Faith for Life

Lesson 4 – Jehovah God

1. Our age is one of skepticism and doubt.
   1. There is the Atheist who denies the existence of God
   2. The Agnostic who claims to be neutral, neither denying nor affirming the existence of God
   3. The Deist who acknowledges a Supreme Being, but denies the Bible as his revelation to man
   4. The Destructive critics who profess to believe in God and his word, but usually reject the miracles and inspiration of the Bible. Ours is an age that needs to be grounded in the truths set forth in Genesis 1:1.
   5. God is named thirty-five times in the first chapter of Genesis and the first two verses of chapter two. God is plural here and appears over 3,000 times in the plural in the Hebrew scripture. The word God, which is the name of the divine nature, is often used under the figure of synecdoche to stand for each member of the Godhead. Because there is one divine nature, there is but one God, though this nature is possessed by three distinct personalities, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and each of them is called God in the scriptures.
2. In the Beginning…
   1. Genesis 1:1 is full of simple words, yet they are eternal in the truths taught.
      1. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth…”
         1. There are ten words—seven of them have one syllable; two of them have two syllables; and one of them has three syllables.
         2. It is simple, beautiful, and satisfactory. It meets the needs of the occasion.
      2. It leads us to God by exhibiting power, design and intelligence. It provides an account, without which we are in the dark.
         1. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psa. 33:6).
            1. “The heaven and the earth.” The American Standard Version has “the heavens and the earth.” The place where God placed the heavenly bodies is called “the firmament of the heaven” (Gen. 1:14). The birds fly above “the earth in the open firmament of heaven” (Gen. 1:20). Peter wrote “that by the word of God the heavens were of old” (2 Pet. 3:5). The “earth” refers to the dry land (Gen. 1:10).
         2. The Psalmist wrote that all creation should “. . . praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created” (Psa. 148:6).
   2. “In the beginning.” The word “beginning” is used a number of ways in the Bible.
      1. It means the beginning of months (Ex. 12:2); the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7); the beginning of the gospel (Mk. 1:1); and the beginning of the Christian life (1 John 2:7).
         1. In Gen. 1:1 it means “the beginning of the existing universe as conditional by time.”
      2. “Creation” Three different words are used in Genesis 1 regarding the creation.
         1. “Created” is from the Hebrew word Bara which means to “create something from nothing” (Psa. 33:9; Heb. 11:3).
            1. The word “create” occurs approximately fifty times in the Bible and is always affirmed of what God does and never of what man does. It is affirmed of three things in Genesis one, namely: (1) matter (Gen. 1:1); (2) animal life (Gen. 1:21); and (3) the origin of the soul (Gen. 1:27). Man was made (Gen. 1:26), formed (Gen. 2:7), and created (Gen. 1:27). Animals were created (Gen. 1:21) and formed (Gen. 2:19).
         2. “Made” is from the Hebrew word Asah which means “to make—form out of pre-existing material as a man takes lumber to make a desk.” Bara and Asah are sometimes used as synonyms. Nehemiah 9:6 mentions that angels were made.
         3. “Formed” is from the Hebrew word Yatsar which means to “form, fashion, from pre-existent material.”
3. Where did God come from?
   1. The view regarding God that is set forth consistently in the Bible is this: He did not come from anywhere. No one made the Creator of the universe. He had no beginning, and will have no ending. He is the eternal, self-existing Being.
   2. God is “everlasting” in nature (Isa. 40:28), which is to say, he is “eternal” as to his very essence (Rom. 16:26; 1 Tim. 1:17). His existence is “from everlasting to everlasting.” Before the material creation was spoken into existence, he always was (Psa. 90:2).
   3. The Lord revealed himself to Moses as the “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14). The “I AM” expression is related to the Hebrew name for God, Yahweh (LORD — KJV, or Jehovah — see ASV footnote). This was the most sacred name for God. The term Yahweh occurs more than 6,800 times in the Old Testament. The word is believed to be a form of the verb hayah, which signifies “to be,” ultimately meaning “the eternal One” or “self-existing One.” God’s existence is underived; no one made him. He simply always was.
