

Where Does God Stand?

Acts 17:22-31

Where Does God Stand?

- Where is God?
 - He doesn't need us to answer that question.
 - The fact that we ask that question indicates that we would not understand the answer.
- The answers humans give:
 - “In mythology”
 - “In your imagination”
 - “He permeates all things as the spirit of existence”
 - “He exists in good, kind people”

Where Does God Stand?

- ““God wants me to be happy.”” This is one of the catch phrases we hear of what is sometimes called moralistic therapeutic deism. The idea is that 1) God wants us to be nice to others and 2) he wants us to be happy. For the most part, God is seen as deistic, not really getting involved in our lives unless we need him to resolve a conflict for us so that we can be happy again. In the end, good people (as we define it) get to go to heaven when they die. Other than that, there are not many restrictions or requirements. Just be good and do what makes you happy.” (Doy Moyer)

Acts 17:22-25

- “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.”

Acts 17:26-27

- “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”

Acts 17:28-31

- “For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Where Does God Stand?

- God's position does not change
 - Mal. 3:6 - "For I am the LORD, I do not change"
 - Heb. 13:8 - "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Where Does God Stand?

- We are the ones who change.
 - This gives the appearance that God is in different places for different people.
- “So you are feeling far from God? Who moved?”
 - Perhaps the question we should ask is: “Where are we in our relationship with God?”

God Is Near The Saved

- God has always desired to be near His people.
 - Ex. 29:45 - “I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.”
 - Lev. 26:12 - “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.”
 - John 14:23 - “Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”
 - Rev. 21:3 - “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God”

God Is Near The Saved

- Those who accept their need to be near God are close to Him
 - Psalm 34:18 - “The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.”
 - Psalm 145:18 - “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.”
 - Isa. 57:15 - “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

God Is Far From The Sinner

- Prov. 15:29 - “The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.”
- Isa. 59:1-2 - “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”
- 1Peter 3:12 - “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”
- Psalm 66:18 - “If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.”

God Is Far From The Sinner

- However, God does not want the sinner to be far from Him.
 - Rom. 5:8 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - 2Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”
- As long as the sinner chooses to remain in his sins, God is far from him.

God Is In Front Of The Backslider

- The backslider is one who backs away from God's will.
 - Matt. 13:20-22 - “But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful”

God Is In Front Of The Backslider

- Heb. 6:4-8 - “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.”

God Is In Front Of The Backslider

- 2Peter 2:20-22 - “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”
- God has left behind the backslidden, now they must catch up to God.

God Is Behind The Innovator

- The innovator seeks to go ahead of God
 - 2John 1:9 - “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”
- We must not go beyond what is written
 - 1Cor. 4:6 - “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.”

God Is Behind The Innovator

- The innovator believes he can improve on what is written; and, like the Pharisee, he tries to create his own righteousness
 - Rom. 10:2-3 - “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”

God Is Behind The Innovator

- Our efforts toward righteousness must not run ahead of God's instructions
 - Matt. 5:20 - “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

God Is Behind The Innovator

- Rom. 1:16-17 - “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
- Phil. 3:8-9 - “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”

God Is Beside The Faithful

- God stands next to His faithful children
 - Isa. 41:10 - “Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”
 - Rom. 8:31 - “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

God Is Beside The Faithful

- Our faithfulness is a reflection of God's faithfulness; when we are faithful, we are like children who stand close to their parents
 - 1Cor. 1:9 - "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - Rev. 2:10 - "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

God Is Within Reach Of The Penitent

- God does not desire harm for the unrighteous
 - Ez. 18:31-32 - “Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord GOD. Therefore turn and live!”

God Is Within Reach Of The Penitent

- He challenges the sinner to come close
 - Isa. 1:18-20 - “Come now, and let us reason together, Says the LORD, Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

God Is Within Reach Of The Penitent

- Jesus calls the sinner to His side
 - Matt. 11:28-30 - “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

God Is Within Reach Of The Penitent

- The Holy Spirit and the Lord's Church invite sinners into God's presence
 - Rev. 22:17 - "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely"

Where Does God Stand?

- Where is God?
 - Is God near you?
 - Is He far from you?
 - Is He in front of you?
 - Is He behind you?
 - Is He beside you?
 - Is God waiting for you?
- Your choices and decisions will ultimately determine where God is in relationship to you.