

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Who is God/Who God Is Lesson 1

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:23 – 10:10

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Meeting the God Who Is

Jeremiah 9:23–10:10 (ESV)

²³Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches,

²⁴but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

²⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh—

²⁶Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”

10:¹Hear the word that the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. ²Thus says the LORD: “Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, ³for the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman.

⁴They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. ⁵Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.”

⁶There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might.

⁷Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.

⁸They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction of idols is but wood!

⁹Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz. They are the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the goldsmith; their clothing is violet and purple; they are all the work of skilled men.

¹⁰But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

Introduction The Moody Blues released a music album in 1968 entitled *Days of Future Passed* and one of the things unique about “the Moodies” was their use of poetry in their albums—read poetry. This depressing poem expressed their fears but captured the heart of thousands of listeners in 1968:

Breathe deep the gathering gloom
Watch lights fade from every room
Bedsitter people look back and lament
Another day’s useless energy spent

Impassioned lovers wrestle as one
Lonely man cries for love and has none
New mother picks up and suckles her son
Senior citizens wish they were young
Cold-hearted orb that rules the night
Removes the colours from our sight
Red is grey and yellow, white
But we decide which is right
And which is an illusion...¹

All preachers like to think that they are saying something important each Sunday morning. We imagine that we have gotten something from the Lord for His people and that we are supposed to give it to them. I am no different. As I have pondered this summer what to bring to you this Fall, I am going with a safe subject: **God**. I want us to know Him. I want us to know Him *well*. I want us to not be confused about who He is. I want us to be familiar with the difference between who He is and who He is not. I want us to *avoid* what Paul said was true of many people—especially the Romans—in the ancient world: ***although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened*** (Romans 1:21). I don't want us to re-define God. Because He is Who He is. He wants to be known *as He is*, not as people might imagine Him to be. If the notion of God at all, is joined with the notion that this God desires to be known by His creatures, and known accurately—this is mind-blowing to me! And describing Him as He is, as He has revealed Himself, will be our task this fall in this pulpit.

We will be in the Bible this fall in this pulpit. And sometimes you will be leaning in,

- “what does this have to do with me?”
- How does this attack my problems?
- How does this solve my stress?
- How does this attribute affect me today?”

The reason we will be looking into the Bible to see Who He is, is that I am persuaded that it is in the Bible where WE CAN LEARN ABOUT THAT. Knowing Who God is, deeply affects ME; deeply affects how I look at my problems AND how I interpret my good days; Knowing Who God really, truly is deeply affects how I deal with stress and affects how I interpret my whole day! The idea of misunderstanding who God is, is no new idea. In fact, examples of misunderstanding who He is, show up all over the Bible itself. The children of Israel often didn't “get” God. More often than not Israel's kings didn't get God. The disciples amaze us for NOT getting Jesus so often. And even after Jesus was raised from the dead and the apostles saw Him ascend back to heaven, how

¹ Graeme Edge, *Days of Future Passed*, April 1968.

often does this church or that church NOT get who the Lord is? And yet wonderfully, in the writings of Moses, the prophets, the Gospels and the epistles of the apostles we have an INTEGRATED PICTURE OF WHO GOD IS. Those writers were specific as to Who God is, and under the inspiration of His Spirit, they wrote down facts, events, out-speakings and responses of God to His people and to pagans, that show us Who He is.

- Although the writings of the Bible were written in real time, by real people, they reveal truths about God which are *out of time, beyond time* and *above time*.
- Although the writings of the Bible reveal problems that happened on real dates on the calendar, conflicts that occurred with very real and painful results and tensions between people that in some cases still ooze with infection today, those writings are *timeless*.
- And although the writings of the Bible seem *conspiratorial* in that only those 66 writings which contribute to the Great Solution to humankind's predicaments made the final cut of the inspired canon, they collaborate to reveal a consistent picture of a God who could not and would not rest with people being lost, without hope and completely unable to fix themselves—that God had to intervene!

This series will start with the question many people are asking today: **Who is God?** But we won't linger there any longer than necessary. We won't *give credence* to thinkers and philosophers, artists, hipsters, musicians, politicians who deny and reject the traditional view of God and imagine a god after their own making. I am not enchanted with the theologians and professors and authors NOR the clergy who just sit and stew in unbelief. We will go to the "**God Who is**" quickly. We won't whine about what we *wish* God was. We will focus on the received view of the attributes of God by millions of people over some 3,800 years—all the way back to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldeans.

I submit to you that people are asking today, "*Who is God?*" A few would say, "I don't care" or "There is no God anyway so don't waste your time" or "He is whatever someone says He is." But I think most people want to know Him, if He is knowable. They are curious and hungry for God. We hear so quickly today of tragedies and atrocities and mind-numbing problems that we want to somehow get to God and ask, "Why?" We have almost not recovered from one when we hear of the next one. So many people are driven to wonder, "Does He care?" "Is He paying attention?" "Who IS God, anyway?"

