

# **THE BAPTIST HOUR**

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## **THE ETERNAL GOD**

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## THE ETERNAL GOD

I quote a recent editorial entitled "Limited Visibility": "Soviet cosmonaut Gherman Titov says he didn't see God in outer space. Maybe he didn't look hard enough. His spaceship was put aloft and kept in orbit according to the immutable laws of physics. Who prescribed those laws? Man didn't. He only discovered them."

On the other hand, American astronaut John Glenn reported that everything which he saw in space told him about God. President John F. Kennedy remarked that he preferred to believe Glenn rather than Titov.

Which leads me to say that belief in the existence of God, or a divine being, is almost universal. By whatever name you may call Him, man's reason leads him to acknowledge that the universe is not an empty nothingness.

The Bible does not argue for the existence of God. It only declares His will and purpose. With one verse it dismisses the atheist. "*The fool [unthinking person] hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" (Ps. 53:1) Note that he said it in his heart. He wishes that there were no God. But in his intellect he knows better. Any honest observer of nature can see the evidence of God's existence and work. Even Mr. Krushchev, in his unguarded moments, refers to God.

But it is one thing to acknowledge God, and another to ignore Him. It is this latter attitude which explains much of man's precarious position today. God has revealed a small portion of His infinite wisdom to man. But man employs it in defiance to God's will. Thus the world hangs on the brink of destruction.

In such an hour it is imperative that modern man look to the Rock whence he was hewn. A crisis had occurred in the nation of Judah. The good king Uzziah had died. But in that hour Isaiah caught a vision of God. The king was dead, but God still lived. And in His will was Judah's destiny. It is ours also.

*"The eternal God is thy refuge,*

and underneath are the everlasting arms . . ." (Deut. 33:27) These words may well be called the "swan song" of Moses. For forty years he had led Israel through trial and suffering, toil and triumph. Soon he is to be gathered up to God. What a legacy he leaves with his nation! Before them lies the challenge of Canaan. But they are not to fear or despair. If only they will find refuge in the eternal God whose everlasting arms can uphold them.

Now, over three thousand years later these words still ring with eternal truth. The eternal God is our refuge still. He would still place underneath us His everlasting arms. So with these thoughts in mind, let us note, first the nature of God; second, the work of God; third, the purpose of God.

## THE NATURE OF GOD

The words "the eternal God" speak of His nature or being. Before the creative act took place God was. He always has been. When time shall be no more, God will be. He is the eternal God. He is not merely an idea but a Person.

Thus when Moses speaks of "the eternal God" he speaks of a Personal Spirit with whom the personality of man can and must be related. You may ignore God, but you cannot escape Him. Indeed you should not seek to escape Him but to find refuge in Him. This is altogether true in an age of change and upheaval such as ours.

What kind of a Being is God? Theologians speak of the attributes of God or those qualities which describe His character or nature. These attributes are usually divided into seven natural and four spiritual elements. Let us examine them for a moment.

Note first of all God's natural attributes. *God is self-existent.* This simply means that God exists by reason of what He is within Himself. He did not come into being at the will of another. He is the First Cause of all things.

Again, *God is immutable.* He does not change either in His character or purpose. (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8) This

does not mean that He is a prisoner in nature, or that He is inactive or non-progressive in His dealings with nature and man. It means that His character and purpose are ever the same. He may change His method, due to the weakness of man, but never His goal. (Num. 14:30-31)

Furthermore, *God is omnipresent*. He is present at all times in all power in all parts of His universe. (Ps. 139:7-12) He is the God of heaven, earth, and hell.

Still again, *God is immense*. He is superior to space. He is neither confined to nor limited by space. (Isa. 57:15) He is above the laws of space. Neither the universe nor the mind of man can contain or circumscribe Him.

Also, *God is eternal*. He is not limited to time. To Him past, present, and future are the eternal NOW. (II Pet. 3:8)

Likewise, *God is omniscient*. He knows all things simultaneously (Rom. 11:33-36), since He is everywhere in both time and space at one and the same time.

Finally, *God is omnipotent*. This expresses God's unlimited power to do that which is in keeping with His nature, character, and purpose. (Gen. 17:1)

## **GOD'S FOUR MORAL ATTRIBUTES**

Now let us look at the four *moral* attributes of God.

*God is holy*. The word "holy" basically means cut off, separated, thus exalted. (Isa. 6:1-3) Originally it contained no moral meaning. Anything separated for the service of a god was "holy."

But as the word came to be associated with the true God it came to express the moral essence of His divinity or divine acts. It is involved in all other of God's moral attributes.

Again, *God is truth*. He is the source and ground of all knowledge. Truth is His very nature. (Ex. 34:6; Deut. 32:4) All spheres of truth, natural, physical, and religious, are grounded in God.

Once again, *God is righteous*. This speaks of the self-affirmation of God

on behalf of the right as opposed to the wrong. In the New Testament it specifically refers to God's saving act in Christ.

Finally, *God is love*. (I John 4:7-10) This is the attribute which permeates all others. It brings God near to the human heart. It expresses God's giving of Himself to seek the highest good for His creation both personal and natural. It expresses the personal relationship between God and man.

