

Awesome God #4

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. When you take a good look at God, you realize that He is awesome

1. He is awesome because of his nature and his characteristics
2. He is awesome because he is not like his creation, he transcends it
3. Every aspect and characteristic of God is a fantastic ultimate

B. Illustration

I read somewhere that studying or thinking about God is like getting closer to the sun. As you get closer, the sun doesn't get smaller, it gets larger. The effects of the sun do not grow smaller as you get closer, they get more intense. That's the way it is with God. The more you know about God the more amazing he is.

C. A quick review

1. We can learn some things about God from creation
 - a. God's eternal power
 - b. God's divine nature
2. God's nature is awesome for he is spirit, not physical or material
3. God's characteristics are awesome for he is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent
4. God is awesome for he works in human lives from a position of weakness, taking what is humanly impossible and working great things

D. There is another set of God's characteristics that we must not overlook

1. These have to do with the purity and goodness of God, characteristics that often give people great difficulty
2. These are the characteristics that the atheist uses to challenge God's existence and to argue against a God that is all-powerful, all-knowing, and loving
3. These are the characteristics that believers will call into question during times of pain or turmoil, when life has dealt a crushing blow – "Why, God?"
4. Humans have a terrible time sorting through the events of life, the meaning and purpose of those events, and the ultimate goal or end of those events – if we can't understand it, or it hurts, then we question God's goodness
5. This is why we must look at life through the lens of God's revelation about himself instead of looking at God through the lens of life

I. GOD IS HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS

A. Meanings

1. First in the more general sense of separation from all that is human and earthly. It thus denotes the absoluteness, majesty, and awfulness of the Creator in His distinction from the creature. (ISBE)
2. In the next place, holiness of character in the distinct ethical sense is ascribed to God. The injunction, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Lev 11:44; 19:2), plainly implies an ethical conception. (ISBE)
3. Moral and ethical wholeness or perfection; freedom from moral evil. (Nelson's Bible Dictionary)
4. Originating in God's nature, holiness is a unique quality of His character. The Bible emphasizes this divine attribute. "Who is like you, O Lord?" (Ex 15:11). "There is none holy like the Lord" (1 Sam 2:2). "Who shall not fear You, O Lord...For You alone are holy" (Rev 15:4). (Nelson's)

B. Why is it so important for us to know that God is holy and righteous, meaning that there is no moral flaw in God, that there is no evil in God?

1. Illustration

In September of 2006, Sociologists from Baylor University released the results of a study looking into America's different views of God. Part of the study was a survey conducted by the Gallup organization, which identified four distinct views of God's personality and interaction with the world. Baylor researchers outlined the results as follows:

Those who believe in an "Authoritarian God" who is "angry at humanity's sins and engaged in every creature's life and world affairs": 31.4 percent.

Those who believe in a "Benevolent God" who is forgiving and accepting of anyone who repents: 23 percent.

Those who believe in a "Critical God" who "has his judgmental eye on the world, but he's not going to intervene, either to punish or comfort": 16 percent.

Those who believe in a "Distant God" who is more of a "cosmic force that launched the world, then left it spinning on its own": 24.4 percent.

John Beukema, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; source: Cathy Lunn-Grossman, "American's Image of God Varies," USAToday.com (9-11-06)

2. That adds up to 94.8%, so I'm not sure what the others believe about God, but it's interesting that out of such a sizeable number, none thought of God as holy and righteous, or good
3. Whether we understand it or not, we need to know that the Bible declares that God is holy and righteous, and we must fit our understanding of God into that framework

C. One passage is enough to illustrate the point

1. Isaiah 6:1-4

6 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, " Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. NASU

2. What did Isaiah see

- a. he saw a God who is morally pure, without moral imperfection
- b. he saw a God who is good, not evil – though certainly awesome to behold
- c. the vision of the holy God was meant to impress Isaiah with how very different God is from the material, physical world of which we are part

II. GOD IS LOVE

A. This is another of those clear declarations of scripture

1. 1 John 4:7-8

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. NASU

2. 1 John 4:16

16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. NASU

3. This is saying more than the fact that God loves, it is saying that his very nature is love, and it is this nature of God that sets up all the loving acts of God toward us

B. This is why Jesus help us cut through a lot of the gray areas, and helps us focus on what is true – directly true about God and his intentions toward you and me

1. John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASU

2. This verse doesn't really make any sense unless you understand that God's very nature is love, and since his nature is love, it is the most natural thing for him to do (though we may struggle to understand it)

C. I read a terrific illustration in which D.A. Carson tries to help us understand God

Picture Charles and Susan walking down a beach hand in hand at the end of the academic year. The pressure of the semester has dissipated in the warm evening breeze. They have kicked off their sandals, and the wet sand squishes between their toes. Charles turns to Susan, gazes deeply into her large, hazel eyes, and says, "Susan, I love you. I really do."

What does he mean?

Well, in this day and age he may mean nothing more than that he feels like testosterone on legs and wants to go to bed with her forthwith. But if we assume he has even a modicum of decency, let alone Christian virtue, the least he means is something like this: "Susan, you mean everything to me. I can't live without you. Your smile poleaxes me from 50 yards. Your sparkling good humor, your beautiful eyes, the scent of your hair—everything about you transfixes me. I love you!"

What he most certainly does *not* mean is something like this: "Susan, quite frankly you have such a bad case of halitosis it would embarrass a herd of unwashed, garlic-eating elephants. Your nose is so bulbous you belong in the cartoons. Your hair is so greasy it could lubricate an eighteen-wheeler. Your knees are so disjointed you make a camel look elegant. Your personality makes Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan look like wimps. But I love you!"

So now God comes to us and says, "I love you." What does he mean?

Does he mean something like this? "You mean everything to me. I can't live without you. Your personality, your witty conversation, your beauty, your smile—everything about you transfixes me. Heaven would be boring without you. I love you!" That, after all, is pretty close to what some therapeutic approaches to the love of God spell out. We must be pretty wonderful because God loves us. And dear old God is pretty vulnerable, finding himself in a dreadful state unless we say yes....

When he says he loves us, does not God rather mean something like the following? "Morally speaking, you are the people of the halitosis, the bulbous nose, the greasy hair, the disjointed knees, the abominable personality. Your sins have made you disgustingly ugly. But I love you anyway, not because you are attractive, but because it is my nature to love."

*D. A. Carson, The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God
(Crossway), pp. 61-63*

CONCLUSION

A. Whatever happens in life, whatever our circumstances, trouble, or problems, we need to remember some basic things about God

1. He is good. There isn't an ounce of evil in him. He is holy and righteous
2. He is love. Whatever he does is from a nature of love. He can't do bad.

B. Though we are unlovable, God still loves us – gave his son to save us, all out of love

C. Heaven's Call