

# No One Like Him

A  
Study  
of  
God's  
Perfections

Men of the Word  
2022-23

## Aseity

Wednesday,  
October 12, 2022

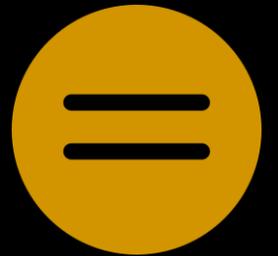
# Review

- The *incomprehensibility of God* is that quality of God which makes Him incapable of being fully understood or defined by anyone other than Himself.
- But through acts of *revelation*, God discloses a portion of His knowledge, granting us the opportunity to share in that knowledge.
- Thus, we can speak also of **the *knowability of God*—God's unhindered ability to make specific knowledge of Himself knowable to His creation.**
- These qualities of God's nature raise an important question about the nature of the language He uses to describe Himself: How definite is it?

# Foundational Definition

## “Biblical Language”

- Deny the *incomprehensibility of God*, and you are left with univocal language (the Bible’s language about God is *exactly the same as* God’s knowledge of Himself).
- Deny the *knowability of God*, and you are left with equivocal language (the Bible’s language about God is *completely different than* God’s knowledge of Himself).
- Affirm both *incomprehensibility* and *knowability*, and you affirm analogical language (the Bible’s language about God *faithfully reflects* God’s knowledge of Himself).





“If we want to walk in safety, let us accept what the Word submits for our reflection and what God Himself wants us to know. Let us pass by other things—things not revealed in the Word.”

—Martin Luther

Aseity

# I. Definition of Divine “Aseity”

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## A. What aseity means.

- The *aseity of God* describes God’s absolute independence from everything else that exists, and the perfect sufficiency He enjoys in Himself for the fullness of His own existence.

- The term “aseity” is made up of two Latin words:

*a* (“from”) + *se* (“self”) = “from oneself”

- In other words, God’s essence is not dependent on anything outside of Himself, but everything God needs to be God is contained within Himself, from everlasting to everlasting.

- God is the only *independent being*. Although everything in creation is dependent upon Him for its existence, He is dependent on no one and nothing. He derives nothing for His fullness from outside Himself.
- God is the only *being without need*. Although everything in creation experiences need for things outside of itself, God has no need; He is perfectly self-sufficient, supplying all that He needs from Himself.
- God is the only *free being*. Although everything else is affected by things outside of itself, God is never affected, changed, improved, or degraded by anything. He exists, wills, and acts *as He pleases*.
- Thus, God's *being* is fundamentally different from ours. God is the only One who says in the absolute sense, "*I AM!*"

“Almighty God, just because He is almighty, needs no support. The picture of a nervous, ingratiating God fawning over men to win their favor is not a pleasant one; yet if we look at the popular conception of God, that is precisely what we see.

Twentieth century Christianity has put God on charity. So lofty is our opinion of ourselves that we find it quite easy, not to say enjoyable, to believe that we are necessary to God. But the truth is that

God is not greater for our being, nor would He be less if we did not exist. That we do exist is altogether of God’s free determination, not by our desert nor by divine necessity.”



—A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 34

## B. What God's aseity does not mean.

- That God is self-sufficient (*a se*) does not mean God is not *personal*—that He is incapable of *relationship* with anything outside of Himself.
- That God is self-sufficient (*a se*) does not mean that God does not exercise *direct control* over what He has made.
- That God is self-sufficient (*a se*) does not mean that God is *indifferent* to the needs of His creation.
- That God is self-sufficient (*a se*) does not preclude the reality of the *incarnation*.
- But in all these things, God is in no way changed by such interaction with what He has created.

## II. Biblical Testimony to God's Aseity

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- The Scriptures strongly assert that God contains in Himself all that is necessary for His existence—while being the source for all else.
- **Genesis 1:1** – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
- **Genesis 2:7** – “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”
- **Exodus 3:13–14** – “Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’”

- **Psalm 115:3** – “Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”
- **Isaiah 40:13–14** – “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding? And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?”
- **Isaiah 40:18–20** – “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him? *As for* the idol, a craftsman casts it, a goldsmith plates it with gold, and a silversmith *fashions* chains of silver. He who is too impoverished for *such* an offering selects a tree that does not rot; he seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter.”



- **Isaiah 40:28–31** – “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”
- **John 1:3–4** – “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.”
- **John 5:26** – “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.”

- **Acts 17:24–25** – “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things.”
- **1 Corinthians 8:4–6** – “. . . we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.”
- **Revelation 4:11** – “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

# Excursus: Then Why Did God Create?

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Three possibilities:

## 1) God created out of necessity.

“I take ‘true religion’ to mean serving God, by which I do not mean simply admiring or ‘obeying’ him, or enabling him to give benefits to me and other nondivine creatures, but also, and most essentially, contributing value to God which he would otherwise lack. Even in this religious case, to ‘serve’ is to confer benefit, in precisely the sense that the served will to some extent depend upon the server for that benefit. This is genuine dependence.”

