

Institutes of Theology | Session 22
Theology Proper: The Only True God
February 10, 2026

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

It's great to be with you men as we begin this semester, and really, we begin to look at our God. I want you to start with me in Romans chapter 11. Romans chapter 11, because I want to remind you of the proper response to theology proper. When we say theology proper, we mean we're going to study the very person of God Himself. How do you respond to that? Romans 11, chapter 11:33. "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord or who became His counselor or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." As Paul brings to a conclusion all of the great theology of the first 11 chapters of Romans, he rehearses the person of God. And how does he respond to the truth about God? In verse 36: "To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

You see, theology properly understood and digested must always lead to doxology. Theology must lead to doxology. And that's what I want us to do tonight. We're going to look at a lot of truth about our God. But men, if it stays there, if it doesn't change your heart, if it doesn't ignite your affections, if it doesn't govern your will, then you've missed the whole point of everything we do tonight. In fact, I love the way Donald MacLeod puts it in "Behold Your God."

"God is not simply a great sight, the object of speculative curiosity. The revelation of His glory and the whole theological process which legitimately follows from it is holy ground. We cannot stand as superiors over God or His Word. We may not coldly and detachedly analyze and collate the great self-revealing deeds and utterances of Jehovah. We may not theologize without emotion and commitment. The doctrine must thrill and exhilarate. It must humble and cast down. Theology has lost its way, and indeed its very soul, if it cannot say with John, 'I fell at His feet as dead.'" I hope you'll keep that in mind as we work our way through tonight.

Now, our objectives this semester in Theology proper, there are really three of them. First of all, we want to gain a basic understanding of the biblical teaching about the person and work of God. Who is He, and what does He do? What is He like, and what are his actions? Secondly, we want to be challenged to further study. You're not going to learn everything there is to know about God tonight or in the semester before you. So this is intended to whet your appetite. Really think of it like this. What I intend is for you to drink salt water that will in part quench your thirst but also make you thirsty. That's the goal. And then finally, to develop a desire for closer fellowship with God.

Available online at www.countrysidebible.org
Copyright © 2026 Tom Pennington. All rights reserved
Unedited transcript for personal use only.

God can be known. The God we're going to talk about tonight can be known, and you can grow in your knowledge of Him. You remember in 1 John 2, John talks about the progress in spiritual growth. You're a spiritual babe when you know your sins have been forgiven and you know God's your Father. Then you're a young man when you come to grips with the truth of the Scripture and you can stand against the evil one. But real adult Christian maturity is when you know God, you know the Father. There is a deepening relationship with God, your Creator. And that's what I want to happen through our time tonight and in the semester before us. So with that said, let's begin then.

And I'm going to cover three issues tonight. We're going to begin with the existence of God. The existence of God.

How do we know God exists? Biblical doctrine puts it this way, "In the beginning, God," Genesis 1:1. The Bible does not begin with a rationalistic argument for the existence of God, but rather assumes that He exists, that He existed before the beginning of all things outside Himself, and that there is only one God. Proof for God's existence must come, first and foremost, from God's testimony about Himself. He has provided irrefutable proofs for His existence in the Bible. Now, it's important to understand when you're talking about the existence of God, that all humans have an intuitive knowledge of God. Every man, every person, every human being has an awareness of God's existence spontaneously, because he was created in the image of God. This intuitive knowledge is universal. That's just the reality.

The World Almanac tells us that currently, there are about just over 8 billion people on this planet. If you look through a study of comparative religion, you will discover that 7 billion of those people, that is 7 of every 8 people on this planet, freely confess and believe in the existence of a superior power being. Why? Why is this so universal? It's because it's necessary. Charles Hodge writes, "There is no satisfactory way of accounting for the universal belief in the existence of God, except that such belief is founded on the very constitution of our nature." Why do 7 of 8 people on this planet believe there is a divine being? Because it's embedded in us. We are hardwired with that knowledge.

You say, Where does it come from? Well, this intuitive knowledge is clearly scriptural. Let me show you a couple of examples. Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1, verse 18. It's seen in the creation. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness." Now watch verse 19. "Because that which is known about God is evident within them." How? For God made it evident to them. Well, how did God make it evident to mankind that He exists? "For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, including His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen. They're in the creation. People see them.

And they don't just see them. Notice verse 20. They understand that there is a God through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. So the creation gives mankind this intuitive

knowledge that there is a supreme being, that God exists. You see it in Romans chapter 2 through man's conscience. He says, verse 14, "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do instinctively the things of the law, these not having the written law are a law to themselves." Now watch verse 15. "In that the Gentiles show the work of the law, the substance of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts either excusing or defending them." In other words, not only is God known and seen in His creation, He's known and seen in the conscience of man.

Man understands that there is a law giver, and that he is responsible to keep that law. And he understands that he doesn't keep that law. God has also revealed Himself through providence. I won't take you there, but Acts 14, verses 9 to 12 (v16-17). Paul says in his sermon there, he says, Listen, God didn't leave Himself without a witness in the world, in that He did good. He sent rains from heaven. He's filled your hearts with food and gladness. So God, in His providence and His care for this planet, in His care for the people on it, has made Himself known. That's why man has an intuitive knowledge of God. It's a universal knowledge. The people on this planet know it. But it's necessary because it's hardwired into us, and the Scripture clearly teaches that God has revealed Himself.

Again, biblical doctrine says theology proper seeks to ground the knowledge of God's existence, however, in the Scripture and to relegate all other evidence of God's existence to secondary status subordinate to Scripture's assessment. In other words, the chief way that we know God and about God is in His Word. Creation, providence, the conscience all speak, but they don't speak in such a way that we perfectly understand who God is, or even absolutely can be convinced that He does. Because the problem is this intuitive knowledge that man has of God is also rejected. It's been rejected. According to Romans 1, what does man do? Romans 1:18, he suppresses the truth. He suppresses what he knows about God's existence. And therefore, he is, verse 20 of Romans 1, without excuse. So man has this intuitive knowledge of the existence of God. But because he rejects that knowledge, suppresses it, ignores it, you know, you say, well, what about atheists? You've heard me mention before, John Blanchard wrote a great book called "Does God Believe in Atheists?" And the answer is no, God doesn't believe in atheists. He has made Himself known and clear to every person on this planet. And the reason there are some people who reject that is Romans 1, they have suppressed the truth that God has made evident. But because they've rejected it, some people, well-intentioned people, say, we need to set forth some rational arguments to convince man that God exists. Let me just walk through the classic rational arguments for God's existence.

Now, let me first of all make sure you understand there are two apologetic approaches, two basic approaches to proving God's existence. One of them is the evidentialist. And the evidentialist approaches the unbeliever on the ground that we all possess a common pool of facts. And he believes that the careful use of reason about those facts will lead to agreement that God exists, that Christianity is true, and possibly to the acceptance of the Gospel. Well, the other approach is

called the presuppositionalist approach. This is where we land, and I'll show you why. We believe that God has revealed Himself in creation, providence, and conscience. Man knows that revelation, and knows it to be true, Romans 1, but he willfully chooses to deny or disregard that revelation to suppress it. In fact, man is now dead to God, unable to choose good, even if confronted with it. Therefore, we cannot rationally argue unbelievers into saving faith. Instead, God has to bring the new birth, regeneration. And God always accomplishes regeneration by means of what? The spirit using the Word of God.

So proving the existence of God rationally outside the Scripture is not only impossible, but it's also unnecessary. I mean, suppose a psychiatrist has a patient who, a psychologist rather, has a patient who lives in a dream world and believes that the doctor is insane. Should the doctor try to enter the make-believe world of the patient to convince him that he's wrong? No, the only option the doctor has is to reason with him from the real world. And that's what we do with the Scripture. So as we consider the classic rational arguments for God's existence, we need to understand them within that framework.

