



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology #15

“Attributes of God: The Unity of God, *or* How Many Gods Are There?”

[Prayer] We pray that thou will guide and direct in such a way that our worship of Thee may be purer and more pleasing to Thee through our study tonight. We commit our time to Thee now.

In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for tonight is, “How Many Gods Are There? or The Simplicity and Unity of God.” And I want to read two texts. The first is Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 4, Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 4.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:”

And then over in the New Testament Ephesians chapter 4, verses 4 through 6. In Ephesians 4, 4 through 6 we read,

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

How many gods are there or the simplicity and unity of God. The study of the divine attributes is a section of what theologians call the doctrine of God. And so we’re studying an aspect of the doctrine of God.

Now, the doctrine of God rests upon some other truths. And in our study, we are presupposing them. For example, the knowability of God. And here we must bear in mind, we do not know God naturally like we know our cousins. In the Old Testament, when God gave the Commandments, he spoke to Israel and said thou shalt not have or make any graven image of me.

Now, that was an evidence of the fact that God cannot be likened to anything upon the earth. No graven image can ever effectively represent God. We only know God as far as he reveals himself to us. He is absolutely incomparable, and, therefore, we cannot represent him by anything here upon the earth. As Professor Brunner has said, that God is mystery means that we cannot solve the enigma. Canst thou by searching find out God? The man’s proud not yet, the Bible replies not ever. So we can really in ourselves never know God. And we cannot represent him by anything here upon this earth, for he is incomparable.

Now, on the other hand, we can know certain things about him because he has revealed himself to us in certain ways. We do really come to know him when we know him through his revelation, but we do not know him fully. It is Jesus himself who says that eternal life is that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent. And he also spoke to the apostles and said ye know the Father.

Now, when the expressed a little puzzlement over that, he reminded them he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayst now then Philip show us the Father. So in ourselves, we can never know anything about God. He is absolutely incomparable. If he had not veined to reveal himself to us, we could never find out anything about him. Even if we were to look out at the creation about us, we could never know God in the

truest sense for we now look upon that creation out of sinful hearts and sinful minds, blinded minds so that what we see in the creation is a twisted view of God, providing we do not look at this creation through the spectacles of the word of God.

Now, when we put on our spectacles and look at the creation, then we see that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork. So what we’re saying depends upon the knowability of God. Now, some of you were studying theology with me three years ago and we talked one night on the knowability of God. And when we come to the study of his attributes, God’s perfections, it obviously presupposes that we can know certain things about God. We are also presupposing the spirituality of God. Only as spirit is God a person possessing perfections. Only as a spirit does he enter into communion with us. And only as a spirit do we respond in worship. Thornwell has commented, a blind force, a stern and irresistible necessity might be an object of terror and of dread, but it would be absurd to pray to it, to trust in it, or to love it. And so we believe that God is a spirit, and being a spirit he is a person. And he is a person who possesses certain perfections which are his attributes. If he is a person then, of course, or a spirit, then of course he is immaterial. He is not made up of material things such as we are. And, further, he is a self-conscious subject, a person who possess intelligence and will.

And so we presuppose then that we can know God, and we presuppose that God is a spirit. It’s very interesting that it’s not until the New Testament that we have a clear statement of the spirituality of God, but it is our Lord, remember, who says God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

In our other studies, we defined the divine attributes as, quote, “the perfections which are predicated of the divine essence in the Scriptures” or visibly exercised by God in his works of creation and providence and redemption.

By attributes then we mean God’s perfections. The perfections that exist within himself, or the perfections that he has manifested to us in his works of creation,

providence, and redemption. These are his attributes. These are his perfections. I personally prefer the term “perfections,” but most theologians speak of the attributes, although they usually also admit that that term is not especially good. It’s a little too philosophical, but since it’s so common we are using the term.

