

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

MESSAGE THREE:

Read Exodus 3:14

THE SELF-EXISTENCE, ETERNITY, AND TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

The attributes of God are not that of which He is composed. The fact that God is God should indicate to us that God is not composed of anything, He is not a sum of His attributes.

Anything that is composed of different parts, or attributes of its nature, had to be composed by something greater than the composition. If God, the Almighty Father, had been composed, then something greater than God would have had to do the composing.

But God is not composed of His various attributes, God is not made of parts, God is not made, God simply is, and always was, and always will be. A.W. Tozer put it this way:

*“God’s attributes are not God; that is, I say that God is self-existent, but that’s something that I posit about God – that isn’t God. I say that God is holy, but holiness is not God. I say that God is wisdom, but wisdom is not God. God is God!”*¹

Now, I want you to imagine for a moment the vastness of the universe. Picture the innumerable stars, galaxies, and celestial wonders that stretch beyond our comprehension. Now, consider the One who spoke all of this into existence with a word.

Imagine the One who was before time itself began, who exists in perfect independence, needing nothing and needing no one, yet choosing to create, choosing to create so that He could love, and so that He could redeem, so that He could redeem a race that would reject Him, blaspheme Him, and eventually crucify His own Son.

With this message, we are going to explore a little bit of that God, and the attributes or qualities of that God that led Him to do just that.

We are going to explore the profound and awe-inspiring attributes of our God: His **Self-Existence**, **Eternity**, and **Transcendence**. These are not mere theological concepts, but truths that reveal the

¹ (Tozer, 2015)

very nature of the Almighty. They should shake us to the core and draw us into deeper worship and adoration.

The Self-Existence of God

Consider the burning bush that Moses encountered. Out of the flames, God declared, "*I AM THAT I AM*" (*Exodus 3:14*). This statement is a declaration of God's self-existence.

He is the great "I AM," the One who exists by His own power, independent of anything or anyone. Unlike us, who depend on countless things for our existence, God is self-sustaining. He is the source of all life and being.

The Eternity of God

Reflect on these words from *Psalms 90:2* "*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*" God's eternity means that He has no beginning and no end.

He stands outside the bounds of time, seeing the end from the beginning. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last (Revelation 22:13). This eternal nature assures us that our God is unchanging, and His promises are forever.

The Transcendence of God

Isaiah 55:8-9 declares, "*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.*" God's transcendence speaks of His exalted, superior nature.

He is infinitely above and beyond His creation. His ways and thoughts are higher, purer, and more magnificent than we can ever fathom.

Imagine, for a moment, standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon. I have been there, and done just that, it is quite the amazing and awe-inspiring thing to do. If you can look at the Grand Canyon and still think there is no God – I don't know about you.

As you are standing there, you look out over the vast expanse, feeling a mixture of awe and insignificance. The sheer magnitude of the canyon, carved by the hand of God, overwhelms you. But even this breathtaking sight is but a faint whisper of the grandeur of our God.

- Our God is self-existent.
- Our God is eternal.
- And our God is transcendent.

He is the One who carved out the Grand Canyon. He is the One who set the stars in their courses, and He is the One who holds all of creation in the palm of His hand.

As we delve into these attributes, let us open our hearts and minds to the overwhelming reality that is God. Let us open our hearts and minds to who God is.

Let us allow the weight of His Majesty to humble us, to inspire us, and to transform us. We are not here to merely gain knowledge, but to encounter the living Almighty God, to be drawn into deeper and deeper reverence and holy adoration for Him who is beyond all comprehension!

Please continually let yourself be amazed by our God. Never take Him for granted. Let the truths of His self-existence, eternity, and transcendence lead you to a place of profound worship.

Our finite minds may struggle to grasp the infinite, but let us approach with faith, knowing that this God, who is so far beyond us, has chosen to reveal Himself to us. Let us stand in awe and draw near to Him in humble adoration.

And this brings us to our first point...

THE SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD

Exodus 3:14 “*And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.*” In this verse you can see that “*I Am That I Am*” is capitalized because that is the name of God. “I Am,” means God is the self-existent God.

Some have attempted to define the attribute of God’s self-existence by saying that God is the cause of Himself. Jerome said, “*God is the origin of Himself and the cause of His own substance.*” But this is not true.

This error comes from assuming the existence of God must be accounted for on the principle that everything beginning must have a cause. But God never began, and nothing caused God to come into existence.

God Himself has no origin, but He is the originator of everything else. God is the uncaused Cause of everything. God is the Origin that had no origin.

