**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**False Concepts of God (part 1)**

There are many different views and concepts people have of God. There are those who believe there are many gods, while others believe there is only one god. Some view God as a tyrant who exercises His power oppressively or brutally, while others view God as one who will condemn no one. The Pantheist equates God with the forces and laws of the universe, and therefore, God is not a personal being, they say. The Deist contends there is a Creator, but this Creator does not interfere with the laws of the universe. The deist believes God just created man and the universe but shows not further interest in them. Others contend that God is only what each person conceives him to be in his own heart. Therefore, no one’s view of God is wrong. Whatever one may conceive God to be, that is God to him.

 All of these different concepts of God cannot be true. If there is a God, then He possesses certain definite, identifying characteristics. Any concept that would not be consistent with these traits is a false concept of God. To characterize God in some other way than who He really is, is to have a false concept of God.

 It should be each person’s desire and goal to learn the true attributes and characteristics of God. What is He truly like?

 In this lesson and next week’s lesson, the Lord willing, we want to look at some false concepts of God and compare that with how the Bible truly characterizes Him.

The first false concept of God that we want to talk about is that God is physical.

Idolaters of times past and present have made gods of stone, wood, and metal. Paul says there were those who *“changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”* (Rom. 1:23) They made gods of the material creation.

But God is NOT physical. He is not made of flesh and bones or of any other physical matter. We just read in Roman 1:23 where Paul called Him “the incorruptible God.” Paul said to the idolaters of Athens, *“for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.”* (Acts 17:28-29) God is in NO sense physical, and therefore, is not limited by physical constraints.

“God is spirit.” Jesus says in John 4:24, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* Now, a spirit is not made of flesh and bones. When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was a bodily resurrection. He had a body of flesh and bones. When his disciples saw Him they thought they beheld a spirit (Luke 24:37). Jesus said to them in verse 39, *“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”* God is spirit. Therefore, he is not made of flesh and bones.

Some contend that God has flesh and bones because in certain passages body parts are ascribed to Him.

Proverbs 15:3 makes mention of “the eyes of the LORD.” Isaiah 55:11 talks about His mouth. Isaiah 30:27 says, *“...His lips are full of indignation, And His tongue like a devouring fire.”* Jeremiah 21:5 God said, *“I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm....”* Are these passages saying that God actually has physical eyes, and a mouth, and lips, and tongue, and hands and arms? NO! These are what we call “anthropomorphisms.” Webster defines anthropomorphism as “The ascription of human characteristics to things nothuman.” (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, © 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc.)Body parts are ascribed to God so that the finite mind of man may understand the operations of God. God sees even though He does not have physical eyes. God works even though He does not have physical hands. This is symbolic language that conveys to the mind of man the workings of God. We use such language. We may talk about “even handed justice” or “the strong arm of the law.” We do not conclude that justice has a literal hand or that the law has an arm. These are simply figurative, or anthropomorphic ways of expressing things.

God is a real being, and He is working, but He is not physical. He is not made of physical materials.

Another false concept of God is that God is local, meaning that God is confined to temples, or church buildings, or to certain other localities. The idea is that we come into the presence of God when we are in these places. These are holy places. And the idea that some people seem to have is that when they are in these places they need to be more careful about what they say and do. People who live by this concept strive to be good and reverent in a church building, but when they leave they have no concern for being pure and holy.

But the fact is God is not confined to temples or to any locality. Paul said to the idolaters of the city of Athens, *“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.”* (Acts 17:24) Jeremiah 23:23-24 says, *“‘Am I a God near at hand,’ says the LORD, ‘And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?’ says the LORD; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD.”*  God is not confined to a place or locality as man is confined. God is everywhere present. The word we sometimes use to sum this up is “omnipresent,” meaning, as Webster defines, “present in all places at all times.” The Psalmist expresses the omnipresence of God in Psalm 139 when he says, *“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.”* (vs. 7-10 ESV)) God is always there, wherever we are. We cannot hide from God. There is a song we use to sing that said, “There’s an all seeing eye watching you.” And that’s right. Hebrews 4:13 says, *“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”* I heard a story of a man who drove to the liquor store with his young son. He left his son in the car, but he went in and purchased some alcoholic beverage. As he went in and out of the store he was looking around to see if there was anyone he knew seeing him go into this liquor store. When he got in the car, his little boy said, “Daddy you were looking all around, but there was one place you didn’t look.” His dad said, “where, son?” His son said, “you didn’t look up.” And that is the problem with many of us. We are wanting to make sure that no one sees our sins, but we forget about the most important One, and that is God. We forget to look up. Others may not know of the sins we commit, but we can be assured, God sees. God is not confined to certain localities.

Another false concept of God is God created man and left him on earth without guidance or help. This is Deism. Deism is that God created man but shows no further interest in man. In Matthew 5:45 Jesus says that God *“makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* Such is an expression of His love toward mankind. When the sun rises in the morning, and when the rain provides moisture for our gardens and the crops in the field, we know that God has not left us. In Colossians chapter 1 Paul says that by Christ “all things were created,” and then he says, *“And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*  (Col 1:17) The word consist means, “to stand together,” or “to hold together.” Christ is not only the Creator of all things, but He is the strength and stay that continues to uphold all creation. In other words, God continues to work in the affairs of this world.

Therefore, we can pray to God, *“Give us this day our daily bread”* because we know He is working in the affairs of men. (Matt. 6:11) Paul said in the city of Athens, *“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;”* (Acts 17:26-27) God did not create us and then leave us be. He is assessable to all who will seek for Him. James says in James 4:8, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you….”*

And also God has spoken to us. He has not created us and then left us without instructions for our lives. Jesus said to the apostles in John 16:12-15 that the Holy Spirit would come and guide them into “all truth.” And that is what happened. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (recorded in Acts 2) and the apostles were guided into all truth. And they wrote it down in words. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”* Notice, the Holy Spirit made known the things of God in words, not words which man’s wisdom taught, but which the Holy Spirit taught. These Holy Spirit guided men wrote those words down and that is what we have in the Bible. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

God has not left us without instruction. He did not create us on the sea of life and then leave us without chart are compass. We have His word and it is sufficient to guide us.

Deism is a false concept of God.

And so the God who created us is not physical. He is not local, that is confined to temples or church buildings or certain other localities. And He did not create us and leave us on earth without guidance or help. These are false concepts of God. Next week we want to look at other false concepts of God. We hope you will join us then.

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