

The Personhood of God

God is Spirit

Intro: It is regrettable that churches in their attempts to get worldly people back into church have yielded to the temptation of presenting a god the world will like. This “user friendly god” is not the God of the Bible. It is a god created in our own image that is more palatable to the masses.

The time has come to re-affirm the truth about God as He has revealed Himself and that’s what I’m trying to do in this series. We are starting with God’s absolute or immanent attributes. We started with Jesus’ statement that God is spirit! When we say that God is spirit, we are affirming that He does not possess a body as we do. Whatever anthropomorphic images God has given are intended only to give us insight into what God is like in human terms. God is not material as we are nor is He subject to the laws that govern material things. He is invisible and that whatever manifestations of His presence He has given are accommodations to man’s need for a sensory experience of Him and that these theophanies are not God Himself.

Now let add to that concept of God as spirit. To say that God is spirit is to call attention to two other key essential features of God: 1) He is living; 2) He has personality. These features are intrinsic to God’s nature as God and it is important that we reflect upon them and respect them.

God is living

But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation. (Jeremiah 10:10)

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (John 5:26)

Our life was given to us; God’s life is intrinsic to His existence. To affirm that He is essentially alive is to say that no one or nothing gave God life or existence. He is self-existent!

God’s life is not merely the processes He sets into motion. Nor, is it dependent upon the creation of other life, such as the life in the universe itself!

God’s life is that mental energy of intellect, affection, and purpose that He possesses within Himself and which He exerts according to His will for Himself and others.

God is a person

When I say God is a person, I do not mean to imply that he is a human being. I mean only to call attention to the fact that he has features we associate with a person,(i.e. He has personality).

God is not an “it”.

He is not a mere force or power.

He is not merely the personification of good nor is He is the totality of

all that is (pantheism).

God chooses to describe Himself in terms we associate with personality.

He uses personal pronouns to identify Himself in His revelation (He, Him or Himself, His). I just used three of them!

This feature of God we also possess and from it may partially understand the nature of God.

As a person, He possesses the power of self-consciousness (an awareness of His being) and He possesses the powers of self-determination (the ability to initiate from within Himself His purpose).

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

(Romans 11:33)

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Ephesians 1:11)

Implications of God's life for our society

To recognize God's inherent life is to see Him as the source of our life, both physically and spiritually

neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; (Acts 17:25)

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

It is a mistake to think as did the Greeks that we supply some need of God.

The life of the whole universe is but a hint of the life that God Himself possesses.

Do not assume that because few people today bow down to lifeless idols that they have not lost sight of the life that belongs to God.

Much of today's "user-friendly" worship and service presumes that somehow God needs us and that He cannot live without us and that because of that He must indulge our misbehavior and receive our uncommanded gifts because He is desperate for our attention.

Nothing could be further from the truth! God is self-existent and not dependent upon man for anything.

Implications of God's personhood for our society

God's personality must not be reduced to human personality descriptions. We may easily reduce God to our conceptions of how He ought to act rather than respect the revelation He has made about Himself!

I don't know how many times I've heard people say things like, "I can't believe that God would do this or that!" (send people to hell for sin, etc.) The very statement suggests that somehow our own conceptions of right and wrong shape how God thinks and feels. People tend to evaluate morality in terms of their own sense of what is right and wrong. Again the mistake is the same: creating God in our image rather than listening to His revelation of who He is!

The meaning of our existence is dependent upon God's purpose for creating us, not what meaning we choose to assign to it!

Humanists speak proudly of man's purpose of self-determination, as if to say, man holds his own future in his hand and God does not enter the picture.

I am not affirming that man does not have free will within the framework of God's purposes. I am affirming that destiny of life on earth is not in man's hands; but in God's hands. And the true meaning of life is derived from His purposes and not our own!

We need to relate our behavior to the personality of God.

God is not indifferent to our actions. God is not some kind of stoic, unmoved being, unaffected by human conduct.

God can experience delight and pleasure in man's obedience. but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:24)

God can be deeply hurt by our sins—by our neglect. And that not because He is needy and we supply something for Him, but because our actions diminish both Him and us and the purpose He had in creating us!

"Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes, which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations. (Ezekiel 6:9)

Conclusion: The real personhood of God has been in the churches supplanted by a quasi-human god made in man's image. Let us never forget that God's spiritual nature implies that we are dependent upon Him for life and life's meaning. We are dependent upon Him for definition of morality and meaning in our lives. And our ultimate destiny depends upon whether our lives conform to His purposes.