

The Living God, part 2 of The Baptist Faith & Message
February 19, 2017

This weekend in the news tells of dry California getting dumped on by lots of rain. Every time there is major flooding in the news we see pictures of people who have to be rescued from their vehicles. They drove up to a spot in the road where a stream of water was flowing across the top of the road. They decided it did not look too deep and tried to drive across it. The water was deeper and swifter than they thought, and it pushed their car off the road and into the stream. This happens a lot, yet people keep trying it. Some people even drown doing this.

Anyone who has been to the beach knows how powerful water can be. A wave rushes in and up the beach, and may only be an inch deep as it flows back down. Yet you feel the force of it pulling at you. Six inches can knock you off balance. A little bigger wave can knock you off your feet. A little bit of water can be powerful, even dangerous. Fast moving deep water is not to be messed with.

At most times of the year, the Jordan River, in Israel, is a lazy, fairly slow-moving river. It averages about 40 feet across, and from 3 to 10 feet deep. But at one time of the year, in ancient Israel, it was a different story. During the spring rains, when the river was in flood stage, it would be much wider, deeper, and faster. No one would be foolish enough to try to walk through it then.

Yet it was at this time of the year that God had led the Israelites up to the river to cross it into The Promised Land. We pick up the story in Joshua 3.

Joshua 3:9-17 (NIV) Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD (YAHWEH) your God. This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you...

And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD (YAHWEH)--the Lord of all the earth--set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap." So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD (YAHWEH) stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

Joshua told the people that by this miracle...

Joshua 3:10 (NIV) "This is how you will know that the **living** God is among you..."

This description of God is important for us. It is the difference between the God of the Bible and every other God who has ever been worshipped on earth. Only Yahweh is a living God.

Today is the second part of our new series which is based on the Baptist Faith & Message. The Baptist Faith & Message is a general statement of beliefs held by most Southern

Baptists. It is not a creed we make you swear to believe in order to join our church. We do not use it in that way. Instead, it is a summary of generally agreed upon understandings of the major teachings of the Bible.

Each week we will cover a different section of the Baptist Faith & Message. If you miss a part, it will be available on our website. Last week we covered article 1, The Scriptures. The next part concerns God.

1963 Baptist Faith & Message Statement

Article II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

How many gods are there? We turn to scripture for the answer.

Isaiah 45:5 (NIV) I am the LORD (YAHWEH), and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.

There are many different made-up gods invented by man. Some people believe in multiple gods. Hindus believe in thousands of gods. Many ancient peoples did too. They believed that each geographical area was ruled by a different god, some stronger than others. They believed that when countries went to war, their gods also went to war. If you lost, it was because your god was defeated by a greater god.

Yahweh has revealed to us through His revelation that

There is only one true God in the universe. All the other supposed gods were dreamed up by a human. They are man-made. They are the figment of someone's imagination.

A little boy being asked, "How many Gods are there?" replied, "One!"

The questioner asked, "How do you know that?"

"Because," said the boy, "there is only room for one, for He fills heaven and earth."

Indeed, our God is larger than the universe. He is outside of the universe, and yet active within it as well.

There is only one God. Most of the religious people on earth have come to the same conclusion. They believe that there is only one God. This includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, and a few others. We do not agree on what this God is like. Just because we all believe there is only one God does not mean we worship the same God by different names. Our beliefs about the one God are so different that it would not be said by anyone within those religions that we worship the same God. It is outsiders who try to make that point.

So what do we believe God is like?

God is self-existent, not dependent.

Exodus 3:13-14 (NIV) Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God tells us His name is Yahweh, which means "I AM WHO I AM", or "I AM, THAT I AM." This means that God is self-existent. He was not born or created. He had no beginning and He has no end. There was never a time that God did not exist.

God exists all by Himself. He is not dependent on anyone or anything. The apostle Paul teaches us...

Acts 17:25 (NIV) And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

He does not need man for anything. He does not need anyone or anything. He is complete as He is. God is self-existent, the great I AM—and if all His creatures would cease to be, He would be just as completely God without them as with them

We are not self-existent. Someone else made us. And our lives are fragile things, so dependent on the right conditions for life on this planet. It is too hot on Venus, too cold on Mars, and not enough oxygen on either for us to live outside of a special suit. We depend on God for life.

Even when the followers of Jesus Christ inherit eternal life with a new resurrection body every moment of that life we will be dependent on God for our existence. We only exist by the sustaining power of God our maker.

He is dependent on nothing from us or anybody else. God is self-sustaining, self-existent. God is complete unto Himself.

Some children were asked what God is like. Kalen, age 9, said, "God has big hands because the song says, 'He's got the whole world in His hands,'" . We do not take that song literally, but it still has truth for us. As the song teaches...

God rules the universe.

Jeremiah 10:10 (NIV) But the LORD (YAHWEH) is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and is present in every part of the universe at the same time. With such power, knowledge, and presence, there is nothing He does not know and nothing He cannot do, and no one who can thwart His plans and purposes. God rules the universe. He may not rule it like you would like. It may seem that evil sometimes is in control. But God rules the universe at all times. He is accomplishing His plans and purposes.

God is spiritual, not material. God is not made of matter, not made up of atoms. He is not light or energy. He is not sound. There is nothing in the universe that is comparable to God. God reveals to us what He is.

John 4:24 (NIV) God is spirit...

God is spirit. He does not breathe air or anything else. He has no physical lungs. He does not eat or drink or have need of any such material things. He does not get sick. He is not limited in any of the ways that a material body is limited.

Our poor bodies are aging. You young ones... just wait. You are strong now. You heal quickly now. But one day you will get an ache. And nothing you or the doctor does will take it away. Pain relievers might work... some... temporarily. But the pain will come back no matter what you do. No matter how much you exercise, how well you eat, what kind of therapy you receive. You will feel betrayed by your body.

God does not suffer in any such way as this, for He has no physical body. God is Spirit.

God is The Living God.

> **God is real, not imaginary.** He is not a man-imagined deity. He is not an idea or philosophy that mankind dreamed up. He is real. He exists as the living God. He was before the creation of the world and is responsible for it.

Genesis 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God here reveals that He existed before and outside of the universe. The universe only exists because of God. In His creation we see the immense power of God. God has more than all the power and energy in the universe.

> **God is active, not dead.** He thinks, plans, designs, creates, purposes, and interacts with His creation. He loves, grieves, rewards, and punishes. God has a will. And He acts on that will. Just as you and I have a will and act on our choices and desires, so does God. In fact we have a free will because God has free will and made us in His image.

> **God is personal.** God is relational. God seeks a personal relationship with each person. He interacts within the God-head of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He also interacts with us. As He is the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present creator of the universe, He sounds too big to notice each of us. But He is fully aware of each of us. And He desires a personal relationship to you today.

Invitation

How should we respond to the revelation of God about Himself? We should humble our hearts before Him, love Him with worship, gratitude, and submission of our lives. We are warned in the letter of Hebrews...

Hebrews 3:12 (NIV) See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

That means today. That means now. How many times before have you heard God's invitation to humble yourself and put your life into the hands of Jesus? Do not let today be one more day of turning away from the living God. Receive Him now.