

BASIC THEOLOGY -- GOD'S PLAN FOR MAN

Part I

Basic Theology

Fundamental human need

Since the beginning of recorded history, one of the most faithfully recorded topics has been religion. This testifies to the fact that there is within man something that leads him, regardless of geographical location, to a quest for something to worship.

In many people's minds, agreement on whether or not there is a God seems to depend on who or what caused the universe. The heavens and the earth can direct us to logically arrive at some conclusions about its creation and consequently about its cause.

The following observations are purposely elementary. Technical terms are kept to a minimum. The objective is to provide some basis for the common man to obtain a knowledge of God.

General revelation

There is abundant and excellent evidence that the Creator has revealed Himself through general revelation. General revelation only means that it reaches to all people. It can be understood by the senses, and intelligence, generally possessed by mankind universally.

God revealed through creation

This is sometimes known in more technical terms as the *cosmological argument for the existence of God*. The cosmos is only another word for universe (the heavens and what they contain including the earth). This argument points out that the universe around us is an effect which requires an adequate cause. If the universe now exists, then there must be an explanation for its existence. We can only trust that the cause is within reach of earthlings, and that it is not above our intellectual grasp.

Let's examine the most prevalent views held regarding the creation of the universe. The "Big Bang" theory is not discussed directly, but it would fall under a combination of 1 and 3 below.

- 1) *The universe is eternal*. This is the only option that would not require a cause since it (the universe) would be without beginning or ending. This option has few proponents since almost all hold that the universe had a beginning, however long ago it might have been.
- 2) *The universe came from nothing*. If the universe came from nothing, then it - must be concluded that it was self-created. This is illogical. For something to be self-created, it must exist and not exist at the same time. To illustrate, if you were to create yourself, you would have to exist before you could perform the act of creating yourself. "*Nothing*" is hardly an adequate *cause* for the *effect*. Self-creation has no scientific basis.

- 3) *The universe came about by chance.* This is not an adequate cause since it can be proven mathematically that random chance could not possibly account for the universe. Even if by the stretch of the imagination, we decide atoms and molecules could be created by chance, a non-living and non-intelligent principle could not create the order, the interdependency, conscience, soul, and spirit which are found in the humanity of the universe.
- 4) *The eternal, living, powerful, intelligent Being who caused the universe is God.* This option would provide the intelligence necessary as a *cause* for the *effect* we observe. It answers the objection of *nonlife creating life*. This option provides for a *Designer* for the complex design of the universe. God does not require a *cause* for His existence since He is eternal.

In summary, here are the options:

- 1) The universe is eternal
- 2) The universe came from nothing
- 3) The universe came about by chance
- 4) The universe was created by God

It requires considerably more faith to believe "nothing" created the universe, or that eternal matter, or chance created the universe than to believe the intelligent, eternal God created it.

General revelation is enough to point objective individuals to the conclusion that there is indeed a God who is eternal, powerful, and intelligent. Embracing illogical theories is not a sign of higher intelligence. As we look around at the universe, surely we must conclude that there was indeed a Creator.

Does God reveal Himself to humanity?

The Creator gave man the ability to reason and to apply logic. He gave him all his emotions. He put within every man the capacity for love and sympathy. It is unreasonable to believe that mankind was given anything that God did not possess Himself on a higher level. Even in man's most noble thoughts and deeds, he could not reach the level of God's attributes. In general revelation, God gives enough evidence to point men to a knowledge that there is a God. He created in man an inner yearning to know more of God. If the Creator God has greater love and sympathy than man, He would not just tease man but would surely give him guidance in his search for the true God. Most men, in their limited capacity for love and sympathy, would do that much for other men.

If God provides enough general revelation to assure man there is a Creator God, and if man then turns to reject and even curse God, does it not give us a clue as to the character of God when He does not immediately destroy those men? Could we not say that God is longsuffering and patient?