The self-existence of God is also sometimes referred to as the Independence of God. God's attribute of self-existence or Independence can be defined as follows:

God is absolutely independent of all else than Himself for the continuity and perpetuity of His being. God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy.²

Turn with me to John 5:26 & then to Acts 17:24-28

THE SCRIPTURAL FACT OF GOD'S SELF-EXISTENCE

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" John 5:26

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." Acts 17:24-28

Samuel Harris, in his book *God the Creator and Lord of All*, described it this way:

² (Grudem, 1994)

*“God is. His name is evermore, I AM. It certainly can be no limitation of God, that He is absolutely unlimited and independent, that He is uncreated and eternal, endowed from all eternity with all possible perfection as the absolute spirit.”*³

Doctrinal statement: God is self-sustaining and always has been from all eternity past and will be for all eternity future. His self-existence is an essential attribute of Himself. It is His nature to be self-existent.

God is not dependent on anything. God’s self-existence is an inalienable attribute of His nature. When God gives an oath, He does not swear by another, He says *“As I live,”*⁴ leaving His oath to rest on the immutable attribute of His self-existence.

J.M. Pendleton, in discussing the incomprehensiveness of the thought of God’s self-existence had the following comment:

*“In the boundless range of human and angelic thought there will never be found a deeper mystery than the self-existence of God. It defies finite comprehension. God alone knows how He exists, why He always existed, and why He will exist forever.”*⁵

“We are never to forget that in Him creatures live and move and have their being – are dependent on Him for life, motion, and existence; but His self-existence makes Him absolutely

³ (Harris, 1896)

⁴ Numbers 14:21, 28, Isaiah 49:18, Jeremiah 22:24, Ezekiel 5:11, Ezekiel 14:18, etc.

⁵ (Pendleton)

independent.”⁶ All of creation, and of all mankind, find the reason for their existence in God, and are thereby, whether they acknowledge it or not, dependent on Him for that existence.

POINT OF DISCUSSION:

CONCERNING THE SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD

***How does this make you feel?

***How should this affect our day-to-day life?

***How should this attribute of God change our thinking processes about the problems and concerns of life?

GOD EXISTS DIFFERENTLY

It is ok to be different than all those around us. God is different, there is nothing like Him. In a way God made us like Him in that aspect. He created us all different, none of us are like anyone else. We are all different by nature. God is also different; He exists differently than we exist. Think on these two statements:

- God does not need creation for anything.
- God could not need creation for anything.

⁶ (Bancroft, 1996)

The difference between God's existence and ours:

- is more than the difference between a candle and the sun,
- more than the difference between a raindrop and the ocean,
- more than the difference between a snowflake and an iceberg,
- more than the difference between the room we are in and the universe,

God's existence is qualitatively different.⁷ There is no limitation or imperfection on the creation that could be projected onto the Creator.

When we reflect on the self-existence of God; we have to balance this reflection with the fact the Scriptures teach us we can bring glory to God.

The God that needs nothing, that has always existed, that all creation depends on in some way, we can bring glory to this God.

Now that is something to contemplate. We have been given quite a privilege in this regard that God has seen fit to give us the ability to bring glory to Him – I cannot comprehend that truth, yet it is truth because God says it is truth. We can bring glory to Him. So let us go about our lives, always seeking to do just that.

APPLICATION: God is self-existent, but God delights in us. We are able to bring real joy and delight to God. We all have this ability; we all have great value to God. So much value that He

⁷ (Grudem, 1994)

gave His only Son to die on the cross, to pay our sin debt for us, just to give us an opportunity to live with Him for all eternity one day. The fact that we can bring real joy and delight to God is one of the most amazing things in Scripture.

***Psalm 18:19** “He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.”*

***Psalm 147:11** “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.”*

***Psalm 149:4** “For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.”*

***Zephaniah 3:17** “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”*

What are we currently doing in our life that the Lord could delight in?

Are we living for Him?

Are we living out His Word in our life?

Are we seeking to bring others to Him?

ETERNALNESS OF GOD

The world had a beginning; it was not from eternity, it was once nothing, then made from nothing to become something. The world and all therein owe its being to the creating power of God.

Since God formed the world, He was in existence before the world. God was the cause of the world. God was the first cause;

He was the cause of all the world and all the infinite expanse of space. God is eternal, the Bible says in ***Psalm 90:2*** “*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*”

“So angels and souls are everlasting; though their being shall never cease, yet there was a time when their being began; they were nothing before they were something, though they shall never be nothing again, but shall live in endless happiness or misery. But that properly is eternal that hath neither beginning nor end; and thus eternity is a property of God.”⁸

GOD IS WITHOUT BEGINNING

Genesis 1:1 “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*”

In the beginning, God created the world, so therefore God was before the world, so at what point could we set as to when God began? We cannot. We cannot set a date for when God began, because God is without beginning.

We do not serve a temporary God; we do not serve a God that had an origin point, or a time He was created, if our God was created or began at some point in the distant past, this would effectively render Him not all-powerful, if something could create God, then that something would be more powerful than God. God has to be eternal, uncreated, and without a beginning to be God.

