

## Class 2, "God as Ultimate Reality"

In our time together tonight, we will contemplate the essential teaching of Christianity: God Himself. We will see the nature of Christian teaching on God and the role God plays in understanding reality itself. In this way, we see that Christianity proclaims God alone as the Ultimate Reality upon whom and by whom all things exist, are sustained, and find their meaning.

**Worldviews and Ultimate Reality:** When studying worldviews, one must come to realize that worldviews attempt to describe what is **ultimately real**. This is commonly called "**metaphysics**," meaning beyond physics, which relates to the material world. Even if a worldview asserts the eternity of the material universe, this is a type of metaphysical statement. This material as an ultimate assertion is called, "**materialism**," which is a necessary assumption in atheism and all ideologies associated with atheism, such as Marxism. Of course, it is to be recognized that the inherent weakness of atheism is the very core of its assertion. Materialism insists that all that has ever existed is the material, all that is today is material, and all that ever will be is material. But people still ponder about life's meaning, purpose, the meaning of sin, and the meaning of salvation. By innate necessity, people ponder metaphysical questions and issues, which argues for reality above and beyond the material.

However, a worldview addresses the question of ultimate reality; whatever explanation a worldview gives to ultimate questions is an attempt to describe Ultimate Reality. As such, Ultimate Reality is the explanation that a worldview gives to the following questions:

- What is above and beyond all that seems to be?
- What is the greatest value above all relative values?
- How is timelessness perceived in the time dimension?
- For Christianity: What is the First Cause and Transcendent Meaning beyond the material?

### **Observation concerning the Weakness in this Category of Non-Christian Worldviews**

I want to acknowledge at this juncture that the need for and the purpose of Ultimate Reality in worldview thinking is such that regardless of what a formal worldview claims to believe about Ultimate Reality, even if it denies the reality of Ultimate Reality (or elevates relative reality/material reality to the level of Ultimate Reality), whatever the answer is, this forms the role of Ultimate Reality in the worldview. What role does Ultimate Reality play in worldview thinking?

- ***Ultimate Reality serves to establish the highest value and meaning to life.***
- ***Ultimate Reality forms the basis upon which all other lesser values can be measured.***
- ***Ultimate Reality creates a framework by which right and wrong, truth and falsehood are established and measured.***

As we can easily see whether a worldview gets Ultimate Reality right is of the highest importance. (I will not at this juncture engage in consideration concerning the limitations of human perceptual epistemology, especially as applied to metaphysical concerns. The limitation and even contradiction of a limited being making absolute pronouncements on an issue of transcendence is obvious.) And to the degree that a worldview has mistaken notions about Ultimate Reality can really mean that a worldview is **dangerous if it is wrong about this.** (Thus, every form of human utopianism makes absolute, and

erroneous, assertions about what is ultimately real; this is the basis of all tyranny and imposition of human domination. The greatest suffering in the world is done by people who claim they can fix the world's problems.) **THUS, THIS ASPECT OF WORLDVIEW THINKING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS IN A WORLDVIEW, BECAUSE EVERYTHING DEPENDS UPON THIS!**

### **The Problem of Radical Relativity**

(In the Western world, we have had the increasing domination of Post-Modernism since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But by this point – 2022 – we are beginning to harvest the bitterness and destruction of the universally assumed presuppositions of Post-Modernism. As was always obvious, Post-Modernism was not the end phase, but a transition to the next phase, which is tyranny, which is why totalitarianism is growing at such a rapid pace in the Western world.)

The modern idea (and this is a modern idea) that there is no such thing as transcendent ultimate reality is a worldview attempt by Post-Modernism to expunge from human thought any existence of absoluteness. Philosophically, this is the **most contradictory worldview statement ever made because it refutes itself. One easily sees the fallacy when put in this way: “There is no absolute except the absolute that there is no absolute!”** Of course, we just made an absolute statement about there being no absolutes. This is ludicrous! But in reality, Radical Relativity/Post-Modernism was never meant to be an ideological destination or stopping point. This asinine statement and belief were only meant to rid the mind of God's truths and moral absolutes. Once the vacuum was created, then this prepared the way for tyrannical coercive human constructs that are imposed upon the people and forces us to treat these as absolute.

Now, let us turn our attention to the Christian Worldview and its truth assertion about Ultimate Reality.