There is some value, as we'll see. Historically, Christian apologists have set forth four primary rational arguments to attempt to prove logically without the support of Scripture that God exists. The first is the cosmological argument. Cosmos means world. Has a long history goes back to Plato, Aristotle, it's complex and consists of two parts, but let me just deal really with the first part. It's the argument from cause and effect. The idea is, there must be a first cause. That's where it lands. That's the supposed contribution. If every cause has an effect, then here's the universe. There must be a first cause. But the weaknesses are these. It begs the question of the need for a first cause. It doesn't prove it. Logically, if you follow this, and this is where a lot of people go when you try to take this approach, God must have a cause. And it certainly doesn't demand a single personal cause. Bertrand Russell, the atheist, attacked it on this grounds.

The second rational argument is the teleological argument. This is the argument from order and design. This is, the roots of this argument are found in Plato as well. Essentially, intelligent design, they argue, presupposes a designer. And the universe clearly exhibits intelligent design. Therefore, there must have been an architect who brought the world and the universe into existence. For example, the existence of a watch, because it's a complex created thing, implies the existence of what? A watchmaker. Order and design, intricate purposeful systems demand intelligent design. And you would come to that conclusion if you'd never seen a watch but stumbled on one on the beach. It's like, wow, that's not the same as a rock. That's required a lot more intelligence to create. The supposed contribution of this argument is that the first cause is intelligent and outside the universe. But again, the weaknesses are prevalent, and that is an intelligent designer could be finite, like His creation, and an intelligent designer doesn't equal a personal god. So it goes so far, but only that far.

A third argument is the ontological argument. This is the argument, the word *ontós* just means being. And Anselm was the one who sort of perfected this argument. Essentially, it's argument from the idea of God. It's like this. We have an idea of God, an absolute perfect being. This idea of God is infinitely greater than man himself. Hence, it cannot have its origin in man. It can only have its origin in God Himself. So supposedly, the contribution is the first cause must be infinite and perfect. However, weakness is it's impossible to do real existence from abstract thought or imagination. For example, one of Anselm's critics said this, "I can imagine a perfect island, beyond which no more perfect can be conceived. That doesn't make my island a reality."

Then there's the moral or anthropological argument. This is the argument from conscience. *Anthropos* means man. It says man has a moral consciousness. Every man has a sense of what is right and wrong. And when he commits evil, he experiences a sense of self-condemnation. Therefore, since all men have this, even if it's not exactly the same in every man, there is a similar thread in every man. And therefore, we can conclude that there must be some external moral law to which we are all wired. The first cause, this contribution would be, has a moral nature. This is the argument, by the way, of CS. Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity*. And it's the basic argument that we just saw in Romans 2. And so there is certainly truth to this. The problem with taking this argument outside the Bible and just arguing it rationally is it doesn't prove but assumes the moral law is objective, and it doesn't necessarily point to a being of absolute perfections. There are a lot of great laws on the books in our country, and there are a lot of really bad lawgivers and enforcers.

Now, those are the four basic rational arguments. And there are several Christian perspectives on those classic proofs. The classic view would say that they successfully argue and therefore force rational unbelievers to admit God's existence. And they can be used in evangelism. That's the classic view. They won't force someone to believe, they would argue, but they will force any rational person to admit there's a God.

A second sort of modified view of that is they will convince no one who isn't already a believer. Really, these proofs offer evidence to the believer that his faith in God's existence is rational. A third view is that these classic proofs are entirely worthless. They have no value whatsoever to believers or unbelievers. And then there's what I would call a common sense presuppositionalist approach. And it's this, none of those rational arguments, in fact, no rational argument will ever convince an unbeliever. Why? Because he's spiritually dead. However, it is legitimate to use these proofs apologetically to remove the unbeliever's false objections to Christianity. We make them offensive weapons to demolish the ridiculous arguments put up by the unbeliever, rather than use them defensively to argue that God exists. And, this is really important, we make these proofs, if we use them like this, from the Scripture, from some of the texts and other texts that I've just shown you. So, then, the weight of Scripture comes to bear. It's 2 Corinthians 10, right? We are destroying every fortress; all of the ideas raised against the knowledge of God. And what

is our weapon to do that? It's not rational arguments. It's the Scripture. It's the Scripture. That's the weapon of our warfare, the sword of the spirit.

So, the existence of God. We've looked at the reality that man has an intuitive knowledge of God, all men do. We looked through briefly the classic rational arguments. Now, let's consider the Biblical, quote unquote, argument. Why do we believe there's a God? Why do you believe there's a God? Well, biblically, we believe for only one reason. Because God has revealed Himself. He has revealed Himself, first of all, generally through creation and providence. We just looked at that. But He's also revealed Himself morally through the law written on the heart. Again, we just saw Romans 2:14-15. And when you talk with someone about the gospel, it's important to remember that you have those two great allies within the person you're talking to. They know, whether they deny it or not, they know in their heart of hearts that there is a God because of creation and because of providence. And they know that He has expectations of them because of their conscience. They know His awareness through creation and providence that God exists, and his awareness through conscience of a moral law that he has violated.

So God has revealed Himself generally through creation and providence, morally through the law written on the heart, personally through His Son. John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God [talking about Jesus] who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." He has exegeted Him. The personal being of God took on humanity and dwelt among us. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And in so doing, God revealed Himself to us.

Fourthly, He revealed Himself propositionally through His Word. Again, biblical doctrine states, the only reliable proof of the existence of the true God consists of statements from and about Him in His inspired Word. God must not be excluded from testifying about Himself. Quite the contrary, His testimony, given by His own inspiration, must be accepted as unique and perfectly reliable. Scripture asserts the existence of the only true God. The Bible begins with foundational presupposition that God existed in the beginning. So every statement from the Bible about God's nature and actions is proof from Him of His existence. In fact, think about this. The Bible requires that anyone who desires to know God first believe that He exists. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. For he who comes to God must believe [what?] that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." The Bible says that those who refuse to acknowledge that God exists in the face of all of the evidence we've already talked about are fools. Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God." Psalm 10:4, "The wicked in the haughtiness of his countenance does not seek God." All his thoughts are there is no God. But God has revealed Himself propositionally through His Word. In fact, the God of Scripture claims He is the one true God who has eternally existed.

Deuteronomy 33:27, He calls Himself the eternal God. Psalm 90, verse 2, "Before the mountains were born, or you gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you

were God. From eternity past to eternity future, you are God.” Isaiah 44:6, “Thus says Yahweh, the king of Israel and His redeemer, the Yahweh of hosts, ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides me.’” This is the claim of the God of the Bible. In John, chapter 17, verse 3, Jesus in His high priestly prayer, praying to the Father, says, “This is eternal life, that they may know you [here's what Jesus says], the only true God.” He affirms the God of the Hebrew scriptures to be the only true God, and to know “Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” John 5:44, “How can you believe,” Jesus says, “when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?” 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul, “There is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” 1 Timothy 1:17, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” But in reality, think about this, with all of that evidence, even the self-revelation of God propositionally in Scripture is not enough to convince a person of God's existence. You say, wait a minute, Tom, what did you just say? Okay, there's one other way. There's a fifth and crucial way that God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself savingly only through the work of His Spirit using His Word.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Paul begins by talking about the ministry that he has, and then he says this in verse 3. “If our gospel is veiled [hidden, unable to be seen], it is veiled to those who are perishing, [how did it get veiled?] in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond servants for Jesus' sake.” Okay, wait a minute, Paul. If the gospel is veiled to those who are perishing, if the God of this world has blinded their minds so they cannot see the truth about God and how to know Him on the pages of Scripture, then how does it happen? Verse 6. Here's the only way it happens. “For the God who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness’ [he's talking about the creation, talking about when God said, let there be light and there was light, that God must be] the one who shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” In other words, it's not enough that God has revealed Himself propositionally on the pages of Scripture because mankind is dead, his mind is dark, he cannot understand the truth because of his sin, and so God has to act savingly through the work of His Spirit, opening the mind of the unbeliever to no longer be blind to the truth.