Jeremiah the prophet ministered from about 626 to 587 BC. That's a long time ago. That's 26 centuries ago. It is tempting to think that "surely God has changed in 26 centuries, hasn't He?" Or at least, our understanding of who He is must have changed in 26 centuries. In the 9th chapter of his prophecy

Jeremiah wrote that God told him to say to the people: ²³**Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”** ²⁶ centuries ago God desired to be known and understood. He wanted to be clearly discerned as possessing particular characteristics and that He did particular things—that He was *interactive* among the people of the earth. LOVE, JUSTICE, and RIGHTEOUSNESS in the earth.

The truly wise man (4:22; 8:8–9; 9:12–14) learns what God teaches; he knows why Judah will fall and is grieved and humbled by that knowledge; thus he will not boast in his wisdom. Knowing God means knowing his steadfast love (covenant faithfulness), justice (right judgment), and righteousness (right behavior, esp. in keeping his promises). See Ex. 34:6–7; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 3:9–4:2. Paul applied the admonition “let him who boasts boast in the Lord,” based on this text, to the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17).²

We are going to explore the attributes of the one, true living God this fall. Here is a little chart, listing the attributes of God as laid out by six well-known evangelical scholars. I am sure that Catholic or Eastern Orthodox theologians would affirm these too. They lists differ from column to column but each thinker would agree I am sure, with the others. These are beyond dispute among Christians and people who respect the orthodoxy of basic Christian theology.

The Attributes of God
from Evangelical Theologians

Josh McDowell	A.W. Pink	A.W. Tozer	Charles Hodge	Wayne Grudem	John Frame
God is a personal Spirit	The Solitariness of God	The Incomprehensibility of God	The Spirituality of God	Independence	Love and Goodness
Omnipotence	The Decrees of God	Omnipotence	The Infinity of God	Unchangeableness	Righteousness and Holiness
Omnipresence	The Knowledge of God	Omnipresence	Eternity	Eternity	Knowledge
Omniscience	The Supremacy of God	Omniscience	Immutability	Omnipresence	Power and Will
Sovereign	The Sovereignty of God	The Sovereignty of God	Knowledge	Unity	Lord of Time
Holy	The Holiness of God	The Holiness of God	Foreknowledge	Spirituality	Lord of Space, Matter, Light & Breath
Absolute truth	The Power of God	The self-sufficiency of God	Wisdom	Invisibility	The Self-Contained God
Righteous	The Faithfulness of God	The Faithfulness of God	The Will of God	Knowledge	
Just	The Goodness of God	The Justice of God	The Power of God	Wisdom	
Love	The Patience of God	The eternity of God	Omnipotence	Truthfulness	
Merciful	The Mercy of God	The Mercy of God	Holiness	Goodness	
Faithful	The Lovingkindness of God	The Divine Transcendence	The Justice of God	Love	
Unchanging	The Immutability of God	The Immutability of God	The Goodness of God	Mercy	
	The Love of God	The Love of God	Benevolence	Holiness	
	The Love of God to Us	The Grace of God	Love	Peace	
	The Wrath of God	The Holy Trinity	The Truth of God	Righteousness	
	The Contemplation of God	The self-existence of God	Sovereignty	Jealousy	
		The Goodness of God	The Holy Trinity	Wrath	
				Will	
				Freedom	
				Omnipotence	
				Power	
				Sovereignty	
				Perfection	
				Blessedness	
				Beauty	
				Glory	

However, I am afraid, THIS CHART IS GOING TO UNAVOIDABLY PUT US INTO CONFLICT WITH THE CULTURE AND THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE. If we lived in another

² English Standard Version Bible *Study Notes*

time, or in a more Christianized culture perhaps we wouldn't be in such contradiction to so many people around us. But I cannot help when we live, and how morality, philosophy, entertainment or technology has changed. God does not change. He is unchanged. He is unchanging.

A central premise of this series, and one of the main motivators for my wanting to bring it, is that THE WORLD AROUND US IS TRYING TO CHANGE WHO GOD IS, right under our noses.

I see American government officials (and many other nations) assuming that God is different from what it was assumed He was a hundred years ago.

I see educational leaders doing the same.

I see entertainment figures, people who write books, those who paint paintings, those who write songs, those who design buildings assuming that God is different—and better, they say—than what it was taught by the “God-teachers” of a century ago.

Collectively, the “movers and shakers” of our society are breathing a sigh of relief as they disassemble the traditional God and re-assemble Him/Her as they wish Him/Her to be.

But why does it matter? People can just ignore God as a subject, can't they? They say, “We will all find out when we get to the other side, but we can't know anything reliable about God until then so why get all uptight or worse, judgmental about it before then?”

It matters because God has revealed Himself. He is a self-revealing God. He desires to be known, as He said to the Israelites through Jeremiah.

