



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 2.6.2 – The Doctrine of God

The Attributes of God: Omnipresence

God's Word teaches us that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at the same time. There is no place where He is not. And wherever He is present, He is at work. He is not idle as an observer. There is no creature anywhere in the universe that is outside the presence of God. We cannot fully understand what this means, but the Bible fully demonstrates God's omnipresence in words and actions.

Rahab, the non-Israelite woman of Jericho, had heard how the Lord had saved the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. She testified to the two spies sent by Joshua: **"The LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath"** (Joshua 2:11). When King Solomon finished the building of the great temple of God in Jerusalem, He admitted: **"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!"** (1 Kings 8:27). God cannot be fenced in or limited by any physical space.

The most complete discussion of God's omnipresence is recorded in Psalm 139. Here are some of the things that King David says: **"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make My bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me"** (Psalm 139:7-10).

The Old Testament prophets also taught that God is present everywhere. Isaiah wrote: **"Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool'"** (Isaiah 66:1). Jeremiah testified: **"'Am I a God near at hand,' says the LORD, 'and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?' says the LORD; 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the LORD"** (Jeremiah 23:23-24). The prophet Jonah tried to escape from God, but he learned that that was impossible. God's prophet Amos learned this same truth: **"Though they dig into hell, from there My hand shall take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down; though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them"** (Amos 9:2-3). God does His work in these far-off places. He appointed a fish to swallow Jonah in the sea, and He could also command a serpent to bite His enemies at the bottom of the ocean.

Christ's apostles, of course, agreed with this understanding. The apostle Paul told his heathen audience in Athens: **"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...He gives to all life, breath, and all things...He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being"** (Acts 17:24-28). The **"we"** in this passage refers to all people everywhere; not just to Christians. The physical life of all is empowered by the ever-present God. Every movement of every creature is enabled by the ever-present God. Our very existence is determined by this omnipresent God, who cannot be contained, controlled, or limited in any way. No one can see His presence or prove God presence scientifically, because the Scriptures tell us He is **"invisible"** (Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17). Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria: **"God is Spirit"** (John 4:24). But even though we cannot see or prove He presence, we know that He is there because He Himself tells us He is everywhere.

Another term that is sometimes used to describe God is "immensity". This word is used to mean that God is incapable of not being present everywhere. It means that God must be everywhere and that it

is impossible to limit his presence. God's presence extends to other planets, other solar systems, other galaxies, and even beyond the space of the universe. As Solomon said: **"Heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You"** (2 Chronicles 6:18).

The omnipresence of God pertains to all creatures, but there is a special gracious presence of God with His believing children. This presence is called the mystical union of God with His people. David says: **"I will fear no evil; for You are with Me"** (Psalm 23:4). The apostle Paul also took comfort in the gracious presence of God: **"The Lord stood with me and strengthened me"** (2 Timothy 4:17). Unbelievers do not have this gracious presence of God. We will be discussing this mystical union in more detail in a later lesson.

Pantheism is contrary to God's Word, because pantheism makes no distinction between God and His creatures. Pantheism teaches that everything is God, and God everything.

Deism is also contrary to God's Word. Deism teaches that God created everything in the beginning, but that God is no longer present with His creatures in an active way. It teaches that creation functions without the active intervention of God. The deistic concept of God is that of a clockmaker who is not involved at all with his clock after he has made it.

Questions

1. What does the word "omnipresent" mean?
2. What had Rahab learned about the God of Israel?
3. What did King Solomon realize about the temple of God he had built?
4. Why is it impossible to escape from the presence of God?
5. How did the prophet Jonah learn this truth?
6. What is meant by these words: **"In Him we live and move and have our being"**?
7. How can we be sure that God is present everywhere?
8. What is the difference between omnipresence and God's gracious presence?
9. In what ways are pantheism and deism contrary to the teaching of the Bible?
10. Do the religions of your native country teach that God is omnipresent?