He continues to provide life and sustenance for earthlings who do not follow His example of longsuffering and patience in their dealings with other men; could we not say that we consequently receive from Him favor that we do not deserve? And since unmerited favor is the definition of grace, He must be a God of grace.

So we thus far conclude through evidence and simple logic that the Creator God is eternal, longsuffering, patient, and a God of grace.

This line of logic could go on indefinitely to draw out the innumerable attributes of the Creator God. But, there is a record already given that spells out who God is and what He is like. If that record agrees with what we can learn by observation and logic, then we can confidently embrace the record as having been given by God. It describes the attributes of God. It tells how the universe was created, and how man was created and how he received life. It tells us what God's plan holds for the future and how everyone who ever lived fits into His plan. That record is called special revelation as compared to the general revelation. By contrast, special revelation does not necessarily come to all people. It is universal in its availability, but is not revealed to those who do not seek God. It is revealed to all those who seek Him diligently. If you classify yourself as a diligent seeker, this booklet might be God's way of introducing you to special revelation.

Note: If you are a diligent seeker, please bow your head, or look up toward Heaven and say from your heart this simple prayer:

"Creator God, I want to know you. Please reveal Yourself to me in special revelation as I read the following words. If these words are true, help me to know it in my heart."

Part II

God's Plan for Man

God's special revelation

The Holy Bible is the written record referred to in Part I. (Scripture verses shown are direct quotes from the Holy Bible. Grammar, punctuation, and capitalization are as they appear in King James Version).

The Bible is God's revelation of truth. He revealed the truths He wanted recorded to selected individuals who wrote them faithfully. They were not free to write their own doctrinal ideas, they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit of God. God was completely in control, thus we can be assured the Bible is without error. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Bible writers again reveal their source of information, Paul says, " All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Scripture reveals the Creator of the universe

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). This last verse can be classified also as general revelation as it is available to all.

God creates man

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

Man willfully sins against God (The fall of man)

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).

Because man disobeyed God, he died spiritually that day. This spiritual death passed on to all of the descendants of Adam. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Spiritual death means that all men are separated from God because of Adam's disobedience. We are not only sinners by birth, we are sinners by choice. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:1-3).

Punishment for sin

God in His love made a way for all men to escape eternal judgment. God in His justice requires eternal punishment for all those who reject the blood atonement that was provided in the crucifixion of His Son (God in the flesh).

The eternal punishment is described in the Bible as the lake of fire. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

God required a blood sacrifice to cover sin

God required the Israelites to offer a male lamb without blemish as a sacrifice for their sins. However, God meant this as a type of what He would do later - not only to cover sin, but to take away sin. Jesus Christ was that perfect Lamb - the only one who ever lived a sinless life. He was not born in sin and He never performed an act of sin. His Father was the Holy Spirit of God, His mother was a virgin chosen of God. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:30-35).

Seven hundred years before Christ was born, an account of His birth was given by the prophet Isaiah. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God with us)" (Isaiah 7:14).

John, who prophesied that Jesus would come, knew Him immediately when the two met, and knew He was the sacrificial Lamb promised by God. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The Lamb sacrificed

God had provided Himself a Lamb. Jesus Christ was actually God in the flesh (incarnate). But to fulfill the type, the Lamb had to be slain. "And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors" (Mark 15:22-28).

The resurrection of Christ

Many times Christ predicted His death and how long He would be in the tomb. "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:19-21).

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when

he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words" (Luke 24:1-8).

Salvation through Christ

When Christ died and was resurrected, God's plan of redeeming mankind was complete. Man can be born again of the Spirit of God through faith in Jesus Christ's shed blood and atoning death. Man can have fellowship with God again, not because of his own righteousness, but through the righteousness of Christ who died so that we might live eternally. The spiritual birth is necessary because all died spiritually when Adam sinned. God in His righteousness will not have fellowship with sin and the sinner, but in His love He made a way. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Salvation accomplished by faith in Christ

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:9-13).

