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A GOD LIKE NONE OTHER

Overview

This journey from beginning to end is about God, but not just any god. At the beginning of time, there were no tribal deities or gods. There was only the Creator. Before anything was, He was. He has always been and remains the eternal and living God.

This initial lesson is crucial as it sets the stage for everything that is to follow. Discover or rediscover that there is no one or no thing with which the Creator is to be compared. God distinguishes Himself from all other gods and desires that His creation acknowledge Him alone as God. For He is a God like none other.

THE STARTING POINT

The Ganges River flows along the edge of Varanasi, a city in northern India. Hindus consider Varanasi among their holiest of cities and its river as a place of worship.

From a small boat on the river, one can look to the water's edge to see the bank lined with buildings. Staring down from their sandstone walls are the faces and bodies of the gods. Shiva, Ganesh, and other gods stand watch over the holy river and the crowds of pilgrims who come to worship. Thousands gather daily at the river's edge to perform acts of worship in efforts to appease, satisfy, and gain merit for themselves and others. Some vigorously wash themselves in the river. Others lay face down before wood and clay figures. Still others go through prescribed religious rituals. The whole scene is full of religious fervor and devotion.

The gods of India are a reality for millions of people, and as such, they determine the course of their daily life. Through these gods, people orient their lives and find a basis upon which to make decisions and what to value.

Many believe that there is no such being as one universal God but only their particular local, national, or cultural deity or deities. For them, the particular god that one worships is not important. Gods are solely a matter of where one is born, one's culture, or one's

KEY VERSE

To whom would you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we would be alike? . . . for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me.

Isaiah 46:5, 9

national identity. They might feel that one group of people forcing its particular idea of a deity upon another person or group is arrogant and just wrong. Others might believe it is impossible to know the absolute truth about something beyond human reasoning. So, why should one person force his or her particular, culturally-defined god on someone who lives in a different locale and culture?

Is one god as good as another? Or is there a god like none other, above all others, an eternal God? Unless we accept as truth that there is one God who transcends every language, culture, and nationality, then little of what follows makes much sense. Does this one God warrant such attention and worship, not only from the people of a particular city or country but by everyone in the world? Is there one God deserving of universal acceptance and worship? If there is one God, then who is He?

WHO OR WHAT ARE THE GODS?

Localized, national, or cultural gods are not just found in India. They can be found all over the world, especially in America. The local gods in America might not seem as strange and outlandish to us as the multi-limbed Shiva and the elephant-faced Ganesh; our gods are more to our liking and taste but just as seductive. These gods go by the name of car and house, religion and tradition, theories and ideas, agendas and plans, children and jobs, Nike and Apple, the stadium and mall, social media and friends. While their worship is not overtly religious, they are likewise gods, revered just as much as gods made of wood, stone, and metal.

A god is whatever or whomever we value or give disproportionate honor.¹ Created things are not bad in themselves. Created things are good and to be enjoyed. It is when they are elevated above everything else and hold ultimate value that they become god-like. People of every culture and all levels of life give value to their possessions and bestow undue honor on fellow human beings. False gods are everywhere.

What modern gods have you observed people honoring and trusting?

What are the names of their gods?

While the gods of Hinduism and tribal deities of animistic peoples may seem crude and repulsive to the modern Western man or woman, there is a kind of god to which all people are drawn. It is the god of humankind. In every location and among every nationality and culture, particular men and women have either set themselves up as gods or their followers have elevated them to the status of gods or near gods. While they have not always been called *god*, they have been honored as such and have taken the place of the eternal God. Some of the better known examples are Buddha, Alexander the Great, Sun Myung Moon, and David Koresh.

In the same way, religious and political systems and movements have become god-like, as men and women give their allegiance, honor, and lives to these systems. Some of these are communism, democracy, sports, and capitalism. Again, a god is anything that takes the place of the Creator God. Even Christianity, when adhered to as a religious system of ultimate value, becomes a type of god and thus vies for the rightful place of the one true God.

None of these gods compares to the one true, living God as revealed in Scripture.² Why is this so? First, these gods are made from the stuff of creation: wood and stone, ideas and methods, flesh and blood. Their existence is beyond and outside their control. Second, these gods are incapable of original action within themselves. The force of others or nature must act upon them. They cannot rise above their limitations.³ Third, the character and activities of these gods are at best on par with that of men and women. In fact, many times they represent the worst of human attributes and behavior. They are all too human and are at times even subhuman.

Metal rusts. Wood burns. Stone erodes. Ideas perish. Data disappears. Men and women die. The one true, living God alone is eternal. He was before time and lives forever. There is no one and no thing like Him.

WHO IS THIS GOD?

His name is not Shiva, Ganesh, Buddha, Lexus, or even Christianity. He is beyond anything we might imagine or any words we might use to describe Him. We know Him only because he has made Himself known to us. So, through His revelation recorded in the Bible, we know Him as *Yahweh*, *Elohim*, and *Adonai*.⁴ Attached to these names are characteristics and activity that tell us what He is like and what He does.⁵ The one true, living God has revealed that He is the absolute and awesome Creator.