

# BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

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## SESSION 2

### THEOLOGY PROPER:

### The Doctrine Of God

This doctrinal study was prepared by Pastor Tom Alexander for use in a Bible Doctrine Survey class at Berea Baptist Bible School in Berea, Ohio, and reflects his personal doctrinal beliefs.

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# BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

*Pastor Tom Alexander*

## SESSION 2 - THEOLOGY PROPER: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

### 1. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

#### A. Views Concerning God

\* There are many varied views concerning the existence of God, and what kind of God exists. Here are some key views:

1. Atheism - There is no God.
2. Agnosticism - It is impossible to know whether or not there is a God. If God exists, it is impossible to know Him.
3. Deism - There is a "God," but he is not involved in the affairs of his creation. He does not intervene in the lives of men. He "wound up" the universe, but then he left it alone. (Voltaire, Thomas Jefferson)
4. Theism - There is a God and He is involved in the affairs of His creation.
5. Dualism - There are two equal and opposite forces or "Gods" - a good God and an evil God.
6. Polytheism - There are many gods of various levels of power and authority. (Idolatry, Greek & Roman religions, Hinduism, Zen Buddhism)
7. Pantheism - God is everything, and everything is god. God is in everything. (Hinduism, New Age beliefs, Star Wars' "Force")
8. Monotheism - There is only one true God. (Christianity, Judaism, Islam)
9. Trinitarianism - There is one true God Who exists in three Persons.

#### B. Proofs Of The Existence Of God - Apologetics

##### 1. Definition

\* Apologetics is the field of study concerned with the defense of the faith. There are two primary "schools" or approaches to apologetics:

- a. Evidentiary apologetics provides arguments and proofs concerning the existence of God and the truthfulness of Scripture (e.g., Josh McDowell).
- b. Presuppositional apologetics begins with the assumption (presupposition) that God exists and that the Bible is His Word. Its approach is to "turn the Bible loose" to do its work (Rom 10:17; Lk 16:31).

##### 2. Biblical Assumption

\* The Bible does not set out to prove God's existence. Instead, His existence is assumed, or taken for granted, in Scripture - Gen 1:1; Ps 14:1; Rom 1:18-20; 2:14-15

\* Charles Ryrie, however, states that passages such as Ps 19 do provide arguments for God's existence. He concludes, "So the Bible does argue for as well as assume the existence of God" (*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Moody Press, 1972, pg. 15). Most texts on Bible doctrine disagree with Ryrie.

### 3. Classical Philosophical Arguments For The Existence Of God

- \* Over the centuries, theologians and philosophers have tried to “prove” the existence of God. None of these arguments is decisive, but taken together they offer strong support for the fact that God exists. However, they also do not prove exactly what kind of God exists! Here are some of the more well-known arguments:
  - a. Intuitional Argument - There is a worldwide, intuitive belief in all cultures of some type of God. Man, by nature and without being taught, believes in some type of a God.
  - b. Cosmological Argument - The argument from cause and effect. The universe exists. It must have had a cause.
  - c. Teleological Argument - The argument from design. The universe exhibits a purposeful and orderly design, so there must have been a designer (creator).
  - d. Ontological Argument - The argument from being. Man has an idea of an infinite and perfect Being. We could not have come up with this concept on our own. Therefore, such a Being must exist.
  - e. Anthropological Argument - The argument from morality. Since humans exist with intellectual self-awareness and a moral nature, there must be a Creator who also has these qualities.

## II. THE NATURE OF GOD

### A. Spirituality - God Is A Spirit

- \* God is a Spirit Being, not a physical (material) Being - Jn 4:24
- \* As Spirit, God does not have a physical or material body - Lk 24:39
- \* As Spirit, God is invisible by nature - I Tim 1:17; Col 1:15; Jn 1:18
  - ~ “God is above sensuous perceptions” (William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, Moody Press, 1939, pg. 19)
  - ~ God has, at times, taken on a visible form to interact with men - Gen 3:8 (Adam & Eve); 12:7 (Abraham); Exo 33:18-23 (Moses)

### B. Personality - God Is A Person

- \* Even though He is an invisible Spirit Being, God is still a true Person. He is not simply a force or influence. He has the characteristics of personhood, including intellect, emotions, and will.
  - ~ Intellect - Isa 40:12-14, 28; Rom 11:33-34
  - ~ Emotions - Love (I Jn 4:16); Hatred (Pr 6:16-20); Anger (Ps 79:5)
  - ~ Will - Eph 1:11; Heb 2:4; Jas 1:18