Here's how Biblical Doctrines puts it.

“As those whose minds have been blinded to the glory of God revealed in Christ, unbelievers do not need more evidence, whether logical or empirical. Rather, they need new eyes to properly evaluate the sufficient evidence they already have. They need to experience the miracle of regeneration in which God quickens the believing heart by shining into it the light of the knowledge of His glory. This happens only by the proclamation of the gospel that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

In other words, we take the truth of Scripture, and we share that truth with those who are perishing. And God the Spirit opens their minds to understand and they get it, they see it. That's the only way it happens. You're never going to argue a person into the Christian faith. They're dead. Can't respond to your arguments. Doesn't mean you don't answer legitimate questions. Doesn't mean you don't use even the classic arguments. The way I like to refer to it is to kind of kick the crutch out from under an unbeliever that he's leaning on. But that's not going to convince him to believe. Only the Spirit, using the Word, will do that.

To illustrate this point, by the way, that I'm making here, John Calvin used the idea of eyeglasses. I have them. Many of you have them. You'll appreciate this. In fact, some of you can't find your way to your alarm clock without your glasses. Calvin said, "Imagine there's a man who can barely see. If you put a beautiful, well-written book in front of him, he can hardly put two words together to understand them. But if you give him glasses, he can read distinctly." Calvin said, "In the same way, by nature, an unbeliever is spiritually blind. He doesn't clearly see the revelation of God generally, morally, personally, or even propositionally in the Scripture. And the only way he can savingly comprehend even the written Word is through the work of the Spirit." So understand this, men. The Bible never attempts to prove the existence of God. It simply takes belief in God for granted. It teaches that all men believe in the existence of God. The truth is like a lion. You don't have to defend it. Just open the cage and let it out. The gospel is like a gun. You don't have to convince the sinner that it is in fact a gun. Just pull the trigger.

Again, Biblical Doctrine puts it very well. "In summary, God exists. He exists as He is revealed by the Bible. The reason one must believe that He exists is because He said that He exists. His existence must not be accepted on the basis of human reason because that is limited to time and space and has been corrupted by indwelling sin. God has sufficiently revealed Himself in the Bible."

That's how we know of the existence of God. Not to say those other arguments, the classic arguments, or even more, the reality of God revealing Himself in creation, God revealing Himself in the conscience, God revealing Himself in providence, all those are true. And we can show people that from Scripture. But in the end, the only way you're ever going to convince a sinner to believe in the gospel is if you share the truth of the gospel with him, and the Holy Spirit turns on the light. If the God who said, let there be light, says, let there be light in that man's soul. That's the only way it happens. So Scripture doesn't attempt to prove the existence of God. God has already done that.

But now we come to the question, okay, there, God exists, there is one God. What is the God who is? What is He like? Well, the truth is, God isn't exactly like anything. I mean, everything in the universe fits into a category. If you see a Golden Retriever, you have a category in which to put that sight. Where do you put, what folder do you put a Golden Retriever in? It's a dog or an animal, maybe a larger folder. There's a category to which that animal belongs. You see a

Japanese maple tree in my backyard, and you immediately understand it falls in a category. That's how we learn. We associate what we don't know with things that we do. But when we come to God, it doesn't work that way. Because God does not fit into a category. He is utterly unique. Isaiah 46:5, "To whom would you liken me and make me an equal and compare me that we would be alike," God says.

We come face to face with this problem when the writers of Scripture attempt to describe God. If you doubt that, read Ezekiel 1, where Ezekiel has that vision of God. The glory of God, and you'll find that He's always saying things like this, "like," "as," "form," "resembling," "appearance," and "something like." Chapters punctuated with those expressions. I am really describing what theologians call God's incomprehensibility. The Westminster Confession simply says that God is incomprehensible. Now, what does that mean? Don't be confused. Biblical Doctrine puts it this way. "Although God can be known truly, Scripture also reveals that God is not comprehensively or exhaustively knowable to humans in any aspect of His being or actions. The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 puts it this way. "The Lord our God is infinite in being and perfection, whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself."

Incomprehensibility means the reality of God infinitely surpasses what any of His creatures ever perceive Him to be, ever understand Him to be. Augustine put it this way. "We are speaking of God. Is it any wonder that you do not comprehend? For if you comprehend Him, He cannot be God. Let it be a pious confession of great ignorance rather than a rash profession of knowledge. To have a very slight knowledge of God is a great blessing. To comprehend Him is altogether impossible." So when we use the term incomprehensible, we do not mean, notice what the slide says, we do not mean that He is unable to be understood. We mean that He's unable to be fully understood.

Now, Scripture states in general terms, God's incomprehensibility. Job 26:14. "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways, and how faint a word we hear of Him, but His mighty thunder [the full revelation of Himself] who can understand?" He speaks of the outskirts or edge of His predictable ways, and the illustration of thunder. From such a distance, the thunder of God's power reaches us like a faint rumble. We're just hearing it like, you know, when a thunderstorm leaves DFW, and you hear it rumbling in the distance, that's the glimpse we get of God. Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9. God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." First Corinthians 2:10-12. "Only the Spirit knows the deep things of God." First Timothy 6:16. "God alone possesses immortality, and He dwells in unapproachable light." Those are general expressions of God's incomprehensibility.

Scripture also provides us with specific categories of God's incomprehensibility. First of all, His being in nature. Job 11, verse 7. "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are as high as the heavens. What can you do? Deeper than Sheol,

what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.” Psalm 145:3. Great is Yahweh and highly to be praised.” And His greatness is what? Unsearchable, His works and His actions. Job 37:5, “God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend.” Speaking of His actions, His understanding. Psalm 147:5, “Great is our Lord and abundant in strength. His understanding is infinite.” It's beyond measure, or beyond number, or beyond counting is the idea in Hebrew.

His knowledge is incomprehensible. Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our sons forever.” We know what He's revealed, but there are a lot of secret things that only God Himself knows. Psalm 139:6, “God's [comprehensive] knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high. I cannot attain to it.”

We read Romans 11 when I began. Romans 11:33 tells us that His plans, His decisions, His councils are incomprehensible to us. “Who knows the mind of the Lord?” Who can fully get their arms around what God is doing in the world? Practically, God's incomprehensibility means we can never fully understand God. And we can never fully understand a single thing about God. And we will never know all of His perfections. Because He's infinite, He must possess attributes or perfections of which we know nothing. But here's the good news. We will never stop learning about God in this life. And we will spend eternity learning more about our God.

God has chosen, in spite of the fact that we can never know everything there is to know about God, He's chosen to reveal to us what He has chosen to reveal. The secret things belong to the Lord, our God, but the things He's revealed, they belong to us and to our children forever. So let's talk then about how we know anything about such a being. The only way is because of God's self-revelation. He has chosen to reveal Himself to us in His Word and in His Son. Now, God's revelation is necessary, because for us to know God or anything about God, He has to reveal Himself. Look at 1 Corinthians. First Corinthians chapter 1, you know the Corinthians prided themselves on their wisdom. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 21, “since in the wisdom of God [now watch this] the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.” In other words, you can't get to God from human wisdom. He has to reveal Himself, and that was the message that Paul was preaching. It's necessary, His self-revelation.

