**Lesson 2: The Aseity of God**

Acts 17:24-25

24The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

The aseity of God is the idea that the Lord is independent and self-sufficient. The term is derived from the Latin *a se* (from himself). The basis for this doctrine is found in several passages of Scripture that indicate that God is completely content and sufficient on His own such that He does not depend upon His creation. In Acts 17:24-25, Paul explains to the Athenians why God is unlike their false gods. Their gods needed their service, but our God is not "served by human hands, as though He needed anything."

The very nature of God supports the idea of aseity. God exists because existence is a necessary part of His eternal nature just like we die because death is a necessary part of our finite and fallen nature. In this way, the Creator/creature distinction is emphasized because God is of a completely different nature as us. Consider this thought from Wayne Grudem:

The difference between God's being and ours is more than the difference between the sun and a candle, more than the difference between the ocean and a raindrop, more than the difference between the arctic ice cap and a snowflake, more than the difference between the universe and the room we are sitting in: God's being is *qualitatively different*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

God is thus existent in Himself and is not dependent upon any part of creation for His existence. Even if none of creation was ever made, God would not only still exist, but He would also be the same perfect God Scripture reveals Him to be. The name of God revealed to Moses sums up God's aseity well: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14). Moses expresses the thought in the Psalms, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God" (Ps. 90:2).

The relationships of the Trinity also shed light on God's aseity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have enjoyed perfect fellowship for all eternity. In John 17:5, Jesus prays, "And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed." In other words, since eternity past, the Father and Son shared in perfect glory. Later in John 17:24, Jesus says, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world." In other words, the Father and Son shared in a perfect love relationship before time began. For all of eternity past, God was perfectly happy, content, fulfilled, and sufficient in Himself through the relationships of the Trinity. There is nothing that created beings can offer that would possibly compare to what God enjoyed in Himself.

This attribute of God establishes an eternal Creator/creation distinction. The gods of the nations required man's service and worship. Our God does not need us. He does not need our service. He does not need our worship. God does not need us to repay Him. We don't give to God as if He needs us, and He certainly is not obligated then to repay us for our service. We serve the Lord out of gratitude and worship, but not because we're doing God a favor. Wayne Grudem writes,

People have sometimes thought that God created human beings because he was lonely and needed fellowship with other persons. If this were true, it would certainly mean that God is not completely independent of creation. It would mean that God would need to create persons in order to be completely happy or completely fulfilled in his personal existence.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In light of all that is said about God's aseity, this does not mean that God is impersonal or somehow does not want us. Consider the amazing truth that the Lord created men to have relationship with him even though it was not necessary. What motivated God's free choice was His grace. And then consider that this sinful man sinned against Him and rebelled against His will, and yet God redeemed him. What an awesome testimony of God's infinite, matchless grace especially in light of His aseity. God made us because of a choice of love, and it is not because He had to satisfy some deep need. It was His gracious choice by His divine free will to create man.

*Questions for Discussion*

1. What do the following passages say about God's aseity?

a. Acts 17:24-25.

b. Psalm 50:10-12.

c. Psalm 90:2.

d. Revelation 4:11.

2. In what ways does the aseity of God demonstrate a fundamental difference in the natures of God and man?

3. How does an understanding of the Trinity help to answer the following false assumptions?

a. God made me because He needs me to worship Him (cf. John 17:5).

b. God made me because He needs me to love Him (cf. John 17:24).

4. How does the aseity of God help underscore and emphasize the amazing grace of God towards man?

5. In light of the aseity of God, how would you explain to someone why God created man in the first place? Does the aseity of God diminish the worth of man? In what ways does this understanding of God's aseity help to correct our view of man (cf. Isa. 43:7)?

**Immortal, Invisible**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious – Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,

Not wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;

Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above

Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest – to both great and small,

In all life Thou livest – the true life of all;

We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,

And wither and perish – but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,

Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;

All praise we would render – O help us to see

'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

*Thoughts for Application*

1. What were your initial honest reactions to this study on God's aseity? Why do you think some people would have a difficult time accepting this truth?

2. A popular idea in the church is that God made man because without man He might not be able to demonstrate His grace or even His wrath. How might the aseity of God cause you to rethink this idea?

3. Have you ever "made a deal with God"? An example of this would be to say, "God, I'm the one who memorizes Your Bible regularly. Why then would You take me through this difficult trial?" How does the aseity of God help us to correct this kind of thinking?

4. Is there some connection between aseity and the gospel? In other words, how does the doctrine of aseity help you to appreciate your salvation more?

5. Write out a short prayer reflecting on the truths of this doctrine. How might you glorify God in prayer in light of His self-sufficiency?

1. Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid., 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)