### C. Self-Existence - God Is Not Dependent Upon Anything

- \* God is the uncaused Cause - nothing (no one) brought Him into existence. He is not dependent upon anything or anyone. He is self-sufficient. He needs nothing or no one - Exo 3:13-15; Rom 11:33-36

**D. Infinity - God Is Limitless**

- \* God exists without limitations or boundaries. His Being, and all His attributes, are without end - Ps 147:5; Job 11:7-9; I Kings 8:27

**E. Unity - There Is Only One God**

- \* The Old Testament clearly teaches there is only one true God - Deut 6:4; Deut 4:35; Isa 46:9
- \* The New Testament clearly teaches there is only one true God - I Cor 8:4-6; Jas 2:19

**F. Trinity - One God Exists In Three Persons**

1. The word “Trinity” is not found in Scripture. This doctrine was developed because of two clear teachings found in the Bible:
  - a. There is only one true God
  - b. Three distinct Persons are known as God - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
2. Scriptural evidences of the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:
  - a. The Trinity is implied in the Old Testament:
    - (1) Elohim, one of the primary names for God, is plural - Gen 1:1
    - (2) Plural pronouns (“us / our”) are used of God - Gen 1:26; 3:22; Isa 6:8
    - (3) Plural titles are used of God - “Creator” (Eccl 12:1) and “Maker” (Isa 54:5) are plural.
    - (4) There are indications of the Son in the Old Testament - Ps 2:7, 12; Isa 9:6-7
      - \* The “Angel of the Lord” normally refers to Christ - Gen 22:11-15; Exo 3:2
    - (5) There are indications of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament - Gen 1:2; Isa 11:1-2
    - (6) There are indications of all three Persons of the Trinity in one passage - Isa 63:7-10
      - \* The Lord - vs. 7 (Father)
      - \* The angel of his presence - vs. 9 (Son)
      - \* His holy Spirit - vs. 10 (Holy Spirit)
  - b. The Trinity is clearly taught in the New Testament
    - (1) The three Persons of the Trinity are each recognized as being God.
      - \* Father - Jn 6:27; I Pet 1:2
      - \* Son - Jn 1:1, 14; Jn 20:28
      - \* Holy Spirit - Acts 5:2-4; II Cor 3:17
    - (2) The attributes of God are applied to all three Persons (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Chafer’s Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*, Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, pp. 304-305)

	<i>Father</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Spirit</i>
<i>Eternity</i>	Ps 90:2	Rev 1:8	Heb 9:14
<i>Infinite power</i>	I Pet 1:5	II Cor 12:9	Rom 15:19

<i>Omniscience</i>	Jer 17:10	Rev 2:23	I Cor 2:11
<i>Omnipresence</i>	Jer 23:24	Mt 18:20	Ps 139:7
<i>Holiness</i>	Rev 15:4	Acts 3:14	“Holy Spirit” throughout
<i>Truth</i>	Jn 7:28	Rev 3:7	I Jn 5:6
<i>Benevolence</i>	Rom 2:4	Eph 5:25	Neh 9:20
<i>Disposition for Communion</i>	I Jn 1:3	I Jn 1:3	II Cor 13:14

### 3. Key Scriptures:

- a. Mt 28:19 - All three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned, yet the word “name” is singular, not plural. This indicates oneness.
  - b. Mt 3:16-17 - All three Persons of the Trinity are present at the baptism of Christ.
  - c. II Cor 13:14 - The “Apostolic Benediction” includes all three Persons of the Trinity.
  - d. Jn 14:16, 26 - All three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned as Christ promises that the Father would send the Holy Spirit.
  - e. I Pet 1:2 - Peter mentions all three Persons of the Trinity in His greeting.
4. Definition by B. B. Warfield: “The doctrine that there is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and co-equal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.” (Quoted by Charles Ryrie in *Understanding Bible Doctrine*, pg. 42)
5. Errors to Avoid:
1. There are three separate individuals in the Godhead (Tritheism).
  2. The Trinity is only one Person manifesting Himself in three ways (Modalism).
  3. There is only one God. The Son and Holy Spirit are lesser beings created by God.

## III. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

### A. Definitions

1. God’s attributes are those essential qualities or characteristics that make God Who He is.
2. God’s attributes have sometimes been categorized into groupings. They are sometimes divided on the basis of those that are true of God alone, and those that can also be true of humans. Another way to categorize them is to divide those that are moral attributes from those that are attributes related to His essential being.