To begin with, hear this that A.W. Pink wrote in somewhere around 1930:

“In the beginning God” (Gen 1:1). There was a time, if “time” it could be called, when God, in the unity of His nature (though subsisting equally in three divine persons), dwelt all alone. “In the beginning God.” There was no heaven, where His glory is now particularly manifested. There was no earth to engage His attention. There were no angels to hymn His praises; no universe to be upheld by the word of His power. There was nothing, no one, but God; and *that*, not for a day, a year, or an age, but “from everlasting.” During eternity past, God was alone: self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied; in need of nothing. Had a universe, had angels, had human beings been necessary to Him in any way, they also had been called into existence from all eternity. The creating of them when He did, added nothing to God essentially. He changes not (Mal 3:6), therefore His essential glory can be neither augmented nor diminished.³

³ Arthur W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* Baker Books (1930, then 1975) p.10

It is startling, is it not, to realize that God doesn't need us. That He doesn't fundamentally need anyone or anything that He has created to be happy and completely fulfilled. This is what Pink calls God's *Solitariness*. He is utterly and permanently content in Himself. Maybe you don't like that. Maybe you think, "Well, I'm not like that." Right! You're not God and God is not like you. This is the first attribute to see about Him—His complete uniqueness and wholeness. That is who He is. He is God, the only God, completely God and fully satisfied with and in Himself. He does not grow or evolve. He does not age or grow less in any way. Time is not His master and decay is a feature of this broken world in which we live.

And simply put, He just **IS**. His name that He revealed to Moses (somewhere around 1,300 BC) is *I Am Who I Am*. Even today Jews consider this name so holy that they will not utter it. They will say Adonai, Elohim and other names of God but they will not allow themselves to speak the name that God told Moses to tell the Egyptians. Jehovah. I Am that I Am. יהוה

Sometime in the first half of the first century, and Jesus' disciple John from Galilee wrote this down: ***Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.*** (John 18:4-6). Indeed it is John who seems to have remembered so many times when Jesus said I am this or I am that:

<i>I am.</i>	(<u>John 18:4-6</u>)
<i>I am the bread of life</i>	(<u>John 6:35</u>).
<i>I am the light of the world</i>	(<u>John 8:12</u>).
<i>I am the door</i>	(<u>John 10:9</u>).
<i>I am the good shepherd</i>	(<u>John 10:11</u>).
<i>I am the resurrection and the life</i>	(<u>John 11:25</u>).
<i>I am the way, the truth and the life</i>	(<u>John 14:6</u>).
<i>I am the true vine</i>	(<u>John 15:1</u>).
<i>I am the first and the last</i>	(<u>Revelation 1:17</u>).
<i>I am coming soon</i>	(<u>Revelation 7:7,12</u>)
<i>I am the root and descendent of David</i>	(<u>Revelation 7:16</u>).

He is dominant. No one takes precedent over God. No one defeats Him, ever. No one can out-think, reason better, devise plans more intuitively, understand history and one era from another more comprehensively.

He is worthy. Jeremiah saw and heard some things, and **Isaiah** saw others, 134 years after Jeremiah saw what he saw: as for instance what he saw somewhere between 748 and 734 BC (***when King Uzziah died***): ***In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and***

lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

He is inescapable. He is fascinating. He is endless and yet personal.

You will never grow tired of Him though you may grow tired of yourself.

You will never be disappointed with His excellent features.

If your faith is about HIM, you will never get bored.

If your faith has you asking questions as "How can I get to know Him better? Or "Does He have a plan for my life?" Or "Is it possible to find someone else who is hungry for Him?" you will find yourself drawn into getting answers.

If your faith has you asking question as "Can He get me a job, a spouse, a better home, more esteem; can He make me feel better about myself?" you will find yourself hearing white noise much of the time.

God does not exist for our fulfillment. We were created to bring Him glory. And when we walk in the Spirit, we accomplish that goal. **But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King.** (Jeremiah 10:10)

Who He is, I am saying, has very little to do with Who I want Him to be. He is Who He is. There it is. And the song about Him was not written by the Moody Blues. But there are many which have been written that DO capture where we are going in this series. Here is one, written by a fellow named Lenny Leblanc in 1991. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-M0f3dZt1I>

There is none like You,
No one else can touch my heart like You do,
I can search for all eternity Lord
And find, there is none like You.

There is none like You.
No one else can touch my heart like You do,
I can search for all eternity Lord
And find, there is none like You.

Your mercy flows like a river wide,
And healing comes from Your hand.
Suffering children are safe in Your arms,
There is none like You.

There is none like You, (There is
none like You, Lord)
There is none like You.

I can search for all eternity Lord,
There is none like You.

I can search for all eternity Lord,
There is none,(there is none,)
There is none Lord,
There is none like You.

Korean version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn-yw8Q9N0M>