

How god is self-sufficient

[Religion](#), [God](#)



“ In the beginning God...” We only need to come four words into our Bible before we’re confronted by the incomprehensible truth of the aseity of God. Aseity means “ self-existence,” and it’s a concept we find hard to grasp in a physical world where nothing is truly self-sufficient. Everything we see has a source, a cause, a place and time where it began. Even the atheist acknowledges that. Everything has a beginning, except for God.

From early childhood we come to expect this and are constantly looking for the cause of what we see around us. As a young father, my life is full of questions like, “ Dad, where does the sun come from?” Eventually, and often on a Sunday it seems, the inevitable question is asked, “ Dad, where does God come from?” A sweet little face looks up into mine with simple sincerity, awaiting the answer.

“ God doesn’t come from anywhere, darling. He has always been.” There’s a brief pause as the reply is met with silent wonder. Even the bright and mighty sun has a source, but God has always been there? For a moment she ponders the imponderable before wandering off in childlike awe. We have no natural category for Someone who never began – for Something that exists all on its own – yet that’s exactly how God is. When everything else began, God was already there. He is eternally self-sufficient and independent. Only through faith can we embrace Him as He truly is (Heb 11: 6). Let’s consider a few more four-word phrases from Scripture that provide little glimpses of our great Self-Sufficient God.

“ What is His name?” (Ex. 3: 13) Moses was a lonely, desert shepherd when God broke into his life one day through a burning bush with a daunting

commission: Go tell Egypt's mighty Pharaoh to let his slaves go. Moses had good reason to hesitate at this call. He had run away from Egypt years earlier as a fugitive afraid for his life. His response was incredulous: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Ex. 3: 11)? 'I'm just an outcast (Ex. 2: 15), a lowly shepherd (3: 1), a stammerer (4: 10), an unwanted deliverer (2: 14).' God's reply came in the form of a promise: "I will be with thee" (3: 12); and that promise pointed Moses to a better question: "Who are you?" The answer came: "I AM who I AM... Say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you'" "I am." The simplicity of it is striking. It's the shortest, complete sentence in English, containing only two words made up of three letters in total, but when spoken by God in self-revelation it conveys an immense truth. His name is "I am." Have you ever introduced yourself simply as "I am?" We always add some qualifier on the end, to say exactly who we are. But for the God of eternity, it is enough to say "I am" without qualification, because He simply is – unchanging, independent, underived; self-sufficient, self-sustained, and self-satisfied. "I am." As Matthew Henry put it, the best of men can only say, "I am what I am;" but God says "I am that I am." "In him was life..."

The reason why God is simply "I am" is because his life knows no contingency . He does not depend on anyone or anything else for the source of His life. He exists independently in and of Himself.

All other beings receive their life from somewhere else. We are "living souls" because we've been given "the breath of life" (Gen 2: 7), and every day that

life depends on external supports: air to breath, water to drink, food to eat, shelter to protect, heat to stay warm – good gifts given to us by God himself. This derived-life makes us accountable, as human beings, to the One who gives life to us and sustains it by His power. But no one sustains God! He alone has immortality (1Ti 6: 15). He alone has life in Himself (Jn 5: 26), and therefore He is accountable to no one. In this universe there can only be one truly unaccountable, underived Being: God Himself. Everything else ultimately derives its life from, and therefore is accountable to, the “ Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending... the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1: 8).

“ We beheld his glory”. But our consideration of God’s self-sufficiency would be incomplete without contemplating the glorious contrast of the Incarnation. God’s aseity is His ultimate independence. It’s His total freedom to do absolutely anything that He wants to do. And just what has He chosen to do with that total freedom? He has willingly chosen to come down to earth in the person of His Son, to live a life of perfect dependence and then to die bound by nails on a wooden cross. At Calvary we see the mighty Son of God, bruised and beaten by puny, wicked men, whose very lives He sustains (Jn 19: 11). Mark the depths of His stoop: In Gethsemane an angel strengthens Him (Luke 22: 43). At His arrest, His captors bind Him (Jn 18: 12). Along the road Simon carries His cross after Him (Lk. 23: 26). Upon that cross He thirsts (Jn 19: 28), and feels pain (Ps. 22: 14). He cries out in forsakenness (Mt. 27: 46).

Our minds struggle to match these scenes with the great truth of His aseity. In the end we can only step back in wonder at the mystery: “ God was manifest in flesh” (1Tim 3: 16). His mighty, self-sufficient strength was cloaked at Calvary in the garb of apparent weakness for our redemption (2 Cor 13: 4). Yet now, because of Calvary, when we are truly weak, He offers us His great eternal strength: “ My strength is made perfect in weakness” (12: 9).

“ Who is like thee?” (Ex. 15: 11) On the banks of the Red Sea where their enemies had just been destroyed, Israel sang this hymn of praise: “ Who is like thee, O Lord? ... Who is like thee?”.

Centuries later King David “ sat before the Lord” pondering that same question as he marveled at God’s grace towards His house (2Sam 7: 18). There he answered it once more with words that still echo in our redeemed hearts: “ Thou art great, O LORD God; for there is none like thee”.