2023-10-13: The Eternal Existence of God

Objective

1. What is God like
2. The eternal existence of God
3. Heresies regarding Gods eternal existence and how to refute them
4. How does Gods eternal existence affect my life

Key Verse

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” Revelation 1:8

Body

Introduction: The Name of God

- Conclusion of the Anaphora:
  - "That as in this, so also in all things, Your great and holy name may be glorified, blessed, and exalted in everything honored and blessed, with Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit." (Liturgy of St Basil, St Cyril)
  - "That as in this, so also in all things, Your great and holy name may be glorified, blessed, and exalted in everything honored and blessed, with Your good Father and the Holy Spirit." (Liturgy of St Gregory)
- The Daily Psalis are all psalis on the NAME of the LORD
  - Monday: "Everyone who says, 'my Lord Jesus', is likened to a sword, casting down the enemy" (2nd verse; other verses explicitly say 'His holy name' or 'Your holy name')
  - Tuesday: "Come unto us today, O Christ our Master, shine upon us, with Your exalted divinity. Send unto us, this great grace, of Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter. So that I may speak, with great honor, about Your Holy, and blessed name." (1st-3rd)
  - Wednesday: "Let them rejoice and be happy, those who seek the Lord, who are constantly, calling upon His holy name" (1st)
  - Thursday: "Let us incessantly, bless the name of Salvation, that is for our Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming and saying..." (2nd)
  - Friday: "For truly I came eagerly, to a great leader, which is the name of Salvation, of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1st)
  - Saturday: "Remembering Your holy name, brings joy to our souls, O my Lord Jesus Christ, my good Savior." (1st)

- Why the focus on God's name?
  - There is great power in a name. Names create an identity and it's how we are known by those around us. The first thing you inquire about someone is their name. The way you call out to someone. The way you refer to someone.
    - Nowadays, even our personalities are sometimes summarized by our names
      - Someone might be very sarcastic and his friend tells him "You pulled a Morcous!"
      - Someone might say a hymn very well and his friend tells him "Okay Ibrahim Ayad"
      - People are even called Karen if they complain at a restaurant or a store!
    - We have some responsibility to glorify, exalt and bless the name of God, to meditate on His name, to keep His name as a memorial, and to not take His name in vain.
      - After God told Moses His name, He said "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'" (Exodus 3:15)
      - "O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:1)
      - "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together" (Psalm 34:3)
      - "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. 'They shall be mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.'" (Malachi 3:16-17)
    - God reveals His character and who He is through His names. So when God reveals Himself through a specific name, we get to know something very special about Him. How can we glorify God or His attributes if we don't know Him?
- All of this begs the question... What is His name?

What are the names of God?

- The names of God gives us comfort, reassurance and hope. The names of God declare His glory.
- There are many names used for God in the Old Testament (names that God revealed to us through the Scripture, and revealed to the authors of Scripture through some other revelation)
  - Most High God (El Elyon)
  - The Almighty (El Shaddai)
  - The Eternal (El Olam)
  - The Lord (Adonai)
  - God, Judge, Creator (Elohim)
  - The Lord is There (Jehovah Shammah)
  - The Lord My Banner (Jehovah Nessi)

    - The Lord our Righteousness (Jehovah Tsidkenu)
    - The Lord Who Sanctifies You (Jehovah Mekoddishkem)
    - The Lord My Shepherd (Jehovah Raah)
    - The Lord that Heals (Jehovah Rapha)
    - The Lord Is Peace (Jehovah Shalom)
    - The Lord of Hosts (Jehovah Sabaoth)
    - The Lord Will Provide (Jehovah Jireh)
- All of these are names used for God, and we see many of them start with the word "Jehovah" which we can say is THE NAME of God. Let us study how God revealed this name to us over time.

What is God's Name?