Now, we classified these attributes as of two kinds. They are incommunicable and communicable. The incommunicable attributes are those that bear little analogy to human nature. Those that are communicable are those that bear a large analogy to the properties of human nature. For example, among the incommunicable attributes are God’s self-existence, his omniscience, his omnipotence, and -- or let me go back -- his self-existence, his infinity, his immutability. These are attributes or perfections of God for which there is little analogy in our human nature. But the other aspects of God’s being, as they are exercised towards us, such as his love, his justice, his mercy, his omniscience, do find analogy in human nature. And so we classify the one set of attributes as incommunicable, the other as communicable, though terms are not absolutely perfect. I wish that it were possible for us to spend, instead of fifteen hours on the attributes, about fifty, and then we could talk about some of the details, but we must pass on.

Now, our last study, we studied the self-existence of God; that is, the ground of his self-sufficiency, and it is the ground of our dependency to him. God does not depend upon anyone. The answer to the question, Where did God come from? is therefore impossible for he exists of himself. He had no beginning. He has no end. All the sources of his life are within himself. And so he himself is responsible for his own life. He is really the only truly, completely living being in the universe. And those who live now live out of him, but he does not depend upon anyone. In fact, the most solemn thing that God can say about himself is, I am who I am. Or perhaps, as I live, for no one else can really say that in the sense in which he does.

He is a self-existent being, and all life in the universe grows out of him. We are therefore completely dependent upon him. Tonight we want to talk about the simplicity

of God and the unity of God. And for the sake of time, as well as importance, I want to spend just a few moments on the simplicity of God and the most of our time on the unity of God. So Roman I in the outline, the simplicity of God. The term “simplicity” has been used of God in two senses. First, it has been used as a reference to God’s freedom from compositeness.

God cannot be divided into parts. The three persons of the trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not parts of the divine essence. There is one divine essence, and three persons subsist in this one divine essence, but we cannot say that God is divided into three parts. In this sense, the human soul is simple or possesses simplicity because it is not composed of elements, parts, or organs. We cannot say one part of our soul, another part of our soul, a third part of our soul. Our soul is simple; that is, it is one. And so God is free from compositeness. He cannot be divided into parts. That should be evident to you because if it were true that God is made up of parts, then something existed before God did in his present form, and thus he would not be eternal as he is now. And, second, the simplicity of God refers to God’s freedom from distinction.

Now, this is a metaphysical sense. And if you have a little bit of puzzlement over the term “distinction,” well, you have a lot of company. But what I mean is this: there is no distinction between God’s essence and his attributes. His essence is his being. His attributes refer to his being in operation. The attributes are not super added to his essence. God is not made up of his essence and his attributes as if they are different things.

As Hodge said, he is always what he is. And his various faces of intellection, emotion, and volition are not successive and transient but coexistent and permanent. And he is what he is essentially and by the same necessity that he exists. Whatever is in God, whether thought emotion, volition, or acts is God. And so we cannot say God is, and he also possess some attributes as if they were something added to what he is. He is those

attributes just as much as he is who he is. He is as we read statements like God is love. And then we read God is light. And then we read that God is justice.

Now, these are expressions of his attributes, but he also is these things. That’s why it’s wrong for us to say as a complete definition of God that God is love. The Bible also says God is light. Now, these are attributes of God, perfections of God, and they are God, but they are not wholly God.

Now, in the second sense our souls are not simple since there is in them a distinction between their essences and properties and their successive modes or states of existence. For example, I grow in knowledge; that is, I ought to grow in knowledge. You grow in knowledge. You experience certain things in your being which are new. Your soul has certain developments that is new. God has no such developments. He does not grow in understanding. He does not in experience. He does not grow in his emotions. He does not experience something in the next moment that is new to him. And so we are not simple as God is in this second sense. We are simple in the sense that our soul is not divided into its parts, but we are not simple in the sense that we may grow and progress. Well, having said that, let’s move on to the unity of God. This aspect of the attributes of God has a great deal more practical significance for us, and so I want to spend more time on it.

