

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Scripture References: John 4:24 Mal. 3:6. Psa. 147:5 Rev. 19:6.
Isa. 57:15. Deut. 32:4 Rom. 2:4 Psa. 117:2.

Questions:

1. Why is this question so fundamental for the soul of man?
It is essential for Hebrews 9:6 states, "He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is." If man can accept the first words of Scripture, "In the beginning God . . ." he is on the right road, for this is a truth upon which all other truths depend.
2. How can we accept and know this basic truth?
Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, reveals God to us and it is only through Christ that we come to God. The Bible says, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18). "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).
3. In the light of the answer to Question Number Four, with what attitude should we approach God?
We should approach Him as the Almighty, Sovereign God. In the front of a particular church, in plain sight of the congregation there was a sign: "Know Whom Before You Stand!" We should always approach Him in our thoughts, words and deeds with the recognition that He is all that the answer to this question proclaims Him to be.
4. What is meant by the statement, "God is a Spirit?"
The meaning is that He is invisible, without body or bodily parts, not like a man or any other creature. (From Minutes of Session of Westminster Assembly).
5. In Theology what term do we use in regard to the adjectives used to describe God?
We call these the attributes of God and separate them into His incommunicable and communicable attributes.
6. Why do we separate them in this way?
We separate them in this way because His incommunicable attributes are not found in any way in his creatures. These are His Infinity, eternity and unchangeableness. His communicable attributes, (being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth), are found in some degree in man. Obviously, in man, these attributes are faint, limited and imperfect as compared with God.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24). These words, spoken by Jesus to the woman at the well, are words for today. There is much worship going on today, but "let us examine ourselves" — is our worship true worship? Man was created for fellowship with God and the worship of God occupies a lofty place in attaining unto that fellowship.

How can we worship Him in spirit and in truth? Only when we worship Him with the knowledge of what he is savingly in Christ for the benefit of lost sinners. When there is this realization in the individual soul, it is possible for the person to begin the worship of God according to His will. It is then that the soul will be able to say with Moses, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). It is only when man is saved through personal faith in Jesus Christ that he is able to approach his Maker with the right attitude in worship.

In Presbyterian circles the charge has often been made that the service is too cold, too formal. If such be true, could the reason for it be found in the failure of the congregation to worship in spirit and in truth? Many people feel that worship has to do with ceremonies or visible observances. Indeed, many are inclined to feel that it is difficult to worship unless stained glass windows, divided chancel and beautiful music are all present. We must not forget that the worship of God is spiritual. Calvin stated, "If we manifest a becoming reverence toward him only when we prefer his will to our own, it follows that there is no other legitimate worship of Him but the observance of righteousness, sanctity, and purity."

Not long ago I was in the replica of the first Presbyterian church established in Claiborne County, Mississippi. A simple log building with a handmade pulpit is all that meets the eye of the worshiper. The thought came to me that after all, real worship has to do with our recognition of the Greatness of the Sovereign God. When we understand who He is, when our lives honor His Sovereignty, when we understand we are sinful creatures redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, it is then that we are more nearly able to worship Him as we should. Arthur W. Pink tells us that our attitude toward the Almighty, Sovereign God should be one of godly fear, implicit obedience, entire resignation and deep thankfulness and joy. These characteristics of a born again person will enable him to worship in spirit and in truth.

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