## THE WORK OF GOD

If our brief consideration of the attributes of God seems intangible and other-worldly, it is because we do not relate them to ourselves and the things about us. To the contrary it is only as we regard the attributes of God that we can begin to understand the universe and life.

The self-existence of God speaks of the creative work of God. Physical science is concerned primarily with cause and effect. For every effect there must be a cause.

Take, for instance, a rock. That is an effect. What is its cause? Science reasons about matter, molecules, neutrons, and protons. Back of the proton is the atom. Where does science go from there? No true scientist would say. Philosophers may reason about a First Cause. But the Bible says, "*In the beginning God created . . .*"

However you may define the act, the fact remains. There was a time when nothing existed. Then it came into being. How? Whence? Whom? Science does not say. Philosophy speculates. The Bible declares. Where investigation and reason cannot go, faith believes.

The immutability of God tells us of orderliness in the universe. It assures us that we are not the victims of fate or blind change. Planets move with precision in their orbits. The chemist in the laboratory and the farmer in the field can proceed with certainty. Sin is the object of an unchanging hate, and man of an unchanging love. And though, due to man's changeable nature, God may alter His course He never forsakes His goal—the full and final redemption of the universe and

man.

The omnipresence of God means that man is never alone, nor can he escape the presence of God. The immensity of God reminds man that he can never exceed nor encompass God. These attributes lead him to say with the psalmist, "*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven . . . if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*" (139:7-10) What a comfort to the Christian! What a warning to the lost man!

The eternity of God suggests for you a foundation firm and sure in a changing, storm tossed society. The omniscience of God shows you how puny your intellect is before God.

His omnipotence should cause you to stand in awe before Him. Who are you to say what God knows or can do? God knows the consequence of your intellectual rebellion against Him. But He neither wills nor causes it. As a free moral agent you are left with the result.

God cannot lie or make wrong right. He cannot undo what He has done. He cannot make two plus two equal five. Nor can He make the wages of sin other than death. But He can by an act of His grace make the gift of God eternal life through Jesus Christ.

These spiritual acts of God are the fruit of His holiness, truth, righteousness, and love. Without them God would be an impersonal Being far-removed from the man whom He created. But they bring God near both in judgment and salvation. A Holy God cannot abide with sin. Nor can a God of truth be compatible with error. A righteous God can but condemn the sinner. But a God of love brings all His other attributes to bear in offering salvation to a lost and disobedient man.

God's love qualifies all other of His attributes. It is a self-existent, eternal love. It is unchanging. It is ever-present and immense, all other loves excelling. It is an all wise love acting in all power for the greatest good for those who receive it.

But it is a holy love, grounded in truth, and acting in righteousness. It is not mere sentiment acting by chance or caprice. It is grounded in the very nature of God, and is extended to all men.

But it is a love which will not violate the dignity and personality of man. God loves all men, but for that love to achieve its intended purpose it must be met by the responding love of man. (I John 4:10) And your love will be expressed through your faith in the Gift of God's love, even the Saviour. (I John 4:16; 5:5)

## THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

We have noted that God moves by an unchanging purpose. This Paul expresses in Ephesians 3:11 when he speaks of "*the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

Literally this is "the plan of the ages." Only in this light may you understand the Bible, even history itself. This purpose of God is to redeem the universe and man to Himself. (Rom. 8:19-23; I Cor. 15:24ff)

There are things in the Bible which I do not understand. There are events in history which I cannot explain. But one thing I know. The Bible is God's revelation of His redemptive will and purpose, a purpose which He is working out in history. The powers of evil may ignore it, even attempt to defeat it. But God is true and unchanging in this purpose.

In that light what should you do?

*In the first place*, you should be sure that you have a saving relationship with God. This He has made possible through the atoning death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. In Him God offers you salvation. But you must receive it through a personal faith in Christ. Otherwise your lot is to be separated from God forever.

*In the second place*, you should fit your life into this eternal purpose of God. Three things the Lord says to you. "Come, tarry, go." Come to Him for salvation. Tarry with Him to find His will for your life. Go and tell all men of the gracious love of God unto salvation to all who believe in His Son. Every other phase of your life

should be related to the privilege of Christian witnessing.

*In the third place*, amid the storms of life find through experience that "the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Let the world defy God if it will. He is your refuge. Let men revile and reproach you. Underneath are the everlasting arms. Let sorrow, trouble, destruction, and despair engulf the earth, if it must. You can know the peace of God which defies human understanding. For "the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Why do you hesitate? Why let your frail bark be tossed upon the stormy sea of a changing age? God is able. God is mighty. God cares. Are you willing?

A preacher stood on the edge of a rocky cliff on a cloudy, cold, wintry day. Snow began to fall. He watched one snowflake as it drifted down toward the granite rock on which he stood. Just above the rock the snowflake hovered, suspended by the wind blowing against the side of the cliff. As the preacher watched it seemed that the massive rock was talking to the snowflake.

"Don't you trust me little snowflake. Why hesitate to rest your weight on me? I am strong and you are weak. But on me you can find a resting place firm and secure. Just trust me and see."

Slowly the snowflake descended. As it came to rest on the rock, the rock did not even quiver.

This is a parable for you. God is waiting. He invites you to find peace and rest in Him. If you will let go of self, and trust God, you will discover what saints in every age have known. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

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