

24-10-01.wpd -- The True God
 religion, God, reason, creation, love, communication
 Jer 10:5,12

All gods that humans make fall short of the God who made humans.

INTRODUCTION:

--Humans pursue religion *universally* but not *uniformly*. People think differently about *what God is like* and *how to please Him*. Despite all these ideas, God keeps His identity. Our concept of God doesn't change Him, but when it's the right conception, it can change us.

--In studying religions, I've found that many ideas about God are not *human-friendly*. They touch on the human condition without explaining it or supporting us in it. That's because **HOM.idea**. Man-made gods are described in Jer 10:5,10a,12 (NASB), {5} "*Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good.*"{10} *But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King....*{12} *It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.* **Title, because the God revealed in Scripture is the only God who is truly human-friendly.**

I. The World's 'Gods' Are Made from Human Ideas

- A. [Suppose we all worked for a large organization, but none of us had ever met the CEO. Then one day, we were each individually to be called into his office to be personally scrutinized by him for our work. Without ever having met him, we might imagine things about him based on *our personal fears, our personal hopes, our past personal experiences* with others in management, or *our personal observations* of the organization itself, how it functioned, what its mission was, and how the employees were treated. All of those would only give us a *personal* perspective, but the perspective that would be most accurate would be the one based on what? **Observation of the organization itself**].
- B. This is how God identifies Himself to us in Scripture. He appeals to the fact that He is behind the organization called "the universe". He says that He "*is the Maker of all things*." He holds us accountable to know Him based on our observation of the creation-- Rom 1:18-20, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 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. (We stray from the true God when we stop carefully observing His created universe, especially ourselves as creatures in that universe.)

TRANS: All gods that humans make fall short of the God who made humans. God's evaluation of false concepts of Himself is stated in **v.5**, "*Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good.*" Humans need a human-friendly God, a God who loves humanity enough to intervene in our behalf to do us "*good*."

II. The True God Is Seen in What He Made, Inside and Out-- v.12

But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

- A. I started my philosophical journey back to Christ, from doubts that sidetracked me in high school, by observing creation [Most of the rest of the sermon will be from my booklet *Journey to the Center of My Heart*]: "The human heart has an innate openness to faith that a "Creator" exists. But which God? The God of one of the religions? // Obviously, the fact that I was raised in a Christian family did not make my former religious beliefs any more valid than those of other religions. And who was to say that any of the world's religions were right about the nature of God anyway? How could I discover the truth about the true God? // In developing a philosophical world view, we all start with a few presuppositions. My heart was leading me to accept the major premise that a Creator God exists, but I also assumed what seemed to be a logical corollary: that all in the universe, including my own person, is God's creation. What then could I learn from the world of nature and from my own human nature that could tell me about the Author of both?"]
- B. First, I looked on the outside (in nature): "First, in the material and biological world, I saw order, law, and design. This betrayed something about the nature of the Creator: God is a Mathematician, a Legislator, and an Artist." (These are all human-friendly aspects of God: *mathematical logic* is the basis of human reason; *natural law* is what man imitates in legislating laws to govern himself; and *a love for artistic design* in God helps us to see where we got the love for it ourselves!)
- C. But second, I had to look on the inside (in my own heart): "Turning my gaze inward, I knew that I was more than a physical being under laws of compulsion and instinct. I had internal laws or aspirations that transcended definitions in material terms. Human intangibilities, such as freewill, honesty, pride, guilt, honor, happiness, sorrow, love, etc., were more real and meaningful parts of human life and existence than even our physical

makeup. Humanness, as expressed by these inner characteristics, could tell me the most important thing I needed to know about God. Since I was a person who could feel, think, choose, and even create, then I could logically conclude that my Creator was also a Person. I rejected the idea of God as an impersonal force, for it would give these inner experiences of personality no Source, no Prototype, and would make the personal creature more advanced than such an impersonal creator." (I had to reject the *pantheistic concept that God is a force, that individuality is an illusion, that reincarnations must be undergone to work off the bad of past lives by good in the present one, because these concepts are not human-friendly!* Yet they define and undergird **Hinduism** and **Buddhism**.)

