

CHAPTER 3 – GOD

1. Genesis 1 tells us about creation. What sort of things do we learn about God from this passage? (Compare Rom 1:19-20). *Some of these have been drawn directly out of the texts, others from elsewhere in Scripture, or inferred as a logical consequence of the main points.*
 - 1.1. God is uncreated
 - 1.2. God existed before creation
 - 1.3. God existed before time
 - 1.3.1. God “created” time
 - 1.4. God is creative
 - 1.5. God created everything
 - 1.5.1. God must be powerful
 - 1.5.2. God must be big
 - 1.6. God speaks, and it happens
 - 1.7. Jesus was present at creation (see John 1:1-3)
 - 1.8. Holy Spirit was present at creation
 - 1.9. God brings order out of chaos
 - 1.10. God has a process for doing things
 - 1.11. God has a purpose in what He does
 - 1.12. What God does is good
 - 1.13. What God created is good
 - 1.14. God gets things right the first time
 - 1.15. God knows the correct balance in nature
 - 1.16. He is a God of enormous (infinite?) variety
 - 1.17. God is an artist (The Artist) (see Eph 2:10 – *workmanship* in Greek is *poiema* from which we get the English word *poem*. Some translations say “We are His *work of art*” or “We are His *masterpiece*”)
 - 1.18. God created the earth (and everything else) for man
 - 1.19. He draws attention to Himself in creation
 - 1.20. God is generous
 - 1.21. God is personal
 - 1.22. God is relational
 - 1.23. God is greater than man
 - 1.24. Man is made in God’s image
 - 1.24.1. Some of the qualities of man come from God
 - 1.25. We are created to be a joy to God
 - 1.26. God’s desire is to bless
 - 1.26.1. The first blessing recorded in Scripture is to the animals
 - 1.27. God has authority
 - 1.27.1. He has delegated some of this to mankind
 - 1.28. God has revealed something about Himself in His creation

- 1.28.1. He holds people accountable for refusing to acknowledge Him from what they see in creation
- 1.29. God is very secure in Himself

2. List as many attributes and characteristics of God as you can think of (e.g. holy, omnipotent, cannot lie). Are there any you don't understand? *Some of these are attributes of God; some are ways He is described or describes Himself in Scripture. Some of His attributes belong to Him alone, and can never be shared by others, such as His omnipotence and omniscience. These are known as His non-communicable attributes. Other attributes can be shared or imparted to humans, such as wisdom, mercy, generosity. These are known as His communicable attributes.*

This list is in alphabetical order, to help you to check them off your own list.

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|---|---|
| 2.1. All-sufficient | 2.31. Jealous |
| 2.2. Awe-inspiring | 2.32. Just |
| 2.3. Beginning and End | 2.33. Keeps His word |
| 2.4. Compassionate | 2.34. Kind |
| 2.5. Consistent | 2.35. King |
| 2.6. Counsellor | 2.36. Light |
| 2.7. Covenant-keeper | 2.37. Living |
| 2.8. Covenant-maker | 2.38. Logical |
| 2.9. Creator | 2.39. Lord of Lords |
| 2.10. Dangerous | 2.40. Loving |
| 2.11. Deliverer | 2.41. Marvellous |
| 2.12. Does not lie | 2.42. Merciful |
| 2.13. Eternal | 2.43. Omnipalatable (<i>we made this one up, but it would mean all-delightful if it were a real word</i>) |
| 2.14. Faithful | |
| 2.15. Father | 2.44. Omnipotent (all-powerful) |
| 2.16. For us | 2.45. Omnipresent (everywhere at the same time) |
| 2.17. Forgiving | 2.46. Omniscient (all-knowing) |
| 2.18. Fortress | 2.47. Only God |
| 2.19. Friend | 2.48. Patient |
| 2.20. Generous | 2.49. Perfect |
| 2.21. Gentle | 2.50. Person |
| 2.22. Glorious | 2.51. Powerful |
| 2.23. Good | 2.52. Precious |
| 2.24. Gracious | 2.53. Provider |
| 2.25. Healer | 2.54. Pure |
| 2.26. Holy | 2.55. Relational |
| 2.27. Hope | 2.56. Righteous |
| 2.28. Immutable (unchanging) | 2.57. Rock |
| 2.29. Incomprehensible (beyond understanding) | |
| 2.30. Infinite | |

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| 2.58. Self-sufficient | 2.68. Trustworthy |
| 2.59. Shepherd | 2.69. Truth |
| 2.60. Slow to anger | 2.70. Ultimate authority |
| 2.61. Sovereign | 2.71. Uncreated/Self-existent |
| 2.62. Spirit | 2.72. Unique |
| 2.63. Strong | 2.73. Unsearchable |
| 2.64. Teacher | 2.74. Untameable |
| 2.65. Timeless | 2.75. Warrior |
| 2.66. Transcendent (beyond
human experience) | 2.76. Wise |
| 2.67. True Vine | 2.77. Worthy |
| | 2.78. Wrathful |

No matter how big a concept we think we have of God, reviewing a list like this (which is far from complete and comprehensive), makes us realise that God is far bigger and more glorious than we ever realised before.

