

Lecture 2: God

Lightning flashed, and a few seconds later the sound of thunder rolled through the classroom. Professor Grimes glanced outside and saw that the storm was getting worse. It had started raining earlier that morning and showed no sign of clearing up. Rain was now falling in torrents, reducing visibility to almost nothing. A moment later he heard what sounded like small rocks hitting against the glass window.

The professor walked over to the window and examined it. “Looks like we’re getting some hail today.”

“That’s a bit weird,” Rob commented. “We haven’t had hail in a while. I hope it doesn’t damage my car. I think my insurance would cover it, though, right?”

The professor walked back to his desk. “I don’t believe you have anything to worry about. This particular hailstorm is quite mild – the hail is small and relatively harmless. It’s

nothing like the hailstorm that will one day afflict mankind. Revelation 16:21 tells us that one day God will judge mankind through a mighty hailstorm – one whose hail weighs not ounces, but more than 70 pounds each.”

Rob frowned. “That would, like, *totally* destroy my car.”

“It would destroy a great deal. Which is the entire point – but we’ll save that discussion for our final class. You’re not quite ready to talk about the end of this age. Instead we’re going to talk about God.”

Professor Grimes checked his watch and then looked around the dilapidated classroom. He had four students today – Rob, Iris, Brad, and Wally. Given the weather, he was mildly surprised that anyone had attended. After all, it was not a good day to be walking across campus – and in his experience students would seize any excuse to skip classes that they were paying thousands of dollars to attend. Given the attendance record and grades of some of the students on campus, they could have saved a great deal of time and trouble if they had *not* enrolled in seminary and had instead taken

their money out back and set it on fire.

But enough of that. It was time to begin.

“Good morning, class. I hope you all did your assigned reading, because the topic of God is an enormous one. It’s—”

Wally spoke up. “You’re way overcomplicating things, prof. This isn’t hard. There’s a God out there and He wants to give us a fabulous life. All we have to do is ask for it and we’ll have lots of money and everything will be awesome. Oh – and He curses bad people. That’s really about it.”

The professor sighed. “I can see we have a lot of work to do today. Your concept of God reveals a staggering level of ignorance. You seem to have mistaken God for a magical genie. I assure you that the real God is *not* some kind of fairy godmother.

“The first thing you need to understand about God is that He is in charge *and you are not*. Colossians 1:16 tells us that God created the universe and everything that is in it. That means it belongs to Him and He gets to make the rules. You are *not* authorized to make your own rules or live as you please. Psalm 147:5 tells us that God’s understanding is

infinite – which means He *does* know what He is doing. Job 28:24 tells us that God sees everything that happens, and Hebrews 4:13 tells us that God sees everything that we do and will hold us accountable for our actions – which means we can't hide our actions from God.

“Not only does God know what we have done, but God also knows what we will do. Psalm 139:4 tells us that God knows everything we will say before we even say it, and Isaiah 46:9 tells us that God has perfect knowledge of the future. Plus, on the off-chance that you are somehow planning on fleeing from God, Psalm 139:7-12 tells us that there is *nowhere* you can go to avoid God's presence. Even death itself can't accomplish that.

“What this means is that you *cannot* escape God. You cannot hide anything that you do from God, and you cannot defeat Him. Whether you like it or not you *will* answer to God. His authority is absolute and non-optional.”

Another bolt of lightning flashed outside, and almost immediately afterward the

classroom was filled with the sound of thunder. The storm was moving closer.

“The second thing to know is that God does *not* exist for your benefit. God is not a butler or a vending machine. He is not hovering over you like some kind of maid, waiting for you to make a request so He can jump to your every whim. In fact, *you* were made for *His* glory. Revelation 4:11 tells us that we were created for His pleasure – not the other way around. God’s purpose in life is not to serve you. Instead, Hebrews 9:14 tells us that we are to serve Him.”

“But God is love,” Wally objected. “He loves us and cares for us and wants us to be happy. You’re making it sound like He’s our boss. It’s not like that at all.”