- The Revelation of God's Name Over Time
    - We read in the beginning of Genesis that Abraham "called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 13:4)... but what is the name of the Lord? What is God's name?
    - In the beginning, the Lord did not reveal his name. When Jacob wrestled with the Lord, he asked Him and the Lord did not reveal it to him.
        - "Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell me Your name, I pray.' And He said, 'Why is it that you ask about My name?' And He blessed him there." (Genesis 32)
    - In the time of Moses, Moses also asked the Lord His name but this time the Lord answered him...
        - "Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14)
        - "And God spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them.'" (Exodus 6:2-3)
    - In the time of the Judges, Manoah (father of Samson) asked the Lord His name:
        - "Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, 'What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?' And the Angel of the Lord said to him, 'Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?'" (Judges 13:17-18)
    - Isaiah writes that same name, "wonderful" and adds to it:
        - "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6)
        - "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)
    - When we come to the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew, he quotes Isaiah and specifies that Immanuel means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23)
    - And we know that God is Trinity: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), Holy Spirit; One God.
- YHWH: The Tettragrammon
    - The principal name in the Old Testament by which God reveals himself is YHWH הוהי which we can pronounce "Yahweh"

- The oldest Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint actually keep this Hebrew name of God in the midst of Greek
- In later Greek, it starts to get replaced by IAΩ (pronounced iawe)
- This is considered by Jews to be "unpronounceable" and in general, they are not permitted to say out loud the name of God. So they replace it sometimes with other words like Adonai which means Lord. Later Greek manuscripts picked up on this word and started to translate it to κύριος which means "Lord"
- Whenever you see (in the NKJV) the word "Lord" in small caps, you can check the footnote and see what it is being translated from and usually it is YHWH in the Hebrew
- In the Coptic Bible, Exodus 3:14:
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  - So the Lord is revealing his name to Moses as □□ □□ **ⲱⲛ**□□ and then tells him "Tell them □□ □□ **ⲱⲛ**□□ sent you"
  - Then when □□□□ ⲱⲛ□□ is translated to English it usually comes back as "The BEING"

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- Liturgy of St Basil
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  - □□□□ ⲱⲛ□□ ⲉⲛ□□ □□□□ ⲑ□□□ : □□□ ⲥ □□ ⲭ□□ ⲱⲛ ⲙ̀ⲡ ⲭ□□ □□□□□□□□□□ - "**WHO IS** in the highest, and looks upon the lowly"
- Liturgy of St Gregory
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  - O You, **WHO IS**, who was and who abides for ever, the Eternal, co-essential, co-enthroned, co-creator with the Father, who for the sake of goodness only brought man into existence out of nonexistence, and put him in the Paradise of joy.
- Liturgy of St Cyril
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  - For truly it is fitting and right, and holy and becoming, and profitable to our souls, bodies, and spirits - O You, **WHO IS**, Master, Lord, God, the Father, the Pantocrator - at all times and in all places of Your dominion, to praise You, hymn You, bless You, serve You, worship You, thank You, and glorify You, and confess to You night and day, with incessant lips, with a heart that keeps not silent, and with unceasing doxologies."
- The Advent Hymn ⲛ□□□ ⲱⲛ □□□

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  - It is truly worthy: and just that we sing: to the True God: the Lord **WHO IS** in heaven.
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  - His name is sweet and blessed: on the mouths of the saints: this is God the Father: the Son and the Holy Spirit
- The second verse clarifies that we are talking about HIS NAME which is □□□□ ⲱ □□ **WHO IS**. We are confessing that the Lord WHO IS, is the Father Son and Holy Spirit

The Eternal Existence of God

- What does all of this mean?
  - I AM, WHO IS, and THE BEING all mean the same thing. Let's see if we can figure out what they mean...
  - AM and IS are the verb BE which is conjugated to "am" - "are" - "is" (I am, we are, you are, he is, she is, they are)
  - And what does it mean "to be?" - to exist!
  - The Name of God YHWH, I AM, □□□□ ⲱ□□ means "He Who Exists"
  - All of us exist... so what's the difference?
    - God is self-existent whereas we exist as a result of Him bringing us into existence (i.e. He is the SOURCE of existence)
    - God is eternally existent whereas our existence has a starting point
- The name of God, revealed to us by God, tells us ABOUT God. One of God's unique attributes: His Eternal Existence.
- What is Eternal
  - No beginning and no end