⁸ (Charnock, Reprinted 1996 - First published 1853)

“Eternity is the dimension of God’s own life, It has no beginning and no end, no parameters or margins or boundaries outside of God Himself. On the other hand, time was willed and created by God as a reality distinct from Himself.”⁹

God was infinitely before all things, in **Daniel 7:9**, God is referred to as the “*Ancient of Days*.” Meaning before all days, before all time, before all ages.

But He is not ancient in the since He is decaying, falling apart, not as powerful or capable as He once was. This term is signifying His eternalness, not ancient as we may use the word to describe someone we may know.

If we called someone ancient, what would you mentally picture this person to be? You would picture undoubtedly old, grey-headed, feeble, and probably not as mentally sharp as they once were; but we should never think of God in this way.

He is not as many picture Him as an old man on a rocking chair in Heaven, no, He is the all-powerful, the all-knowing, the fully present, and the totally and perfectly capable eternal God. God knows events as taking place in time, but God is in no way limited by time or affected by it.

ILLUSTRATION:

One author gave us a great illustration of how time does not affect God:

⁹ (Akin, 2007)

“If you can, think of eternity, of infinitude, as a pure white sheet of paper extending infinitely in all directions. Then think about a man taking a pencil and drawing a line, one inch long, on that infinitely extended sheet of paper. And that little line is time. It begins and it moves an inch and ends. It begins on the paper and it ends on the paper. So time began in God and will end in God. And it doesn’t affect God at all. God dwells in an everlasting now.”¹⁰

GOD IS WITHOUT END

God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what He is. He remains always the same in being; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch him (**James 1:7** - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*)

Boethius defined eternity as “*a perfect possession altogether of an endless life.*”¹¹ Such a definition, of course, applies to no other but God. This definition transcends other definitions as it brings thought to God’s full majestic, unimaginably rich, and abundant overflowing life as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

GOD IS HIS OWN ETERNITY

God is His own eternity. He is not eternal by grant, or by the permission or power of another, rather He is eternal by nature and essence. If eternity were anything distinct from God, and not of the essence of God, then there would be something which was not

¹⁰ (Tozer, 2015) Illustration given by C.S. Lewis and quoted by Tozer.

¹¹ (Green, 2016)

God, necessary to perfect God. Then God would have been at one time not perfect.

God would have also needed the help of something else to attain eternality, then He would not be all-powerful. Eternality has to be of the essence of God, for God to be God. Eternity is the choice perfection of God; it establishes Him as eminently supreme to all others.

GOD'S ETERNITY IS EVIDENT

His eternity is evident, by the name God gives himself (*Exodus 3:14 - And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you*).

This is the name by which He is distinguished from all creatures. This description being in the present tense, shows that His essence does not relate to time as we do. God eternally is “*I Am*.” This name signifies His eternity, as well as His perfection and immutability.

IF GOD WERE NOT ETERNAL:

The following is a logical argument for this. It can be hard to follow, but it is a good argument or explanation for this.

If God were not eternal, He would not be immutable in His nature. It is contrary to the nature of immutability to be without eternity. How so? For everything that begins, is changed in its passing from not being into being.

It began to be what it was not; for it was nothing then became something, and if it ends, it ceases to be what it was; it cannot

therefore be said to be God. Therefore, for God to be God He has to be eternal and unchanging. (***Malachi 3:6a*** - *For I am the Lord, I change not;*). From this argument we can derive several other statements then that must be true:

- If God were not eternal, He could not be an infinitely perfect Being. A finite duration is inconsistent with infinite perfection (***Psalms 18:30*** - *As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him*).
- If God were not eternal, He could not be omnipotent, almighty; the title of almighty does not agree with a nature that had a beginning; whatever has a beginning was once nothing; and when it was nothing, could act nothing: where there is no being there is no power (***Job 42:2*** - *I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee*).
- If God were not eternal, He would not be the first cause of all; because something would have had to cause Him; but He is the first and the last; the first cause of all things, the last end of all things (***Revelation 1:8*** - *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*).

For God to be Almighty, for God to be the Creator, for God to be perfect, for God to be immutable, for God to be infinite in nature, for God to be God – He has to be eternal.

CONCLUSION TO ETERNALNESS OF GOD

The following quote from *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, 1853, brings a thoughtful close this section:

*“In regard of our impotence to comprehend this eternity of God. How little do we know, how little can we know, of God’s eternity! We cannot fully conceive it, much less express it; we have but a brutish understanding in all those things, as Agur said of himself (**Proverbs 30:7**). What is infinite and eternal, cannot be comprehended by finite and temporary creatures; if it could, it would not be infinite and eternal; for to know a thing, is to know the extent and cause of it.”¹²*

Doctrinal statement: The Bible asserts the fact the God is eternal; His existence had no beginning and will have no ending; He always was, always is, and always will be.

