

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain

Psalm 127:1

# Essentials.

**G**

One  
Sovereign  
Creator

**J**

Resurrected  
God-Man  
Christ

**Sp**

Holy  
Indwelling  
Life-Giver

**Gr**

Free  
By Faith  
Salvation

**Ch**

The Body  
Local  
Awaiting

**Ad**

2<sup>nd</sup> Coming  
Judgement  
Restoration

**Ev**

Missional  
Obedience  
Discipleship

## In Essentials, Unity.



River Oaks  
Community Church

# Exploring the Nature of the Triune God



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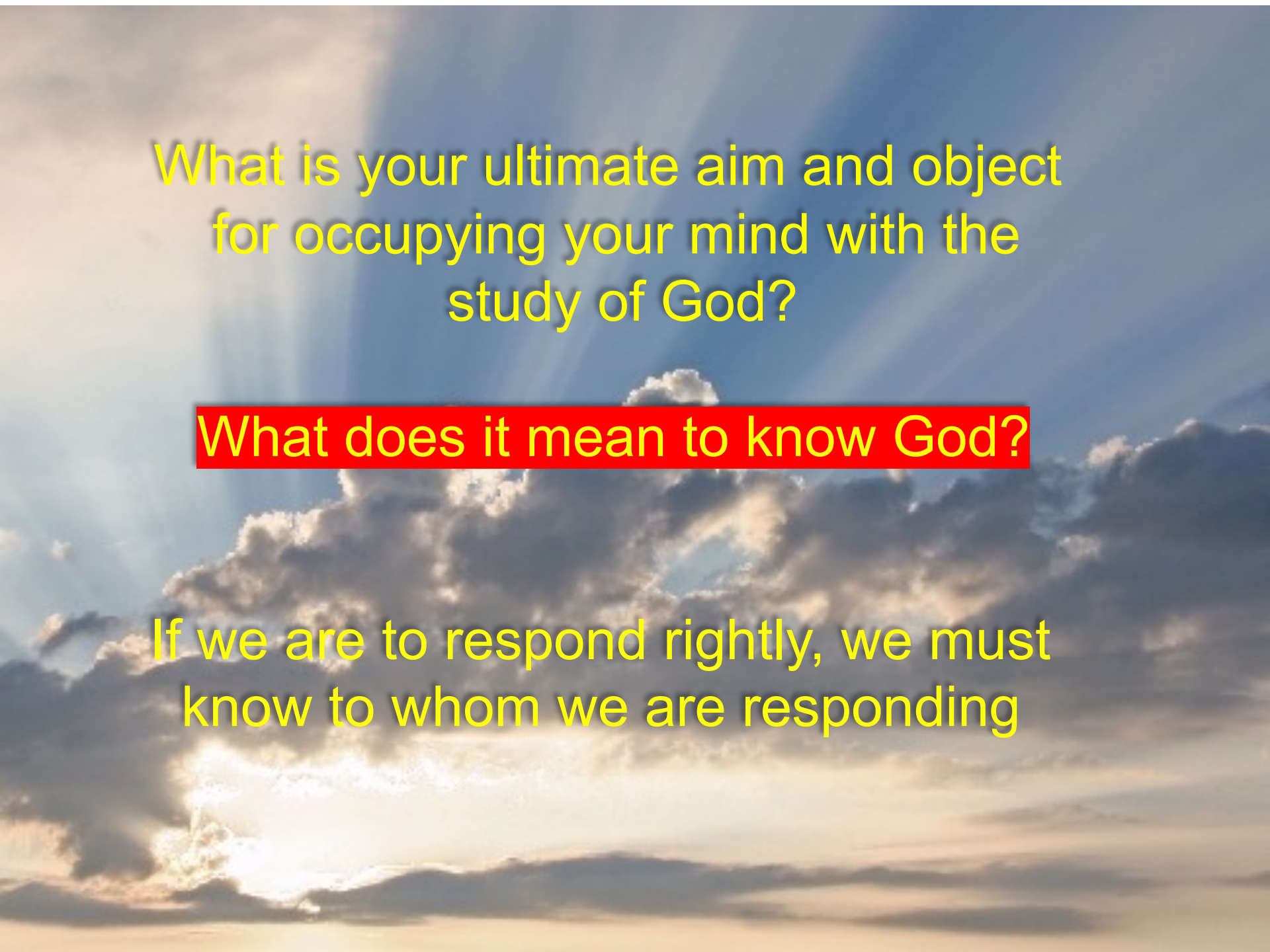
## Some Basic Questions About God

Who is God?

Where is God?

Why Study About God?

What will I do with my knowledge of God?



What is your ultimate aim and object  
for occupying your mind with the  
study of God?

**What does it mean to know God?**

If we are to respond rightly, we must  
know to whom we are responding

A dramatic sky scene with a bright sun partially obscured by dark, heavy clouds. Sunbeams (crepuscular rays) fan out from behind the clouds, illuminating the sky. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and warm yellows/oranges from the sunlight.

What do I intend to *do* with my knowledge  
about God, once I have got it?

## Some Basic Statements

- ❖ The Proper Study of God's Elect is God! The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. Charles Spurgeon , 1855
- ❖ “The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”  
J. I. Packer, Knowing God
- ❖ The first question of the Westminster Larger Catechism is “What is the chief end of man?” It is “to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”

## Some Basic Statements

❖ John Calvin's chief rule of Prayer.....

“was that you remember who God is and to  
remember who we are”

If you remember those two things your *prayers*  
will always be marked by adoration and confession.

# Outline: Exploring the Nature of the Triune God

## Intro.

## Why Study About God

1. Knowing God: His Existence
  2. Foundational Truths about God
  3. Knowing God: His Knowability
  4. Knowing the Deity of Christ
- 
5. Knowing the Trinitarian God
  6. Union and Communion with God
  7. Knowing God: Names of God
  8. Knowing God: His Attributes

# Knowing God: His Existence



# Existence of God: Believing the Evidences of Scripture and Nature

## Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

## Psalms 19: 1-2

“ The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”

## Romans 1:20

“ For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

## Existence of God : Humanity's Inner Awareness of God

**All persons have an awareness of God : Romans 1:19, 21, 25**

Romans 1:19: “since what may be known about God is plain to them,  
because God has made it plain to them”

**Some persons will deny God's existence: Ps 10:3-4; Ps. 14:1**

Psalms 10: 3-4: “He [‘the wicked man’ v.2] boasts of the cravings of  
his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.  
In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his  
thoughts there is no room for God.”

**Some persons will willfully sin in denial: Rom. 1:18, 20, 23-32**

Romans 1:18 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven  
against all the godlessness and wickedness of men  
who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”









## Existence of God: Inner Awareness of God Grows as we learn about God

### Romans 8:15-16

“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, and by him we cry, *Abba, Father*. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

### Ephesians 3:16-18

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through the Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”

### I Peter 1:8

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy..”



Existence of God: Only God can overcome our sin and point us toward Himself

## I Corinthians 1:21

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”

## II Corinthians 4:4

“The god of this age had blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God

## ***Cosmological Argument:***

Considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause. Therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must also have a cause, and the cause of such a great universe can only be God.

***Teleological Argument:*** [explanation of the purpose phenomena serve, rather than of the cause]

Argument is a subset of the cosmological argument and focuses on the evidence of harmony, order, and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose, thus there must be an intelligent and purposeful God who created it to function this way.

## ***Ontological Argument:***

Argument begins with the idea of God, who is defined as a **being** 'greater than which nothing can be imagined.' It argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such as the **nature of being** [metaphysics], since it is greater than not to exist. \*

## ***Moral Argument***

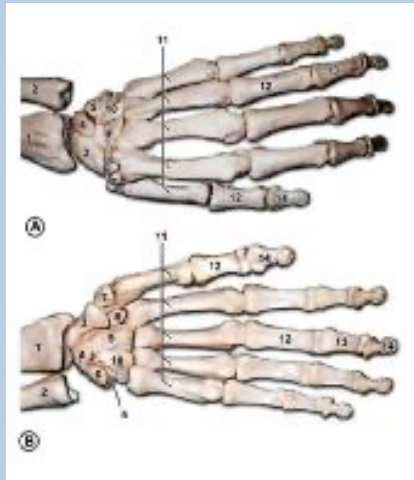
Argument begins from man's sense of right and wrong, and of the need for justice to be done, and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will someday mete out justice to all people.

\* the examination of the fundamental nature of reality, such as the relationship between mind and matter, between substance and attribute, between potentiality and actuality

## Some Questions to Consider

Do you believe most people today believe in the existence of God?

Look at your hand. Is it more or less complex than a wristwatch? Is it logical to think that either one of them came about by an accidental combination of elements?