Now, before we look at the unity of God, let me say just a word or two by way of introduction to this Roman II in the outline, the unity of God. The attribute unity is used of God in two senses. First, in the sense of oneness, the idea is that of numerical wonder, that three persons of the trinity forms one essence, constitutes one indivisible God. And so we can say that God is a unity in that sense. God possess unity in that sense. One who is absolute and infinite must be one. If there were two who were infinite and absolute, then we would have a manifest contradiction. But the Bible makes it plain that there is a oneness in God which is part of his essential being.

You remember Jesus said to the Jews I and my Father are one. Now, he did not use the term which means one person. He used the Greek expression which means one thing. I and my Father are one thing. And I see why Bob Nixon on the front row, and I know that he has taken Greek and reading the Greek New Testament now, and Bob, if you look that up in John chapter 10, verse 30 you’ll discover it’s not him one masculine but him one neuter, one substance. I and my Father are one. So when we speak of unity, we may speak of it in the sense of oneness; that is, a numerical oneness. We believe in monotheism, not polytheism, not tritheism, but monotheism. And so the Christian, though he is Trinitarian in his philosophy is not a tritheist. He believes that God is one in his essence.

Now, there is a second sense in which we use the term “unity”; that is, we use it in the sense of unicity, U-N-I-C-I-T-Y, and by that we mean uniqueness. There is only one God to the exclusion of all others. So that God is not only one within himself in the sense that there is one essence, though three persons, but he is one, the only God. And so when we say God possesses a unity, we mean that there is only one God.

Now, how can we prove this unicity or this uniqueness in God? Well, Capital A, the logical proofs. And let’s notice just a few suggestions. I want to spend, as I say, most of the time on this doctrine and particularly on the Scriptural proofs for the unity of God. But there is an argument that we might use to prove that God is one from logic.

We could say that the harmony of the creation itself round about us suggests that God is one. Now, we have suggested that the effects that we see in creation about us prove that there must have been an ultimate first cause. If an effect proves a cause as we have argued from the cosmological arguments, and if we may look about us and see evidence of design and argue that indicates a designer, then I think it is fair to say that we may argue that the singleness of the plan and the singleness of the operation and creation that we discern is evidence of the fact that the designer and planner is one. The fact that this whole universe functions as one giant beautifully operating, unified mechanism,

organism, life is evidence that the one who is responsible for it is also one. So the creation is manifestly one indivisible system, and suggests to us that its planner must have unit.

Now, that argument is not completely convincing to a philosopher, and I would not want to argue the unity of God on the basis on it. It is only an evidence that is interesting. I think that it gives a better explanation of what we see than any other philosophical argument, but it is not convincing. We might also say that the unity of God may be argued from the infinite perfection of God. Two infinite beings, who were possessed of infinite perfections, would include each other and be included by one another. They would be, therefore, one and identical. Two infinite and perfect beings cannot coexist. As a matter of fact, God cannot even have a wife. And I mentioned last time this rather interesting thing that contrary to the gods of ancient peoples, Jehovah is never pictured as having a wife.

Now, figuratively, Israel is referred to as his wife and the church of the New Testament is referred to as the bride of Christ, but these are only figures and are not intended to be a wife in the sense of a goddess wife. And, in fact, as I mentioned last time, the Old Testament does not even have any term for a goddess. And the masculine terms are used for gods, other gods. So the infinite perfection of an infinite god suggests the unity of God.

Now, let’s move to the Scriptural proof because these are the ones that we are interested in. The revealed word, after all, is the only sure source of information regarding God. So let’s turn, first of all, to Exodus chapter 15 in verse 11, Exodus chapter 15 in verse 11. This is a verse in the famous song of Moses, his song of redemption. And in verse 11, Moses thinking of the great victory that Israel obtained through God’s deliverance of them at the Red Sea says, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?”