We hear of people who confidently declare that they don't think that God is like such-and-such, or that they prefer to think of God in this way or that way. Almost without exception, people who make statements like that really have no idea of what God declares Himself to be like, but have formed a god in their own image, and a god of their own desires.

Another thing we realised as we compiled this list is that many (most) of these attributes, characteristics, qualities and descriptions of God also describe Jesus.

3. What does Romans 8:28 (*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*) mean and what difference does it make to you?

Believers can trust that God will not allow any experience, circumstance or situation in their lives to be wasted, but will use it for their benefit. No matter the circumstances, God is in control, and has only the best in mind for His people. We can trust Him. Everything has a purpose and a value for the people of God, and will be part of the process of making them more like Jesus Christ.

God even uses our own "stuff-ups" for our good. Knowing God's character helps us to understand our circumstances and the way He works for us, and to remain confident and trusting even when things seem to be going wrong. John 15:1-2 reminds us that our Father prunes us to be more fruitful, ultimately to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29), who in turn is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15, Heb 1:3).

Some were able to share examples of how God had taken a situation that seemed at first to be absolutely disastrous, and turn it into an enormous blessing. Nothing is too difficult for God that He is unable or unwilling to turn it into good for us. He has promised in this verse to do so.

CHAPTER 4 - JESUS

1. Read the CS Lewis quote on page 27. Lewis claimed Jesus must be "lunatic, liar or Lord." What do you think he means by this?
Again, we hear of people who want to fit Jesus into their own wishy-washy ideas of what they think He is like. Or statements such as, "We don't actually believe in Jesus, but we try to follow his teachings." Jesus made some pretty big claims about Himself, such as the following. Note that every single one of these claims come from the lips of Jesus Himself, not from other people.
 - 1.1. He came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets - Matt 5:17
 - 1.2. He spoke as one with authority, as in, "You have heard it said... but I say to you..." - Matt 5:21-22
 - 1.3. He had the authority to be able to reject some who come to Him on judgment day. - Matt 7:21-23, 10:32-33, 13:41-42
 - 1.4. He was the Son of Man - Matt 8:20 & 24:30, compare Dan 7:13-14
 - 1.5. He had the authority to forgive sins Matt 9:2-6 & matt 26:28
 - 1.6. He was lord of the Sabbath - Matt 12:8
 - 1.7. He was superior to Solomon - Matt 12:41-42
 - 1.8. He was the Christ, the Son of God - Matt 16:15-17
 - 1.9. He would sit on a glorious throne - Matt 19:28
 - 1.10. He would be resurrected after three days dead - Matt 20:19
 - 1.11. He was David's Lord - Matt 22:41-45
 - 1.12. He was the long-awaited Messiah - Luke 4:18-20, compare Isa 61:1-2, John 4:25-26
 - 1.13. He was the King who should receive praise - Luke 19:38-40
 - 1.14. The whole of the Old Testament was written about Him - Luke 24:25-27 & 44-45, John 5:39, 46
 - 1.15. He had come from heaven - John 3:13
 - 1.16. He would give eternal life - John 3:16
 - 1.17. He would be Saviour of the world - John 3:17
 - 1.18. He was equal with God - John 5:16-18
 - 1.19. He was worthy of the same honour that the Father was due - John 5:23
 - 1.20. He existed before Abraham - John 8:56-58
 - 1.21. He was one with the Father - John 10:30
 - 1.22. He accepted people's belief that He was God - John 10:33-37
 - 1.23. He was the only way to the Father - John 14:6
 - 1.24. Hating Him was the same thing as hating the Father - John 15:23
- 1.25. He lives forever - Rev 1:18

Jesus was also very critical of the Pharisees, who were generally considered to be the most righteous of all, such as:

1.26. Do not be like the hypocrites... - Matt 6:2, 5

1.27. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites... - Matt 23:13, 23, 25, 27, 29

In light of these claims He made about Himself, and His criticism of the leading religious leaders, there can be only 3 possibilities according to CS Lewis:

(1) *Jesus is a lunatic. He thinks he is something when he is really nothing. He is deluded. Therefore, we should dismiss him, and dismiss the Christian religion as nonsense.*

(2) *He is a liar, trying to get people to follow him when he knows full well that he is none of the above. Therefore, we should reject him, and reject the Christian religion as a lie.*

(3) *He is exactly who He claims to be. If this is true, then the only proper response is to submit to Him and worship Him. Therefore, we should bow our knee before Him as the God of the universe, and recognise that the Christian religion is the only one that leads to God.*

CS Lewis' intention was to force people to think, and force them to deal with the facts. The existence of Jesus Christ in time and history is well-documented, even by some enemies of the Christian faith. He wanted people to stop being smug and patronising, and come to some real decision about Him, instead of spouting the pathetic and weak-minded line that He was a good teacher, but nothing more. As we have just seen, Jesus made substantially bigger claims about Himself than just that He was a good teacher. Unless He is actually Lord, He is not even a good teacher, as CS Lewis makes clear. His claims require a response.