## Question for Personal Application

When the seraphim around God's throne cry out,  
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth  
is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3)

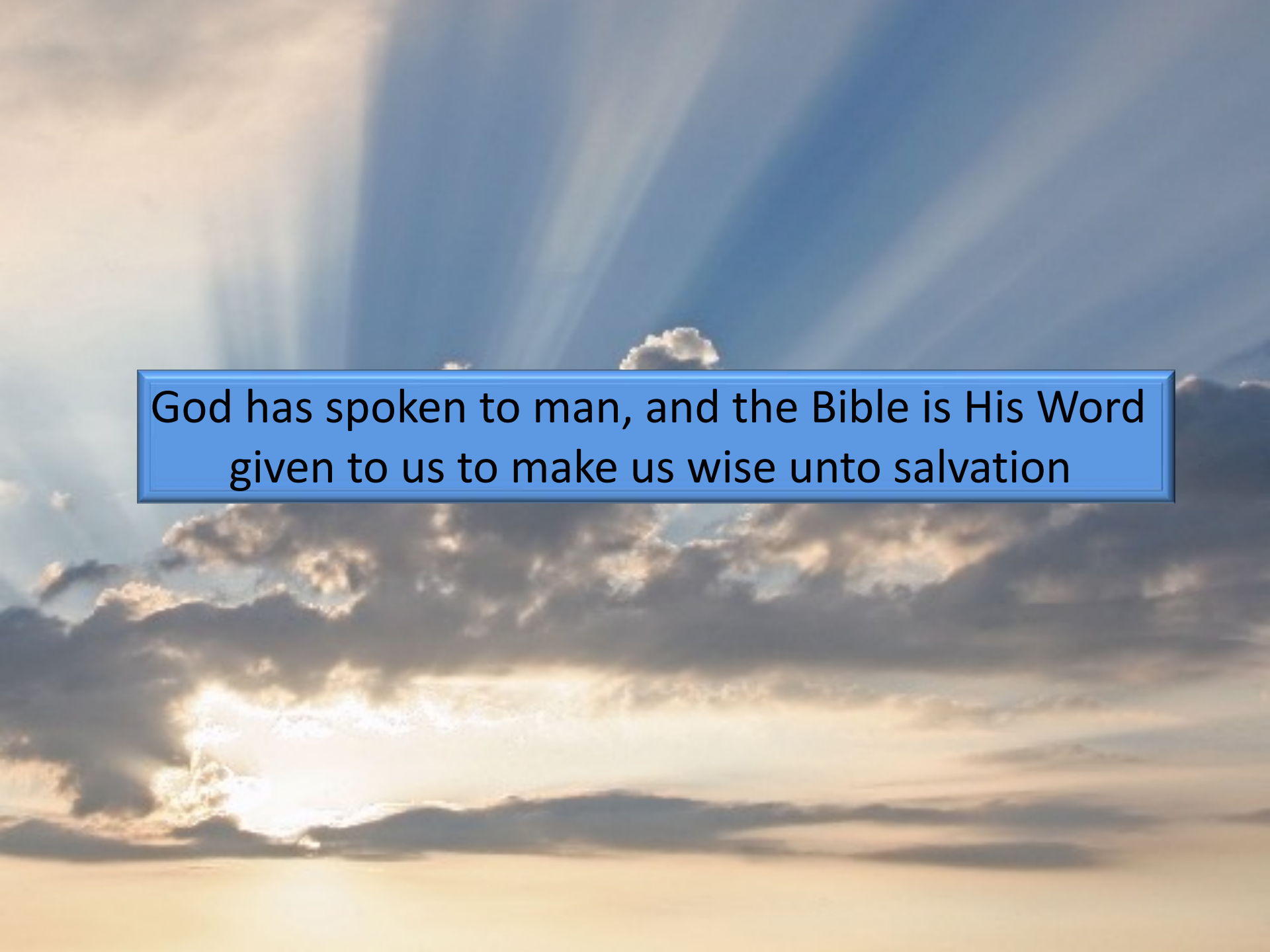
Do you think they are seeing the earth from a  
somewhat different perspective than ours?

In what ways?

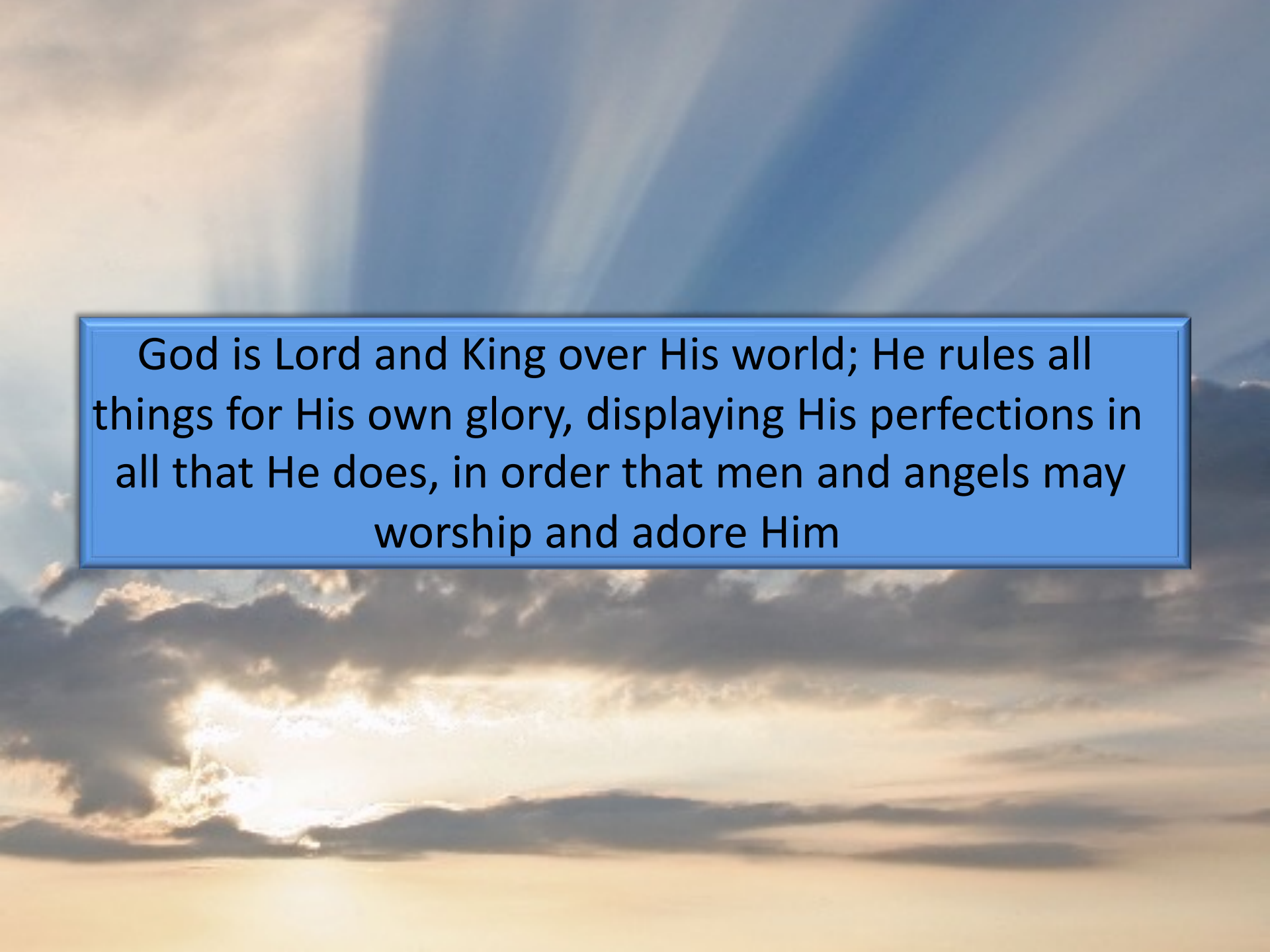
How can we begin to see the world more  
from this perspective?