Now, you’ll notice this text does not state unity. One of the Old Testament scholars has claimed that nowhere in the earlier Old Testament writings do we find a clear statement of the monotheistic idea. Now, I don’t time to refute that. I think that any of us as we look at the Old Testament from it’s beginning on through Malachi will discern that this Old Testament is based upon an idea of monotheism. So far as Judaism itself is concerned in the greater part of the Old Testament has to do with Israel and its laws God gave them. There is no evidence that there was ever in Israel any other worship than a monotheistic one. But this text really simply states that Jehovah is the only God entitled to the name “Jehovah.” He says, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, (O Jehovah) among the Gods?” In other words, among all the gods that the heathen worship, where can we find a God like Jehovah? Where can we find a person like Jehovah?

Now, we saw last time that the characteristic term for “God” to Israel was the term “Jehovah.” It is the covenant name. It is the name that suggests that this eternal God has entered into relationship with Israel. And we also saw that the term “Jehovah” is derived from the Old Testament word for to be. That *Yahweh* means he is or he exists. That’s his name. And so the implication is all of the gods that the heathen worship cannot be compared with Jehovah because he is the living God. And through the Old Testament, you know, he will say as I live or as the Lord liveth. Or I am, I exist, who exists? And so while this is not a specific statement of the unity of God, it is a statement of the fact that there is no other God like him.

Other gods do not have light. He is one without fear among the gods. And if he is without fear among the gods, it should be obvious that there is only one like him. And so he is unique. And that is the point that we’re trying to get over. What I’m saying is the statement implies uniqueness and oneness, though it does not specifically state it. Let’s move on to Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 4, Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 4.

Now, as you know, this is probably the most important text in all of Judaism today. It is, in effect, the basic formula of absolute monotheism and is the chief text. It’s

the theme of Judaism, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:” It’s generally acknowledged by Hebrew scholars that this term this statement can be rendered in two ways. Our English text says, the Lord our God is one Lord. It can be rendered, Yahweh or Jehovah our God is one single Jehovah.

Now, if that is what it means, it means that he cannot be split up into various divinities of powers like the Baals of the Old Testament time. Remember, there was a Baal of Tyre. There was a Baal of Hazor. There was a Baal of Shechem. In other words, every little community had its Baal. Every little place had its god. But for Israel’s god, Jehovah our God is one single Jehovah, literally the Lord Our God is Jehovah, one. In the Hebrew text, it is *Adonai Elobeinu Adonai Echad*, The Lord Our God is the Lord one.

Now, that is one way it which it may be rendered. It is my own personal opinion that that is the way it ought to be rendered. But I have some good friends who insist it’s not the way the Hebrew text should be taken.

Now, I read Hebrew, too. In fact, I taught Hebrew for a number of years at seminary, and I do admit that we could render it the second way. We could render it Jehovah or Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone. Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone. In that case, what Moses would be saying is that God Jehovah has an exclusive position over against all the other deities. In other words, Israel has one god, and their one god is Jehovah. They do not have the other gods as their gods. So he has occupies an exclusive position over against the other deities.

But now if we say that, we are, in effect, still saying that the god that Israel worships is the incomparable god, the only one of his kind. And so we are implying unity. And I want you now to turn over to the New Testament to Mark chapter 12, because here our Lord quotes this text. And in the New Testament, it is the basis some discussion on the day of question in our Lord’s life. Matthew chapter 12, verse 29.

Now, while you’re finding this, I’m going to read -- did I say Matthew? Mark. Mark chapter 12, verse 29. You know, you should have known it was Mark chapter 12,

verse 29. Now, while you’re finding Mark, as I misled you by having you go to Matthew, I’m going to read verse 28. Mark 12:28, “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:”

Now, you can see that in the New Testament the sense taken is that first sense. Jehovah our God is one single Jehovah. The Lord our God is Jehovah, a unity. Now, let’s read on verse 30, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like; namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:”

And after he had said that we read in verse 34, “And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly (or with intelligence), he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.” In other words, surrendering that this man gave is approved by our Lord, according to Mark. So I’m inclined to think that the Deuteronomy 6:4 then should be rendered, Jehovah our God is one single Jehovah, or, the Lord our God is Jehovah, a unity.