His self-revelation is also truthful. In other words, what God reveals about Himself is true. Again and again, the Scripture talks about God being true, God being truthful. God is not so incomprehensible that the information He gives us doesn't at all correspond to the real way He is. What He has revealed about Himself in the Scripture is accurate. It is the way He is. Alan Cairns writes, “When men come to know Christ, who is the truth, they receive an objective knowledge, a grasp of truth, which, though far short of God's understanding, both in quality and quantity, is real, because it is a genuine reflection of God's knowledge. What you know about God is true, what you know from the Scripture. If you properly understood the Scripture, what you know about Him is exactly the way He is.” You just can't know everything about what you know about

Him. And God's self-revelation is limited. What God has revealed to us about Himself, think about this, what God has revealed in creation, in the conscience, in providence, and in His Word, what He has revealed is infinitesimal compared to what can be known about God.

I remember when I was in seminary, a professor illustrated this, and I'll use this little sign behind me here. He said, imagine for a moment that that is not, it's a plane mathematically, right? It's a plane on the front. And he said, imagine that you could extend that plane, that's the front of that sign, in an infinite direction, in all directions. So you took this plane and you extended it infinitely that direction, infinitely up, infinitely down, infinitely that direction. He said that infinite plane represents what can be known about God, what's true about God. And then he went up to the, it was in our case, I'm about to really date myself here, but it was a blackboard. And he went up to this blackboard, and he took a piece of chalk and he drew this tiny little dot in the middle of that blackboard. He said, so now you got this infinite plane, that's everything that can be known about God. He said that dot is what we know about God, what God has revealed. Our knowledge of God is like a single drop of water in the vast ocean that is the person of God. Our knowledge of God compared to the totality of His person is like this planet compared to the vastness of the universe.

We know so very little of the infinite being that is God. That's what we mean by God's incomprehensibility. So how can God make Himself known to us when He is so great and so magnificent? Well, the writers of Scripture used two tools to help us understand God. One of those is called anthropomorphism. Anthropos, Man. So literally, the word means man's form. Scripture at times uses a figure of speech in which it attributes human characteristics to God to enable us to understand otherwise abstract truth. For example, Scripture talks about God's eye. Does God have an eye? No, God doesn't have a body. He's a spirit. So when it speaks of God's eye, it's speaking of His knowledge. He sees everything. He knows everything. When it speaks of His hand, God doesn't have a hand. He's a spirit. It's speaking of His action. You use your hands to act, to do things. It's talking about God acting. God's heart speaks of His love. God's face speaks of His presence. Now, some heretics or cults seriously error by interpreting those literally, like Mormonism. Mormonism attributes a body to God. Scripture isn't saying God has a body. In fact, we'll look at it. Scripture is very clear He doesn't. So those are figures of speech to help us understand who He is. Anthropomorphisms.

Secondly, there are anthropopathism. Anthropos, you recognize that again. Literally, it's man's passions. Scripture attributes human emotions to God. The figure of speech in which that's done. Now, that's a divine condescension to help us understand something about God. For example, when the Scripture says God regretted that He made man, does that mean that like you and I do, God did something and then after the fact went, oh man, I wish I hadn't done that? No. It's helping us understand that what was going on in the heart of God was similar to what happens when you and I do something and regret that we did it. It grieved Him.

Now, when we speak of God having emotions, it's important to speak of a theological truth. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time here. You'll come back to this, I think. But there's a thing that theologians speak of as the impassibility of God, that is without emotions. But when we say God is without emotions, we mean that in two senses. He has none of the passions associated with a body. Robert Raymond says, "'God is without passions.' It's understood to mean that God has no bodily passions, such as hunger or the human drive for sexual fulfillment." Secondly, His emotions are not like ours. They're not reactions. When do you show emotion? You react to something. Does God ever react? No, He knows what's going to happen. He's planned what's going to happen from eternity past. So He never reacts like you and I react, because we're surprised by something. So biblical doctrine says this. God is impassible, not in the sense that He's devoid of true feeling or has no affections, but in the sense that His emotions are active and deliberate expressions of His holy dispositions. Not, as is often the case with human emotions, involuntary passions by which he is driven. Raymond says, "The creature cannot inflict suffering, pain, or any sort of distress upon him against his will." Does God grieve? Yes. Is that because He's caused to grieve by something outside of himself? No. It's because He chooses out of His own holy disposition to be grieved by that reality.

So, God's self-revelation, even with His self-revelation, He is still incomprehensible. We can know Him, but we cannot know Him fully. And men, that should humble us. But there is so much that we can know about God. And that's where I want us to go now. Let's start this, and we'll take a break in a few minutes.

But let's start then with the nature of God. The nature of God. I want to begin by considering what God is not. I'm not going to give you a comprehensive list. Rather, I'm just going to highlight some of the common distortions of God. What God is not.

First of all, we reject anti-theism, or atheism, the idea that there is no God. Now, there are two kinds of atheists, or people who deny the existence of God. First of all, they're practical atheists. These are godless people who live as if there is no God, but do not always deny His existence. In other words, there are a lot of people who just live as though there's no God, but if you ask them, they believe there is a God. Then there are theoretical atheists. That is, those who base their denial of God on rational argument. Now, there are three kinds of theoretical atheists. There's the dogmatic atheist who explicitly denies the existence of God, Bertrand Russell and his type. There are skeptical atheists. These are those who assert that it is not possible for humans to know with certainty that God exists, also known as agnostics. And then there's the critical atheist who asserts that they just haven't yet seen valid proof for God's existence. And so they don't, they're not convinced that He does. We reject that. It's not true that there is no God, and we've already seen His existence. We'll look at some other things in a moment.

Secondly, we reject the idea of pantheism. The idea is that all is God. The word pan means all. Theos means God. There are different forms of pantheism. There's Native African and American

religions. There's Transcendentalism, New Age religion. But at its core, all of these deny the transcendence of God, the personality of God, and the distinctness of God from His creation. In the simplest sense, and it is simplistic, but in a very simplistic sense, God is all, and all is God. But more specifically, pantheism would say that reality is an amorphous fusion of all matter and spirit. You say, I don't understand that. But welcome to the club. All personal being is swallowed in one predominant over-soul. Animism is different in that it teaches all things have a spirit, but practically, it can look very similar to pantheism. We reject pantheism. That's not what Scripture says God is like.

We reject polytheism. Poly means many. Theos means God. Polytheism is the belief in a plurality of gods. Whether you're talking ancient religions, the Greek and Roman religions, Hinduism, Mormonism, all of those are polytheistic faiths. They believe there are many gods. Polytheism is often closely tied to the worship of nature, and it's a popular counterpart of pantheism.

We also reject the gods of other monotheistic faiths, the god of Islam and the god of Zoroastrianism. In fact, look with me at 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Paul makes a shocking statement. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 19. "What do I mean then? That something sacrificed to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything?" I mean, is an idol something? He says, "No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to become sharers in demons." In other words, Paul says, and he's only quoting Deuteronomy 32:17, or referring to it, that the gods of the nations, other gods besides the one true biblical god, that those gods are actually demons masquerading as those gods. That's the reality. And so we reject them. God must not be thought of in any of those ways. So let's come then to what God is.

The shorter catechism asks this question, "What is God?" What's the answer? "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." It's an amazing definition. Charles Hodge calls that the best non-biblical definition ever penned by man. Let me read it again. "What is God? God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Now, several categories grow out of that remarkable definition.