# Foundational Truths About Knowing God

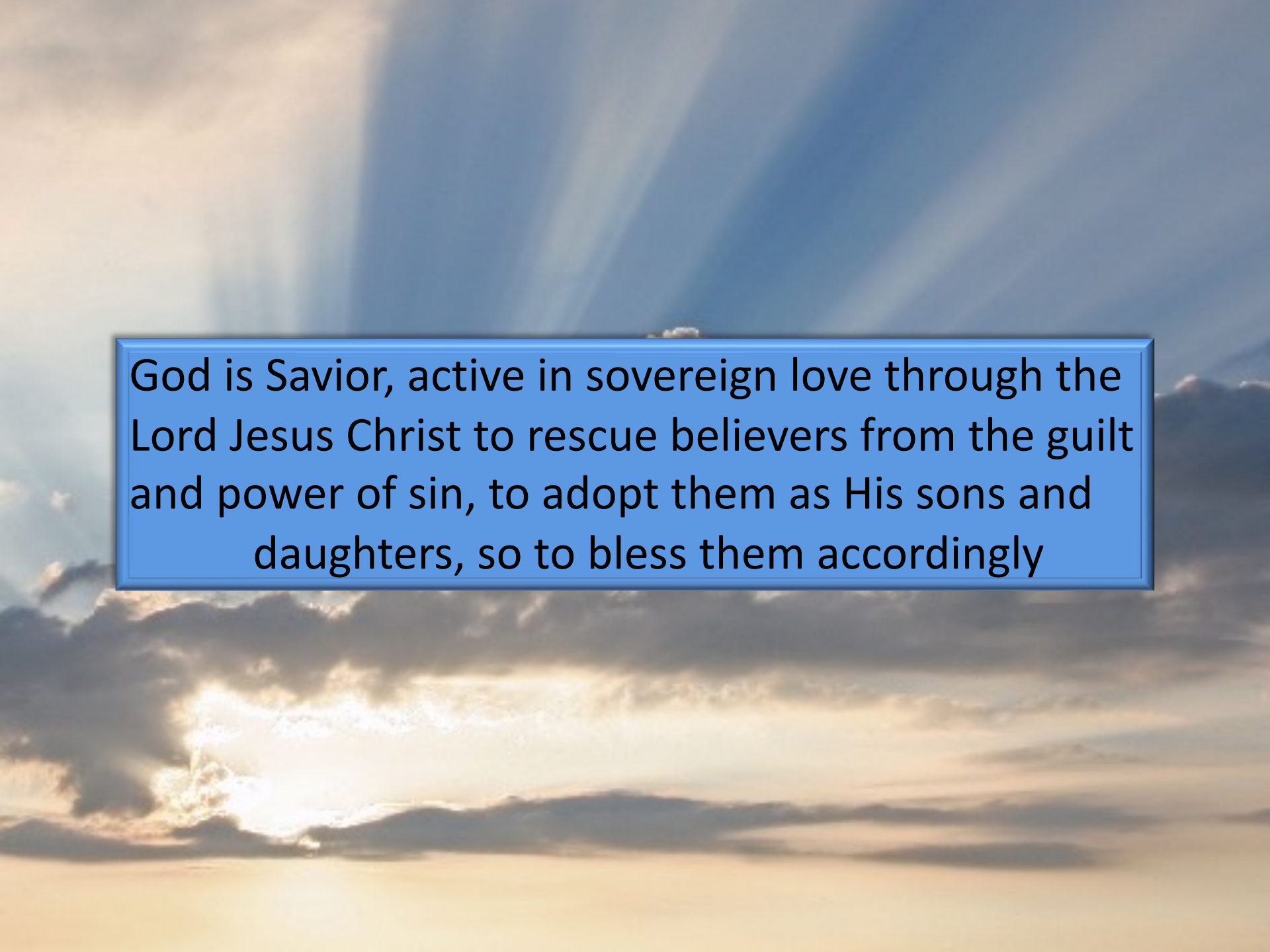


A dramatic sky scene with sunbeams (crepuscular rays) shining down from the top left. The sky is filled with various cloud formations, including a large, bright, and textured cloud mass in the lower half. The overall color palette is dominated by warm yellows, oranges, and blues.

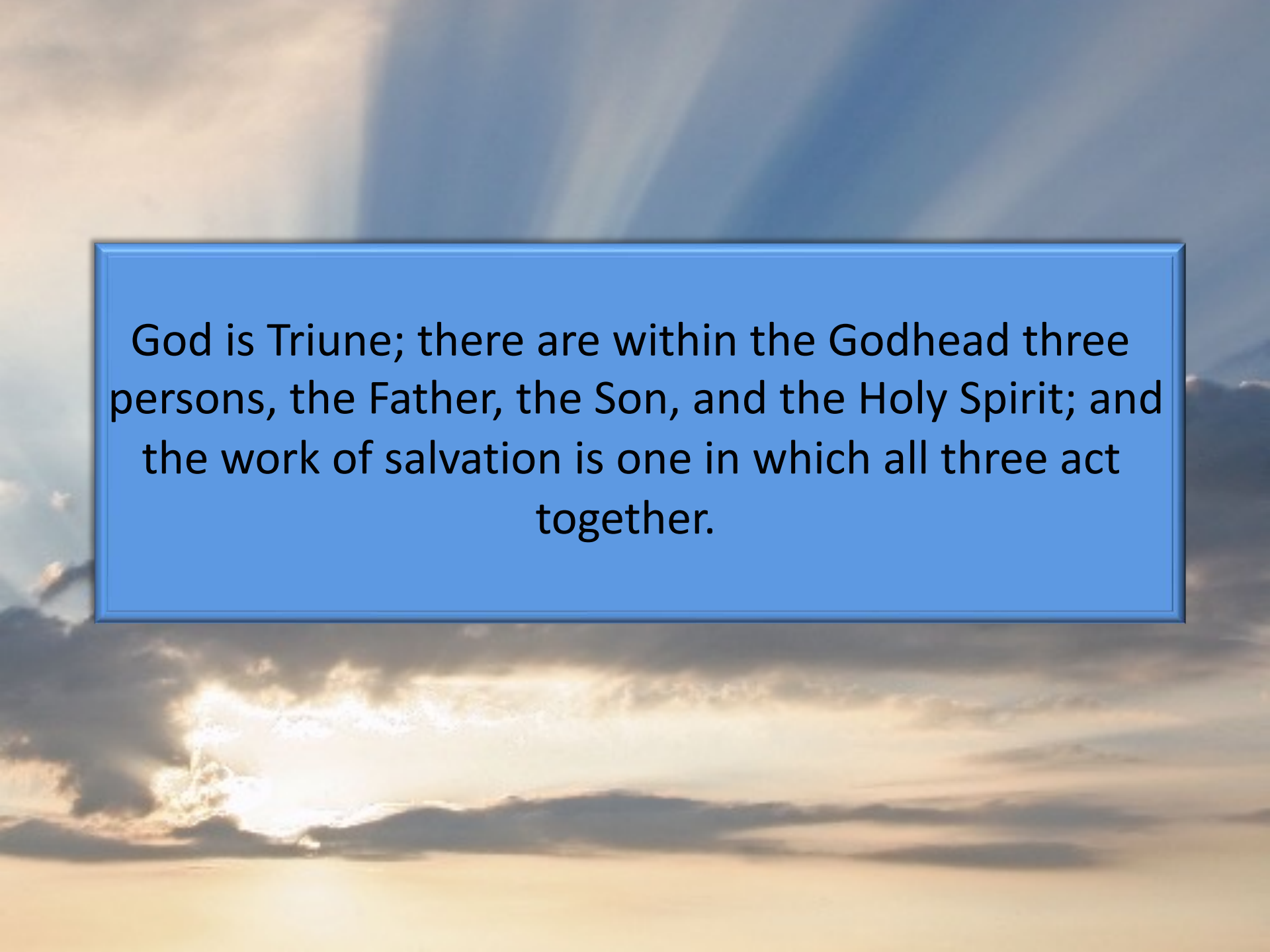
God has spoken to man, and the Bible is His Word  
given to us to make us wise unto salvation



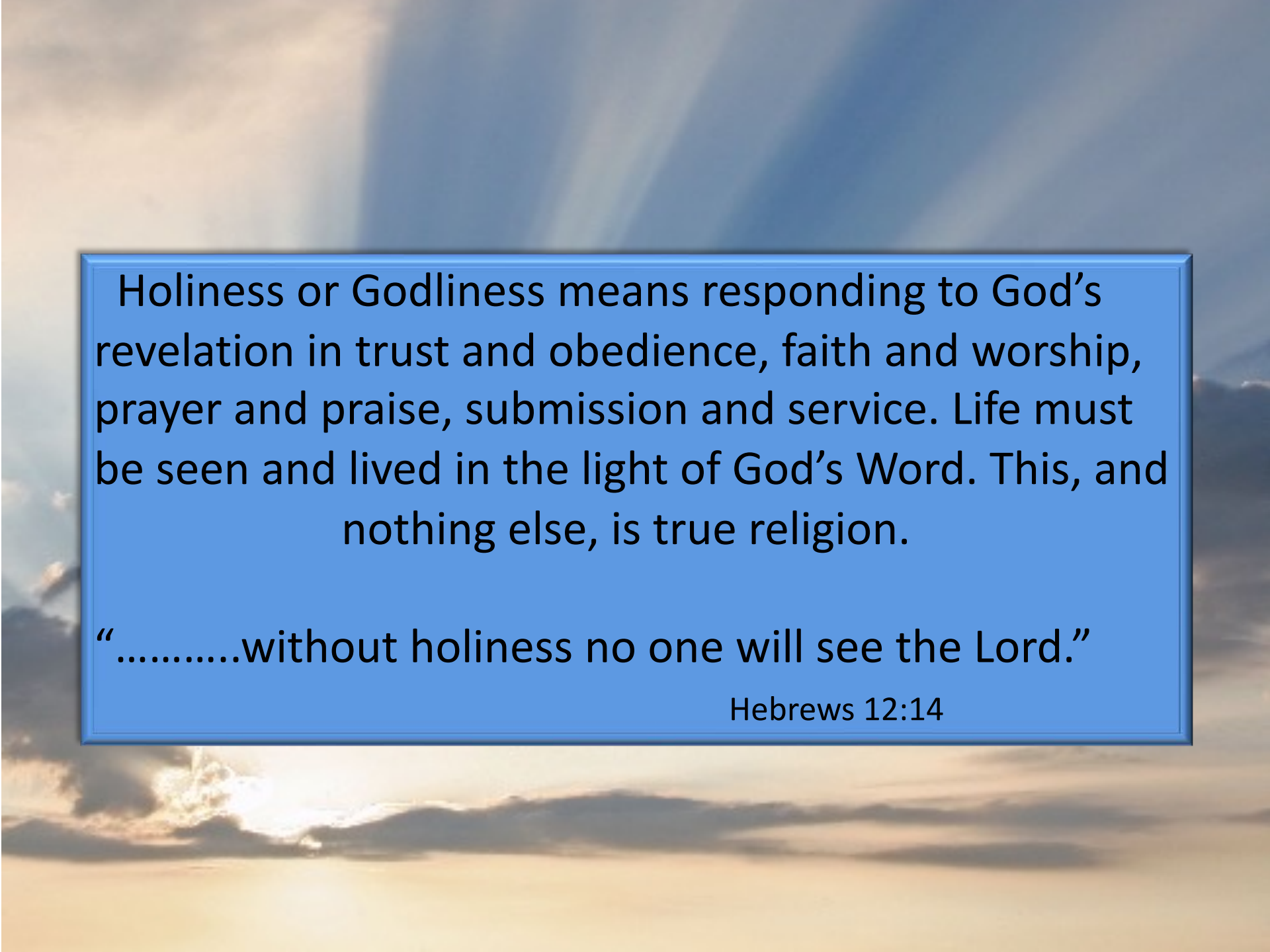
God is Lord and King over His world; He rules all things for His own glory, displaying His perfections in all that He does, in order that men and angels may worship and adore Him



God is Savior, active in sovereign love through the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue believers from the guilt and power of sin, to adopt them as His sons and daughters, so to bless them accordingly



God is Triune; there are within the Godhead three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the work of salvation is one in which all three act together.



