**SKETCHY VIEWS OF GOD**

**The Impersonal God**

Sunday, August 27, 2023

**WE Slide 1 T/F Your view of God impacts how you live life-** there’s no God- you become God; God’s angry- you’ll fear/not want to know Him; God’s about my happiness/genie, He’ll disappoint you; God’s unfair- angry at Him/reject Him. **Every wrong definition of God will cause a person to be angry, fearful, and/or disappointed with God and they end up rejecting Him and being the god of their life.** Ultimate tragedy- they fail to accept His offer of forgiveness/relationship/heaven and enter an eternity in hell because of it.

**A PROPER VIEW OF GOD IS CRUCIAL and everybody has a view/definition of God, some are right, some are wrong, most are a mixture of right/wrong. Slide 2** For instance, 80% of US adults believe there is a God- that would be right, but 23 percent of them believe God is just some impersonal, higher power/spiritual force- that would be wrong. **In fact, around 33% of US adults, includes those who believe in a God/those who don’t, believe that there is some impersonal, higher power/spiritual force at work in their lives.** This belief is found in Hinduism, Taoism and is the basis for martial arts/yoga/reiki. **It teaches we are all one with nature, have within us the energy force of the universe which we need to tap into, become one with, in order to find peace, purpose, health. Slide 3** AA- 12 Step Program teaches this concept of God being a higher power, or as they put it- STEP 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. STEP 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him* (italics is part of the original statement).

**“as we understood Him” is what makes this belief so tempting to believe.** People can’t deny the fact that there is something greater than themselves, but they don’t like a personal God to whom they answer so they create/define their own God. **This allows them to say, “I’m spiritual” and satisfy that belief but define God in such a way to do life however they want to satisfy their self-focused desires.** But God being an IMPERSONAL POWER is a SKETCHY VIEW OF GOD, a wrong view of Him, because the Bible, which God gave to reveal Himself to us, tells us that God is 1) personal within His very nature, 2) He created us to know Him personally, and most importantly 3) He did what was necessary to bring us into a personal relationship with Him by becoming human. **Let’s let God speak for Himself on this. Slide 4** 1st we need to know that God exists in/of Himself, He is the self-existing One.

**GOD**

1. **HIS VERY NATURE IS RELATIONSHIP**
2. **God Exists In and Of Himself/The Self-existing One-** No one/no thing created God; He existed before time/space/creation- He is the One who created everything.

**The Bible teaches that God is unchangeable so He always existed and, here’s where His personalness comes in, always existed as the Trinity. What does that mean?** DEFINITION: **Slide 5-6**

1. **God Exists in Trinity/in Relationship with Himself**
2. DEFINITION: God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God; and there is one God. Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 269 **Mind-blowing concept**
3. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit- 3 persons co-existing as One God.
4. The word Trinity isn’t found in the Bible, but the concept of Tri-unity; “three-in-oneness” is.
5. **READ Slide 7** 1st expressed at creation, Genesis 1:26 (3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8)- all plural pronouns.
6. **READ Slide 8-9** God also says He is one- Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (Isaiah 45:5-6, 21-22).

**This is important because…**

1. **Only a Personal God Can Create Personhood. Mankind- you and me.**
2. Impossible for an impersonal force to create personhood/people/physical and spiritual beings.
3. God, who is personal, created the universe and everything in it- makes Him separate from it.
4. There is no cosmic force that we need to align ourselves with, we connect with God in relationship.

**God created mankind with personhood so we could personally know Him and know each other.** Let’s go back to Genesis 1:26. **READ Slide 10-11 God created us in His “image”. What does that mean?**

1. **HE CREATED US FOR RELATIONSHIP**
2. **Created in the Image of God**
3. Image- selem; similar to/likeness- demut; an example of
4. The only created being to have been created in His image- not angels, not plants, not animals/pets; we are a unique and special creations of God.
5. Man was created similar to God but not identical to Him and we represent Him. **Slide 12**
6. Immaterial spirit- unlike God we’re physical but spiritual like Him
7. Morality- inner sense of right/wrong- animals respond to punishment/reward, accountable to God for our actions.
8. Intellectual- reason, think, learn, think abstractly, grow in intellect/technology, understanding of time, creativity, emotions.
9. Relational- marriage, family, friends, connect emotionally, different roles/yet equal like the Trinity.
10. Physical abilities- God doesn’t have a body, but He sees, hears, touches, etc. and so can we with our physical bodies.
11. Care/control of creation- God has given us responsibility to care for His creation.

**Prior to A/E’s sin each of these were perfectly whole/operating exactly as designed.** When they sinned, it didn’t cause them/us to lose God’s image, but it severely distorted His image. **Slide 13 The once spiritually alive spirit in relationship with God became spiritually dead/separated from God.** What was originally God/others-focused qualities, motivations, responses became self-focused- just read Genesis 3 on- they chose to do life their way/self-focused. **Every person after A/E is born in this sin-filled, self-focused condition which is why our lives/world are so messed up.** It’s not God’s fault, it’s our fault.