   4. If there ever was a time when nothing at all existed, then there would be absolutely nothing today. It is an axiomatic truth that if nothing exists, then “nothing” will be the case -always, for nothing simply remains nothing - forever! Nothing plus nothing equals nothing. If there is absolutely nothing but nothing, there cannot ever be something. “Nothing” and “something” -applied to the same object, at the same time - are mutually exclusive terms.
   5. Since it is the case that something does now exist, one must logically conclude that something has existed always. Let us state the matter again: If nothing cannot produce something, and yet something exists, then it follows necessarily that something has existed always. The question then becomes this. What is the “something” that has been in existence always?
      1. The Scriptures identify that spirit Being as God. “God is spirit?” (Jn. 4:24) — an uncreated, eternal Spirit Being.
4. I AM THAT I AM
   1. God is a spirit, infinite, and eternal whose essence and attributes are unchangeable.
   2. When Moses argued with God’s request that he go back to Egypt to lead the people out of bondage, he said the children of Jacob would ask the name of the one who was sending him to deliver them. God’s reply took the form of an astonishing announcement.
      1. Exodus 3:14 - And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.”
      2. Interestingly, one of the deeper insights into the meaning of “I AM THAT I AM” is found in the ASV footnote: “Or, I AM, BECAUSE I AM Or, I AM WHO I AM Or, I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE.”
      3. Gerhard Kittel, noted a German Protestant theologian, and lexicographer of biblical languages, gives the Jewish tradition of this name as “ I am who I have been, who I now am, and who I will be in the future”
      4. I am who I am.” This claim is for the “absolute independence” and “absolute faithfulness . . . in harmony with himself, remaining always consistent.” The definition includes “The ‘I am who I am,’ therefore, is the absolute I, the absolute personality, moving with unlimited freedom; and in distinction from ELOHIM (The Being to be feared), he is the personal God in his historical manifestation, in which the fullness of the divine Being unfolds itself to the world.”
      5. Another suggestion is that Yahweh, considered too sacred to pronounce by the Jews, as “I reveal my active presence as and when I will,”
   3. “I AM THAT I AM” demands that this person is self-existent, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and all-provident.
5. Who is God?
   1. “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice” (Ex. 5:2)?
      1. Does it really matter who God is?
      2. It must, for the Bible says, “he that cometh to God must believe that he is” (Heb. 11:6).
      3. How can we believe that he is, unless we know something about him? Who is he? Everything depends upon the answer to that question.
      4. Didn’t the prophet admonish us, “Seek the Lord while he may be found of thee” (Isa. 55:6)? But where do we turn to do that seeking?
   2. God is Omnipotent
      1. The English word omnipotent is only used once in the New Testament, in Revelation 19:6, which says: “…the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”
      2. In several other places in the New Testament the same Greek word, pantokrator is rendered “Almighty.” It is from pas (all) and krateo “to hold.” It is used of God only. In the Old Testament, it is the word that the translators of the Septuagint used to translate “God of hosts.”
         1. An example of such a passage is Amos 4:12-13, “…prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, is his name.”
            1. It is easy to see omnipotence in the “The God of hosts,” as cited here.
            2. The Bible clearly paints the masterpiece of God’s omnipotence.
         2. Most of the scriptures that point to his being omnipotent are in concrete rather than abstract terms.
            1. For instance, we read that God sends fire on nations (Amos 1-2:3), and uses nations, as a man would wield an ax or a rod (Isa. 10:5).
            2. He has a “Strong One” who casts wind, hail, and flood down with the hand to punish Ephraim (Isa. 28:2), and treads underfoot the wreath of his pride (Isa. 28:2).
            3. He writes with his finger the Ten Commandments on tables of stone (Ex. 31:18).
            4. His hand reaches down into Sheol or up to heaven to retrieve those who seek to elude his power: “Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down” (Amos 9:2).

Such imagery as the above leaves no doubt about the unlimited power of God.

* + 1. In many passages, biblical language shouts of God’s omnipotence. Passages illuminate both the negative and positive views of the power of God.