Now, this text, I say, became the basic formula of absolute monotheism, and so it expresses for us the fact that there is no other God like Jehovah. Now, that is not the greatest importance for us as Christians, as we shall see when we come to the *Usus Practicus* of the doctrine of the unity of God.

But let’s turn on now to the 1 Kings chapter 8 in verse 60, 1 Kings chapter 8 in verse 60. And here we read, “That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else.” [Repeat] That the Lord is God and there is none else.

Now, that means that he is the incomparable one. He is the absolutely unique. He is one in his perfection.

Let’s turn to Zechariah chapter 14, verse 9. Zechariah is an Old Testament commentary on the book of Isaiah. And in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter in the book of Zechariah, the prophet is describing what is going to take place when Jesus Christ comes again to the earth to establish his kingdom. He describes in this chapter how he shall come and stand upon the Mount of Olives; how there should be a great earthquake; how the light shall not be clear nor dark; it shall be one day which shall known to the Lord not day nor night, but it shall come to pass that in evening time it shall be light. He describes in that day how living waters shall dry from Jerusalem. And in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse he says, “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.” He is absolutely unique.

One day the gods of Buddhism shall be no more. The gods of Taoism shall be no more. The gods of Mohammedism shall be no more. The gods of Unitarianism, for they have their little gods too, shall be no more. There shall only be worshipped in the earth one Lord.

Now, there has only one Lord all along but others are worshipped. And that, we shall see in our next text, as we turn to the New Testament. 1 Corinthians chapter 8 in verse 6, 1 Corinthians 8, verse 6. Now, in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 6 Paul accommodates himself a little bit to the ideas of men about them and acknowledges that others did have beings that they call gods and lords, but they are not really gods and lords. Verse 4, 1 Corinthians chapter 8, Paul says, “As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

In other words, the heathen have their lords. The heathen have their gods. And we acknowledge the fact that they do call upon gods, and they call upon lords. But for

us who are Christians, there is only one God. They are not real gods. They are called gods Paul speaks of them.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter he will say in verse 20, “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons.” (or devils.)

So you see what Paul really says that these gods the heathens call gods are not gods at all. And, in fact, when they fellowship with them and sacrifice to them they are really sacrificing to demons, for the ideas that they have are the products of the thoughts of the demons. They have been influenced by them. But so far as being in reality gods, no, they are not in reality gods at all.

Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 6. we’ll just read this one since we’ve read it once before. Paul states Ephesians 4:6, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Again, the unity of God.

And finally 1 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 5, 1 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 5. This text is interesting for several different doctrines. It expresses the unity of God for Timothy is told verse 5, “For there is one God.” Now, that express the uniqueness of God. He possesses the attribute of unity in the sense of unicity or oneness in the sense uniqueness. There is one God.

Furthermore, Paul says there’s one mediator between God and men. That means that Mary is not a mediator, only Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and men. That means no earthly priest is the mediator between God and men. That means no reverend is a mediator between God and men. No doctor is a mediator between God and men. No professor in a theological seminary is a mediator between God and men. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And it’s startling that Paul says the man. You might expect him to say the God, but he says the man Christ he because you see his mediation depends upon his true humanity as well as his complete deity. And so he who was completely God came down here on the earth, took to himself an abysmal

nature that he might represent us, and then when died upon the cross at Calvary. He established the basis for relationship between Heaven because he is from heaven and earth because he is from the earth. He’s the man who can lay his hand upon both, the man whom Job looked for, The man who could put his hand upon God, and the man who could put his hand on man and bring the two into fellowship. And so God is in this man Christ Jesus, and thus God is with man. And we by faith may come to be in this man and thus be with God so that a relationship is established between the two and, that is, of course, the essence of the story of the Bible.

Now, that was for everything. Let’s turn now to the *Usus Practicus* of the doctrine. Now, I like to say that because you see we have to review our Latin. And those of you who are formal Latin students you will know that the *Usus Practicus* mean what? What? The practical -- did you say implications? Applications. That’s closer. *Usus* means simple use, of course. And so the practical use is the practical application or implication of his doctrine.