“You’re right,” Professor Grimes agreed. “God is *not* our boss and we are *not* His employees. The Bible refers to Him as our *master*, which is an altogether different thing. You can always quit your job and escape your boss, but you cannot escape God. The New Testament says repeatedly that Christians are actually Christ’s slaves. Acts 20:28 says that He purchased us with His blood, and we

belong to Him. Our lives, our desires, and even our hopes and dreams do not belong to us. Instead of living for ourselves, we are commanded to live for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

“In Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul called us a ‘living sacrifice’. All those who truly are Christians have given themselves and their lives to Christ. That means their lives have been *sacrificed*. If you are a Christian then your life doesn’t belong to you anymore. Instead it belongs to God, and your purpose in this world is to serve God – even if it costs you your comfort, your wealth, or even your very life.”

“But God loves us,” Wally insisted.

Professor Grimes nodded. “You are absolutely right. John 3:16 tells us that God loved us so much He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Hebrews 13:5 says that God promised to never leave us or forsake us. He has also promised to give us grace, to comfort us, to watch over us, and to one day raise us from the dead into a life of everlasting joy and peace. The love of God is exceedingly great and vast – but that love is completely

misunderstood by this generation. Young people think ‘God loves me, so I can do whatever I want and get away with it.’ That is utter nonsense.”

Brad spoke up. “But God is forgiving, so what’s the big deal? If God will forgive me for sin then what difference does it make? Why not just do whatever I want?”

The professor frowned. “First of all, there’s the fact that the entire chapter of Romans 6 was written specifically to condemn that very line of thinking. Christians should *not* be sinning, and anyone who approaches sin as casually as you suggest cannot possibly be a Christian. In order to become a Christian you have to have a change of allegiance. You have to repent of your sins and literally give your life to God. You *cannot* be saved by saying ‘Lord, take me to Heaven when I die, but other than that stay out of my life.’ If Jesus is not your Master and if He is not in charge of your life then *you are not saved*, and you are bound for Hell.

“Yes, it is true that God forgives us. If He didn’t then there would be no hope for any of us. It’s also true that Christians do continue to

sin. But people who willingly lead lives of gross sin have never been saved at all. It doesn't work that way."

"Sure it does," Brad disagreed. "Nobody's perfect, and everyone sins. Some people just sin more than others. Sin isn't a big deal."

Professor Grimes sighed. "You have a very poor understanding of the gospel. When a person comes to Christ and is saved, God changes that person. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that he becomes a new creature – one who loves God and hates sin. Christ begins working in that person's life to make him more like Himself. Genuine salvation *always* results in a changed life – in fact, 1 John 2:3-5 tells us that obedience to God is one of the ways to tell if your salvation is genuine. A person who continues on sinning 'because God will forgive me' has never been saved. Holiness is *always* a fruit of genuine faith. *Always*. If holiness is lacking then salvation is lacking as well. You can't earn your salvation through holiness, but genuine salvation will produce holiness *every single time*."

"But that's not all. When the world sees

Christians sin, it comes to believe that Christians are hypocrites – people who preach one thing and practice something else. That damages our witness. Since our sin causes people to laugh at the gospel and reject it, that means the sin of Christians actually leads people to Hell. I'd call *that* pretty serious! Sin also damages us, it damages those around us, and it has terrible consequences – including death. On top of all that, each one of us *will* stand before God and give an account of our lives. No one gets to escape accountability."

Professor Grimes glanced out the window. It was still raining, but the hail and lightning had stopped. The storm was beginning to weaken – and the roof wasn't leaking. That was a good sign. Perhaps the building would survive the semester after all.

"But what about God?" Iris asked. "Who is He accountable to? Is it the person who made God?"

"No one made God," Professor Grimes replied. "He is a self-existent, uncreated being. He doesn't have a creator."

"Then where did he come from?"

“God didn’t ‘come from’ anywhere, because He has always existed. Only things that come into existence need a creator. If something does *not* exist one day and then *does* exist the next day, then something had to have caused it to come into existence. However, if something has *always* existed then it doesn’t need a cause. Since God has always existed, God does not need a cause. Psalm 90:2 tells us that God is eternal – He has no beginning and He has no end. There is no one else like Him. Angels, demons, and mankind are all created beings, but God is not.”

Brad spoke up. “But aren’t there three gods – the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? How did all three of them manage to become eternal?”