First of all, God is a being. The Westminster Confession says, "His being." Now, we say this to make sure that we distinguish between God and His creation. Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Unlike pantheism, in which God is identical with each point in space, God's being is not identical to the created universe. Scripture teaches that nothing created is like God, and that's why God forbids the making of any idols of Him. There is nothing in the created universe that matches God, but He is a being separate from His creation. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and everything that exists. He is a being separate from them.

We've seen what God isn't. We're looking at what God is, and started with that definition, because it reflects the Scripture perfectly. God is a being. He's non-identical to the created universe, separate from His creation. But then the question comes, what kind of being is He? And next, when we talk about what God is, we say that God is living. Again, the Westminster Confession says, "There is but one only living and true God." That's what the Scripture teaches. Jeremiah 10:10, "But Yahweh is the true God. He is the living God and the everlasting king." 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God". And the emphasis here is what? When we talk about God is living, what's the contrast with? It's with idols. It's with pretend gods that don't live. They don't have life. And again and again, the Scripture does that.

Turn back to Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 46. And notice verse 3. "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel. You have been born by me from birth and have been carried from the womb." Now, I want you to notice the contrast here. He just described Himself, God did, as carrying Israel. Notice the contrast. Even to your old age, I'll be the same. Even to your graying years, I will bear you. I have done it, and I will carry you, and I will bear you, and I will deliver you. Verse 5, "To whom would you liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we should be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse, who waste silver on the scale, hire a goldsmith, makes it into a god, they bow down, indeed they worship it. [Now watch this] They lift it up on the shoulder and carry it. They set it in its place, and it stands there. It doesn't move from its place, though one may cry to it. It cannot answer. It cannot deliver him from his distress. Remember this and be assured. Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is no one like me."

You see what God is doing here. He's contrasting the reality that He is the true God. He carries His people. He is alive, and He's able to carry them. Idols, on the other hand, are not alive. They cannot move. They cannot help. They have to be carried by those who worship them. The true God lives. He's alive in the same sense that you are alive. In fact, Acts 17, Paul says that this true living God is the one who gives life to all things. God lives, think about this, God lives more truly and certainly than you live. And because He lives, you live. "In Him, we move, exist, and have our being," Paul says. He is a living being. He is infinite. The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 says, the Lord our God is infinite in being and perfection. Infinite, that is, He's unlimited. There are no limits on God except the laws of logic. In other words, God is the one who gave us logic. He is rational. He's a rational being. He can't violate the laws of logic any more than we can because that's who He is, and He can't violate His attributes.

Now, when we say that God is infinite in His being, we mean that He transcends all spatial limitations. That's really His omnipresence. God can't be confined to any space, and that you'll deal with later in the semester. But when we say that God is infinite in His attributes or His perfections, we don't merely mean that He has an infinite amount of that quality. We mean it,

although that's certainly true. We also mean that He possesses that attribute in a different way than any other being in the universe. For example, when we say that His love is infinite, we not only mean that He possesses an infinite quantity of love, but we mean that the quality of His love is without limits. It's without borders or boundaries. The quality of His love is of a different kind than ours. I mean, we love, but we love in response to His. But His love is without limits, both in quantity and quality. In other words, the word infinite essentially means not finite. The word finite comes from the Latin word for end. The point is, when we say God is infinite, we're saying nothing about God has an end. Nothing about Him has a terminus. You can try like a diver to plumb the depths of God's love, for example, but you never reach the bottom. And you can try to plumb the depths of its quality, and you can never fully grasp the quality of His love. God is infinite in His being and His attributes.

A fourth thing that's true about God is He is spirit. He is spirit. The Westminster Confession again says, "He is a most pure spirit, invisible without body, parts or passions." Now, when we say God is spirit, we first of all mean that God is non-material or immaterial. In the universe, there are two kinds of substances or things that exist. There is material or matter, and there's immaterial or non-matter. God, in the essence of His being, is immaterial. In His essential being, God has none of the properties that belong to matter. Confession says He is without body. Turn to John chapter four. Jesus makes an incredible point in His discussions with the Samaritan woman. He describes God, and He says in John 4, verse 24, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." Now, in Greek, the word spirit or *nouma* actually comes first in the sentence for emphasis. So literally, Jesus said, spirit is the God. Jesus here makes an unequivocal statement about the being of God. God's essence is of the nature of spirit. What did Jesus mean?

Well, Jesus defines it for us in Luke 24:39. Listen to this. Jesus says, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I myself, touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have." God is a spirit. That means God does not have flesh and bones as we have. God is not material. He is spirit. We also mean when we say He's spirit, that He's invisible. The fact that God is spirit, and immaterial, also means that He is invisible. Look at 1 Timothy. First Timothy chapter 1, verse 16. Paul says, "For this reason I found mercy, so that in me, as the worst of sinners, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King, eternal, immortal..." What? We sing it. Invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. John 1:18. "No one has seen God at any time." That is, in His essential being, because He's spirit. But "the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." No one has or can see God in His essential nature. Why? Well, on the one hand, because no one could see Him in His essential nature, and live. Remember what He told Moses in Exodus 33? "You cannot see My face." You cannot see the fullness of who I am, for no man can see all that is me and live. His glory and His majesty

would simply be too great for anyone to really see and survive. Certainly a sinful human being. We would be incinerated by the blazing glory of His majesty.

But there's another reason, and that is there is nothing inherently visible in God to see. He is spirit. Colossians 1:15, Christ "is the image of the invisible God." Romans 1:20, the phrase "His eternal power" and godhead are in apposition, a further defining of the phrase "His invisible attributes." That means godhead is, by definition, invisible. God's divine nature, His Godhead, is invisible.

Now, let me just talk about some misunderstandings that come from this, this idea that God is spirit. You go, wait a minute, Tom, what about those passages in which God appears in some physical manifestation? For example, in Genesis 32, He appears as a man. In Exodus 3, as a burning bush. Genesis 16, as the angel of the Lord. In Matthew 3, as a dove. What about those? Well, God can and does choose to make His presence known through physical phenomena, so humans can see Him. But He is still by nature spirit, and those are not permanent manifestations of His being. What about Christ? Oh, Christ, you remember, the eternal Son of God, and as God is what? Spirit. God is spirit. The eternal Son was spirit. But He took on Himself, He added to Himself full and complete humanity, and He will be fully human forever. Christ's divine nature, think about this, Christ's divine nature remains invisible, just like the Father and the spirit. When we see Christ in the future, and we will see Him, what we will see with our eyes will be His human glorified body.

You say, okay, well, I get that, but what about those references to God having bodily parts, like a hand or eyes or ears or a face? Well, remember what we talked about. Those are anthropomorphisms. They're using something we're familiar with to communicate to us something about God, but it doesn't mean God actually has a hand or actually has eyes in the way that we do. God is a spirit, and as Jesus said, a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones, as you see that I have. You say, okay, what about those passages that talk about our eventually seeing God? There's a lot of promises about that. Job 19, "I will see God." Matthew 5:8, "the pure in heart, will see God." First John 3:2, "we will see Him just as He is." Hebrews 12:14, "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord." With the implication that those who are truly Christ's, who do pursue sanctification, because they're really believers, will see Him.

What about Revelation 22:4? "We will see the face of the Lamb." What's going on there? Well, those references must mean one of three things. Here are those misunderstandings resolved. They must mean, first of all, we will see the second person of the Trinity, who as the God man, has a human body that can always be seen. That human body of Jesus, that glorified human body, can only be in one place at one time. I mean, He can obviously move very quickly between places, but at the same time, it's a human body, a glorified human body, like the body we will one day receive. So we'll see Him. We'll see the face of Jesus, truly and literally.