2. Why is it important for Christians to defend vigorously the uniqueness and exclusivity of Jesus?

This question is not intended to conjure up thoughts of a confrontational situation, where we get into arguments with unbelievers. After all, Jesus is big enough to defend Himself and His honour if He so chooses. We need to be discerning about whether the person we are talking to is open and wanting to learn or is just looking for a fight. If it is the former, then be "...prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15). If it is the latter, then do not "...quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers... avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness" (2 Tim 2:14, 16). Don't waste your breath on them; don't cast your pearls before swine (Matt 7:6).

Rather, the question is intended to ask whether the uniqueness and exclusivity of Jesus should matter to the Christian. If so, why does it matter, and how do we go about explaining the person and purpose of Jesus Christ?

In fact, it matters a great deal. The whole of our Christian faith hangs on whether or not Jesus is who He claims to be.

If Jesus is not the only way to God, as He claimed, then the Christian religion and way of salvation falls in a heap. It cannot stand, and it is fraudulent or deceptive. Not only that, but the Bible itself collapses under the false claims of this person, and therefore attempts to live like Jesus, or any admiration for him as a great teacher are based upon nonsense and wishful thinking, or pride in living a so-called 'moral' life.

Jesus made claims about Himself in relation to salvation, that indicates that there is no salvation outside of Him. His coming, His life, His death and His resurrection are the only basis of hope for salvation. If this is not true, then we are all doomed, and no one has any hope, or any reason to live.

It is clear that we are unable to be good enough to meet the standards set by a holy God. Hence, we need another to do it on our behalf. Jesus is the only one who makes the claim that He is able, and willing, to do this. All other religions require works and/or holiness to be saved, or make no offer of salvation at all.

Salvation, and the whole of Christian faith is founded upon, and rooted in, the person and work of Jesus Christ.

3. What does the Bible tell us about the similarities between God and Jesus? List some verses that show these similarities.

We determined that God and Jesus are the same in character, but different in function.

- 3.1. ... I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)
- 3.2. ... the Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:38)
- 3.3. ... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)
- 3.4. ... the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me (John 14:10-11)
- 3.5. ... Christ, who is the image of God.
(2 Cor 4:4)
- 3.6. He is the image of the invisible God... (Col 1:15)
- 3.7. Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (Php 2:5-6)
- 3.8. He is ... the exact imprint of his nature... (Heb 1:3)
- 3.9. and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Ti

- 1:3-4) compare: waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Ti 2:13)
- 3.10. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:1)
- 3.11. In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "*Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.*" (Isa 6:1-10) compare: Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.*" Isaiah said these things because he saw his (that is, Jesus Christ's) glory and spoke of him. (John 12:37-41)
- 3.12. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity (Ps 103:2-3) And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." (Matt 9:2)
- 3.13. He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. (Acts 1:7) And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.." (Matt 28:18)
- 3.14. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in

- steadfast love and faithfulness, (Exo 34:6) ... that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God (Heb 2:17)
- 3.15. "I, I am he who comforts you (Isa 51:12) Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt 11:28-30)
- 3.16. For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. (Ps 71:5) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope (1 Tim 1:1)
- 3.17. You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt 5:48) ... but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (Heb 7:28)
- 3.18. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." (Lev 11:45) But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, (Acts 3:14)
- 3.19. ... according to the command of the eternal God (Rom 16:26) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Rev 22:13)
- 3.20. ... from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Ps 90:2) ... the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 1:11)
- 3.21. There are so many more that we don't have time or space to add them, but feel free to do your own research and add to this list.

We sometimes hear, or maybe even think ourselves, that the God of the Old Testament is angry and vindictive, but the God of the New Testament is kind and loving. The consequences of this type of thinking are serious and destructive to faith. It makes God unpredictable and changing, and therefore unstable and unreliable. Certainly not the sort of god in whom we could put our trust or confidence. Or it splits Him into two gods, which also destroys faith, and puts us back on a level with the animistic religions, struggling to know which god they needed most to appease to have a good harvest or success in battle.

As the Scriptures above show, this sort of dualistic thinking is false, and sets one god against the other.

Jesus Christ is the exact imprint of God. Whatever attractive qualities we see in Jesus apply equally to the Father. This affects how we read the Old Testament also, which is full of passages which seem to make God seem vicious and unloving. If Jesus reflects God, then there must be more to reading the Old Testament than just the superficial understanding of a vindictive and brutal God who seeks any and every opportunity to punish people.

If Jesus Christ, who even little children loved and were not afraid of (Mk 10:13-16), is the same nature as the God of the Old Testament, then some of us may need to change our thinking about God. And maybe we need to change our thinking about Jesus too. Consider Psalm 2:6-12:

"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

This Jesus, who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, remaining silent and not opening His mouth (Isa 53:7, Acts 8:32) is the same Lamb whose wrath kings, generals, rich, poor, slave and free will have to face one day (Rev 6:15-17).

If nothing else, I hope that this study has given you a more expansive vision of God. He is much greater, more powerful, more glorious than we could ever have imagined. We need to be careful that we don't shrink Him down to a size that we feel comfortable with, and strip Him of all of His power, including His power to save. We will spend eternity trying to grasp His majesty, and His grace. Now might be a good time to begin meditating on it.