       1. Positively, Job states: “I know that thou canst do everything” (Job 42:2), and the Psalmist states, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Psa. 115:3).
       2. Negatively, we read such passages as “there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Isa. 43:13), and “there is nothing too hard for thee” (Jer. 32:17).
       3. God alone can make a “new thing,” such as the ground’s swallowing up Korah (Num. 16:30), or “ways in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isa. 43:19).
       4. God alone has the power to say, and make happen the following: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).
       5. God’s power is underlined in the redemption of the soul. “Who then can be saved?” ask the disciples, when Jesus seems to say the rich cannot (Matt. 19:25). Jesus answers: “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). God has made a way possible to save “to the uttermost” (completely) those who come to him by Christ (Heb. 7:25). The resurrection shows us God is omnipotent.
       6. God alone has the keys to death and the grave! Jesus told the Sadducees: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.” (Matt. 22:29-30).
       7. The power of God makes the resurrection true and possible. Lazarus (John 11), and Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:55) show the power of God. Jesus arose because God “loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55). God gives us the victory, through our Lord, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57), “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18).
  1. God’s nature is clearly revealed in the scriptures.
     1. He is portrayed as being infinite (or perfect) in the following attributes:
        1. Holiness (1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Rev. 15:4 RSV)
           1. God is Holy (Isa. 5:16; 6:3; Psa. 99:9; Rev. 4:8). This means that God is separate from and exalted above all creatures. He is sanctified or set apart due to his good and perfection (Matt. 5:48; 19:17), and he is separate from all moral wrong and sin (Jas. 1:13; 1 John 1:5).
        2. Justice (Ezek. 18:25-29; Psa. 89:14)
           1. Paul draws reference to the righteousness of God and the pursuit of righteousness by God’s children thirty-five times in the book of Romans alone (cf. Rm. 9:30-10:6). God’s righteousness and justice are dominant themes throughout the entire Bible (Deut. 32:4; Isa. 30:18; 45:21; 2 Chron. 12:6; Ezek. 9:15; Neh. 9:33; Psa. 89:14; Dan. 9:14; John 17:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 16:5; Zech. 3:5).
        3. Knowledge and wisdom (Psa. 147:5)
        4. Power (Matt. 19:26; Rev. 19:6)
           1. God is Sovereign; an “everlasting King” (Jer. 10:10). God is supreme above all else, anything else, everything else. He is the Most High God (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1). None is like the Lord, our God (Ex. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; Is. 46:9; 2 Sam. 7:22). Deity has all power and authority (Matt. 28:18). God gave Christ the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18); thus Christ is above all and in all (Eph. 1:21; 4:6; Phil. 2:9-11). By virtue of his supremacy, he can command, and we must obey because we are his creatures (Acts 17:24, 25). God has the right of disposition toward us.
        5. Goodness (Rom. 2:4; 11:22)
           1. This is a trait which we also are supposed to imitate (Mt. 19:17; Mk. 10:18). Love is an extension of his goodness. His love is manifested through Christ (Jn. 3:16), expects love in return (1 John 4:19), is the basis for all meaningful relationships (1 John 4:20, 21), and will never die (Rm. 8:35-39). God also epitomizes mercy (Jas. 5:11; Psa. 103:8) and grace (Psa. 86:15). God is our helper, provider, protector, strength, comfort and peace (Jas. 1:17; Psa. 46:1; Psa. 23; Matt. 7:9-11; 2 Cor. 1:3, 4; Jude 6:4; Heb. 13:20; Phil. 4:7). God is so good and holy that he cannot even trifle with evil. This goodness should characterize the life of every Christian. The world needs more people to strive for the goodness emanating from God’s nature (Mt. 5:16; 12:35; Gal. 6:6-12).
        6. God is true (John 17:3; 1 Th. 1:9; Rm. 3:4; 1 Jn. 5:20).
           1. It would be difficult to imagine an aspect of God’s eternal presence which will be more essential to the topic of the sovereignty of God than the fact that God is true to himself and to his expressed will. God’s knowledge, declarations, and representations eternally conform to reality. He is truth personified, i.e., the full essence of truth because he is true (Rev. 3:14; 19:11). His word is truth (Jn. 17:17; 14:6). God’s truth is absolute and reliable.
