness, Truth
    - As we grow in faith, we become more like Him, and our sanctification is measured by our attributes growing ever nearer to God's communicable attributes. See Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23).

# God's Communicable Attributes

# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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- Fruit of the Spirit

- Knowing a Christian

- Matt 7:21-23
- Matt 7:15-20

- What is fruit?

1. The direct result of our heart

- Fruits of the sinful flesh: Matt 15:19; Gal 5:19-21; Rom 7:5
- Fruits of the Holy Spirit: Gal 5:22-23; Proverbs 11:30

2. Produced by the Trinity

- God the Father as gardener: Jn 15:1
- Jesus as the vine: Jn 15:5
- Holy Spirit as the life in us produces fruit: Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 5:17; 12:13; Eph 1:13-14; Phil 4:13

# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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- Fruit of the Spirit
  - What is our ability to do good?
- The 9 fruits of the Spirit:
  - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and self-control

# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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- God will be the Judge of Believer's Fruit not Sin
  - We will be judged individually (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:11-12; 1 Cor 3:8, 13-15)
  - God will not judge a believer's sin
    - No condemnation (Jn 3:18; 5:24; Rom 8:1)
    - Christ as our substitute (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24)
    - Justified (Rom 5:1, 9; 3:22-24; 8:32-33)
    - Righteous (1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:8-9)
    - Debt of Sin has been paid (Heb 9:26-28; 10:10, 14, 15)
    - Believers will stand glorified before God during the Bema Seat judgment (Judgment Seat of Christ)



# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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- God will judge the fruit born of the believer
  - Christ’s eyes are as flames of fire (Rev 19:12)
  - Appearing at the judgment (2 Cor 5:10)
    - Appearing (*phaneroo*) This does not mean to be in a geographical location at the judgment seat. It means we will be revealed for what we really are.
    - “In (*dia*) the body” The body is the channel through (*dia*) which our deeds are done. “What” deeds have been done will be judged.
    - “Why” the deeds were done will also be judged (1 Cor 4:5; 10:31; Gal 3:3). Compare this to the deeds of the Pharisees (Matt 6:2, 5, 16)
    - Works will be judged as good or bad (*phaulos*).
      - » Bad (*kakos* or *paneros*) means morally corrupt
      - » Bad (*phaulos*) means worthless. Compare to Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42).

# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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- God will judge the fruit born of the believer
  - Rewards at the judgment (2 Cor 5:10)
    - Not all believers will receive equal rewards (Mt 16:27; 1 Cor 3:14-15; Rev 2:23; 22:12)
      - » Highest virtue today: Love or Unselfishness
      - » Pressing towards the prize (Phil 3:14; 1 Cor 9:24; Heb 11:26)
      - » Proper rewards are not tacked on to some related activities, they are the activity in consummation.
        - Marriage is the proper reward of a real lover
        - “Poetry replaces grammar, gospel replaces law, longing transforms obedience, as gradually the tide lifts a grounded ship.” – C. S. Lewis
    - Jealousy will not be manifested (Eph 5:27; Jude 24)

# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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- God will judge the fruit born of the believer
  - Rewards at the judgment (1 Cor 15:40-42, 58)
    - General Rewards
      - » Believers will possess varying degrees of glory (Lk 19:17, 19)
        - Praise (1 Cor 4:5)
        - Honor (1 Pet 1:7)
        - Treasure (Mt 6:19-21)
        - Inheritance (Col 3:24; Rom 8:17)
        - Reign (2 Tim 2:12)
        - Privileged Service (Rev 22:3-5)

# Existence of God: Communicable Attributes

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## – God will judge the fruit born of the believer

- Rewards at the judgment (1 Cor 15:40-42, 58)

- Specific Rewards (Crowns)

- » Victor's Crown, *stephanos* & Kingly Crown, *diadema*

- » The kingly crown of the gospel, *stephanos* (Mt 27:27-31; Mk 15:16-20; Jn 19:1-5)

- » Believers will be rewarded crowns (only *stephanos* is used)

- Response to the crown (Rev 4:4, 10-11)

- Incorruptible crown (1 Cor 9:24-27)

- Crown of rejoicing (1 Thess 2:19; Phil 4:1; 2 Cor 11:2)

- Crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:7-10; Titus 2:13; Phil 3:17-21; Col 3:1-4)

- Crown of glory (1 Pet 5:2-4)

- Crown of life (James 1:12; Rev 2:10; Mt 5:10-12)

- » Conclusion: Rev 22:10-12