If God is eternal, which He is, then He is worthy of our greatest love and reverence. We should have the strongest of desires to have a relationship with Him and fellowship with Him. We should love, adore, and worship the eternally loving God, who saw fit to send His Son to die for lowly imperfect, sinners such as we are.

If we as humans can love and be loved, imagine how infinitely superior to our human love is God’s love toward us. Those of us who have children know what it is to love them, but the love we

¹² (Charnock, Reprinted 1996 - First published 1853)

have for our children pales in comparison to the eternally perfect love God has for us.

- Our God is not a god of few thousand years.
- Our God is not a god of millions of years.
- Our God is not a god of billions of years.
- Our God is the God of all eternity past and all eternity future.

It is incomprehensible to our finite minds the fact of the eternality of God, yet He still chose to send His Son to die on the cross to be our Savior, once we realize we are a sinner, deserving of Hell, and see our need to repent of our sins and turn to Christ by faith we can then accept Him as our Savior, and one day we will experience all of eternity future with Him. What a glorious thought.

ILLUSTRATION:

Thinking of the fullness and duration of this wonderful life, W. B. Hinson, a great preacher of a past generation, spoke from his own experience just before he died. He said, "I remember a year ago when a doctor told me, 'You have an illness from which you won't recover.' I walked out to where I live 5 miles from Portland, Oregon, and I looked across at that mountain that I love.

I looked at the river in which I rejoice, and I looked at the stately trees that are always God's own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps, and I said, ' I may not see you many more times, but

Mountain, I shall be alive when you are gone; and River, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea; and Stars, I shall be alive when you have fallen from your sockets in the great down pulling of the material universe!"

What perspective! What an incredible way to look at life, to look at death. Only Christians can think that way or have that outlook.

Praise God for our Savior! Praise God that our heavenly Father loved the world that much to send His Son to die in our place – so that we could have that kind of perspective and outlook on life!

TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

"Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." I Chronicles 29:11

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" Job 11:7-8

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." Psalm 145:3

"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." I Timothy 6:16

The term the transcendence of God may sound like it is something that will take a lot of study or explanation to comprehend, but it is not. Transcend simply means to go above, to rise above, to be above.

Yes, it can be difficult to understand how God can be here with us, in us, pervading all things, yet at the same time be transcending all things. At first glance it can appear to be a contradiction, but it is not contradictory; the two thoughts of God are entirely in agreement with one another. A.W. Tozer explained it this way:

*“God is always nearer than you may imagine Him to be. God is so near that your thoughts are not as near as God; your breath is not as near as God; your very soul is not as near as God is. And yet because He is God, His uncreated Being is so far above us that no thought can conceive it, nor words express it.”*¹³

To explain this concept a little further, when we say that God is transcendence and is far above everything, it is not far above as in physical distance. Distance of one thing to the other does not matter with God because God contains all things, God is everywhere, He does not have to travel from point A to point B, because He is at point A and at the same time, He is at point B.

Distance does not mean anything to God. When we say God is far above all things, it is just an attempt by man to put into words the concept of the transcendence of God. But what we do need to understand is that there is a vast gulf fixed between that which is God and that which is not God – between the great I AM and all creation.

God’s uncreated quality of life causes Him to be transcendent, to be above, to rise high above all of creation. *“God transcends and*

¹³ (Tozer, 2015)

*rises so high above all that the very angels in Heaven veil their faces. And the living creatures cover their faces and cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come”.*¹⁴

POINT OF DISCUSSION:

CONCERNING THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

*** How should this attribute of the Transcendence of God make us feel?

*** Should this attribute inspire us to show more reverence to the transcendent God of the universe?

*** How does this fact about God apply to our daily life?

*** Should this attribute make us stress and worry less about our problems and situations?

*** How should God’s transcendence effect our walk with the Him?

CONCLUSION

We have looked at three somewhat closely related attributes of God. His self-existence, His eternalness and His transcendence. All three of these attributes are critically important attributes of God. Without them He would not be the God we need.

- He would not be the God that can see all things.
- He would not be the God that is unchangeable.

¹⁴ (Tozer, 2015)

- He would not be the God that has all-power to help us when we need Him.
- He would not be the God of all-knowledge that knows perfectly just what we need and when we need it.
- He would not be God.

God is self-sustaining and always has been from all eternity past and will be for all eternity future. His self-existence is an essential attribute of Himself. It is His nature to be self-existent. God is not dependent on anything. God's self-existence is an inalienable attribute of His nature.

God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what He is. He remains always the same in being; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch him.

God is transcendent far above everything, He is worthy of our praise, He is worthy of our thanksgiving, and He is worthy of our lives dedicated to Him in humble service, because He Is, He was, and He will ever and always be our transcendent and all perfect loving Savior.

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