



Survey of Christian Theology.1

Doctrine of God / *Theology Proper*





Logistics & Learning Objectives:

1. Learning Objectives. Participants will gain an understanding of the:
 - a. Innate knowledge of God
 - b. Attributes of God
 - c. Reasons that support the existence of God.
 - d. Problem of evil in a universe with a loving God
2. For more information please visit studioscriptura.com



Key Sources:



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- ❖ "In the beginning, God..." Genesis 1:1
- ❖ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6
- ❖ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24
- ❖ Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. Mark 12:29-31

"The bible presupposes the existence of God in its very opening statement,"

"Man ceased to recognize the knowledge of God as something that was given in Scripture, and began to pride himself on being a seeker after God. In course of time it became rather common to speak of man's discovering God, as if man ever discovered Him" Berkhoff

Innate Knowledge of God

- People around the world have an inborn concept of God's existence.
- "Wherever men exist, in all ages and in all parts of the world, they have some form of religion. The idea of God is impressed on every human language. And as language is the product and revelation of human consciousness, if all languages have some name for God, it proves that the idea of God, in some form, belongs to every human being." (Charles Hodge)



- "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Gen 1:27
- "...Also He has put eternity in their hearts..." Eccl 3:11
- "Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.'" Acts 17:22-23



Christian Doctrine of God

God is a personal God and His attributes are personal, e.g., love, judgement, purpose, desires reconciliation with sinners, and pursues a relationship with man. God is not an impersonal *force*.

Although God is personal and desires to enter into relationship, He is not commonplace; He is transcendent.

Therefore, the Bible is not just making facts known about God, but it is God's self-revelation about who He is and how He has, and is interacting with His creation.

God is the creator of all that exists, He is unchanging and self-sufficient.

Society has, from time to time, determined that it arrived at a place it could dispense with the *notion* of God. Jesus, therefore, became acceptable as a lifestyle teacher. This is a dangerous notion and leads to a dysfunctional society and eventually paganism.

"Theology should be thought of as a human response to God's self-disclosure, rather than a human quest for God." Alister McGrath

The Nature & Attributes of God

Because God is transcendent, we can never use human words or human intellect to fully comprehend Him. Our words, and the following attributes, cannot provide an exhaustive understanding of God. But as we seek to understand God by looking at His nature and attributes, we differentiate God from all others. As in every area of theology, we must let the Scripture be our guide and not allow our minds to slip into the selfish motive of stating: "Well this is who God is to me."



God is: Spirit

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is *Spirit*, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23-24



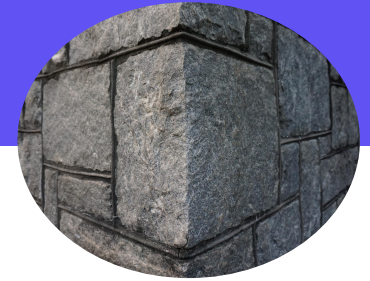
Transcendent

No limitation can be assigned to God's essence. "God perceives and acts everywhere." (Hodge) "O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens!" Psalm 8:1 "The Lord is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens." Psalm 113:4



Eternal

God is the unmoved mover from before time. He exists outside the constraints of space and duration. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from *everlasting* to everlasting, You are God." Psalm 90:2 "The high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity" Isaiah 57:15



Immutable

God's unchangeable nature is a comfort to all in this ever-changing and perishing world. "For I am the Lord, I do not change" Malachi 3:6 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." James 1:17

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"God cannot and must not be constructed or conceived in human terms, as if He were some kind of projection of human culture, reason, or emotion. Again and again Barth emphasizes the vastness of the gulf fixed between God and humanity, and the impossibility of bridging this gulf - on our own we are incapable of knowing Him." Alister McGrath

The Nature & Attributes of God *(continued)*

The Westminster Catechism: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

As we seek to understand God by His attributes, it would be haughty and arrogant to think we can ever truly and fully describe God in our words and fully understand who God is in our current human life. We do, see through a glass darkly and know only in part. 1 Corinthians 13:12



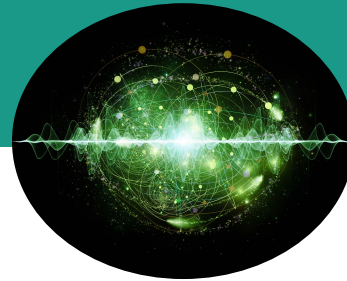
All-Powerful

God speaks and it is done; "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." Genesis 1:3 "Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great *power* and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You." Jeremiah 32:17



All-Knowing

God knows all that was, is, and is to be. "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:13 "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Proverbs 15:3



Self-Existent

"And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" Exodus 3:14 "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



Creative

"In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth...And God said, 'Let there be light' Genesis 1:1,3 "God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did." Romans 4:17

The Nature & Attributes of God *(continued)*

God is not far off and hidden. Not only does He desire for you to meet Him, but He desires to have a relationship with you. We get to know Him through His Word, prayer, and meditation on His word - and as we more fully grasp His attributes, we should seek to make Him known to the world!