Verses about the Eternality of God

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)
  - The Scripture does not try to prove God's existence or His eternality but simply states that at the beginning of recorded time, God was already in existence.
- "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God" (John 1:1)
- "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15)
- "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Lats; besides Me there is no God.'" (Isaiah 44:6)
- "'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'" (Revelation 1:8)
- "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." (Psalm 90:2)

- "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)
- "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)

What can we know about God?

- It is not possible to fully comprehend the eternal existence of God. He is incomprehensible because we live and exist and measure everything in the realm of time.
- God has always existed; there was never a time when He came into existence; there will never be a time when He goes out of existence. Because He created time, He is not limited to it.
- St Augustine (on Genesis 1:1): “But even if we believe that God made heaven and earth at the beginning of time, we should certainly realize that there was no time before the beginning of time. For God also made time, and thus there was no time before he made time. Hence, we cannot say that there was a time when God had not yet made anything. For how could there be a time that God had not made since he is the maker of all time? And if time began to be with heaven and earth, there cannot be found a time when God had not yet made heaven and earth. When they say, “Why did He suddenly decide?” they speak as if some time passed during which God produced nothing. But a time could not pass that God had not already made, because he cannot be the producer of time unless he is before time.”
  - The word "before" and "after" are related to time, so we cannot logically ask the question of "what happened before God made time?" or make any statement like "before God created time..." - St Augustine adds to that, that God created heaven and earth at the beginning of time. This means that we cannot even say the statement "before God created heaven and earth..." since that is equivalent to saying "before God created time..."
- St Augustine: "It is not in time that you precede all times, O Lord. You precede all past times in the sublimity of an ever-present reality. You have made all times and are before all times." (Confessions)
- There's a story that St Augustine was walking on the seashore meditating on the Holy Trinity (he was writing "On the Holy Trinity"). He saw a child digging a hole in the sand and running to the ocean, filling a bucket with water and dumping it into the little hole he dug. So he asked the child what he was doing and the child said "I'm trying to empty the ocean into this hole" and St Augustine said "that's impossible!" The child said "Indeed! But I will sooner fill this hole with all the water of the ocean than you will succeed in penetrating the mystery of the Trinity."
- St. Cyril of Alexandria: “If one wishes to inquire into these things, there is no doubt that he will be completely lacking in mental ability, in contrast to that [the mind] which God is perceived to have. That our faculties are insignificant or as absolutely nothing in comparison with God, he himself clearly states: ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways’, says 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.’ (Isaiah 55:8-9) Let it be allowed, then, that extraordinariness and incomprehensibility are the

touchstone concerning these things. For God creates as he himself knows how and as only he is able.” – Glaphyra on the Pentateuch Part 1

- St John Chrysostom: "I, too, know many things but I do not know how to explain them. I know that God is everywhere and I know that he is everywhere in his whole being. But I do not know how he is everywhere. I know that he is eternal and has no beginning. But I do not know how. My reason fails to grasp how it is possible for an essence to exist when that essence has received its existence neither from itself nor from another. I know that he begot a Son. But I do not know how. I know that the Spirit is from him. But I do not know how the Spirit is from him." - On the Incomprehensible Nature of God 1.19

How does God's eternal existence affect my life?

- It is important to learn Theology so that we can know what is true and what is false, the Truth will set you free
- The doctrine of the eternality of God provides comfort to the believers. Since God will never cease to exist, neither will those who have put their trust in Him.
- When I understand the Divine Liturgy, I can better practice and participate in it and enjoy it

Application

Do you sometimes worry about what might happen in the future? Contemplate on how knowing that God is eternal can help us to not worry about these things and on how we should act toward God to show that we understand that He is everlasting.

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