- D. (Continuing) "But if a Person, then what kind of Person was God? In my own estimation, which met consensus with the majority of thinkers in history, the highest of virtues in this intangible realm of the soul were those which stem from "unselfish love." And if we humans esteemed "love" so highly, then God must surely be loving. How could I know this? Well, this God of order put a strong law within my heart that made me feel good about loving actions, but uncomfortable with my unloving or selfish deeds. In fact, I had to battle this sense of guilt with rationalizing efforts to bring my mind to accept any of my unloving acts as being "okay." And just by studying life, I observed that when love is the rule, humanity is in order. When selfishness rules, destruction and disharmony follow. So, just from these two observations, the outer world and my inner world, I could learn that God was a very wise, powerful, loving Person."

TRANS: Many stop at this reasoning and build their own religion. "But my reasoning took a different path. As a finite being, I had some wisdom; but God's wisdom would be, by nature, infinite. I had a measure of love; but God's love would be, by nature, perfect. God's perfect love, then, would far surpass even the love I had for myself, and God's absolute wisdom encompassed the very wisest choices I could ever make. If I could learn God's will, rooted in such infinite wisdom and love, then I would be a fool not to yield my own will to God's. I had already learned some general things about His will through nature and my own heart. Was God the kind of Person who would make His will known? Would He spell out His specific desires for humanity, especially His will for individual human beings, like myself?"

III. The True God Would Communicate in the Best Way Possible

- A. The nature of love: "Something true about the nature of human love is that love communicates. Without communication, a relationship of love breaks down, whether it is the patriotic love between citizens, the friendly love between neighbors, the familial love in clans and homes, or the romantic love between lovers and spouses. So, the God of love would have to be a Communicator. It would be His nature to communicate with us, and the perfect God would do so reliably and unambiguously. His love would mandate a

Divine communication, a Personal revelation that went beyond His hints about Himself in the design of the physical world and the nature of the human soul. Such a Self-disclosure by God would be the only sure foundation of a true religion, or more properly, a true relationship between God and humanity."

- B. The true God is the God whose love is supreme: "I looked among the world's religions for a revelation of the God of infinite love which my heart taught me about. If such a God existed, that God would love to the greatest degree imaginable. That last step of reasoning led me beyond my old doubts and fully back into my original faith in Jesus Christ. I cannot reproduce here the details of my religious research or of my study of Christianity in particular. I believe you must seek the truth for yourself for it to be really meaningful to your life. But I do challenge you: search through earth's history for a religion whose center is a God who loved humanity so much that He "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God's word in nature is nice, His word in the mouths of divinely illumined prophets is better, but becoming one of us is the platform for communication par excellence! God's loving act of Incarnation has to be the ultimate in divine Self-revelation. And yet, His becoming human just to say "I love you" would not be the kind of love our world really needed from God. What about the disorder, the hurt, the loss caused by mankind's greatest problem, the selfishness of sin? The answer of Christian Scripture is this: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8). The ultimate proof of divine, self-giving love was the Cross of Christ. In a marvelous way, His death for our sins and His victory over the grave have released into this world the fountainhead of peace and healing that all humanity longs for. Most of all, Christ's dying in our place paid for the reconciliation between a loving Creator and us, who have often rebelled against His laws of love. Selfishness brought us only ruin and death. But God's love, reaching out to lost humanity and experiencing death in our place, brought us the offer of life and wholeness."

CONCLUSION:

--Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism (in its unfulfilled state) reveal no concept of God as *loving* and *human-friendly* as found in the Christian faith. "I could not invent or imagine a religion that deals with the human condition in terms of greater love than the love we discover in the New Testament. So, I gave up the idea of establishing my own world view and turned my life over to the God who revealed Himself in the Bible.... Not all my intellectual questions are answered yet, but I would be a fool to let my unanswered questions rob me of enjoying my answered ones.... The more I learn about this earthly life and the human condition, the more I see how the Christian faith makes so much sense. I was searching with my best and most honest reasoning to find the truth, and I found that the Truth was a Person. I was seeking the God that my heart hoped was there, and the God of love who revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, was all the time hunting for me."