Secondly, it means that God will, just as He did in the Old Testament, choose to reveal Himself in some physical manifestation. I think when we study the Book of Revelation, we see in other places, He will manifest Himself as light. He often does. So we will see God in that sense. We'll see what He chooses to display Himself visibly as, but that isn't part of His essential nature. He is spirit. And I think it means that we will comprehend God in a much deeper, more profound way than we are able to now. What they don't mean, all those passages I just talked about, is that God has some permanent material form, except through the human body of Jesus.

Now, what are the implications of God being spirit? We've already talked about them really, but let me just remind you, God is invisible. God has no extension into space. He has no weight, no mass, no bulk, no parts, no form, no taste, no smell. He is invisible. God is incorruptible because He's spirit. He can't decay. He can't deteriorate. Doesn't wear out. Doesn't need to be replaced. And in this small way, humans are like God because your soul is immortal. From the moment of your conception, your eternal soul is in fact eternal and doesn't decay.

I was just talking to someone who's growing old and struggling with all the things that go with growing old. And I told them a story. I was talking to my mom when she turned 90. And I said, so mom, what does it feel like to be 90? And she had been in Christ many years. And she said, "You know, Tom," she said, "inside the real me, I feel exactly like I did when I was 18. It's my body that's decaying all around me." And that's exactly right. Our spirit, our soul is not subject to decay. It will last somewhere forever. God is incorruptible because He is spirit. And then God is immortal. Immaterial things don't die.

Now, as far as application to this idea of God is spirit, God is everywhere. God can't be perceived by the physical senses, but He is everywhere. You all had this experience. You know, my daughter would ask me questions, you know, probing some of these mysteries when she was younger. And one of my daughters would do this often. And the question to me was, "Daddy, is God here in the car with us?" The answer is what? Yes, He is, because God is everywhere. He's not limited to space. He's everywhere. I remember, you know, one time, I caught her at the door of the bathroom, and she had the door of the bathroom, and she had this other hand kind of extended like a running back or something, like she's fending off somebody, and she's got this grimace on her face. "And I said, sweetheart, what are you doing?" She says, "Dad, I need to go to the bathroom, and I'm trying to get God and Jesus out of the bathroom." Makes sense, right, to a little mind like that. But that's exactly right.

We live *Coram Deo* before the face of God. We cannot perceive Him by the senses, but He is everywhere. We should not make any form to represent God. Since God is spirit, don't attach your concept of God to a form. And we should not worship, or we should rather worship Him in spirit and in truth. That's what Jesus says, right? He's a Spirit. So we worship Him in spirit and in truth. You say, what does it mean to worship in truth? It means in keeping with the Scripture, in keeping with His self-revelation. What does it mean to worship in spirit? It's not talking about

the Holy Spirit. It's talking about the human spirit. In other words, because God is spirit, He is not happy with purely external physical worship.

Guys, let me apply it very, very directly. If your body shows up on Sunday morning, but your mind and heart aren't engaged, you're not worshipping in a way that honors the God who is Spirit. Because to worship God in spirit means your whole being, your inner self, your real self is engaged in worship, and it's not just your body sitting there. God is spirit. God is also personal. Einstein admitted that there's a cosmic force in the universe, but he concluded that that force is unknowable. The Scripture teaches us that the true God is not the force or some collection of cosmic energy, but He is personal.

Now, when we say God is personal, we mean two things. First of all, we mean that God is rational. He's rational. And let me break that down a bit. When we say He's rational, first of all, we mean that He is self-conscious. God is aware of Himself as a distinct being. You know, if you accidentally step on your dog's tail, your dog experiences the sensation of pain and yelps. But your dog isn't capable of thinking that there is a self that is experiencing that sensation and that he is that self. In other words, your dog isn't self-conscious. Scripture teaches us, however, that God is self-conscious. God is self-aware. In Exodus 3:14, He reveals His name. In Isaiah 43:10, He compares Himself with others. In Isaiah 54:7-8, He tells us what His emotion is. Again, using comparison to human emotion, but what He's experiencing. ““In an outburst of anger, I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting steadfast love, I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord.”

God is aware, if I can put it this way, I think you understand what I mean, God is aware of His current mental state. He's self-aware, self-conscious. And the entire Bible comes from God as one great self-revelation, according to 2 Timothy 3:16. So God is self-conscious, but when we say He's rational, we also mean that He's self-determining. That is, that He has the ability to consider alternative choices, to choose as He pleases, and the power to carry out what He pleases and chooses. Job 42:2, “I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.” God can act. He can do what He chooses. Psalm 115:3, “Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases.” This is what persons do. Ephesians 1:11 says He's predestined all things. “After the counsel of His will.”

So God is rational. He is self-conscious, and He's self-determining. But when we say God is personal, we not only mean He's rational, we also mean He's relational. He relates as a rational being. He relates as a rational being among the members of the Trinity. We're going to talk about the Trinity in just a moment. He relates as a rational being to His world and to creation. He answers prayer. He comforts. He loves. God is rational, and He is relational. In other words, He is personal. And the greatest proof that God is personal comes to us in human history. And what is that proof? The person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. “He [Jesus said in John 14:9] who

has seen me has seen the Father.” In John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” Jesus was obviously rational and relational.

And just as He was personal, the invisible triune God is also personal. There's one other thing we need to know about God, and that is that God is Trinity. He's a being. He's a living being. He's an infinite being. He's spirit. He's personal. And He is Trinity. Now, here we come to one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Trinity. Now, let me be clear to you, the Trinity is not a contradiction. Biblical doctrine says, while it may be ultimately incomprehensible, it is not contrary to reason and logic, but can be rationally explained, supported, and understood through biblical revelation. So, the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in the Scripture. However, the word Trinity does not occur. There is no one verse or passage that precisely states the truths about the Trinity. Still, it's been almost universally embraced by all who call themselves Christian throughout church history, why? Because a careful examination of the scriptural data produces seven scriptural propositions.

One, the Father is God.

Two, the Son is God.

Three, the Holy Spirit is God.

Four, the Father is not the Son.

Five, the Father is not the Holy Spirit.

Six, the Son is not the Holy Spirit.

And seven, there's only one God.

Now, when you look at those seven propositions, those suppositions form the basis for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. The first six of them are reflected in what's called the shield of the Trinity, which dates to the early third century AD. There it is. You can see, you have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And you can see, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, but the Father is not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not the Son, and the Father is not the Son. That illustrates why we believe in the Trinity. All of those propositions can be clearly, powerfully proved in the Scripture. So let's start by defining the Trinity. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here, but what does it mean?

What does the Trinity not mean? Four common deviations. First of all, tri-theism. The Trinity is really three full distinct essences, three separate gods. It's not widely held today, but it is a deviation from the doctrine of the Trinity.

Partialism. The idea that each of the three persons has a third of the divine essence. This results ultimately in none of the three persons being fully divine.

Here's one that's a little more common today in North Texas. Modalism. Also called Sabellianism, or modalistic monarchism. And this teaches that there's only one god, amen, but that one god, they teach, wrongly, assumes three different roles, or modes. In other words, just like a man can be a husband, a father, and a son at exactly the same time. So, there's one person, think of it like this, there's one god and only one person in god, and that one person just wears different hats at different times. Today, this heresy is taught by the United Pentecostals, also called the Jesus-only Pentecostals, or the Oneness Pentecostals. The most famous one until not too long ago was T.D. Jakes down in Dallas. Modalism.