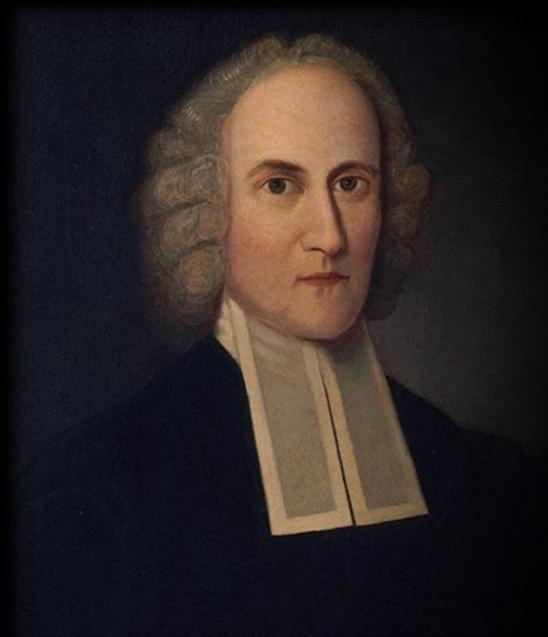
—Charles Hartshorne, “The Dipolar Conception of Deity,” 274

## 2) God created without purpose.

- To protect the concept of divine aseity while also coming to terms with the fact of creation, others suggest the Creator had no purpose in creating.
- The existence of created things is meaningless as far as God is concerned.
- Creation is subject to impersonal fate; the Creator has set certain laws in place to govern the world and is Himself wholly unconcerned with its outcome.

### 3) God created out of the fullness of joy.

- God created out of His fullness of joy and for the joy of what He created; He created out of abundance, not out of need.
- **Ephesians 1:3–14** – “. . . according to His good pleasure . . . to the praise of the glory . . . according to His good pleasure . . . to the praise of His glory.”
- **Philippians 2:13** – “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.”
- **Colossians 1:19** – “For it was the *Father’s* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.”



“There is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God, a fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness. And as this fullness is capable of communication or emanation *ad extra* [to the outside]; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that it should be communicated. . . . God communicates himself to the *understanding* of the creature, in giving him the *knowledge* of his glory; and to the *will* of the creature, in giving him *holiness*, consisting primarily in the love of God; and in giving the creature *happiness*, chiefly consisting in *joy* in God. These are the sum of that emanation of divine fullness called in Scripture, *the glory of God*.”

—Jonathan Edwards, *Dissertation on the End for Which God Created the World*

# III. What Aseity Demands from Us

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## A. Stop living as if God needs you.

- The idea that God needs something from you is the essence of false religion.
- Nothing of what you confess, think, pray, or feel toward Him contributes to His majesty.
- The gospel message is not an invitation to meet God's need as He meets yours.
- Ultimately, the aseity of God deals a fatal blow against human pride.

- **Psalm 50:10–12** – “For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains.”



- **Acts 17:24–25** – “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things.”

“In theology, endless mistakes result from supposing that the conditions, bounds, and limits of our own finite existence apply to God. The doctrine of his aseity stands as a bulwark against such mistakes. In our life of faith, we easily impoverish ourselves by embracing an idea of God that is too limited and small, and again the doctrine of God’s aseity stands as a bulwark to stop this happening. It is vital for spiritual health to believe that God is great . . . and grasping the truth of his aseity is the first step on the road to doing this.”

—J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 26–27



## B. Remember that God owns everything.

- The aseity of God means He is just in giving and taking as He pleases.
- **Genesis 14:19** – “God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth.”
- **Deuteronomy 32:39** – “See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.”
- **Job 1:21** – “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”
- **Psalms 24:1** – “The earth is the LORD’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.”

## C. Get in line with God's agenda.

- The aseity of God establishes His absolute worthiness of worship.
- **Romans 11:33–36** – “. . . For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.”
- **Colossians 1:16** – “For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”
- **Revelation 4:11** – “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

## D. Marvel at His concern for you.

- The aseity of God intensifies the astounding nature of His love.
- **Psalm 8:3–5** – “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty!”
- **Psalm 144:3–4** – “O LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You think of him? Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.”
- This God knows your name!

“God relates to us, but by his choice, not because he is compelled by some need. That he does so relate to us is therefore an even greater cause for glorifying him. He has acted and continues to act out of *agapē*, unselfish love, rather than out of need.”

—Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 242

## E. Find your perfect supply in Him.

- **Isaiah 40:28–31** – “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”
- **Psalms 23:1** – “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”
- **Philippians 4:19** – “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

“Divine life necessitates God’s all-sufficiency. This vital truth assures us that having an eternally, unchangeably, infinitely, blessedly all-sufficient God frees us from any worry as to whether he can satisfy our needs. Indeed he can, because he remains perfectly satisfied in himself.”

—Mark Jones, *God Is*, 66–67

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—Revelation 4:11