### B. A Partial Listing Of God’s Attributes

1. Eternity: God had no beginning and He will have no end. He is not bound by time. He is the “Eternal Now” - Ps 90:2, 4; Ps 102:24-27
2. Omniscience - God is literally “all-knowing.” He knows everything - Ps 139:1-6
  - \* God’s knowledge covers all time - Acts 15:18

- \* God's knowledge covers all creation
  - ~ Inanimate creatures - Ps 147:4; Isa 40:28
  - ~ Animal creatures - Mt 10:29
  - ~ Human creatures - Mt 6:8; Ps 139:2; Ps 94:11
- \* God's knowledge covers all possibilities (what *might* have happened if . . .) - Mt 11:21, 23
  - ~ "Open theism" is false!
- 2. Omnipresence - God is literally "all-present." Another way of phrasing it is that everything everywhere is in the presence of God - Ps 139:7-12; Jer 23:23-24
- 3. Omnipotent - God is literally "all-powerful." - Ps 139:13-19; Rev 19:6; Mt 19:26; Gen 18:14
  - \* He has power over nature - Ps 33:6-9; Hag 2:6
  - \* He has power over humans - Jas 4:12-15
  - \* He has power over angels - Dan 4:25
  - \* He has power over Satan - Job 1:12; 2:6; Rev 20:2, 10
  - \* He has power over death - Eph 1:19-21
- 4. Immutability - God's nature is absolutely unchangeable - Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17
- 5. Freedom - God is independent of all His creatures - Isa 40:13-14; Rom 11:34-35
- 6. Sovereignty - God is the supreme authority and power in the universe - Ps 2; Rom 9; Eph 1
  - \* This is a difficult doctrine. The Bible clearly teaches that God is sovereign - His will is always accomplished on earth. However, the Bible also clearly teaches that God is not the Author of sin (Jas 1:13-14). Therefore, we typically divide God's permissive will (what He has chosen to allow) from His causal will (what He has chosen to actively do, or cause, Himself).
- 7. Holiness - Negatively, God is totally separate from all evil and defilement. Positively, God's moral nature is the absolute standard of perfection and purity - I Jn 1:5; Exo 15:11; Lev 11:44-45; Isa 6:2-3; Isa 57:15
  - \* Note: This is God's most often mentioned attribute!
- 8. Justice or Righteousness - God's holiness as applied to His dealings with others. He treats everyone fairly and equitably. He always does what is right - Zeph 3:5; Ps 19:9
- 9. Truth - God's holiness applied to His communication. God is consistent with Himself in everything He says and does - Rom 3:4; Jn 14:6
- 10. Love - God seeks the highest good (His will) for humans, even at infinite cost - I Jn 4:8; Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8
  - \* God's holiness demands that sin must be punished. God's love provides Christ to satisfy that demand.
- 11. Goodness - God is always good in His character and His actions. He seeks the welfare of those He loves - Ps 145:9; Exo 33:19; Jas 1:17

12. Grace - God demonstrates unmerited favor toward those He loves - Exo 34:6; Eph 1:6-7; Tit 2:11
13. Merciful - God shows compassion and pity upon those in need - Exo 3:7, 17; Ps 103:13; Mt 9:36
  - \* Mercy - We don't get what we deserve (judgment & hell)
  - Grace - We get what we don't deserve (eternal life & heaven . . .)
14. Faithfulness - God always keeps His promises - Num 23:19; I Thess 5:24; I Jn 1:9

## IV. THE NAMES OF GOD

### A. Why Are The Names Of God Important?

1. God's Names Are Part Of His Self-Revelation - Exo 34:5-8
  - \* In the Bible we have a number of ways that God has revealed Himself to us. We learn about Him from how He interacts with men, from statements concerning His attributes, and from His names and titles. I have one list in a book in my library that gives about 300 names and titles for God in the Bible! Some of these are titles that have been given to Him by His people, but most are titles that He Himself has used to reveal Himself to us!
2. God's Names Help Us Know Him Better - Exo 3:13-15
  - \* Studying the names of God will help us get to know Him better! We will learn about His nature, and His character, and His attributes, and His glory, and His ways - how and why He does things. We will learn more about Who God is, and how He has chosen to relate to His people.
3. God's Name Receives Special Honor In Scripture
  - a. It Is Holy - Ps 99:3; 103:1
    - \* Ps 99:3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.
    - \* Ps 103:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
  - b. It Is Glorious - I Chron 29:13; Ps 72:19
    - \* I Chron 29:13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.
    - \* Ps 72:19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.
  - c. It Is Eternal - Ps 72:17
    - \* Ps 72:17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.
  - d. It Brings Worldwide Worship - Mal 1:11
    - \* Mal 1:11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

e. It Must Not Be Taken In Vain - Exo 20:7

\* Exo 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

\* We must not use God's name in an empty fashion. We must not treat it as being worthless. God's name is precious, because it represents God Himself! The way we treat His name is the way that we are treating Him!

