

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Class Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

The Doctrine of God, Part 1

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

I. The Existence of God

How do we know that God exists?

Explanation and Scriptural Basis: Two great categories of evidence for existence of God. 1) Internal Evidence (each person has an innate sense of God); 2) External evidence (God has revealed Himself in creation and in Scripture)

A. Humanity's Internal Sense of God

1. Worldwide, throughout history: people are naturally very religious

Acts 17:22-23 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

Cultural Anthropologists confirm this overpowering religious tendency

2. Human beings KNOW GOD internally

Romans 1:19 what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

Romans 1:28 ...they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God

Romans 1:32 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 practice them.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men

Don Richardson's book, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981) has as its basic thesis that God has left *redemptive analogies*, prophecies of His gospel and the Incarnation of His Son within many cultures which missionaries can use to preach the gospel

3. Human beings suppress this knowledge

Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Psalm 53:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Bumper sticker I saw recently: "National atheists day: April 1"

Romans 1:18-23 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 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. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Richard Dawkins, an "arch-Darwinian" who says, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of DNA, says, "Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved"

B. External Evidence

1. Scripture testifies to worldwide "general revelation" in creation

statements about creation as a "theater of God's glory" (John Calvin's statement)

Isaiah 6:3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Psalm 19:1-4 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

Acts 14:16-17 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

2. Scripture itself reveals God (as we have discussed at length)

Summary: An "overwhelming amount of reliable evidence from God's words and God's works." Grudem adds, "It is a characteristic of true faith that it is a confidence based on reliable evidence, and faith in the existence of God shares this characteristic." (Grudem, p. 143)

C. Traditional "Proofs" for the Existence of God

Grudem: These "proofs" are attempts to analyze the evidence in creation for the existence of God in order to prove it is not *irrational* to believe in God.

1. Cosmological argument: [cause] "Everything in the universe has a cause. Thus the universe itself must have a cause, and the cause of the universe can only be God.
2. Teleological argument: [purpose] "The universe gives immense evidence of harmony, order, and design. Design gives evidence of intelligent purpose, and therefore, of a Creator, an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way."
3. Ontological argument: [imagined being] "Begins with idea of God defined as 'a being greater than which nothing can be imagined.' Then it argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist."
4. Moral argument: [innate sense of morality] "Begins from man's sense of right and wrong, and of the need for justice to be done, and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong, and who will someday mete out justice to all people."

Note: Atheistic evolutionists are sometimes also conservationists, who lobby and persuade people that it is wrong to kill bearded seals, or to wear fur coats (remember the slogan "Fur shame"... "shame" is an intensely moral condition!!)... and that it is right to be active in saving species from extinction. But there can be no talk of "right" and "wrong" apart from an absolute standard, namely God Himself.

Immanuel Kant, German enlightenment philosopher, effectively devastated all but the fourth argument

Interestingly, these arguments can be effectively overturned by people who begin with different presuppositions, and who argue by different rules. YET, every one of them is TRUE!! The cosmos DOES have an ultimate creator, there is a PURPOSE behind everything because God is a purposeful being, God IS the being greater than which no one can be imagined (and He DOES exist), and God is the absolute standard of righteousness.

Roger Nicole: "God has not left sufficient evidence for His existence so that belief in His existence is **logically inescapable**, just simply enough that unbelief is **morally inexcusable**."

D. Only God Can Overcome Human Suppression of Truth

2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.... For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

This can only happen from the Preaching of the Gospel, and the direct work of God by the Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

II. The Knowability of God

Can we really know God? How much of God can we know?

A. The Necessity for God to Reveal Himself to Us

1. General revelation

Romans 1:19-20 ...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 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.

2. Personal revelation

Matthew 11:27 [Jesus said] "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

3. God lives in unapproachable light

"Immortal, invisible, God only wise; in light inaccessible, hid from our eyes..."

"All praise we would render, O help us to see, 'Tis only the splendor of light hideth thee!"

Psalms 104:1-2 Praise the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. He wraps himself in light as with a garment

1 Timothy 6:15-16 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

4. Man cannot "figure God out" by Himself

1 Corinthians 1:19-21 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

B. We Can Never Fully Understand God

1. God is “incomprehensible”... God cannot be **fully understood**

We cannot get the arms of our minds completely around the reality of God...

2. Scripture testifies to this

Psalm 145:3 Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

English word “fathom” means to plumb to depths with a weighted line until we reach bottom... 1) there is no bottom; 2) you don’t have enough string anyway!!

Psalm 147:5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Psalm 139:4-6 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in-- behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

3. Thus we will never know “too much” about God, and should never stop growing in knowledge

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

4. Thus, heaven will not be boring or static... rather, a place of constant discovery about God

Even with eternity of time, we will never exhaust all there is to know about God!!

Psalm 139:17-18 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.

C. Yet We Can Know God Truly

1. However, we can acquire true knowledge of God
2. Accepting Scripture’s testimony about God enables us to make true statements about God

1 John 1:5 God is light

1 John 4:8 God is love

John 4:24 God is spirit

Psalm 103:8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

3. Even more, it is GOD HIMSELF who we know, and not merely facts about Him

4. Knowing God is the essence of eternal life and the most precious thing we can possess

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

5. Perfect knowledge of God is promised in heaven

Hebrews 8:10-11 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

"Perfect" but NOT EXHAUSTIVE knowledge... we will be constantly learning God forever in heaven.