And I’m going to think particularly about the truth of the unity of God and try to point out that it has two great practical implications for us. And this is of the greatest significance for us as Christians in the twentieth century. And the first is the prohibition of images. In the Old Testament in chapter 20 in verse 4 when God gave Israel the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments, he said in verse 1, “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

In other words, there shall be no polytheism, but then he went on to say, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” No graven images.

Now, this is, of course, to be true on a national as well as a personal level. Idolatry is folly, and it is perilous. To worship the image or god in the image produces

the same thing. The man who worships an image becomes like his object of worship. In the Old Testament, remember the psalmist said concerning those who made idols, they that makes them are like unto them. They were expressing this great truth that a man becomes like the God he worships.

Did you know you can usually look at people and tell what kind of god they worship if you were able to come to know them well enough because they are a reflection of their god. That is true of all of us. We reflect the god that we worship. So when a man worships an image, a dead god, he’s going to reflect that image. Every image is a falsehood in two respects. In the first place, it represents the living by the men. What it does is to attempt to picture a god who is vital and alive whose sources of life come from within himself by wooden image or by a stone image. And so it represents the living by the dead. And it leads the mind into wrong thoughts about God.

There are often people you know who say well I worship an image not because I really think God is like that image but because the image reminds of God or the images are used to me in making think about God. But when you look at an image and you think about God, you think wrong thoughts about God. You cannot help but think of him as someone who is dead. You cannot help but think of him as someone who is corruptible, for wood corrupts and stone corrupts and even gold corrupts.

And so the most excellent image of God that you could make out of material things is a blasphemy against his character, for he is incorruptible. And so the very fact that we put up something and say this is God which is corruptible and say this reminds me of God tells us immediately we already have wrong thoughts about God. And so an image is a falsehood in that respect.

And, furthermore, it represents God who is moved by himself alone as a person who moves only as it is moved, for you see an image or an idol is at the mercy of the men who own it. I’m going to ask you to turn with me to an Old Testament passage in which Isaiah makes fun of those who use images for worship. It’s Isaiah chapter 46,

Isaiah chapter 46. This is one of the most humorous passage in all of the Old Testament, in my opinion, because Isaiah just makes fun of those who worship idols. He says verse 46, chapter 46 in verse 1 page 754 in my edition of the King James Version, “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle.” You can see a procession the cattle the beasts are going along and idols are riding on the back of them. “Your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.”

In other words, the gods that you have, you Babylonians, you have gods that burden the beasts. They stoop. They bow down together. They could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. The gods, the idols, the images are hopelessly subject to infirmities. “Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am, I exist; and even to hoar hairs (that is, gray hairs) even to gray hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” So let’s look at the gods of the heathen. Let’s look at the images. Why they are images that burden down the beast. They have to be carried, but I am the God who has created you, and I am the God who will carry you and will carry you to the time of your birth to the time you are old. And so Isaiah draws this tremendous comparison between the two.

The gods of the heathen are so many baals for beasts backs and such are your gods, O Babylonians. But God is not one who is carried. God is one who carries. And in these little pictures here you can see two ways of looking at God. For some people’s god is the kind of god they have to carry around, but others who know the biblical God have a God who carries them. And all the difference in the world is bound up in those two conceptions of a god. A god who is a burden to us, a god who we must carry around, a god who we must support, and the god who out of the greatness of his self-existence and out of his redemptive work through Jesus Christ is one who carries us, who



regenerates us, who provides for us, who keeps us, who one day will bring us into his presence like the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two kinds of religion express themselves also among Christians because some Christians, while they know these truths really do not live them. They have a god that they have to carry around. They are so legalistically bound up in the “thou shalt not.” Thou shalt not this and thou shalt not that that their god has become a terrible burden to them. And then there are those who know the freedom of the worship of the holy God who kept...[No audio]

I could only believe in a god which did something. With a cry of pain which I shall never forget, Carlisle said, he does nothing. Now, that kind of god is a god of the images, the god of the idols.