Holiness or Godliness means responding to God's revelation in trust and obedience, faith and worship, prayer and praise, submission and service. Life must be seen and lived in the light of God's Word. This, and nothing else, is true religion.

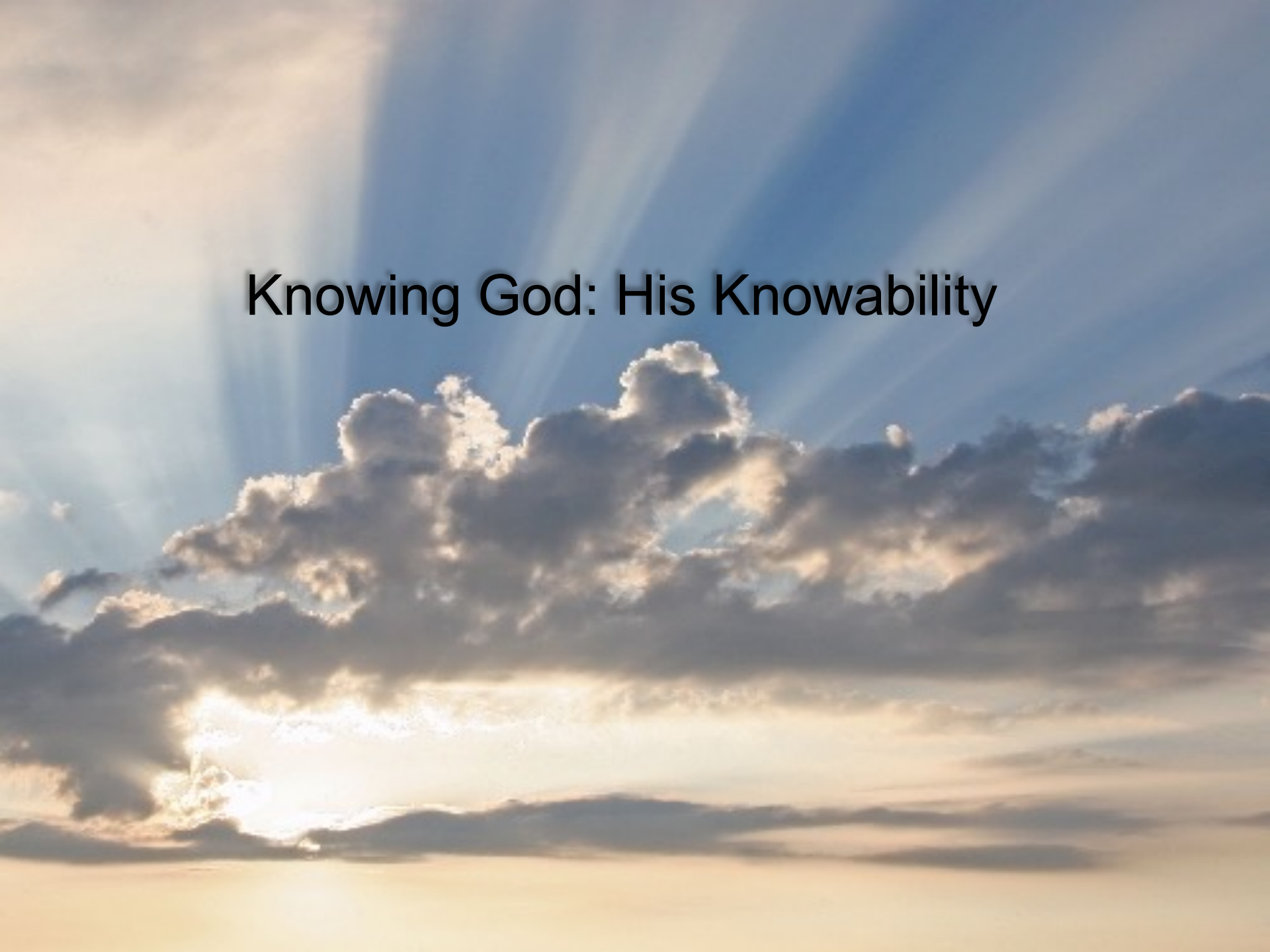
“.....without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14

# What effect does knowing God have on Mankind?

1. Those who know God have great energy for God
2. Those who know God have great thoughts of God
3. Those who know God show great boldness for God
4. Those who know God have great contentment in God

# Knowing God: His Knowability





## Knowability of God: Necessity for God to reveal Himself to Us

### Matthew 11:27

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

### Romans 1:19

“Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”

### II Corinthians 4: 3-4

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

# Knowability of God: We can never fully understand God

God is infinite, we are finite (limited)

**Psalms 139:6**

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”

**Psalms 145:3**

“Great is the Lord most worthy of praise.”

**Psalms 147:5**

“Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.”

**Romans 11:33**

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

## Knowability of God: Also..can't understand any single thing

### Isaiah 55:9

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

### Job 26:14

“And these are but the outer fringe of his works: how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?”

## Knowability of God: Our Calling is to Pursue God.....

### Colossians 1:10

“And we [Paul & Timothy] pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, **growing in the knowledge of God.**”

.....and to know Him Truly

### 1 John 4:8

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

### 1 John 5:20

“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true.”

## Some Questions to Consider

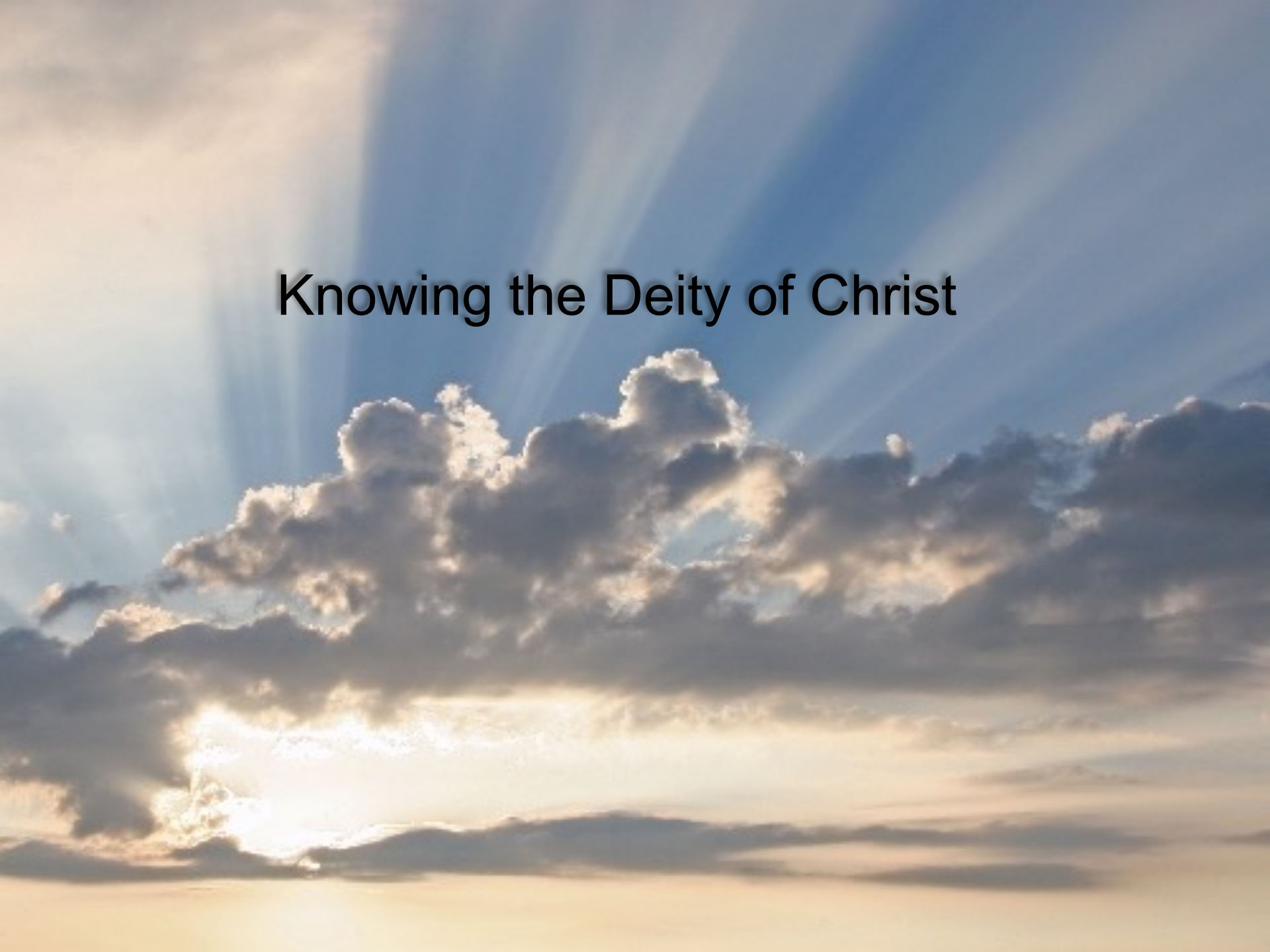
Why do you think God decided to reveal himself to us?

