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God is Self-Existing

Have you ever wondered what it was like before God chose to create? Have you even wondered what it would be like to be God? In the absence of creation, God was and continues to be completely satisfied within Himself. “During a past eternity, God was alone: self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied; in need of nothing.”¹⁴ He needs nothing for His own eternal existence.

God cannot bring Himself into being. He always was. And while God has the potential to *do* other things, He cannot *be* anything other than what He is. He has the power to *create* other things, but He does not have the power to *exist* in any other way than He does, namely, as an infinite, eternal, necessary, and simple Being. God's [self-existence] means that He *is* Being; everything else merely *has* being. God, cannot not exist. All creatures can be nonexistent. That is, they have the potentiality for nonexistence. Only God is a Necessary Being. All other beings are [dependent].¹⁵

He has never been alone or lonely. Within the Godhead proper, there is an all-encompassing pleasure with Himself. **It is the eternal self-satisfaction within the Trinity that moves God to create those with whom He can share this internal joy and rest. Humanity is designed with the purpose and capacity to enjoy God's company and presence forever. We are created with need and dependency and both are fully and finally met in God.** God's essence marks His motive in writing the *Story*. God needs nothing outside of Himself to be content. Thus,

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.¹⁶

God exists of himself, that is to say, not from another or of another or by another or by reason of another.¹⁷

The respected biblical theologian J.I. Packer makes the following comment concerning God as self-existing:

Our Maker exists in an eternal, self-sustaining, necessary way - necessary, that is, in the sense that God does not have it in Him to go out of existence, just as we do not have it in us to live forever. We necessarily age and die, because it is our present nature to do that; God necessarily continues forever unchanged, because

it is His eternal nature to do that. This is one of many contrasts between creature and Creator.¹⁸

God is the source or ground of His own existence. God's existence is wholly in Himself. He is totally uncaused and independent of all things external to Himself. Thus it is unwise for us to believe the Almighty has placed Himself in a position of need within the sphere of man's will (Acts 17:23-25). “To see the history of the world [i.e. God's *Story*] revolving around the axis of man's will would not be a biblical approach.”¹⁹ He derives His being from none, but gives being or essence to all (Job 41:11). Creation is everything outside of God, and He does not rely on it for His existence in any way. God needs nothing for the perpetuation of His being. Nothing else outside of God can make such a boast or claim.

Listen to how theologian Emery Bancroft describes this aspect of God:

God has the ground of His existence in Himself. Every being must have the ground of its existence either in or outside of itself. We have the ground of our existence outside ourselves. God is not thus dependent. God exists by the necessity of His own being. It is His nature to be. It is grounded, not in His volitions, but in His nature.²⁰

There are several passages stressing this quality.

First, when Moses stood before the burning bush in Exodus 3, he asked God for His name. In response to the question God said,

God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM**”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘**I AM** has sent me to you.’” (Exod. 3:14)

The essential meaning of the statement “carries the fundamental idea of the self-existence of God.”²¹ “This means that God's being has always been and will always be exactly what it is.”²² A.W. Tozer adds, “In God there is no was or will be, but a continuous and unbroken is. In Him history and prophecy are one and the same. Whatever God is He is infinitely.”²³

Second, because Jesus has life in Himself, He has the power to give life to others (John 5:25-27).

²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ **For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;** ²⁷ and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (John 5:25-27)

Verse 18 defines the context for this statement.

- ¹⁷ But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” ¹⁸ For this reason therefore **the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.** (John 5:17, 18)

The audience clearly understood what Jesus said.

New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce provides for us this powerful explanation of what this means:

None but God the Father, unbegotten and uncreated, inherently possess life-in-himself. He is in his very being “the living God.” To the Son alone, begotten but not created, has the Father imparted his own prerogative to have life-in-himself. In the eternal order the Father, as Father, imparts to the Son, as Son, that life-in-himself which it is the Father’s to possess and impart.²⁴

This same idea is affirmed in John 1:1-4.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.** ⁴ **In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.** (John 1:1-4)

The Gospel of John establishes the deity of Jesus. Chapter 1 is a first word to the entire Gospel and established the foundation on which the Gospel unfolds.

Finally, when confronted by the question, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I Am**” (John 8:58).

Those who heard His statement saw the direct connect to Exodus 3:14. The text goes on to say, “**Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple**” (John 8:58-59). “The Jews could interpret this only as blasphemy.”²⁵

What does the self-existence of God mean for His people? With blinding clarity it means God has neither beginning nor ending. There is never any fear of God simply running out of power. “It is not just that God *does* not need the creation for anything; God *could not* need the creation for anything.”²⁶ His actions never deplete His resources. There is never any fatigue in God. His existence is self-perpetuating and maintaining. The same God that created all things and that is written of in both the Old and New Testament is our God. He has not diminished one iota.

Notice the passages where we read, “The LORD lives” (Judges 8:19; Ruth 3:13; 1 Sam. 14:39). **This statement is in the context of oath taking.** Why is this quality of God accented? There are three reasons: (1) it provides an unchanging standard, (2) it provides an eternal witness, and (3) it provides an unwavering judge. Notice Hebrews 6:13-18.

¹³For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, **He swore by Himself**, ¹⁴saying, ‘I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.’ ¹⁵And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. (Heb. 6:13-18)

His self-existence forms the bedrock for oath taking. **The God from whom, through whom, and for whom are all things gives to those who trust Him an unchangeable foundation on which all of life is to be lived.** God never tires or grows weary. He gives to those who are burdened and heavy-laden rest. Consider the words of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”? ²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹**He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.** ³⁰Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, ³¹Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. (Isa. 40:27-31)

Isaiah 40-48 form a spectacular disclosure of God.

In addition, let us consider those of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30.

²⁸“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.** ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)

O what joy is ours as we rest in the One who is self-existing. He alone and only has life within Himself and He imparts this very *life* to those who are His. It is because of who God is and what He has done, that one finds rest. Since God is self-existing, He is under no obligation to us. What He does for us is by His own choice. It is because of His self-existing nature He works from grace for those who need grace. His love is never ending, His acceptance is never wavering, His forgiveness is never restricted, His favor is never withheld, and His gracious activity toward us is never conditional. Because He is self-existing, He is enough. May we never lose sight of God as self-existing.