Now, it’s only natural that a man who worships an image constantly, who goes into a great cathedral went around about its walls where all of the images of the saints and the gods, it’s only natural that religion like that could be responsible for a mechanical kind of worship because, you see, that’s precisely what it is. You look at their gods, and they are lifeless and dead. And it’s no wonder that that kind of religion is a lifeless, dead, mechanical kind of religion, though it calls itself Christianity. Because, you see, they that make them are like unto them. And the kind of God we have reflects itself in our life.

I wish -- I had intended to bring Calvin’s Institutes in his first book -- books -- first book, chapters eleven and twelve in which he has a treatment of the images of the idols, and I wanted to read you some of the things Calvin has said because he has followed in the steps of Isaiah. And some of them are humorous as well as very pointed in there getting over the truth as the person who worships the idol become like those idols. But, unfortunately, in the rush to get here, I put it out on my desk and then got up and left it. So we must go on now to the last.

And the last practical application of the doctrine of the unity of God is that this should be a motivation to us of personal worship. You see in the Decalogue God said

thou shalt have no other God before me. If he is one, only he can be worshipped whether in the community or by the individual. And isn’t interesting that in the Old Testament the Ten Commandments are addressed to the individual and the book of the covenant which was directed toward Israel was also directed to the individual. All of the words of God touch not only the corporate community, the church, but also the individual. And so for Yahweh, there’s no serious claimant to rival. And, therefore, if we are truly believers in Jehovah, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we must not and we cannot worship any other god but Him.

In the Old Testament perhaps the living expression of this conflict is the struggle that took place on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the gods and prophets of Baal. Over in chapter 18 of 1 Kings is the story. We don’t have time to give the whole story, but I do want to point out what was the essence of it.

Now, you remember that Isaiah was challenged. He met Ahab. Ahab said unto him, aren’t thou thee that troubleth Israel -- that’s what people always say about prophets who disturb them. It really was Ahab who was troubling Israel, but he blamed it on Elijah. And Elijah answered I have not troubled Israel. This is 1 Kings chapter 18, verse 18, “I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

Now, you’ll notice that there are three kinds of people on Mount Carmel, and there are three kinds of people always. And in Christian churches, you’ll find the same thing. You’ll find the unbelieving. They believe that all creeds are alike. It doesn’t make

a bit of difference what god you worship, just so you worship one god providing it’s popular in the community in which you live. But we’re all going to heaven in the same way. It’s like you may riding Pullman, and I may be riding the coach, and somebody else may be going by bus, and somebody may be going by Boeing 747, but we’re all going to the same place.

Now, the Boeing 747 are Episcopalians. And those who are riding lesser -- lessers are Presbyterians. And Baptists are going by day coach, but we’re all getting there, and we’re all going to be there. And there is that class of person, the unbeliever, who doesn’t understand anything about the word of God.

And then there are the undecideds. The great mass orphaned in our believing communities of our professing communities, and they are undecided. They are often the ones who want to say not yet. Not yet. I’ll make a decision. I’ll give myself wholly to the Lord sometime but not yet. And here when Elijah was on Mount Carmel, there were the unbelieving prophets. There were the unbelieving servants of Baal, and those who worshipped in the groves. In the great mass of Israel, the professing community, they have not made up their minds, and so they were undecided.

And then there is the Elijah, the person who is really committed. And so Elijah devises, as you know, a little test. He suggests to the prophets of Baal, “Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.”

Now, Baal was a fire god. And so he gave them every advantage that they could possibly ask for. He said, we’re going to have a little test. We’ll each build a little altar. You build an altar. And you build an altar. And you then take your animal and call upon god, and the god that answers by fire, that’s the true god. As you know, I must confess. I think Elijah is one of the boldest, most courageous men I’ve ever known. As far as I can tell, he is more courageous than any of our modern heroes. We have had some great

heroes, some heroes in our armies. I believe he is even more courageous than Stonewall Jackson.