## **B. The Primary Old Testament Names For God**

### **1. EL, ELOHIM, (ELAH, ELOAH)**

a. The Most General Name or Title For God

b. Primary Translations: God; god(s)

\* Because this name is found in many languages, and because it is used as a title for what God is, the name "El" is used of the true God as well as false gods.

c. Also Used Of False Deities, Humans, And Angels

\* Since this is a general term or title for God, it can refer to false gods, or false deities, or idols. It is also occasionally used in the Old Testament to refer to angels and even to men. But most of the time it refers to the true God of Israel.

d. Used Over 3000 Times In The Old Testament

\* About 300 of these are references to false gods.

e. Root Meaning: Power, Might, Strength

### **2. ADONAI**

a. Two Forms: ADON (Singular) and ADONAI (Plural)

b. Primary Translations: Lord; Master

c. Meaning: Master, Owner, One who rules

d. Used Almost 770 Times In The Old Testament

e. Also Used Of Humans (Over 300 Times - Mostly ADON)

\* Used of human masters of slaves - Gen 24:9-10

\* Used of human husbands - Gen 18:12; cf. I Pet 3:6

\* Used of rulers of a country - Gen 40:1; 42:30, 33

\* Used as a title of respect - Ruth 2:13; I Sam 1:15, 26

### **3. JEHOVAH (JAH); YAHWEH**

a. Two Forms: Jehovah and Jah

\* Jah - Shortened, or contracted, form; Found about 50 times in the Old Testament (twice in Exodus, 3 times in Isaiah, the rest in Psalms)

b. Primary Translations: LORD, GOD



- \* Typically, “LORD”; Translated “GOD” just over 300 times, usually when used with Adonai - Adonai Jehovah = The Lord GOD
  - \* Technically, these are not translations of the Hebrew word. They are substitutions that our translators have used. In other words, the word “Jehovah” does not MEAN “Lord” or “God.” But since it is God’s name, the translators have used LORD and GOD to translate it into English.
  - \* Translated “Jehovah” 4 times and “Jah” once in the KJV (Passages with strong emphasis on the name)
- c. Used Almost 7000 Times In The Old Testament
- d. The Personal Name For God
- \* This is the most specific name for God. It is His personal name. Adonai is His title - He is the Lord. El or Elohim are His office - He is God. But Jehovah is His name.
- e. A Very Sacred And Reverenced Name For God
- (1) Jewish Customs Reflect Its Sacred Nature
- \* Many scribes would actually bathe and change their clothes before writing the name Jehovah. Others would clean their pen or get new ink. It was a sacred name, and the scribes almost became superstitious about abusing it or taking it in vain.
  - \* When the Scriptures were read aloud, tradition ultimately caused them to never read the name aloud. Again, they were worried about using this name for God lightly. So, as they read, they would substitute Adonai for Jehovah, or if the context demanded it, they would use the name Elohim in its place.
- (2) Its Pronunciation Has Been Lost
- \* The Hebrew text did not contain vowels. The vowels were added as people read the Scriptures aloud. Since pious Jews stopped reading this name for God, its pronunciation was lost.
  - \* Tetragrammaton: YHWH or JHVH
    - ~ “Tetragrammaton” is a technical word that is used for this four-letter name for God. “Tetragrammaton” literally means “four-letter word.”
  - \* Vowels were added from Adonai - YeHoWaH or JeHoVaH
  - \* There is no way to know what pronunciation is correct!
- f. Never Used Of False “Gods”
- \* Unlike “El” and “Elohim,” this was Israel’s special name for her true God. It is never used of false gods or idols.

### **C. There Are Numerous Compounds Based On These 3**

## **V. THE PARTICULAR WORKS OF GOD THE FATHER**

\* These are listed directly from the textbook for this study, *Survey of Bible Doctrines* by Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Press, pp. 34-35.

**A. He Was The Author Of The Decree (Plan) Of God - Ps 2:7-9**

**B. He Was The Author Of Our Election - Eph 1:3-6**

**C. He Sent The Son To Be The Savior - Jn 5:37; I Jn 4:14**

**D. He Disciplines His Children - Heb 12:9**