

THE REALITY OF GOD, HEB.11:6, ROMANS 1:18-32

What is God Really Like? #7

◆**Intro:** As you may know, we are in a series on the attributes of God. We've been asking "What is God really like?" We've seen some things so far, like that fact that he is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, sovereign, good and glorious. Today I'd like to hit the pause button and back up to a foundational question; call it a preface question: Is there a God at all? Some folks don't believe there is a God about whom we might ponder his characteristics. I talked with someone this week who remains unconvinced that there is such a being. If you are genuinely wondering what God is like, it is a pretty good indication that you have a sense that he is there in the first place. I want to assure you that this quest is not a pipe dream or clouds in your coffee. In fact, looking in to the reality of God is a most rational enterprise. Last week in considering the glorious nature of God, we discovered that God is far more than we can wrap our minds around; that his glory is an indication of his "too-muchness", his being far and away beyond us. That however does NOT mean that we cannot know about him. Nor does it throw into question whether he exists in the first place for the evidence of the reality of God is all around for the questioning mind to observe.

◆Let's pretend we are in court and the existence of God is on trial. The prosecutor will begin...

◆1. Prosecution: Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you have been asked to determine for the court today the truth in this case. You have been summoned to determine for the court whether or not God exists. As the prosecuting attorney, I find it incumbent upon myself to pose some question for your consideration: If God exists...

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- ◆...explain to me how an innocent boy dies in a bus accident and another is shot through the neck by a friend in their own house.
- ◆If God exists, why do some boys have fathers who die when they need them, and mothers with cancer? Why do some drug abusers and smokers live on into ripe old age with young people with healthy diets pass away in their youth?
- ◆If God exists why doesn't he answer all our requests?
- ◆If God exists why can't the people of the world agree on what he is like? (After all, Buddhists don't really think he's there, Muslims think he is a demanding rule maker, Christians claim he is love, and Hindus think there are millions of him.)
- ◆If God exists, how do we account for beautiful young girls being molested and murdered in Delphi last week? Why do devout, and helpful citizens lose all their belongings in hurricanes or flooded rivers? Why does God let doctors make mistakes while working on your spinal column?
- ◆If God exists, why doesn't he show himself, appear right now and prove it, removing all doubt? If God exists, why doesn't he strike me dead right this minute for attempting to prove he does not? And you see, I'm still here. The state rests.
- ◆2. **Defense:** (Lets switch hats now and play the other side.) Citizens of the Jury, I must point out to you like any good attorney, that the only thing my opponent has proven with his questions is that we are very much in need of a God. Now I cannot force you to see God, though I can assure

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you there is evidence in this case to make his case. But as one ancient writer has put it

◆ *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Romans 1:20, NIV.*

◆ Again, I cannot force you to see this. I am not able to summon God with a subpoena and put him on the stand. So from our merely human vantage point your conclusion will require some faith. But, as the Judge of this court often points out, no court in the land demands absolute certainty. Such a thing is a philosophical impossibility. Life is not that way. Rather we live on probability rather than proof every day.

◆ We board airliners daily that will probably make it to their destination without mishap. But we do not KNOW, cannot know that they will. Accidents do happen. Planes do fall out of the air. We drive roads expecting that 99% of the time the brakes will stop us when we push on them, and that gas pedals will not accelerate unless we push on them. Yet both of these have malfunctioned in our history. We drive on faith that things normally work a certain way. We eat in a restaurant on faith that they have done due diligence on not passing on in their food any poisoning or bacteria like salmonellae. My point is simply this, ladies and gentlemen of the jury: you are expected by the court of law to be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt. But because there is an element of faith involved

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in what we all believe, does not make it invalid. This is also true when it comes to the existence of God.

◆ *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Hebrews 11:6, NIV.*

◆ Now I shall present to you several very good reasons why you should conclude that God exists, not that your conclusion has any real affect on him in the end. But it will have a tremendous effect on you.

◆ **A.** To begin, lets consider the **Cosmological argument** for the existence of God. This term comes from the word for the world (cosmos) and the word for study (logos). It asks “What is behind, or the cause of, the cosmos we see. It takes us back to beginnings.

◆ *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Psalms 19:1-4, NIV.*

◆ 1) Part of this argument is the Principle of Sufficient Reason: namely, that it is undeniable that something exists, and it is universally observed that everything has a cause. For example, if you pinch the girl nearest you you can experience for yourself the principle of sufficient reason in various ways. Should she slap you across your face you should not be surprised. However if she did it without cause, you would call her “irrational.”

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◆2) Part of this argument involves the principle of contingency: namely, that everything that exists does so dependent upon something else in some way. Nothing in the created realm can exist purely by itself. Trees cannot exist without air. Water cannot exist without oxygen. Even protons must have neutrons and electrons. The Boilermakers cannot exist without fans... then again... Well, you get the idea.

◆3) Another part of the cosmological argument involves the second law of thermal dynamics, or as it is commonly known, the law of entropy. This law says that things always tend to go from the state of order to the state of disorder. People who pride themselves in being highly scientific affirm that science shows us that everything in the

universe is losing rather than court rusty bike.)



gradually slowing down, energy and disintegrating integrating. I submit to the specimen #1 (a photo of a

If you leave your 12 speed or your BMX out in the element, it does not grow a new coat of paint, or even merely maintain it's condition. Rather it gets worse. And the longer you drive your car, the more worn out it becomes and the poorer it performs, that is, without attention or intervention.