**General Comments about the Christian Assertion concerning the Concept of God:** Now we turn our attention to how Christianity addresses the issue of Ultimate Reality, and we will begin by giving general comments out of Christian thought. “The Christian Worldview” centers on God Himself. Christianity is not essentially an ethical or philosophical system; rather, it is revelation from God about God. The teaching of Christianity is God's SELF-REVELATION, with relevancy to every issue, question, and human situation. Within the Christian Framework, Christian teaching presents certain general concepts related to God. These may be collected into **FOUR GENERAL STATEMENTS:**

1. The essential and necessary existence of the eternal, infinite, and sovereign God
  - God not only is, but God must be! God must be for anything else to exist. The existence of anything means that God exists. And if He exists, He must exist the way He has described Himself to be in revelation.
2. All temporal and material reality come from and depend upon God, the Ultimate Reality.
  - God is the Self-Existent One
  - Thus, God needs nothing
  - All things come from God and need God in all aspects of their existence.
3. The meaning and understanding of all temporal and material reality comes from its relation to God, who is Ultimate Reality, and upon whom all relative and material reality are based.
  - God is the foundation upon which everything else comes and is built.

- God is the hub from which all the spokes of the wheel of reality extend. Everything means anything in relation to its position to God.
4. Sin at the core of human contemplation destroys the meaning and grasp of God as Ultimate Reality, resulting in rejection of God and a form of mental foolishness and insanity with respect to human and life purpose, destiny, and accountability to God.

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God’.” Psalm 14:1; 53:1

The application of this final point to life is clear and practical in nature. **Without a true and right understanding of God as God, there can be no real meaning to knowledge, understanding, wisdom, belief, right and wrong, and any foundation for human life and relationship. In short, without God, the mind atrophies, the heart degenerates, and everything comes unraveled in human experience personally and collectively. The sinful spiral downward leads to ultimate REPROBATION. This is moral, spiritual, and intellectual reprobation. Knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and all positive development of human creativity and soul depend upon God!** This is a good description of where we are in our society today.

It is helpful to take note that in Romans 1 the vast moral wretchedness of human experience, relationship, and sexuality comes to exist in the context of rebellion against the person of God as ultimate reality. This is a very important chapter in the Bible, because in Romans 1 we see what sin is (rejection of the exaltation and authority of God) and what sin does to us (leading us to reprobation).

It is time now to think about the Christian Worldview, as it relates to the teaching of the PERSON OF GOD AS ULTIMATE REALITY. So, let’s review what the Christian Worldview says about God Himself, what is necessary to know about God for God to be God.

**Christian presentation of God in Categorical Terms:** In this section, I want to frame **SIX** categories about God that **MUST** be understood and included for thinking to be Christian. No thinking is Christian that doesn’t think about God in these **six categorical ways**. (Disclaimer: We are not asserting here that there are not some different perspectives relative to the minor points of any or all of these categories; what is being said here is that these categories reflect NECESSARY truth about the PERSON OF GOD AS ULTIMATE REALITY for thought and idea to be considered Christian)

1. **God’s Essential Existence as Ultimate Reality** – We have already stated that God is the Necessary Being for BEING to occur. For anything to BE, God **MUST** be! But specifically, Christianity states five specific components of this truth about God’s Essential Existence: (We must not attempt to separate each category from each other; rather, these categories form a composite of God simultaneously)

- 1) God’s Eternality
- 2) God’s Infinity
- 3) God’s Holiness
- 4) God’s Perfection and Immutability
- 5) God’s Personhood

(1) Personal attributes – all essential aspects of personhood belong to God. The very fact that personhood exists in humanity (and only humans have qualities of

personhood) is because personhood exists in God, and God made humans in HIS OWN IMAGE! There are many aspects to personhood, including:

1. The high level of intellectual capacity and contemplative thinking that involves meaning, purpose, beauty (aesthetics), and environmental manipulation (a remnant of the human stewardship of the Garden of Eden).
2. Transcendent thought and joyful yearning of soul – this is the remnant of humanity’s created relationship with God, which led to soul-fulfilling fellowship with God.

Thus, all aspects of human personhood, including the ability to establish and a desire for relationship, intellectual and creative pursuit, moral reasoning, a hunger for spiritual transcendent meaning and purpose with God, and the capacity to contemplate the meaning of time and the destiny of human history all are evidence of personhood, as God created us to be. These are all finite reflections of God’s infinite personhood.

(2) Personal intervention of creation and redemptive history – At least the following must be included in God’s personal intervention in creation and redemptive history:

1. God created the universe and continues to sustain the universe.
2. The universe exists to the degree and in the way God created it, and the universe exists for His glory and is controlled by His power.
3. God engaged with pre-sinful humanity in joyful and loving relationship.
4. God intervened in fallen humanity by redemptive revelation (Bible), redemptive covenantal promise (Old Testament), the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and through salvation of the human souls of the elect.