Do you learn more about God from his revelation in nature  
or his revelation in Scripture?

Why do you think it is that God's thoughts are "precious" to us?  
How vast is the sum of them!

Psalm 139:17

# Knowing the Deity of Christ



## Establishing the Deity of Christ

- ♥ "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our Lord'" (Isaiah 40:3, Mark 1:3)
- ♥ "'He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent.'" (Isaiah 53:7)
- ♥ "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand I and the Father are one." (John 10:29-30)
- ♥ "that all of them [believers] may be one, Father, just as you are one in me and I am in you." (John 17:21)

## Establishing the Deity of Christ [cont.]



"For in Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fulness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." (Col. 2:9)



"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:5-6)



Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain

Psalm 127:1

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Judgement  
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# Knowing the Trinitarian God



## Selective Scriptural Citations

**Genesis 1:1** “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

**Genesis 1: 26** Then God said, “Let *us* make man in our image, after *our* likeness”

**Exodus 3:14** God said to Moses, “I AM who I AM.”  
This is what you are to say to the Israelites:  
“I AM has sent me to you”

**John 8:12** “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”

**Revelation 22:13** “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”

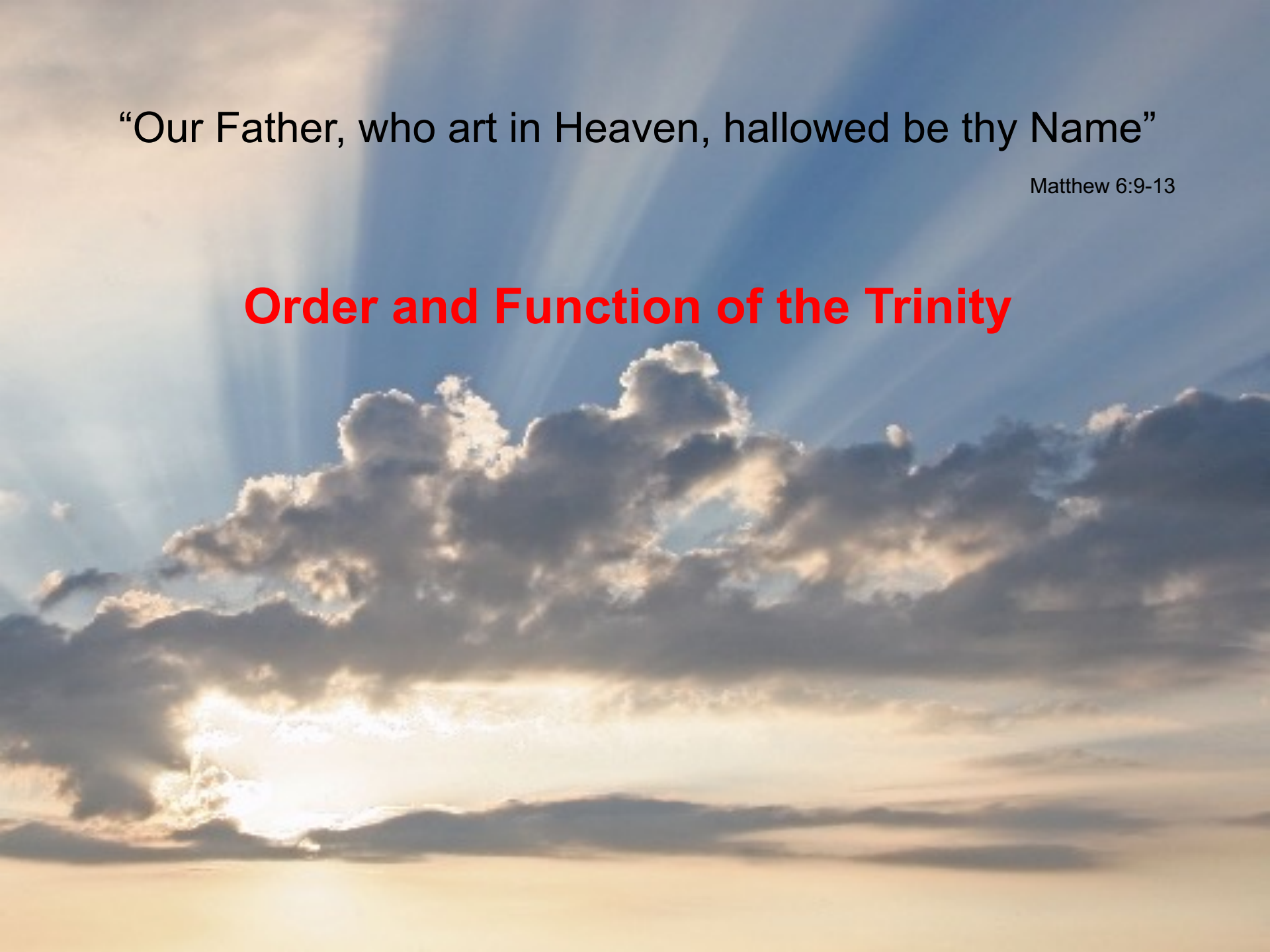
## Basic Trinitarian Definitions

- ♥ God eternally exists as three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God
- ♥ God is one being or essence (Deut. 6:4) “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3)
- ♥ Man can know God only in so far as the latter actively makes Himself known....without revelation man would never have been able to acquire knowledge of God
- ♥ It is not human reason that discovers God, but it is God who discloses Himself

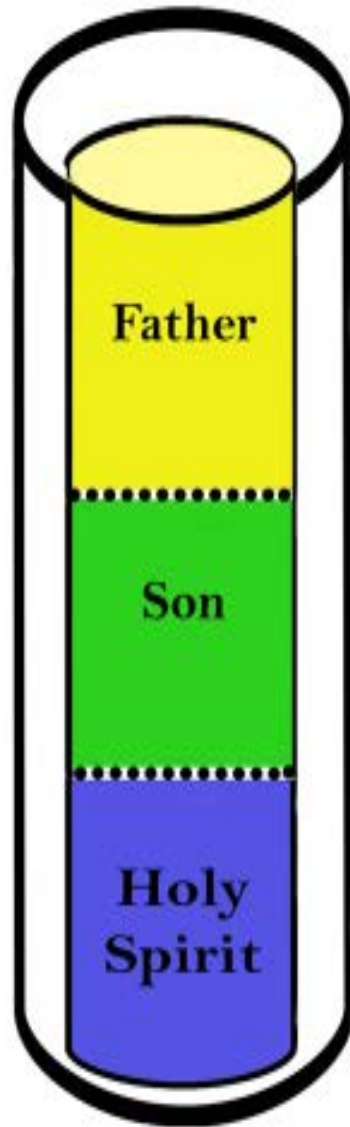
“Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name”

Matthew 6:9-13

## Order and Function of the Trinity



# Progressive Revelation of the Trinity



## Old Testament

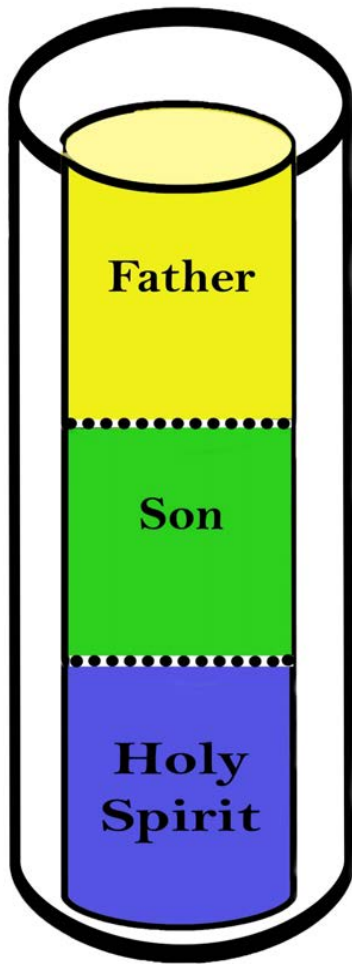
Gen. 1:26 *"Let us make man in our image"*

Gen. 3:22 *"Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil"*

Isa. 6:8 *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us"*

Psa. 45:6-7 *"Your throne, O God will last for ever  
.....therefore God, your God, has set you  
above your companions by anointing you  
with the oil of joy."*

# Progressive Revelation of the Trinity: Old Testament



**Using Psalm 110:1 & Matt. 22:41-46 develop an explanation, from these verses, which demonstrate a progressive evolution of the trinitarian relationships**

David is referring to two separate persons as “Lord,”  
BUT who is David’s “Lord” if not God himself ?