◆Now we may ask, according to our best science, if all things are contingent on something else, and if all things must have sufficient cause, and if all things are by themselves fading, or slowing or dis-integrating, then who or what is the explanation for the existence of these objects in the first

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place? The prosecution might claim the fabled “big bang” but again we must ask, “Who or what pulled the trigger?”

◆ Lets go a step further. May I submit exhibit B (white board). Now whatever the cause, or reason of existing reality is, it must exist either 1) within created reality, but then it too is part of the created reality, contingent on other things, crumbling and disintegrating, or 2) it exists outside created reality, that is, it is completely self-reliant, self-sustaining, in other words, eternal, unlimited, all-powerful, and alive. (which sounds an awful lot like what we call “God”. I’m just saying...) Doesn’t the scientific mind have to say the following?

We all believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that there is a single and simple spiritual being, whom we call God-- eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, unchangeable, infinite, almighty; completely wise, just, and good, and the overflowing source of all good. (Belgic Confession art.1)

◆ **B.** Now ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the cosmological argument is significant evidence alone for you find in your deliberations that God does indeed exist. However the evidence does not stop there. The defense would like to add the **Teleological Argument**. (Tele in greek means “end”. As in tele-scope, or tele-phone, or tele-vision -sending a picture to a remote end. The teleological argument simply states that the order and complexity of the universe suggests that it was designed and intended for specific ends, or shall we say, on purpose, for purposes.

◆ William Paley, the 18th Century philosopher offers the classic description when he posits the following. Suppose you are walking along an uninhabited beach in Australia when you find a rock. You

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might assume the rock has been there forever. But suppose among the rocks you discover a watch, or a Fitbit for that matter. (The court submits specimen #2: watch). Any intelligent being must assume immediately that someone had been there before, had left it there, or placed it there, but most certainly it was not something that happened by accident for though we search the world over nowhere do we ever find something of such complex design, fitted and working gears, pins, springs, etc –so precisely falling into concert with one another. No, it was clearly designed, which presupposes a designer. People of the Jury, you are not allowed to simply pass this watch off as a religious theory. Ironically, it was in the same century that Paley lived that people of science began to postulate that origins of life could be explained by purely chance processes over long periods of time.

◆ Tell me, dear civil servants of the court, how likely is it that a steel factory would explode and amazingly an automobile would be created in the process? What are the mathematical probabilities of chance that floating gasses would eventually combine to produce even a single living micro-organism, let alone something as complex as the human nervous system? Darwin himself has famously said, “To suppose that the eye, with so many parts all working together could have been formed by natural selection seems, I freely admit, absurd.” The law of entropy works against it. The law of probability works against it. One scientist calculated the chance of a single

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protein molecule forming to take 1 time in 10^{243} years! (exhibit C).

◆ Again, all we are trying to show the court today is that there is evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, to believe in the existence of God. In fact, it takes more “faith” to consider your baby a lovely collision of gases than to believe in a custom design of a real God. We’d no more expect a fabric store to collapse and have designer jeans pop into existence as a result. Why do we postulate that our genes would?

◆ **C.** Finally, dear Jury, there is a third significant body of evidence which we label the **Moral argument** for the existence of God. The moral argument asks how it comes to be that all of human kind recognize a sense of moral code. It is a continuance of the teleological argument because if there are in fact purposes and order to the universe and its contents, this suggests that some things “ought” to be, while other “ought not.” It is not surprising, therefore that the second half of David’s Psalm 19 moves from creation, to moral law, since both point to the reality of God.

◆ *“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.” Psalms 19:7, 8, NIV.*

◆ Ponder dear Jury, this. If humans are merely grown up germs, or evolved biological organisms, how do we account for the categorical leap to moral awareness? Trees don’t injure. And bears don’t discuss truth vs deceit, or kindness over violence. Yet humans everywhere do. If we are all accidents

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in the long run, on what basis do we make laws? Is there a biological cause for giving to charity? Where does the sense of fairness come from? And if morality is simply the agreement of the majority at any given time or place, then if there are more headhunters in town than the rest of us, killing becomes moral, does it not? Still, even headhunters don't think it's right that their heads get hunted. Where does this phenomena called morality come from? It is reasonable to suppose it comes from beyond the physical reality. From some spiritual power or being. And so we have yet another piece of evidence that it is in fact, quite reasonable to affirm that there is a God, and if there is, then there are true things to be known about him.

◆ We also have a warning: for when the acknowledgement of the reality of God disappears, so does healthy moral choice.

◆ “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worth while to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practise them.”
Romans 1:26-32, NIV.

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◆**Conclusion:** Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, allow me to make my closing argument. There are at least three very strong and compelling reasons for acknowledging the existence of God which any one of you could repeat over donuts in the coffee shop.

- ◆1) The cosmos points to cause behind it and greater than it.
- ◆2) The design of every part of the cosmos points to an intelligent designer.
- ◆3) The indisputable human sense or moral order, ie, that some things are right, and some things are wrong, points to a non-physical source of good.

◆Philosopher Jean Sartre captured much of these in this simple equation: the evidence for God can be seen in the starry host above and the moral law within. Add to that the fact that for thousands of years of human history, billions of people have born witness to feeling loved by, and forgiven by, and of having been talked to by God. If we reject the existence of God, this is a further reality we shall have to understand. Now, is there more. Certainly there is, but you have been summoned to serve the court purely in determining if God exists beyond a reasonable doubt.

◆If you are a God-follower you have no reason to cower when on the stand. And yes, you will not, like me, be able to prove 100% that there is a God. God has not set up the world that way. But faith in God is not any less reasonable than faith in your tires holding out, or the crops growing again this spring.