Just

When we regard God as the author of moral excellence in his dealings with His creatures, we conceive of Him as just. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25 "For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth." Psalm 96:13



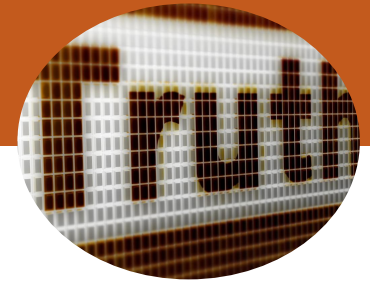
Light

"God is *light* and in Him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5 "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8:12 "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light." Revelation 21:23



Good

God's disposition is to promote happiness; to exercise kindness towards the miserable, the dilapidated, and disenfranchised. "No one is *good* but One, that is, God." Matthew 19:17 "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!" Psalm 118:1



Truth

God is the source of truth, He really is what and who He declares Himself to be, and He can be relied upon in all things. "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the *truth*, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6 "Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Psalm 31:5

The Nature & Attributes of God *(continued)*

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"Paul is authorized to deliver the Gospel of God. He is commissioned to hand over to humanity something quite new, unprecedented, joyful and good - the **truth** of God. Yes, precisely - the **truth** of God!"

Karl Barth

The Nature & Attributes of God *(continued)*

"Our aim in studying the Godhead is to better know God. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's *attributes*, but with the living God Himself, whose attributes they are." -J.I. Packer

"'Am I a God near at hand,' says the Lord, 'And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?' says the Lord; 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord." Jeremiah 23:23-24



Merciful

Compassion and forgiveness toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish. "The Lord is *merciful* and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy." Psalm 103:8



Jealous

God is fiercely protective and vigilant over His name and over those He watches. "For I, the Lord your God, am a *jealous* God" Exodus 20:5 "I will be jealous for My holy name." Ezekiel 39:25



Love

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is *love*." 1 John 4:7-8 "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." 1 John 4:16



Holy

God is free from all aspects of moral evil and is the ultimate of moral excellence. "Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are *holy*." Revelation 15:4a "Exalt the Lord our God, And worship at His holy hill; For the Lord our God is holy." Psalm 99:9

God's Existence

1. After reading the previous slides, one might say: "All is fine and good!" But what about the person who does not believe that God even exists?
2. This question is in the realm of what we call *apologetics*.
3. Apologetics is not giving an *apology* for our faith in God, but it is giving a *reasoned defense* for what we believe and why we believe it.
4. The *Ontological Argument* from Anselm of Canterbury? *That which no greater being can be conceived*
 - a. God is the greatest possible being.
 - b. God exists in the human mind and understanding.
 - c. A being who exists only as a mental notion is not so great as a being who exists in reality and not merely as a mental idea.
 - d. If God exists only in the human mind, then God is not the greatest possible being.
 - e. It therefore follows that God must exist both as an idea in the mind and in reality. (Alister McGrath)

When this was originally penned by Anselm, it was meant as more of a meditation for the Christian, rather than an apologetic presentation of God's existence. Today, we see that it serves both purposes, and we should use it in our apologetics, and we should also remember the benefits of meditating on Anselm's thoughts.