     2. In each of these attributes, it is possible for people to emulate or copy God. I will never be quantitatively equal with God in these traits, but I can possess these qualities to some degree.
  2. The Bible teaches that one can know God and that one cannot know God. How can this be?
     1. We must accept our limitations and inabilities to fully comprehend God, but we should also conclude that God has revealed himself to us in ways that are adequate to his purposes (Deut. 29:29).
     2. Qualitatively and quantitatively, I cannot know God in an exhaustive way in that I cannot know every attribute of God, nor can I have inexhaustible understanding of any one attribute of God. But I can know some things about God, i.e., enough to identify who God is (Rom. 1:20, 21).
  3. God has revealed himself sufficiently (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Matt. 11:27).
     1. God is revealed in nature (Rm. 1:20, 21; Psa. 19:1), in man (Gen. 1:27), in Christ (Jn. 14:6; Col. 1:15; 2:9), in history (Psa. 75:6, 7; Prov. 14:34; John 19:11), and in his special revelation which is the Bible (Isa. 40; Psa. 139).
     2. In conclusion, the answer to this first paradox is that humans can know God, but no human will ever attain the heights of the Almighty.
  4. Other qualities of God
     1. God is spirit (John 4:24; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18). God does not have a physical body complete with flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). God’s nature is not the nature of physical things (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:23).
     2. God is a person. It is his essence to be personal. Persons have awareness of themselves, self-directed activity, self-determination, and the ability to build relationships.
        1. God is self-aware (Ex. 3:14; 1 Cor. 2:10).
     3. He also manifests an extensive number of personality traits such as:
        1. Intellect (Gen. 18:19, Ex. 3:17, Acts 15:18)
        2. Sensibility (Gen. 6:6; Psa. 103:8-13; John 3:16; et al.)
        3. Volition or Power of decision (Gen. 3:15; Psa. 115:3; Jn. 6:38)
        4. Speech (Gen. 1:3)
        5. Sight (Gen. 11:5)
        6. Hearing (Psa. 94:9)
        7. Capacity of sorrow (Gen. 6:6; Jonah 3:10)
        8. Capacity to be angry (Deut. 1:37)
        9. Capacity for jealousy (Ex. 20:5)
        10. Compassion (Psa. 111:4)
        11. Tirelessness (Isa. 40:28)
        12. Continuous activity (John 5:17).
        13. God is also three persons and one personal Being—the Godhead (Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Jas. 2:19).

1. One’s acceptance of the existence of God and the right concept about God becomes a great determining factor in one’s behavior. Some Israelites did as they pleased because they thought that God would not do good or evil (Zeph. 1:12). When men want to do evil they first try to get rid of God.
   1. Rom. 1:20-32 - **Read**
2. Acceptance of the existence of God makes one realize that there are no secret places where one can hide from God, and run away from the consequences of his sins. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, but his presence was there (Gen. 3:8-9). Jonah tried to flee to another city “from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:3), but God was there in the sea (Jonah 1:4). “The darkness and the light are both” alike to God (Psa. 139:2). “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3).
3. The fact that God exists and that He is brings great comfort or essential consolation to the righteous. Peter said, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers . . .” (1 Pet. 3:12). God is not asleep, or engaged in a conversation which cannot be interrupted, or on a journey (1 Kings 18:27-29), but he is ever present to bless and help us (Matt. 28:20).
4. It is reasonable to believe in God. Man’s mind has never faced a greater challenge than to attempt to comprehend God. It is reasonable to believe that something existed from all eternity. The universe exhibits design, therefore there must be a great Designer; it operates with mathematical precision, therefore there must be a great Mathematician; there must be a great Chemist, because the universe gives us important chemical combinations; it is run by the law of nature, therefore, there must be a great Lawgiver; there must be a great Thinker, because the universe shows thought. Thomas A. Edison said that the universe is such an engineering feat, “there must be a great Engineer.” From these conclusions there is no escape. GOD EXISTS.