Light and Life Class (February 3, 2019)

“To Know Me is to Love Me: The Omnipresence and Immutability of God”

1. God’s omnipresence means that God is present at all points of space, though he is not present at all points of space in exactly the same way.
   1. God is present at all points of space (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24; 1 Kings 8:27; etc.).
   2. We must distinguish the biblical teaching on God’s omnipresence from the false teaching known as Pantheism (false teaching that everything is a part of God).
   3. When Jesus took on a human body at the time of his conception in Mary’s womb, that human body is only able to be in one place at a time.
   4. God is not present at all points of space in exactly the same way.
      1. He is present in heaven only to bless (Psalm 16:11; Revelation 21:3; etc.) but present in hell only to punish (Matthew 25:41-46; Revelation 20:14-15; etc.).
      2. God caused his presence to dwell above the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle/Temple in a way God’s presence did not dwell anyplace else on earth (1 Samuel 4:4; Exodus 25:22; etc.).
2. How should the reality of God’s omnipresence affect the lives of the disciples of Jesus (and unbelievers too)?
   1. a source of the greatest possible comfort to believers
   2. a source of some discomfort to believers
   3. a challenge to unbelievers to flee to God for salvation
3. God’s immutability means he does not change in his eternal being or will, but he does act and feel differently within time in ways that are appropriate with changes in his creatures.
   1. See Exodus 3:14; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8; etc.
   2. God becoming flesh (John 1:14) did not change the eternal being or will of God.
4. The Old Testament in several passages speaks of God “relenting” (Hebrew verb *nacham*, e.g., Exodus 32:14; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:10). How are we to understand God’s “relenting”?
   1. The use of this term is what we call in literature an anthropomorphism, that is, an effort to understand God by describing him in human terms.
      1. God cannot relent in the same way you and I relent, because we “relent” (turn fro what we have done) because we have either sinned or made a mistake. God is incapable of sinning or making mistakes, so his “relenting” must necessarily be different from our relenting.
   2. God’s “relenting” also may reflect the reality of an eternal Being who himself lives outside of time but who also operates within time.
      1. Within time God acts and feels differently with changes in his creation. Pastor and former Wheaton Professor Dr. Sam Storms, [www.samstorms.com](http://www.samstorms.com): “The many and varied changes in the relationship that God sustains to his creatures, as well as the more conspicuous events of redemptive history, are not to be thought of as indicating a change in God's being or purpose.”
      2. Moses’ prayed in Exodus 32, and God acted and felt differently from the time before Moses prayed about destroying the people of Israel.
      3. This same discussion applies to the closely-related idea of God “regretting” or “being sorry” that he created man (Genesis 6:6) or made Saul to be first king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:11). God did not make a mistake in either case; in fact, in both cases he was carrying out his eternal plan. However, when circumstances changed in God’s creation, he act and felt in ways appropriate to those changes.
5. Two reasons why God’s immutability is such good news to Christians
   1. His immutability means he will keep all his promises. Cf. you and me.
   2. Since God is already perfect in every way (or infinite in every perfection), if he could change, he could only become worse than he is.