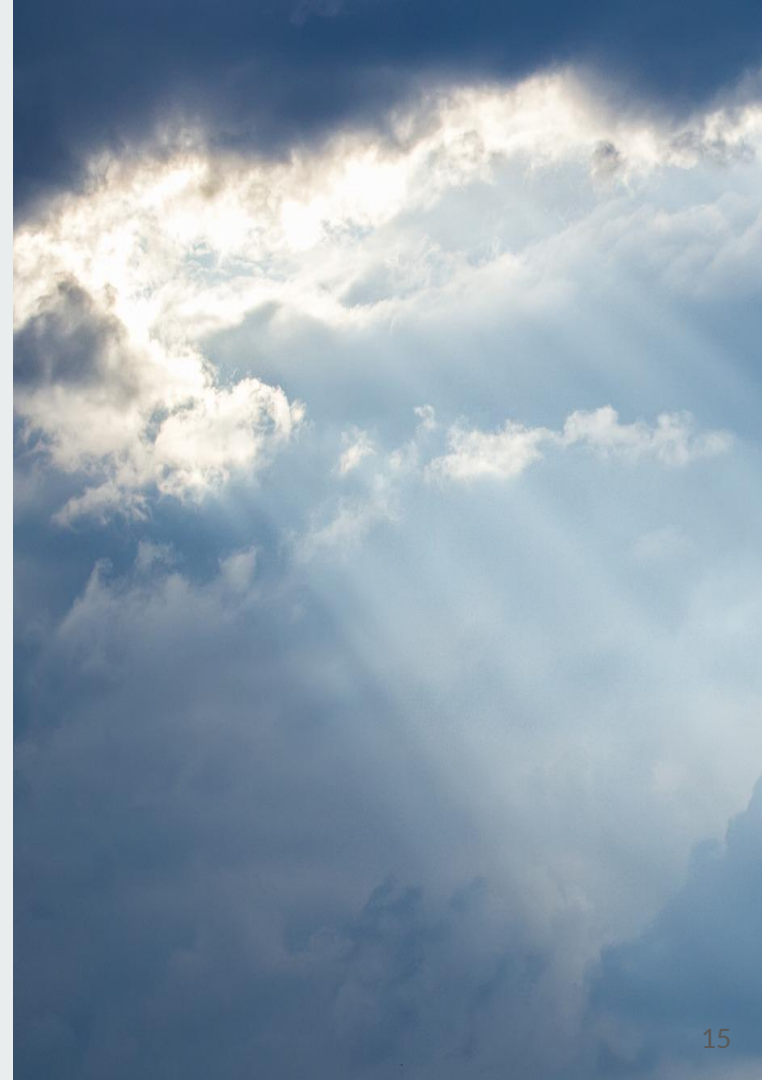


God's Existence *(continued)*

5. The "Five Ways" of Thomas Aquinas:
 - a. There is motion in the universe and things do not move themselves; they are moved or brought into being by something/Someone. As there cannot be an infinite regression of things being moved by other things, there must be a *prime mover* who is not moved by anything else. The unmoved prime mover is God.
 - b. There must be an original cause - or Creator - to all that exists in the universe
 - c. We are *contingent* beings, we are here because of our parents. There must therefore be a *necessary* being who is God.
 - d. Where do concepts such as truth, goodness, and love come from? Aquinas argues that God must be the original cause as He Himself is truth, goodness, and love.
 - e. Teleological argument - The world obviously shows order and design. Complex operational structures that exist are designed, have not designed themselves, and have a purpose. Therefore, there must be a designer for the world, i.e., God created and governs the purposes of the world.

God's Existence *(continued)*

6. Modern cosmology strongly suggests that the universe had a beginning. An argument for God's existence comes from the following which is sometimes referred to as the *Kalam Cosmological* argument:
 - a. Everything which has a beginning must have a cause.
 - b. The universe began to exist.
 - c. Therefore, the beginning of the existence of the Universe must have been caused by something.
 - d. The only such cause can be God. (Alister McGrath)