But he stands up in the midst of this great number of people, and I’m sure that not only were his enemies ready to slit his throat but even his friends for he was stepping on their toes. And so the prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice. And they took the boar. They dressed it. They called on the name Baal from morning until noon saying O Baal. Hear us. O Baal. Hear us. But there was no voice or any that answered. They leaped upon the altar, and they did all of their jigs and their dance steps, their fugue or whatever it was that they danced in those days. They did it all but there was nothing. And then Elijah begins to mock them. He says maybe your god is out hunting or maybe he’s so busy talking he cannot hear you or perhaps he’s sleeping. And believe it or not now -- I hope you won’t think I’m being crude when I say that, but Elijah said this. He also said here, perhaps he has gone to the restroom.

Now, that is what is meant by one of these expressions here. And they cried more and more. And they cut themselves with their knives, and nothing happened. And then Elijah said come near unto me and the people came near. And he prepared the altar of the Lord was broken down and he took the twelve stones and he built an altar in the name of Jehovah. And he made a trench about the altar and he put the wood in order. And he put his bullocks, and he cut the bullocks in pieces and laid them on the wood. And then he said in order to be sure that this is really Jehovah entering, let’s fill four barrels with water and put it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood so you wont say somehow or other it came to fire of itself. And so after they had wet it down completely, then he prayed.

And you notice his prayer so different from our Sunday morning prayer. You could get through Elijah’s prayer in about fifteen seconds. It is, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel. Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel And that I am thy servant and that I have done all these things of thy work. Hear me O Lord. Hear me that

this people may know that thou art the Lord God and thou hast turned their hearts back again.

That’s all. And the fire of the Lord came down from heaven, consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stone, the dust, lift up the water that was in the trench. And when the people say it they fell on their faces, and said Jehovah, he is God. Jehovah, he is God. And Elijah said, let’s lay all the prophets. He was a man who did not believe in any kind of compromise. Let’s cut the prophets in pieces. And he said, “Ahab, Get up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.”

Now, it is evident that the lesson of this incidence here is if Jehovah is God, follow him. If it is really true that there is one God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then there is no course of action that is harmonious of God that is not complete dependence upon him. And that’s why the New Testament ends almost with those words in 1 John chapter 5, verse 21, the last words of that little epistle. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” God is one. And his oneness demands the destruction of all images and the acknowledgment that he alone is worthy of worship.

Now, when you read through the New Testament you discover some interesting things because some of us may be thinking that all he’s telling us is that we should do away with our images, perhaps even our pictures of Jesus. Still which some of us will allow. But you see really the New Testament goes much beyond that. It speaks about anything that comes between me and God as being idolatry. Paul says, for example, in Colossians that we are to put off covetousness which is idolatry. Covetousness: Idolatry. Anything that comes between me and God is my idol. And being my idol, it will have its effect upon me, for they that make them are alike unto them.

Always remember Mr. Tidbottom’s spectacles, which were spectacles -- I’ve forgotten now for the moment the person who wrote this work. But there was a man in it whose name was Tidbottom, and he had spectacles. And when he put the spectacles on, he could see people as they really were. For example, if he put on his spectacles, he

might look out over this audience -- and this is not personal at all but he may look here and all that he sees instead of Bob Nixon is a dollar bill. That would mean that that is the essence of his nature and disposition. He’s materialistic. He may look at another man and see a golf ball and his whole is golf. He may look at another one and see something else. But those are our eyes. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. God is one. Jehovah is unique and he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth in his uniqueness as the only God. May God help us to do it. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful insights into Thy character and nature and essence. We worship Thee, the self-existent one who has the only -- who alone has life within himself. And we worship Thee, Lord, as one absolutely simple and one absolutely unique incomparable. O God, as we worship Thee in spirit and truth, may we become more like Thee for Thy glory.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.