Another deviation is subordinationism, or Arianism. Only the Father is in His essence god. The Son and the spirit are created and subordinate. This denies the deity both of Jesus Christ and of the spirit. It's named for Arius, bishop of Alexandria, who died in 336 AD. And he taught that the Son and the spirit were created by God the Father. Before that time, they didn't exist. Only the Father. The Son existed before the rest of creation, and is greater than the rest of creation, but He's not equal to the Father in all of His perfections. Now, how did Arius end there? How did he come to that conclusion? A couple of ways. He argued, first of all, from Christ being called the only begotten Son. He made a wrong—I'm going to talk about what that means—He made a wrong conclusion from that. He said that must mean if He's a Son and He's begotten, it must mean He had a beginning. And so He was created, he argued.

But the word *monogenēs*, only begotten, originally described an only child, whether a son or a daughter. As a result, it came to be used of something unique, of which there was only one of its kind. For example, in Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is referred to as the *monogenēs* of Abraham, even though Isaac wasn't Abraham's first son or even his only son. But He was the one-of-a-kind son because He was the child of promise. So when the New Testament writers used this word for Jesus, they mean that He is the only eternal Son. He is the one-of-a-kind Son because He shares, as we'll talk about in a moment, the Father's essence.

The other way he argued is, Arius argued that phrase from Colossians 1:15 that says, Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. He said, that must mean he's created. But that expression is often used of someone with preeminence, regardless of their birth. And so, you can see it in Psalm 89:27. It's not the literal firstborn. Arius' views were condemned to Council of Nicaea in 325. Today, the primary adherence to his views are Jehovah's Witnesses. And so, beware when they come to your door. They have embraced an ancient heresy. They're wrong in the doctrine of God. They're wrong in the doctrine of Jesus. They're wrong in the gospel. They are a cult. And so, just be aware of that. Now, I didn't spend a lot of time there, because I really want to get to what the Trinity is.

What are we talking about when we say God is Trinity? We mean the one true God. God is one in His essential being or His constitutional nature, His essence, His *ousia*, to use the Latin (ed. Greek) word. There's only one God, one divine, undivided essence. But in that one divine being, there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three hypostasis, again, to use the word that was often used to define this, to distinguish the members of the Trinity. Again, Biblical Doctrine puts it this way. "These distinct modes of relationship establish a definite order within the Trinity, so that it is proper to say, with respect to their relationship only, not with respect to their essence, glory, or majesty, that the Father is first, the Son is second, and the Spirit is third."

Three persons. What do we mean by persons? We mean, theologically, three distinct centers of consciousness. I almost hate to use that expression because I think it's going to easily be confused. Let me explain what I mean. All I mean is this, that within God, one God, one will, one mind, one purpose, not all three persons know things in the same way. They all know all things, and they know them of one mind, but they know them in a way that's peculiar to His own person. For example, both the Father and the Spirit knew the objective fact that the Son would die on the cross, but neither the Father nor the Son thought, I will die on the cross. So in the one divine being, there are three persons. And the essence of God belongs equally to each of those three persons.

Now, I think I'm going to do this. I hesitated, but I think I'm going to give you an overview. Here's a brief theology of the Trinity, okay? I do this because I'm going to reduce what Scripture teaches about the Trinity to three slides, all right? Slide number one, the being of God. This is an overview, obviously. There is one God whose name is Yahweh. He is one in essence, with one mind, one will, one power.

That one God eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father, John 5:26, is of none, unbegotten. He has life in Himself, Jesus says. The Son is eternally begotten, or eternally generated by the Father. What does that mean? Well, eternally just means the Son had no beginning, right? He had no beginning. And generated, you have got to get your idea of generated out of your head. Doesn't mean He was born. Doesn't mean He had a beginning. All that generated means, and only what it means is that He shares the Father's nature or essence, just like if, as a son, you share your father's essence, and you share his nature, I should say. You share your father's nature. Jesus, the Son of God, shares the Father's nature or essence. Because the Son eternally shares the Father's essence, He is equal to the Father. John 5:18. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, eternally proceeds, as the biblical language, or spirates, as the theological Word, from the Father and the Son.

Now, how do you understand the relationship of those three persons in the one God? They are co-equal. Each person equally possesses every perfection or attribute of the divine essence. They are co-eternal. Each person is eternal, without beginning. And they are consubstantial. That just means of the same substance. In other words, each person fully possesses the entire essence of

God. Put those three together, you have an understanding of the nature of the Trinity. Co-equal, co-eternal, consubstantial.

What about the works of God? Last slide, I told you about this brief theology. The works of God. Well, the three persons all act and act as one in all the divine works. That's called inseparable operations, theologically. And in each of God's works, the work of one divine person may be emphasized. Theologically, that's called appropriation. Stay with me. Here's the key. All God's works—and this is how you can distinguish the work of God—all God's works are initiated by the Father, executed by the Son, and perfected, or maybe a better word that may be clear to you, completed by the Spirit. That's true with all of God's works. You can see this example in Ephesians 1, right? The salvation of sinners was initiated by the Father. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Then the Son accomplished our redemption, beginning in verse 7 and following. And then the Spirit perfects or completes that work by sealing us, saving us, regenerating us, sealing us, and preserving us for our eternal inheritance. This is how it works with all the divine works. Now, God's works within the Godhead, what does God do within the Godhead? Well, generation and procession. It's a mystery. We just talked about those things. But God's works toward creation are creation, providence, redemption, and ultimately bringing everything to consummation. That's what God is about. So, there you go, a mini theology of God in three slides.

Now, let me go on briefly in the time we have left to defend the concept of the Trinity to you. How do we know God is Trinity? Well, there are hints, are intimations of the Trinity in the Old Testament. B.B. Warfield illustrates the Old Testament evidence for the Trinity like this. He says, “Imagine an extremely beautiful room in which the lights have been completely dimmed, down to where you can barely squint and see what's in the room. When you add light, you don't introduce anything new into the room. It just brings into clearer view everything that was there before. He argues that when it comes to the nature of the Trinity, that's true. In the Old Testament, it's like the light's dim. You can kind of squint and see some hints of things. The New Testament turns the light up, and it doesn't change anything you see in the Old Testament. It just makes it a lot clearer.”

So what evidence is there for the Trinity in the shadows of the Old Testament? First of all, you have plural pronouns and plural verbs describing God. For example, Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image.” Our God made man in His image. You have pronouns and verbs that are plural. And I've given you several examples there. You have the plural name Elohim. It's plural in form. It usually gets a singular verb. Plural in form, singular verb, except in certain passages. And this is interesting. God, which is a singular idea, but plural in form, in three places gets a plural verb. Genesis 20:13, “caused to wonder” is plural. God and the verb is plural. Same thing in Genesis 35:7, and 2 Samuel 7. You have plural forms of creator and maker. God is referred to as Creator or Maker, and in Hebrew, the word for Creator or Maker is plural. Again, these don't

prove the Trinity, but it's compatible with the doctrine of the Trinity when the "light's turned on" in the New Testament.

You have distinctions between members of the Godhead in the Old Testament. Genesis 19:24, "The Lord rained down fire and brimstone from the Lord." What's that about? Hosea 1:7, God says, "I will deliver them by the Lord their God." Psalm 2:7, the Lord says, "He said to me, you are My Son." Hebrews applies that to Christ. Isaiah 48:16, the speaker who's called the first and the last, clearly God says, "The Lord God has sent me and His spirit." This is the Messiah speaking. And the Messiah says, "The Lord God has sent Me and His Spirit. And Genesis 6:3, "The Lord said, My Spirit will not always strive with man." So you have these distinctions, then, among members of the Godhead.