Repentance and remission of sins

God wants to give you repentance (turning away from your sins), and remission (your sins removed from your account). He wants you to desire to be separated from your sins. Sin is against God. Sins will keep you from God if there is no repentance. If you continue to consider yourself a sincere seeker, please read the following prayer over and over until you really understand it. If you sincerely agree that this expresses the desire of your heart, then right now you can trust Jesus as your Savior. Humbly pray this prayer earnestly from your heart:

Creator God, I am a sinner. I want you more than I want my sins; I am willing for you to separate me from my sinful way of life. Please save me from the penalty of sin. I accept Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as my Savior. I accept Him as Your sacrifice to take away my sins. Give me Your Holy Spirit and the Spiritual new birth. Holy Spirit Please take up residence in this body of mine. Please take away the guilt and load of sin. Thank you for providing Jesus so that I will never have to face Your judgment for my sins. I accept Your promise, I am now Your child. Although I do not deserve to be a Christian - by faith I believe Your Scriptures and I put my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross. I thank You in Jesus' name.

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved (was necessary for) Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). Reading the Bible can increase your assurance of salvation. You can know that You have eternal life. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that Ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

Further instructions

If you were sincere in your prayer, you are saved, converted, born again. You may feel little more than the lifting of a load, a clean feeling that you have been obedient to the instructions from God's Word. You are a babe in Christ. You must begin to grow. Don't expect to be Spiritually mature until you have had much Spiritual nourishment. This must be received from God's Word, the Bible. If you don't have one, get one. God will make it possible. Spend much time in His Word. Pray for understanding of it, pray for wisdom.

As long as you are here on earth, you will continue to live in a body that houses two natures, one is your old fleshly nature and the other is your Spiritual nature. Because of this you will have trouble with the old nature. This will not be a major problem if you will develop your faith in God. Through faith in God you can overcome any problem that arises. You will continue to be tempted to sin, especially when you neglect a close communion with God through His Word. Faith comes from God's Word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). You must recognize that Satan desires nothing more than to see Christians sin. This helps his cause as he can point you out as a failure to discourage others from accepting Christ. He will try to impress them that Christ does not have the power to keep you from sinning. The power is there, but you must keep close fellowship with God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. These are three-in- One; they are called a trinity or a triunity. One never acts independently from the others - neither can He, for they are One. We must realize that power is available to us as we face Satan (the evil spirit and enemy of God and Christians). "... But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

Your good works have nothing to do with your salvation which is the gift of God, but good works will be an integral part of your new life. We saw earlier that you are created (new birth) unto good works. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin (sin's penalty), ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

Warning

Feel free to ask God to guide you by His Spirit, then ask Him to keep you from the influence of other spirits. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). There are cults, and false religions that even use the name of Jesus Christ. Be very careful. Be very prayerful. Some will want you to add "experiences" to your faith as a sort of proof. God wants you to accept Him at His Word - demonstrating your faith. Some would teach that you must feel something, or see something. These teachings are foreign to God's Word. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). It is a sign of faith to believe

God solely because of what He said. Resist those who say you must join a certain denomination. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). "In spirit and in truth" means your spirit in fellowship with His Spirit as He reveals the truth -- the Word of God.

God's Word ended with the book of Revelation, He pronounced a curse on anyone who would add to or take away from His completed Word. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

Please share the information found in this little booklet with as many others as possible. The Lord Jesus is coming back to receive us unto Himself. Not only those who are alive but also those who died as believers. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (dead), that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). You will rejoice even more in your salvation with the knowledge that your loved ones are also in the fold of God.

Find a Bible believing church and attend regularly. If there are no churches in your area that hold to the Bible as their only guide for belief and practice, pray that God will begin one. Don't be too surprised if He wants to use you to help in getting one started. You may feel free to contact the organization shown on the back cover to learn more about its ministry.

God bless you in your new found faith. We will see you in Heaven as we give honor, praise, and glory to God.

For more information please contact:
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