

CWR^m magazine

June 2023
Volume 14, Number 3

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION



אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה

"I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14)

He Is Who He Says He Is | Greg Albrecht 2

25 Father's Days | Laura Urista 5

This God Comes Down | Brad Jersak 7

אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי

He Is Who He Says He Is by Greg Albrecht

“IT IS WHAT IT IS”

It is what it is. When a dilemma for which there seems to be no clear solution or answer is wrestled with, without being resolved, one will often pronounce to family and friends, “It is what it is.” It is what it is states, often with a hint of resignation, a given situation or conundrum is beyond satisfactory explanations and must be accepted *as it is*.

Perhaps God is a bit like that. **God Is Who He Says He Is**—and we cannot be expected to fully grasp, as finite humans, his eternity, beauty and majesty. As his children, as we mature in our understanding of Father God it is inevitable that we realize, on many levels, God is more and greater and “better” than we previously thought. In many cases, God is not at all like many previously thought him to be.

If our perspective of God is distorted, then that misrepresentation corrupts and twists virtually every part of our life. Further, if our perspective of God is distorted, then we must ask whether religious authorities and institutions have misrepresented God.

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer (1897-1963) once said: “What comes into our minds when we think

“For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” —John 1:17

about God is the most important thing about us.”

Reacting and interacting with this thought, and adding even more focus, the prolific and honored Christian scholar and author, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), almost precisely Tozer’s contemporary, said, “How

God thinks of us is not only more important [than what we think of him], but infinitely more important.”

What we believe about God influences what we can possibly hope for and imagine he thinks of us. **What we think, believe and embrace about God, who he is, and what he thinks about us, will shape everything in our lives.**

If one thinks of God as being filled with wrath, it is much easier for one to be filled with wrath toward those whose behavior is not appropriate. If one thinks of God as racist, bigoted and mad at the world, then one may feel justified in being racist, bigoted and mad at the world.

As the old saying goes, “God created man in his own image and man returned the favor.” We return to our premise: **God is not necessarily who we think he is, God is who and what he says he is.**

“I AM”

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).

The backstory to this verse involves the life of Moses in Egypt. Moses, by his own self-description (Exodus 2:22), was an alien living in a foreign land. Moses had never really been at home anywhere. He was a child of the enslaved Hebrews, adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh and given an Egyptian name. He became a “Prince of Egypt”—the title of a 1998 movie that told the story of the Exodus.

When Moses grew up and became a prince of Egypt, one day, while he was trying to save one of his own, a Hebrew, who was being beaten by an Egyptian, he killed the Egyptian, and he had to flee for his life. He became a fugitive and was forced to shepherd sheep, working for his father-in-law in a land outside the boundaries of Egypt.

That was the context when God introduced

himself to Moses, via a burning bush that burned and burned but never burned up. Moses was going about his business, taking care of his sheep, when God spoke to him out of a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-4).

God told Moses he had selected him to go back to Egypt, where Moses had posters hanging on every police station wall—where Moses was a wanted man—and Moses would lead his captive people, the Hebrews, out of Egypt.

Moses objected to that grand mission, saying that no one would pay any attention to him, even if he could avoid being put to death by the Egyptians for the murder he had committed (Exodus 3:11). When God insisted, Moses said that were he to lead the slave-nation of Israel out of Egypt they had a right to know the God who deputized me for this mission.

Moses, in Exodus 3:13, asks God who he is, so that if Moses does what God tells him, he can tell the Israelites who God is. God's cryptic answer: "*I AM who I am*" (Exodus 3:14).

"I AM WHO I AM"

God is who he is. Two simple, powerful words. God is who he says he is. *I AM*.

These two words identify God throughout the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. *I AM*. In the parlance of the 21st century, when "self-identity" has risen to be a "God-given" right—God self-identifies to Moses by telling him *I AM*.

God is not who you think he is or who you would like him to be or who you have been told he is—God is who he says he is.

God Does Not Have Love—He IS Love. Love is who God is. Jesus, the Son of God, God in the flesh, fully revealed God the Father and did so more than anything by his love. God is love—he doesn't have love as one of his attributes, *love is who he is*.

The perfect illustration of the perfect love of God—the revelation of God and his love—is the gift of that which has unsurpassable worth—God the Son—to another who is completely undeserving—that would be you and me.

The nature of God's love is the act of unconditionally giving ultimate worth to another at a great cost to oneself. This is why we are Christ-centered, for it is in and through him that God the Father is revealed and made known to us.

HE IS WHO HE IS

Throughout history, humans have been tempted, and often given in to the impulse to re-make God in their image—the temptation is to turn God into a small god, so we can understand him and manipulate him, rather than worship him as he is, which is infinitely greater and bigger than we are.

The human tendency is to reduce God into measurable and controllable elements and dimensions. ***But God is not who you think he is; God is who he says he is.***

"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing (Isaiah 40:25-26).

The late John Stott, an English pastor, scholar and author (1921-2011), once told about his visit to a small little country church in England. Stott was spending the summer in this area, researching and writing, so he attended this church for a number of weeks.



Week after week he heard the pastor talk about issues facing the local village and their little church. Week after week, John Stott heard their prayers, which were always about their own members—church members who were sick, church members who were on vacation—or as the English still call it, “on holiday.”

At the end of his summer, Stott concluded about this little village church: *“They were a village people and they worshipped a village god.”*



If your God is encompassed by the boundary markers of your town or even country, your God is too small. If you have created God in your own image, or more likely, someone has helped you to do so, then ...

- God will hate the people who you hate.
- He will vote for the person you vote for.
- He will be a member of your

denomination and your political party.

- Whatever you are passionate about, God will also share that passionate zeal.
- You may speak of God’s “plan for your life” without considering how remarkably identical it is to your own plan for your life.

If you have created God in your own image or allowed someone help you do so, God will agree with you about everything. You will have him in your hip pocket, ready to be taken out, activated, “turned on” and “conjured up” to be used whenever you need him. But here’s the

twisted ideas about God.

You might say, *“Well, sure—he talked to fishermen, farmers, poor people, sick people, prostitutes—they had no idea.”*

Well, yes, Jesus did teach working-class people—but if you look closely, Jesus spent as much or more time with religious authorities teaching them how wrong they were about God.

Jesus came to reveal the Father—he is the very essence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him, all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

*“For in him, all things were created... He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together.
—Colossians 1:16-17*

bottom-line truth—history teaches us that most of the time, most humans have had a completely *screwed-up and distorted idea of God.*

History teaches us that the majority is often wrong, and that certainly fits when we survey what humanity has believed—and in many cases still does believe—about God.

Jesus spent a great deal of his time teaching people about God the Father—revealing God to people because people had

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:15-20).

God Is Who He Says He Is. □

Greg Albrecht is President of Plain Truth Ministries.