You have the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, who's identified with the Lord and yet distinguished from it. Let me show you one example. I won't take you to all of these. We don't have time. But just look at Genesis 16. You have this mysterious person called the angel of the Lord who shows up throughout the Old Testament. And here, notice in verse 11, Genesis 16:11, "The angel of the Lord says to Hagar further." So the angel of the Lord said to her. Now look at verse 13, she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees." So the angel of the Lord speaks to her, and she calls Him the Lord. You see that throughout this mysterious use of the angel of the Lord throughout the Old Testament.

B.B. Warfield writes, "The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament, but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus, the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended, and enlarged."

You also have, when you talk about defending the Trinity, not only those hints in the Old Testament, but you have the scriptural evidence for, I'm going to take just three of the seven propositions. Let's make it one person in the Trinity. There is one God, Christ is God, Christ is distinct from the Father. Just take those three propositions. There's scriptural evidence for all three of those, and that means the Trinity has to be a reality. And I'm not going to belabor this because you understand this. Scripture is very clear, there's one God. "The Lord our God, the Lord is one," Deuteronomy 6. Deuteronomy 4, "There is one God. There is no other. Deuteronomy 32:39, "See now that I am He, and there is no God besides me." Isaiah 45, "I am the Lord, there is no other; besides me there is no God."

And you come to the New Testament; you see the same thing. "The only true God," Jesus says in John 17. Paul in 1 Corinthians 8, "There is no God but one." 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God." You understand, okay? So there's one God.

Secondly, Christ is God. By the way, if you struggle with the deity of Christ, there's a great book I would recommend to you. It's called Putting Jesus in His Place. It uses the acronym HANDS to

prove the deity of Christ. He shares the same honors as God. He shares the same attributes as God. He shares the same names as God, the deeds of God, and the seat of God, HANDS. But because of time, let me just give you three arguments. And this is going to come later in Christology.

I'm just going to remind you of this. Jesus is called God in repeated passages in Scripture. Old Testament descriptions of Yahweh are applied to Christ in the New Testament in multiple ways. I love John 1:3. Jesus, the Word, made all things, "and without Him, nothing was made that was made." Isaiah 42 says, "Yahweh made the heavens and the earth alone." Only one way to reconcile that, and that is that He is the one who is God. The name of Yahweh is applied to Christ in multiple places in the New Testament. Again, I'm sorry not to flesh this out, but it's important for you to have this data. You can go and look at it on your own. Again and again, the name of Yahweh is applied to Christ. So Christ is God.

But third, so there is one God. Christ is God. At the same time, the Scripture teaches that Christ is distinct from the Father. They are not the same person. Psalm 2:7, you have God's or the Messiah speaking. He says, "I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh, Yahweh said to me, you are My Son, today I have begotten you." So the Messiah has God speaking to Him. Psalm 110:1, "Yahweh says to my Lord [David says] sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." So you have the Father speaking to the Son. Only one way to reconcile that, and that is that He is the one who is God. The name of Yahweh is applied to Christ in multiple places in the New Testament. Again, I'm sorry not to flesh this out, but it's important for you to have this data. You can go and look at it on your own. Again and again, the name of Yahweh is applied to Christ. So Christ is God.

In Matthew 27:46, you have Jesus on the cross, the Son of God, speaking to the Father. So they are distinct from one another. You see it in John 5:32." You see it in Galatians 4:4. "God sent forth His Son." The Father sent forth the Son. Revelation 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him." So you see, there is one God. Jesus is God, but Jesus is not the Father. And you're left then with the Trinity. Multiple persons in the one God. So you have the intimations of the Old Testament. You have the scriptural evidence for those three propositions.

You also have New Testament passages that link the members of the Trinity together. And you remember the most famous one, and that is the baptism of Jesus and the Great Commission, most famous ones. Matthew 3, verse 16, "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were open, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved son, and whom I'm well pleased.'" All three members of the Trinity are active in that one verse. Modalists have a big-time problem with this, because you've got one person in their theory, one in their heresy, one person who's doing all those at the same time. He's scurrying from one place to the other and trying to cover his bases. It's ridiculous. You have three persons here.

The other, of course, as I mentioned, is the Great Commission. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Notice what Jesus does not say. He does not say, into the names, plural, or into the name of the Father, into the name of the Son, and into the name of the Spirit. As if there were three separate beings. And I should also say, He doesn't say “into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” If He had said it that way, omitting the recurring articles, you might assume that there are three designations of a single person. But notice what He does say, very specific. He says, “into the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Warfield says this, “He could not have been understood otherwise than as substituting for the name of Jehovah this other name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and this could not possibly have meant to His disciples anything else than that Jehovah [or Yahweh] was now to be known to them by the new name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The only alternative would have been that Jesus was supplanting Yahweh by a new God. There is not an alternative, therefore, to understanding Jesus here, to be giving for His community a new name to Yahweh, and that new name is to be the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

There are other New Testament passages that link the Trinity as well, just one of them. You have the Trinitarian blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:14, “The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit, where they're made equal in a single verse.

One last point I'll make. Well, actually, I have two last points, and I'll let you go. The three persons work in harmonious unity. In other words, the same works are recorded of each of the members of the Trinity. They have the same attributes, but they do the same work. Creation is, we're told the Father created, we're told the Son created, we're told the Spirit created, and I've given you references for each. The incarnation: all three are involved. Luke 1, you have the Most High, you have the Son of God, and you have the Spirit implanting Jesus' humanity in the womb of the Virgin Mary, all in one verse. They're all involved in the incarnation. They're all involved in the atonement. Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. Hebrews 9:14. So there are so many verses. The resurrection, the Father is said to raise the Christ. The Son is said to raise Himself, and the Spirit is said to raise Christ. They're all involved in the same work. Same thing is true with salvation, and even with the indwelling of the Christian. The Father and the Son are said to indwell the Christian through the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ.

So, there's so much that underscores the Trinity. The early creeds do as well. This is the last point I'll make with you. The Apostles' Creed. “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. I believe in the Holy Ghost.” The Nicene Creed makes the same point. The Athanasian Creed: “We worship one God in Trinity, in Trinity and Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor separating the substance.” So, this is our God. He is, in fact, Trinity.

I'll close with this. What are the implications of the Trinity for us? Think about this. If there is no Trinity, then there is no salvation. If the Son of God, if the Son is less than God, how can He serve as an atoning sacrifice for all? If the Spirit is not fully God, how can we be sure that He can regenerate believers and indwell them? Revelation. How can we know that the Scripture is an accurate revelation of the mind of God if the Spirit isn't of the same essence of the Father? First Corinthians 2:11. How can we know what Christ taught about the Father is accurate if He's not as He claimed of the same essence with Him? How can we trust the Bible and what it says about salvation if it's wrong about the person of God?

But another implication of the Trinity is relationship. Men, we were created in God's image, and one aspect of that is our desire for relationship. Relationship like the persons of the Trinity enjoy and have enjoyed from eternity. Two major implications. We were made for relationship with God and with others. Don't ever forget that guys. You weren't made to have a career. You weren't made to be successful. You were made for relationship. And that means our lives must center on relationships. What are the two commands that summarize your entire moral duty? Love God and love the people around you. Where does that come from? It's a reflection of the very character of our God Himself. Let's pray together.

Thank you, Father, for our time. Seal these truths about you to our hearts. Lord, we've covered so much ground and not done it justice.

Lord, I pray that you would cause us to think on these things and to love you, the one true and living God, infinite in your perfections, and yet personal and relational. We love you and we praise you that that's possible through your Son in whose name we pray. Amen.