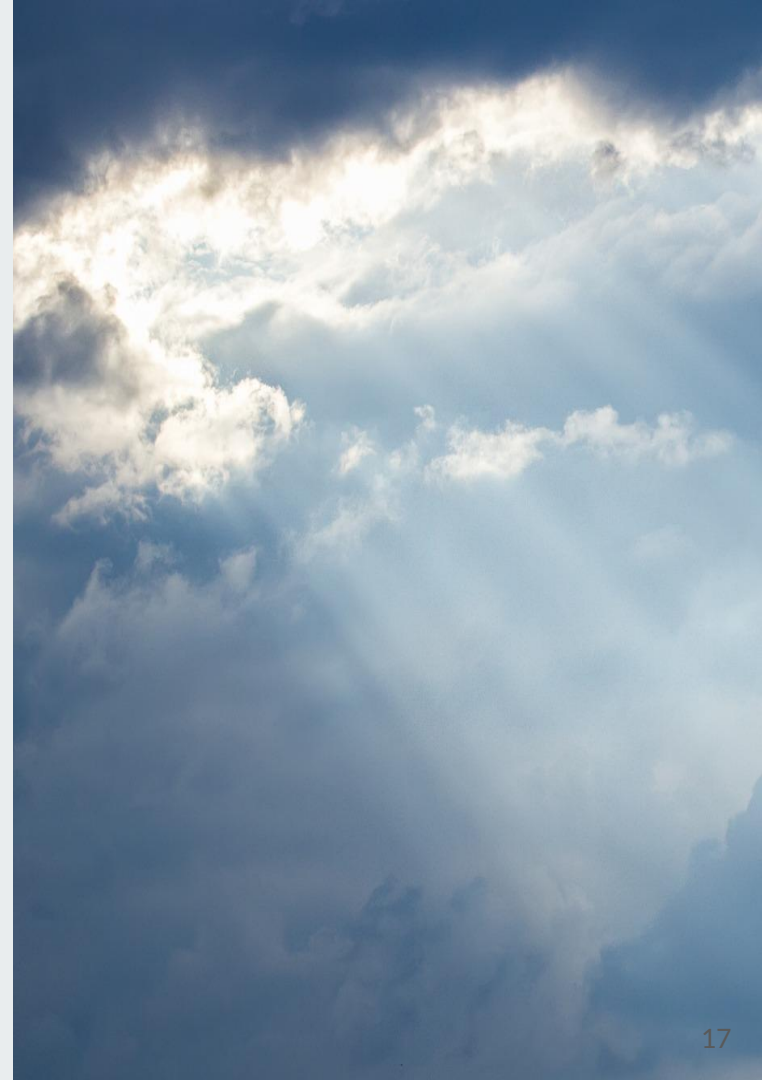


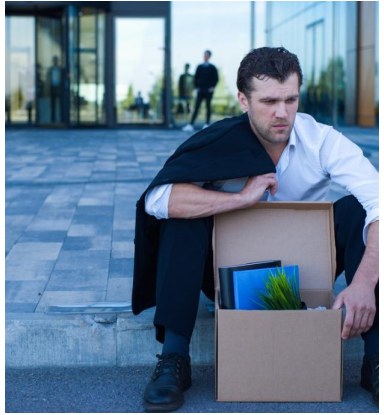
God's Existence *(continued)*

7. *Teleological argument* - English theologian & natural philosopher William Paley expanded upon Aquinas' argument from design:
 - a. Anything designed is designed for a purpose.
 - b. Paley was influenced by Sir Isaac Newton and saw the universe as a comprehensive and complex mechanism operating according to regular and understandable principles.
 - c. Complex mechanisms do not come into being by purposeless chance.
 - d. The design of a watch is intricate, has a purpose, and comes into being by someone who designed and created it.
 - e. Hence the universe, which is intricate and all in it has a purpose, must have had a designer and creator.

God's Existence *(continued)*

8. Ultimately, one realizes that God cannot be proven to exist by arguments from logic. God's existence is certain, and does not rest upon or depend upon our belief. But our eternity depends on our belief or lack of belief in Him and His work of salvation on our behalf.
 - a. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the earth shows His handiwork. Psalm 19:1
 - b. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Psalm 53:1
 - c. "For he who comes to God must believe that He is." Hebrews 11:6
 - d. "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." Acts 17:24-25





The Problem of Evil

- So if God exists, and He is good and just and holy, then how can bad things happen to "good" people? Why is there evil in the world?
- Some hold that encounters with evil are necessary to truly know what is good. And such encounters are a prerequisite for spiritual growth, to develop the character of Christ in us. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8
- As referenced by Alister McGrath, John Hick's book, *Evil and the God of Love* (1966), emphasizes: "human beings are created incomplete. In order for them to become what God intended them to be, they must participate in the world. God didn't create human beings as automatons, but as individuals who are capable of responding freely to God. Unless a real choice is available between good and evil, the biblical injunctions to 'choose good' are meaningless."