1. **Adam/Eve’s Sin Distorted God’s Image**
2. Spiritual- spiritually alive now spiritually dead.
3. Moral- self determines right/wrong
4. Intellectual- self-focused thinking, reasoning, responses
5. Relational- relationships formed to meet our needs, not the other person’s needs like at creation.
6. Physical- death/sickness/disease hinders the physical
7. Care/control- man destroys or elevates it above human needs

**Sin has so distorted God’s image in us that even the things we think are good God considers to be disgustingly dirty.** Look what He says in Isaiah 64:6 **READ Slide 14 So God is personal, but we are spiritually dead and in that condition unable to know Him in a personal way/relationship.** Good deeds can’t make us right with Him/win Him over because He considers them dirty/disgusting rags. **How can we ever know God personally then? Here’s the greatest demonstration of God being a personal God…God the Son became man and did the only thing that could be done to make a relationship with Him possible.** Here’s how the Apostle Paul describes it. **READ Slide 15-17 God the Son became man- Jesus Christ.**

1. **GOD RESTORES THE RELATIONSHIP**
2. **God the Son Became Man- Jesus Christ, Philippians 2:5–8 He didn’t stay spirit/became flesh**
3. “existed in the form of God”- huparxo; continuance of a previous state, was God/still is God.
4. “emptied Himself”- kenoo; gave up His privileges/right to operate as God
5. He gave up being solely spirit and became human- 100% God/100% man.
6. He didn’t give up His deity but placed Himself under the authority of God the Father and was empowered by God the Holy Spirit.
7. He did this by becoming a man, a man who came to serve others.
8. “humbled Himself”- tapeinoo; bow down, lower oneself, self-emptied life **What a great description!**

**The ultimate demonstration of this was when He died on the cross. But why would the God of the universe who was a perfect human being die on a cross?** Once again the Apostle Paul gives us the explanation. **READ Slide 18-21 Jesus did that to take our eternal death sentence, so God could save us from hell.** Our salvation/being right with God is not based on what we do…

1. **God Saves Us through Faith in Jesus Christ, Titus 3:4-7**
2. Not based on our good deeds/religious rituals/traditions, Isaiah 64:6; motivated by selfishness.
3. Just like God is the one who gave us physical life, only He can give us spiritual life and that can only happen through God the Holy Spirit washing away our sin.
4. That happens when we believe/trust what God says- that Jesus died/took God’s wrath for you/me and ask Him to forgive our sins against Him.
5. At that point we are “justified”- declared not guilty of our sin.
6. And are made heirs of eternal life- made part of God’s family, Jesus’ church/promised heaven.

**Before we hit some TAKEAWAYS let me show you just some of the ways God describes how personal He is. Slide 22** 1st throughout the Psalms He describes us as being under His wings of protection; Jesus even uses this illustration in Matthew 23.

1. **Illustrations of Relationship**
2. Hidden under His “wings”- Psalm 61:4, 91:4; Matthew 23:37
3. Shepherd caring for His sheep- Isaiah 40:11, John 10
4. Apple of His eye- Psalm 17:8 little man of the eye; so close to Him we see ourselves in His pupils.
5. **As I’ve already mentioned-** Child of God/family of God- John 1:12
6. A member of Jesus’ body/church- 1 Corinthians 12

**God is a personal God who has made it very clear in the Bible that He wants a personal relationship with you/me.** The fact that He is personal should have a positive impact on your life. **The first is for those who haven’t yet received God’s gift of relationship.** God wants you to know He loves you, He’s willing to forgive you of sinning against Him, and He’ll make you His child for eternity- He adopts you for eternity. **Would you like to know that once and for all God has declared you not guilty of the sin that has kept you from Him, that He’s forgiven you and given you spiritual life through the presence of God the Holy Spirit? Let me challenge you right now to have a conversation with Him.** **Slide 23**

**YOU TAKEAWAYS**

1. **Receive God’s offer of relationship with Him.**
2. **Admit** you’ve sinned and need God’s forgiveness.
3. **Believe** Jesus took your judgment on Himself.
4. **Confess** these things to God.

**If you’ve already received His gift of relationship then…**

1. **Slide 24 Take your next step to know God better.**

* Increase your time with God in His Word- read daily, next step- begin to take notes/write applications.
* Increase your connection with your church family- watching online isn’t being part of God’s family, get with your church family as God commands, **connecting once a month?** increase to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 4. Basically, obey God and get together with the church family He’s given you.
* Attend the Men’s or Women’s Bible studies- great for biblical knowledge and developing relationships with others.

**PODCAST: Is there a personal God out there or just a cosmic energy force? Take a listen and see what you think.** Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 64:6; Philippians 2:5-8; Titus 3:4-7