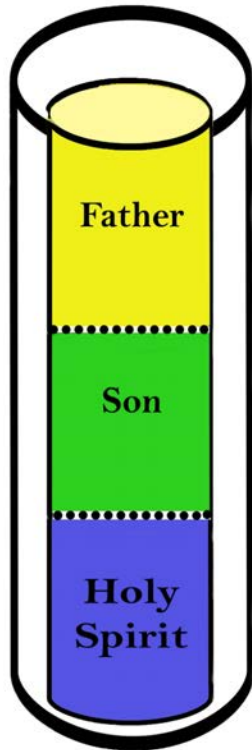
SO, who could be saying “Sit on my right hand”  
except someone else who is also fully God?

In the N.T. verses God the Father said to God the Son,  
“Sit at my right hand”

Other O.T. verses are: Isa. 63:10; Gen. 16:13; Ex. 3:2-6,  
23:20-22; Numbers 22:35 & 38; Judges 2:1-2, 6:11 & 14;  
and Prov. 8:22-31

# Progressive Revelation of the Trinity

## New Testament

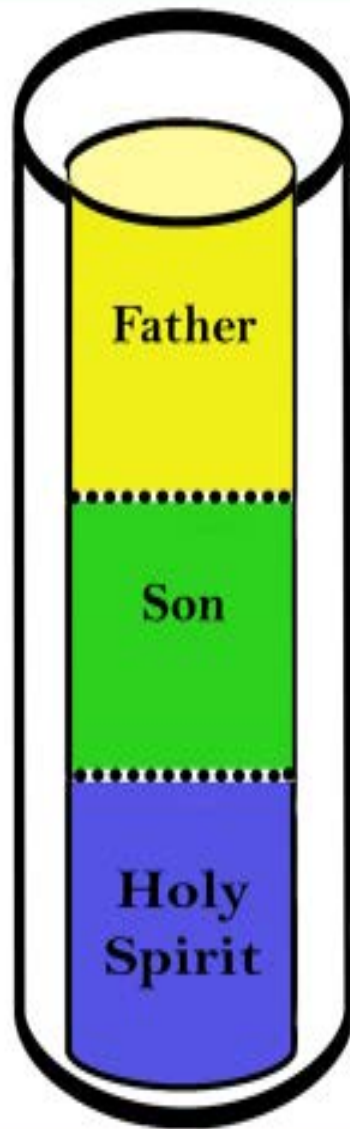


Matt. 3:16-17 says “the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending...and alighting on Him.... a voice saying this is my beloved Son”

- ♥ God the **Father** is speaking from heaven
- ♥ God the **Son** is being baptized and spoken from heaven by God the Father, and
- ♥ God the **Holy Spirit** is descending from heaven to rest upon and empower the Son Jesus for his ministry.

**NOTE:** Look at Matthew 28:19 and I Cor. 12:4-6

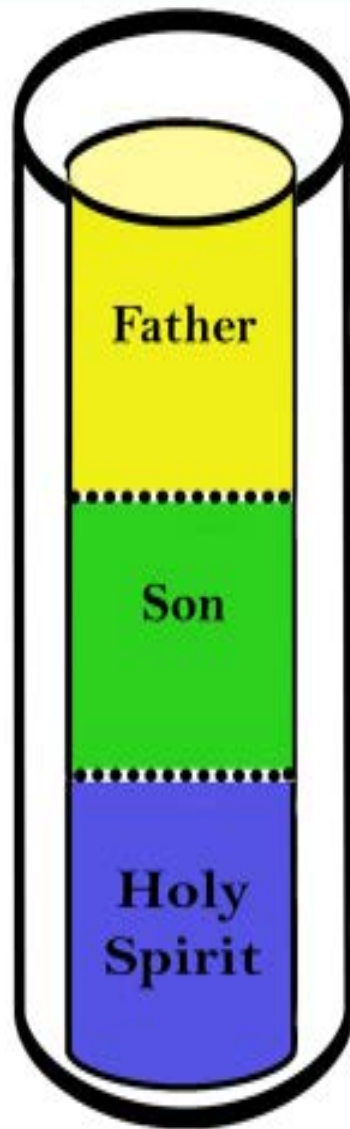
# Progressive Revelation of the Trinity



## New Testament

- ♥ II Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all"
- ♥ Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body and one **Spirit**, just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call, one **Lord**, one faith, one baptism, one **God and Father** of us all who is above all and through all and in all"
- ♥ I Peter 1:2: "According to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, by the sanctifying work of the **Spirit**, that you may obey **Jesus** and be sprinkled with his blood"

# Functionality of the Trinity : Creation



**Spoke the Creative Words**

**Genesis 1:1-31; 2:21-22**

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**Carried out the Creative Decrees**

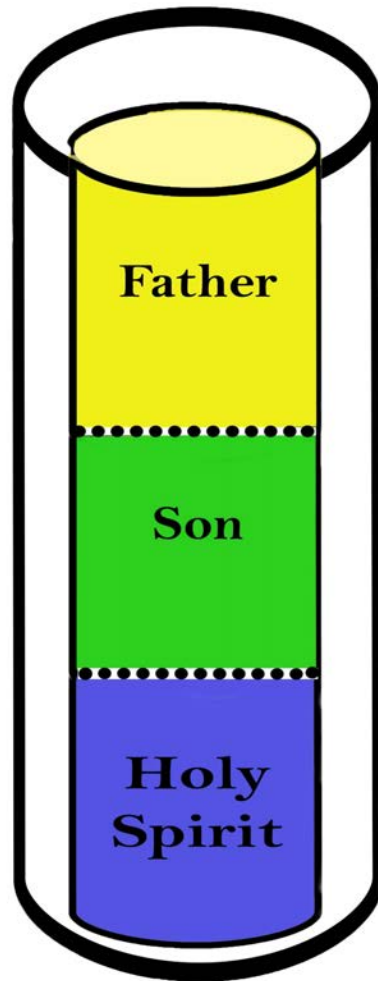
**John 1:3; Col. 1:16; I Cor. 8:6; Hebrews 1:2**

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**Active hovering over the Waters**

**Genesis 1:2; Ps. 33:6**

# Functionality of the Trinity: Redemption



**Using John 3:16, Gal. 4:4, Eph. 1:9-10, John 6:38, Heb. 10:5-7, and John 14:26 complete the sequence for the work of Redemption**

God the Father planned redemption and sent his Son into the world (John 3:16, Gal. 4:4)

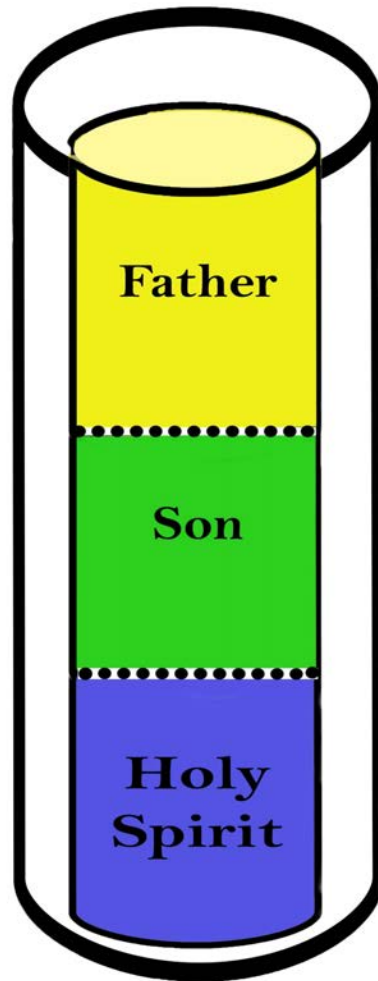
The Son obeyed the Father and accomplished Redemption for us (John 6:38, Heb.10:5-7)

After the Son ascended to heaven, the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to apply redemption to us (John 14:26, 16:7)

See also John 15:26; Rom. 8:13,15:16; Acts 1:8; I Cor. 12:7-11

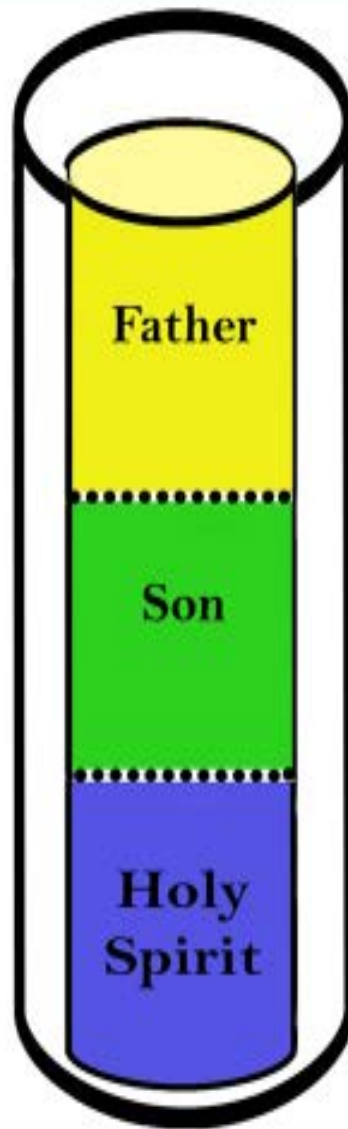
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## Functionality of the Trinity: Holiness