## 2. God as Trinity

- 1) One God in three persons (three in one) – God is One in essence and three in persons. God is simultaneously One, yet three; not three separate beings, but one Being in three persons. This is the only way to contemplate the existence and being of God in the self-revelation He has given.
- 2) Co-equal, co-eternal, co-substantial – Each person in the Trinity is co-equal, co-eternal, and co-substantial (of the same substance) as each other. Christianity does not accept either Modalism (Sabellianism), which denies three persons in the Trinity, or Tri-theism, which asserts there are three Gods and not one, as true explanations of God’s being.

(I am asserting here in this point that non-Trinitarian belief is not Christian, regardless of its assertion to be Christian. The Trinity is a necessary idea concerning God as Ultimate Reality for any thought about God to be considered Christian.)

(I am not investigating here what is commonly called “**The Economy of the Trinity.**” The word economy comes from the Greek word for household management. The concern regarding the economy of the Trinity has to do with relationship between the persons of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. This is assumed in my talk tonight, but I will not speak specifically about the intricate aspects of it.)

(Caution: We must realize the actual way that the Trinity works of three persons in one Godhead is beyond the capacity of our human explanation. No human analogy works! Don't fall for this trap!)

3. **God as Love and Goodness** – The very essence of God is love; this is why the Bible in 1 John 4 speaks of God as love. God IS love! There is no love outside of God, and all love comes from God. Love is a necessary part of God's goodness. We may use the term of divine goodness as a larger category for all the beneficial aspects of God's people. I will outline some specifics, as follows:

- 1) Love, goodness, and giving of self (self-giving or sacrifice for the benefit of another)
- 2) Love, goodness, and compassionate and kind
- 3) Love, goodness, and merciful and gracious
- 4) Love, goodness, and joy

The only possible way that humans can know and experience any element of these soft and sweet virtues is because they exist in the transcendent nature of God. The lesser echoes the greater.

4. **God as Purposeful and Sovereign** – Sovereignty and purpose go together in God. God is sovereign, and God is lovingly and graciously purposeful in His sovereignty.

- 1) God – perfect knowledge and wisdom
- 2) God – all powerfully and authoritatively sovereign over creation and history
- 3) God – gracious and loving in salvation and providential in care

The core essence of God's being may be summed up in the term SOVEREIGN GOODNESS. Everything comes from this. God is sovereign over all, all the time, for His purposeful and gracious plan. This is why Christianity is so hopeful.

5. **God as Creator**

- 1) God created all the universe by His power and for His purposeful glory
- 2) God sustains and providentially cares for the universe
- 3) God forms the purposeful core for all material, created reality – nothing in the universe makes sense without God, and only in its right relationship to God does anything fulfill its intended purpose.

6. **God as Judge** – Because God is God in the way He is God, then because of God's exalted position as the only living and true God with whom all humanity must deal, especially in view of the sinfulness of humanity, then Christianity asserts the following fundamental aspects of God's essential being as Judge.

- 1) Sovereignty and Moral Standard – God establishes moral standards and reveals them in the Bible.
- 2) Sovereignty and Accountability – Humanity is accountable to God in view of God's moral standard.
- 3) Sovereignty and Truth – All truth about life, reality, humanity, God, and meaning can only be found in God and His revelation.
- 4) Sovereignty and Redemption – There is redemption only in God's salvation accomplished in Christ and applied by His grace and Spirit to the human soul.
- 5) Sovereignty and Judgment – All humanity will give an account to God.

**The Impact of Christian View of God as Ultimate Reality** – We will take a look here at the application of God as Ultimate Reality, which Christian Worldview asserts. I will limit our thoughts to four units of application.

1. Human Life Meaning

- Intrinsic value of the individual
  
- Self-perception
  - Created by God
  - Created in image of God
  - Self before God (Coram Deo)
  - Esteem without ego
  
- Perception of others
  - Created by God
  - Created in image of God
  - Mutual respect of others
  
- Human stewardship and accountability to God

2. Moral Framework for Ethical Reasoning

- Eternal goodness and truth reflected in revelatory morality
- Human guilt and accountability
- Eternal objective truth and morality

3. Divine Redemption and Judgment

- Meaning of history
- Divine Redemption and Human Hope
- Divine Judgment and God's nature and Law