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God is Omnipresent

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GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

God is omnipresent:

The great theologian A. H. Strong defines this attribute as follows:

God, in the totality of His essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts. (*Systematic Theology*, p. 279)

- The omnipresence of God thus means He is present everywhere with His whole being at the same time. The great danger to avoid in rightly understanding this attribute is the grievous error of pantheism, which says that God is everywhere, and everything is God. This is totally false. God is everywhere, but everything is not God.

Paul Enns writes:

The doctrine of omnipresence is a comfort to the believer who recognizes that no calamity can befall him that God is not present with him; it is also a warning to the disobedient person that he cannot escape the presence of God. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 194)

- The disobedient person referred to here can be either a carnal believer or a rebellious unbeliever.

A. The carnal believer—Jonah the prophet

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me” (Jonah 1:2).

Wrong Jonah! You cannot flee from God.

1. He was with you on that ship (1:5).
2. He was with you in the angry sea (1:15).
3. He was with you in the fish’s belly (2:1, 10).
4. He anointed your preaching in Nineveh (3:4-8).
5. He spoke to you in your anger just outside Nineveh (4:5-11).

B. The rebellious unbeliever

“Though they dig into hell, from there My hand shall take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down; and though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will search and take them; though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them; though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword, and it shall slay them. I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good” (Amos 9:2-4).

- In a nutshell, God sees all people at all times in all places!

“‘Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?’ says the LORD; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD” (Jer. 23:24).

- Two aspects should be kept in mind as one studies the omnipresence of God.

A. God's immanence

This speaks of God being in the world, acting within and through His creation:

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"
(Matt. 18:20).

B. God's transcendence

This affirms that God is above and beyond His creation:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psa. 139:7-12).

Charles Ryrie observes:

Omnipresent does not mean that the immediacy of His presence does not vary. It does. His presence on His throne (Rev. 4:2), in Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 7:2), or in the believer (Gal. 2:20) certainly differs in its immediacy from His presence in the lake of fire (Rev. 14:10). Though in the lake of fire people will be separated from the face-presence of God (2 Thess. 1:9, "prosopon"), they will never be separated from Him who is omnipresent (Rev. 14:10, "enopion"). There is obviously no presence of fellowship (for His face will be turned away from the wicked in the lake of fire) as exists when He indwells believers. (*Basic Theology*, p. 41)

- Now for some illustrations:

A. There once was a staunch Republican farmer named Fred and wife Kitty who lived in central Illinois. Before leaving his home to hear the results of the 1936 presidential election at the local courthouse between Al Landon and FDR, Fred, a noted Roosevelt hater said to his wife: "Kitty, start packing, for if Roosevelt carries Pike County, we're moving!" Around 3:00 A.M. as the results trickled in, he rang his wife in great despair: "Kitty, this is Fred. Unpack girl, for there's no place to go!" The final vote of course would reveal that FDR had carried every state except Maine and Vermont!

B. One of my former students at Liberty University once told me he had found a real problem in regard to the future judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

The difficulties centered in the vast amount of time it would take to judge and reward the millions of believers who would be there. He concluded that if God spent only one hour per Christian, the time involved would equal hundreds of thousands of years! I answered that his problem was easily solved, for the total duration of time involved would be exactly 60 minutes! In other words, the divine attribute of omnipresence

assures that each believer would experience the full and undivided attention of God at the same time!

- C. You are scheduled for very serious major surgery. Needless to say, the day before had been especially difficult. Yet His presence had been felt, especially during the drive to the hospital. You sensed He was in the car, sitting right next to you. After being admitted, you are assigned a room. Quietly lying there, there comes that assurance He is in the room, just waiting for you to acknowledge Him. For the first two hours you spend a restless night, wondering what the next twenty-four would bring. But eventually sleep comes, as His words are remembered, *"He giveth his beloved sleep"* (Psa. 127:2).

At daybreak, however, the tension once again begins to build. Will this day be my last one? This fear soon fades as David's prayer comes to mind, *"But I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, 'Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand'"* (Psa. 31:14, 15).

Now they have come for you, just as the visiting pastor has finished his prayer. In an amazing way it seemed God Himself was speaking directly through him to you.

Now you are heading for the operating room, accompanied by a nurse and followed by loved ones. Finally, they are asked to return to the waiting room. Both you and the medical attendant are at this moment alone. But is this really true? Suddenly and perhaps even unexpectedly, a glorious peace gives blessed assurance that patient and nurse have been joined by a third party. But the best now comes—for as the surgery door is opened, you see Him standing by the operating table. With a smile He gently says, *"Come in dear child, I've been waiting for you!"*

This, my friend, is God's glorious omnipresence in a nutshell.

- D. Sometime in the decade of the 580s B.C., three young Hebrew men were cast into a red-hot fiery furnace for refusing to worship a statue built by a pagan Babylonian king. So, a horrible death would be the price for their faith. Well, not quite. When the fire had somewhat subsided, Nebuchadnezzar the king was amazed to see not three—but four—walking in the fire—and the fourth he said had the appearance of a god!

Amazing indeed, but even more so when the three Hebrew men would casually walk out of the furnace, not only unhurt but their clothes not even smelling of smoke. This is their story as recorded in Daniel, chapter two. Now for some quick math:

1. The number of men cast into the fire: 3
2. The number of men the king saw in the fire: 4
3. The number of men who left the fire: 3

Question: In light of the above, what happened to the fourth man? Where is He?

Answer: He's in the fire—waiting for you!

Just who was the fourth man? It is generally concluded this was a Christophany; that is, a pre-Bethlehem appearance of Jesus Christ. Thus, the scriptures present this omnipresent Savior as follows:

1. He stands at the right hand of God *representing you* (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).
2. He walks *with and beside you* (Psa. 23:4).
3. He actually lives *within you* (Col. 1:27).
4. He now waits *for you* during the fiery afflictions of life (Isa. 43:2).

No gospel hymn summarizes this glorious truth than does the following one:

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said—
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

*Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.*

*When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee thy trouble to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not harm thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.*

*The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."*