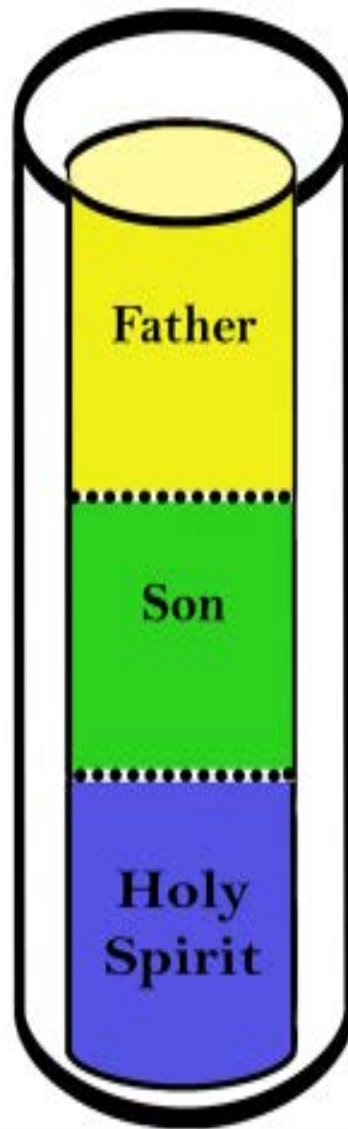


**Has Appointed It (Eph. 2:10)**

**Ordains or Appoints it  
as “Mediator” (John 15:16)**

**“Appoints and Ordains” this  
Holiness in Believers (Acts 13:2)**

## Functionality of the Trinity: Faith



Is the source of faith

Directed to the Son who  
secures and increases Faith

Empowers the Spirit to  
activate and sustain Faith




# Communion & Union with God

# A Triune Approach

## First and Foremost Steps

Believers in Christ MUST be in ACTIVE  
Communion with God

This is a dynamic interactive relationship

Triune God  Believer  
United to Christ in God by the Holy Spirit

## A Triune Approach cont.

### Communion with the Triune

♥ Believers united to Christ Jesus are called to respond to God's unilateral action of *union* through a desired interaction between the Holy Spirit and God

- Communion with God can waver (up/down) and lead to greater sanctification or “run away sin, with a diminished conscience or a loss of communion with God

- Prayer, corporate worship, biblical meditation are means to foster communion with God and thus lead into a greater fellowship

## A Triune Approach cont.

### Comforting activity with the Triune

♥ Believers should not be passive in the hope that the Spirit will bring comfort, rather they should....

- seek His comfort by focusing on the promises of God realized in the Spirit
- call out to the Spirit for supplication to bring consolation, and
- attend “to his motions” which take us to the Father and Son.

## A Triune Approach cont.

### Testing the Spirits activity through the Triune



The Spirit is the *Spirit of Freedom*

- this is when God's Spirit brings spiritual freedom, love, and rest. This is freedom for obedience, not freedom from it.



The Spirit of God *tends to work in and through natural human faculties* (i.e. mind, will, affections and body)



The Spirit is the Spirit of Prayer. The soul is never more raised with the love of God than when the Spirit is taken into intimate communion with him in prayer

## A Triune Approach cont.

### Union with the Triune

♥ Humans are merely receptive, being the object of God's gracious action

- this action is *unilateral* action by God as the Holy Spirit ignites the dead in Christ for regeneration
- this act is by the object of God's radical and free grace that does not ebb and flow



# Knowing God: His Names

# Migdal-Oz Shem Adonai

*“The name of the LORD is a  
strong tower:  
the righteous one runs into it  
and is made safe.”*

*Proverbs 18:10*





## God's Names & Character

Matthew 6:9

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name....”

Exodus 20:7

“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,  
for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who  
misuses his name.”

# God's Names & Character cont.

## Names from Creation:

Isa. 31:4, Isa. 53:7; Ps 84:11; Rev. 22:16; Prov 18:10

## Names from Human Experience

Isa 61.10; Deut 32:6; Heb 11:10; Ps 23:1

## Names from Human Actions

Gen 18:21; Ex 2:24; Ps 9:7; Isa 25:8

## Names from Descriptions of Human Body

Ex 33:20,23; Ps 11:4; Ps 55:11; Gen 6:6

# God's Names & Character: The 'I AM'S' of God

Before Abraham Was, I' AM (John 8:58)

I' AM the Bread of Life (John 6:35)

I' AM the Light of the World (John 8:12)

I' AM the Gate for the Sheep (John 10:9)

I' AM the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)

I' AM the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)

I' AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6}



# Knowing God: His Attributes

## Study Overview of God's Character

## Incommunicable vs. Communicable

Incommunicable : Those attributes not shared with others  
i.e. eternity, unchangeableness, omnipresence

Communicable: Those attributes God shares with us  
i.e. love, knowledge, mercy, justice

Attribute least reflected in our character:  
Independence

SELF-EXISTENT

Psalm 102:26-27

“...the Father has life in himself”

SELF-SUFFICIENT

Revelation 4:8

“.....nor is he served by human hands,  
as though he needed anything.”

SELF-DIRECTED

Acts 17:25

“Who has prescribed for him his way?”

ETERNAL

John 5:26

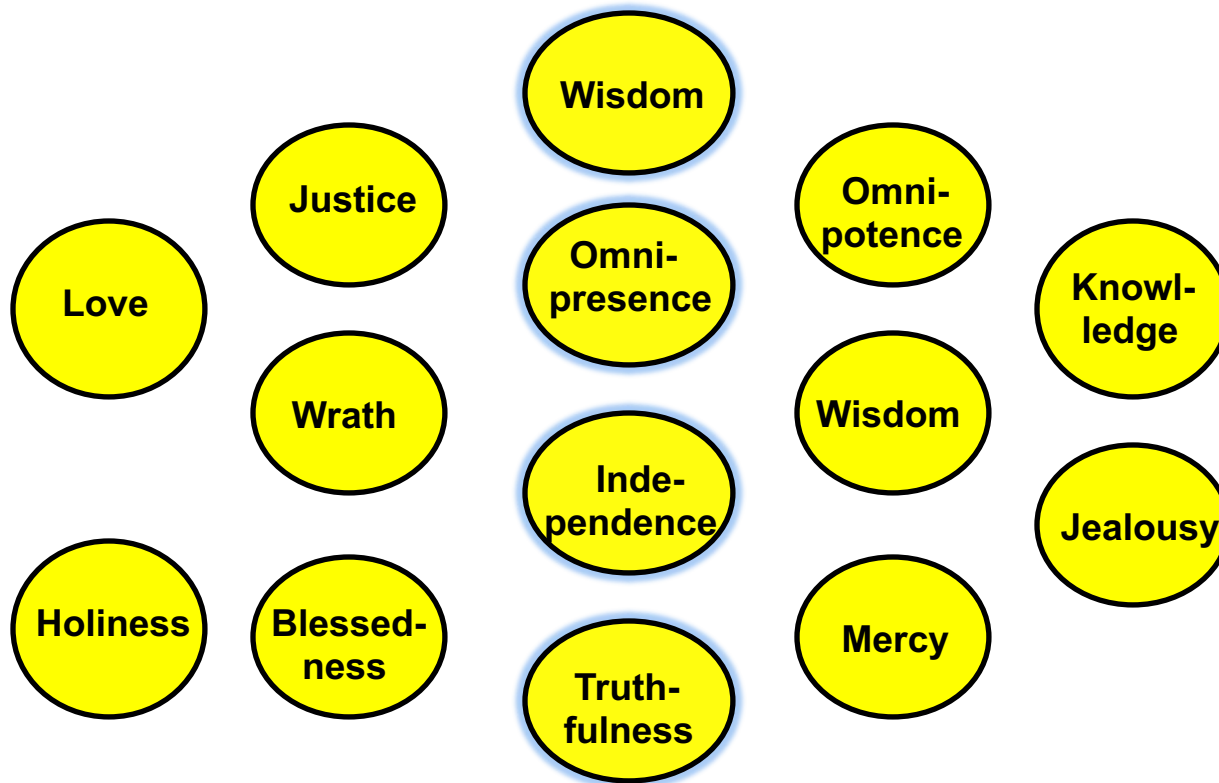
“Who was and is and is to come!”