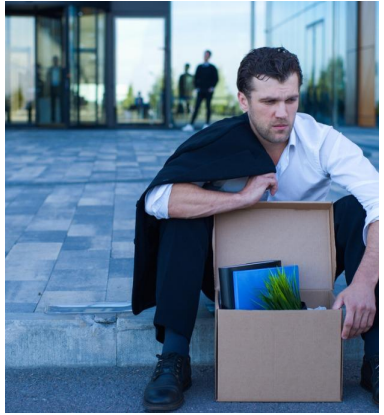
The Problem of Evil *(continued)*

- St. Augustine believed/taught that God's creation was good but that evil was a direct consequence of man's misuse of freedom. Sadly, man continues to choose evil, and thus the world is contaminated by it.
- But one may ask, where did the evil come from that man has decided to follow? The origin of evil is in satan's pride / downfall / and temptation. So, one may further ask, where did satan come from? Biblically, we know that an angel desired supreme authority over God and thus, fell into rebellion. Isaiah 14:12-13
- Does God continue to be morally responsible for a world that continues to sin against His will? Is the alternate question also plausible: "Why do good things happen in a world that continues in disobedience to God?"



The Problem of Evil *(continued)*

- Philosophical, and seemingly logical, answers to the question of suffering and evil, provide little to those who are living in despondent circumstances.
- The problem of suffering in the world may be God's call to all his people to work to relieve injustice, poverty, depression, and war through actively living a life that exhibits the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" Matthew 25:37-40



An Overview of Pantheism

1. There are many alternate views that differ from the biblical text of a loving God. One of the most dangerous and prominent of these alternate views is *Pantheism*. Although not a term used daily in society, it is a worldview, or view of God, that is prevalent during our current days of postmodern thinking.
2. Many Hollywood movies have Pantheism at their source . This is seen in the Star Wars movies: "The *Force* is a mysterious energy field ... that binds the galaxy together. Harnessing the power of the *Force* gives the Jedi, and others sensitive to this spiritual energy, extraordinary abilities" (www.starwars.com). We also see Pantheism in Young Adult fiction, such as the Harry Potter series.
3. So what is it? The word *pantheism* is constructed from the Greek roots *pan* (all) and *theos* (God). "reality is identical with divinity, or that all things compose an all-encompassing, immanent god or goddess. Pantheist belief does not recognize a distinct personal god" The idea is ancient and most world religions other than biblical Christianity and Judaism, have Pantheism at their foundation. Religion, for Pantheists, is guided by a desire to pursue actions to invoke the so-called impersonal *force* that exists in the universe. The desire of a Pantheist is to bend this impersonal *force* to their own benefit, the benefit of others, and, at times, the harm of others.

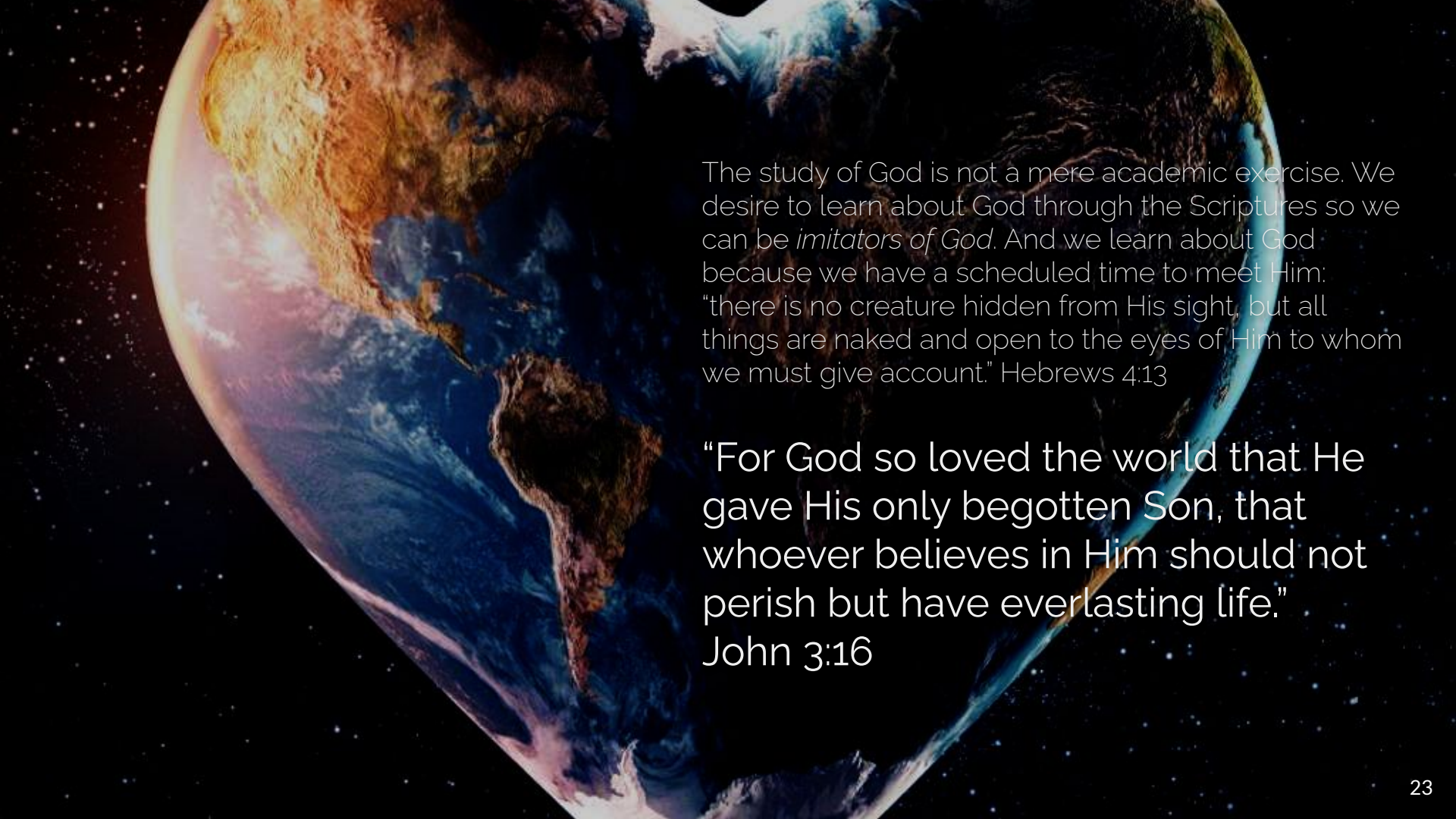
We're looking at Pantheism to understand it, and to realize that it is contrary to a Christian's view of God. Pantheism controls most of our planet's worldview and it is perilous to an individual's psychological health and soul.