“There aren’t three Gods – there is just one,” the professor corrected. “God is one Person who is composed of three beings. I John 5:7 tells us that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all one being. It’s what we call the Trinity.”

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Iris complained.

“But it is still true,” Professor Grimes replied. “It is even intuitive. We all understand the idea of a God who is inside us – that is the Holy Spirit. We understand the idea of a God who died for us on the cross – that is Jesus. We also understand the God whose presence is everywhere in the universe at once – that is God the Father. And we also understand that all three of these are not separate Gods, but the same God. On that level it is easy to comprehend.”

Iris shook her head. “I still don’t get it. One person can’t be three people, unless they have a personality disorder or something. It just doesn’t work that way.”

“But God is not like us. He is altogether different. He is infinitely wise and all-powerful, and His presence fills the universe. He is utterly unlike any other being that we have ever encountered.”

The professor thought for a moment. “Tell me, Iris. Do you have a good working knowledge of quantum physics?”

“Um, no.”

“What about neurology? Could you do brain surgery?”

“Of course not! I’m not a brain surgeon. That’s not my major!”

“So what you’re telling me is that there are many complicated things in this world that you don’t understand, and yet you don’t reject *them*. You don’t reject the idea of a brain just because you’re not a neurologist, nor do you reject the idea of a GPS because you don’t understand relativity. The world is full of things that utterly baffle you and yet you are content to accept them because you know they are true. The Trinity is something like that. You may not understand it, but it is absolutely true – and we must accept by faith that God has given us an accurate picture of who He is.

“If you refuse to believe in anything that you don’t understand then you had better stop using your television sets, cell phones, and computers. After all, why have faith in something that you don’t understand?”

“That’s silly!” Iris replied. “I don’t have to understand it to know that it works.”

“Exactly. We know what God is really like because He has told us. Since God is all-knowing, I strongly urge you to believe His

own account of Himself.”

Brad spoke up. “Hold on a minute. The Bible is what tells us about this Trinity thing. How do we know that it’s right?”

“That’s what we will talk about in our next class,” Professor Grimes replied. “We will study what the Bible is, where it came from, and why we can believe it.”

Just as the professor was about to dismiss the class, Iris spoke up. “So you’re telling us that God created us for Himself, right?”

“That’s right.”

“So what did God need us for? Was He lonely?”

Grimes laughed. “No, young lady, God was not lonely. God does not have any needs. He does not get hungry, or thirsty, or bored, nor does He run out of things to do. God was not looking for entertainment or companionship. Malachi 3:6 tells us that God never changes. He will never become any more or any less than what He is right now. He will never learn anything new, because He already knows everything there is to know and He also knows everything that will ever

happen throughout all the infinite ages of time. He will never be surprised or caught off-guard.”

“Then why were we made?” Iris asked.

“Romans 9:22-24 tells us that we were created to demonstrate God’s character. You see, God is a merciful God, but until we were created God had no way to demonstrate that because there was no one who needed mercy. God is forgiving, but until we were created there was no one to forgive. God is just, but until we were created there was no one who deserved God’s wrath. The existence of mankind allows God to reveal parts of His character that had been hidden for all the ages of eternity. All of these things – God’s mercy, forgiveness, justice, wrath, and more – can now be clearly seen for the very first time. In other words, God is using His creation to demonstrate aspects of Himself that had been previously hidden.”

The professor picked up his notes off his desk. “I’m afraid that’s all we have time for today. Be sure to read the next three chapters in your textbook for our next class. Our next topic will be the Bible. Oh – and take care out

there. You don't want to slip on any hail."

"I'm sure it's all melted by now," Brad remarked, as the class filed out the door.

"Unless it hasn't," the professor replied. "You can choose to exercise caution and try to avoid problems, or you can barge right into problems and suffer the consequences. It is your choice. I think that we should try to avoid suffering and pain, but I'm just a wise old man with a doctorate and decades of experience. What do I know?"

Brad shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the room, leaving Professor Grimes alone. Grimes walked over to the window and looked outside. He noticed that patches of the ground were covered in a white substance that, from this distance, almost looked like snow.

"I'm sure that hail down there is just imaginary," Grimes said cheerfully. "After all, if people don't believe in it then it can't possibly be true! What a world these young people live in."

Grimes then left the room, leaving the classroom empty.