CONSISTENT

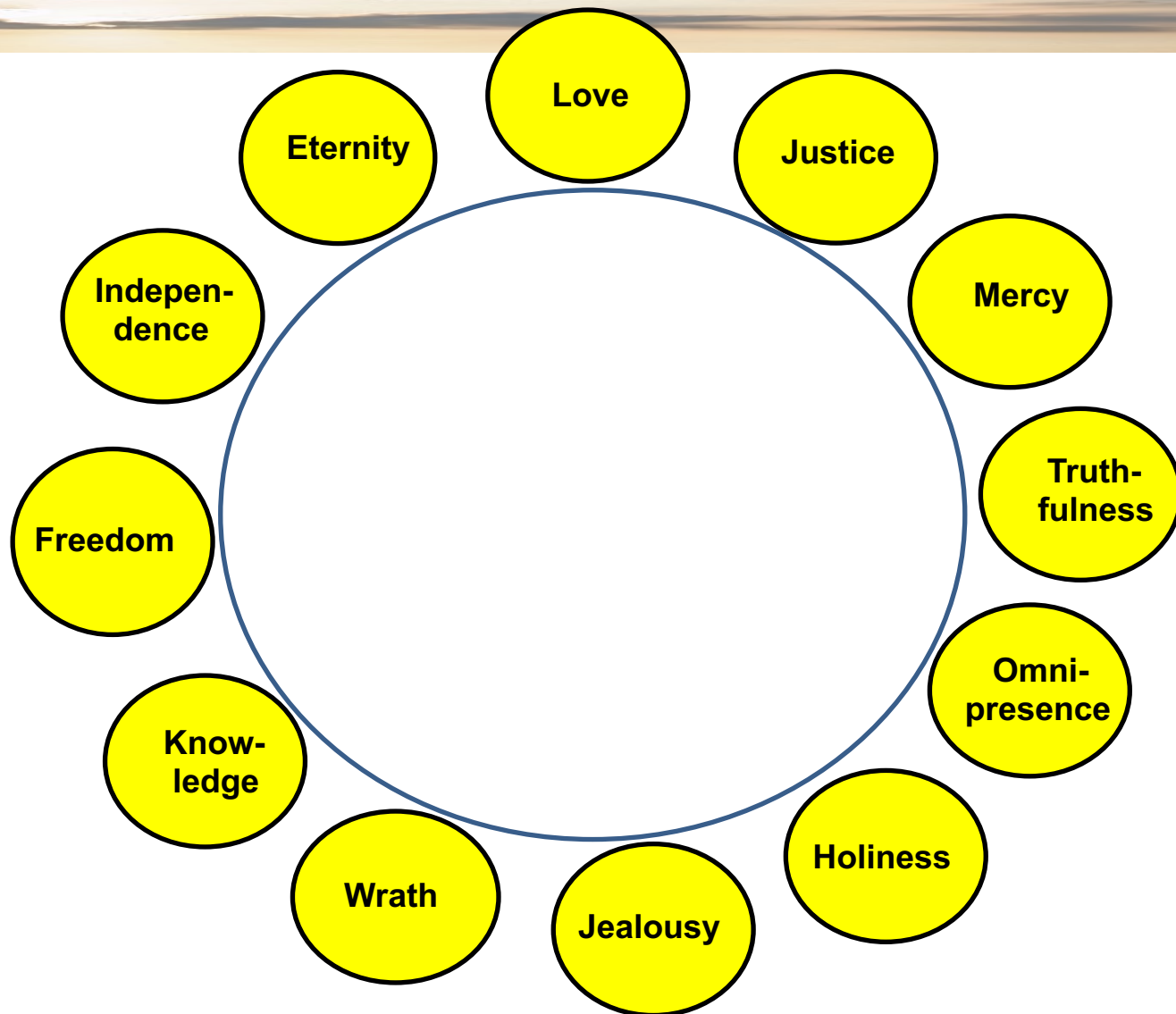
Job 36:22-23

“You will remain.....you are the same,  
and your years have no end.”

# God's Being is not a Collection of Attributes Added Together

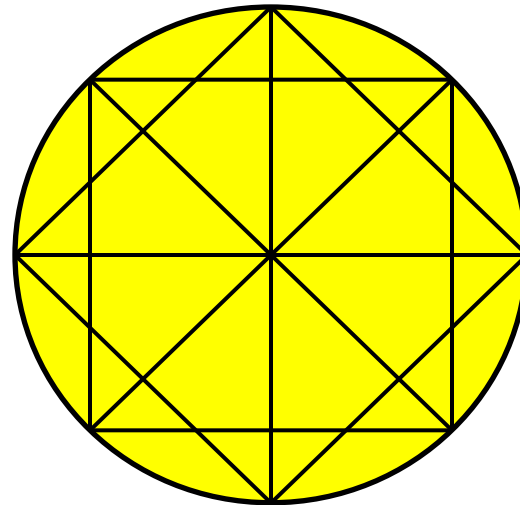
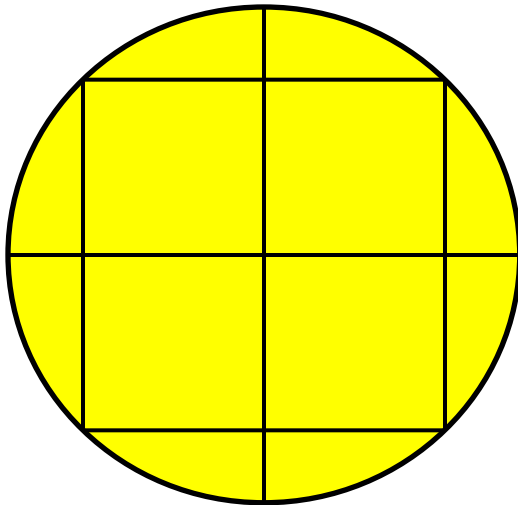


# God's Attributes are not Additions to His Real Being





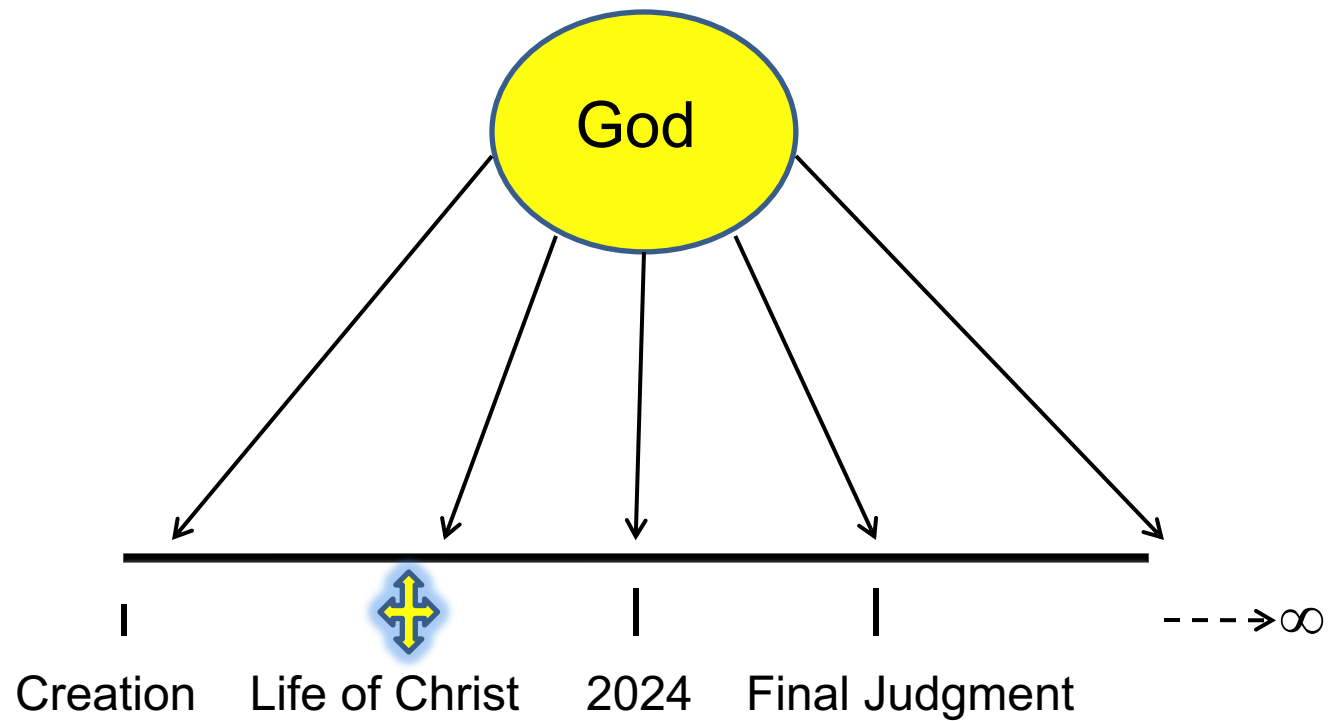
God's Love & Justice



God's Love, Justice,  
Holiness & Wisdom



## Relationship of God to Time





## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Independence

### Definition:

*God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything,  
yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy.*



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Independence (cont)

God doesn't need mankind.....

Acts 17:24-25 – “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.”

but fellowship with God is evident.....

John 17:24 – “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Independence (cont)

God's exists by virtue of his very nature – He was never created and never came into being.

**God always was! God has no origin! Origin is a creature word.**

Revelation 4:11

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

John 1:3

“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Independence (cont)

God's independence is seen in His self-designation.....

Exodus 3:14 - “ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’”

God is transcendent:

♥ God never thinks about the **size** of anything. Why?

♥ God never thinks about **distance**. Why?

♥ God's uncreated quality causes him to be transcendent



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Unchangeableness

### Definition:

*God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.*



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Eternity

### Definition:

*God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.*



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Omnipresence

### Definition:

*God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places*



## God's Incommunicable Attributes: Unity

### Definition

*God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes  
of God emphasized at different times*



## God's Communicable Attributes: Spirituality

### Definition

*God is spirit and true worship does not require that one be present in any specific physical location, as true worship is located in one's inner spiritual condition.*

I am the Alpha and the Omega [Rev. 22:13]



Gen. 1:11 ; Gen. 1:27-28



Rev. 21:1-4; Rev. 22:1-5; Rev. 22:17



# Primary Study Resources

Packer, J.I., Knowing God. Intervarsity Press, 1973

Owen, John, Communion with the Triune God,  
Crossway Books, 2007.

Grudem, Wayne, Systematic Theology, An Introduction  
to Biblical Doctrine, Zondervan, 2000.