An Overview of Pantheism *(continued)*

4. Pantheism is enticing because humans misapply the sense of grandeur one gets by looking at nature and state incorrectly: "I see god in everything!" This leads to a Pantheistic worldview where their god is not only *seen in everything* but that god *actually is everything*. Pantheists reject any notion of a personal God, so although a Pantheist may *love the universe*, this *force in the universe* never loves them back. This is because the Pantheist's god is not personal and is incapable of doing anything personal.
5. You often hear people say today: "Well, I'll just put this out to the universe to see what happens". This is Pantheism at its core, as the Pantheist believes that somehow this impersonal force will do their bidding. At times, Pantheists believe that certain sorceries can bend this impersonal force to do their bidding.
6. The millennial generation grew up hearing about this so-called *force* and it has subconsciously impacting their thinking and view of God.
7. The challenge with Pantheism is that it is not a simple codifiable religious position, but it is a worldview that spins itself into diverse beliefs that impact, in a damnable way, one's daily life, psychological health, and eternal soul.
8. As Bible-believing Christians, we must dismantle this faulty view of God and help those infected with this false view, and bring them to the light of a solid biblical view of who the God of the universe is.



A high-resolution image of Earth from space, showing the Americas and the Atlantic Ocean. The Earth is curved, with the horizon visible on the left. The colors are vibrant, with deep blues for the oceans and various shades of brown, tan, and green for the continents. The background is a dark, starry space.

The study of God is not a mere academic exercise. We desire to learn about God through the Scriptures so we can be *imitators of God*. And we learn about God because we have a scheduled time to meet Him: "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:13

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

We cannot truly worship God if we do not have a biblical understanding of who God is.

It is important to understand the "problem of evil" as many will use this as an argument against the existence of a loving God.

When we understand the attributes of God, we can begin to build those attributes (as applicable) into our lives as we seek to be imitators of God.

Because pantheism has infected so many aspects of our society, it is critical to know what it is and how it is contrary to our biblical understanding of God.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a blue rectangular sign with the words "So What" written in white, sans-serif font. The background is blurred, showing a brick wall and some greenery.

So What



Memorize the attributes of God and begin to pray that God will build those same attributes (as applicable) into your life as we seek to be *imitators of God. Ephesians 5:1*

Homework

Study, and gain a solid understanding of the reasons for God's existence, and use these in your presentation of the Gospel to those who are unbelievers.

Be alert to Pantheism and protect your family and those around you from this unbiblical worldview.

Talk about this class with your family and friends.

Now What

