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# 3 things

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## 3 Things – Part 2

As I closed off our last Podcast, I suggested that there are really only **3 things** we need to believe (that is to actively believe) to settle our trust issue with God, and everything else will sort of take care of itself. These **3 things** cover so much of our relationship with God that if we were to believe them with our heart, mind, soul, and strength, we would begin to experience the deepest sort of intimacy with God and find that we can live in His joy, peace, and rest regardless of our circumstances.

And even though there is so much to understand in the Bible, if we can truly bet our lives on these **3 things**, we will be ok. In fact, we might find that once we are secured in His joy, peace, and rest, the rest of the story, so-to-speak, starts making more sense and the larger picture comes into view with much greater clarity.

As far as the **3 things**, it may sound simple, because it is, and it may sound easy, but trust me, it is so far from easy because these **3 things** have a way of grating, tearing, and fighting against our heart, our mind, our soul, and the very cellular reaction in our bodies. Thus, these are the simplest hardest things to believe.

The **3 things** we need to believe are as follows:

- **Yahweh is the sovereign Lord** (in control of all things all of the time).
- **Yahweh is good.**
- **We are aliens and strangers in this world.**

That is really it. 3 simple things to actively believe, to bet our lives upon, and I guarantee that if you do, you will come to know the depth of the Yahweh's character and will abide in His joy, peace, and rest. Again, 1) Yahweh is the sovereign Lord, 2) Yahweh is good, and 3) we are aliens and strangers.

I have found it fascinating that most people struggle so hard with the idea that Yahweh is the sovereign Lord which is a way to cover up for the reality that they do not believe that God is genuinely good. But since most good Christians would **NEVER** say that God is not good, they have to fight against the fact that Yahweh is in control of all things all the time. And I rarely hear anyone talking about living as aliens and strangers in this place, it is one of those issue that just gets flyby treatment by most.

So, let's take these one at a time and discover why these **3 things** are so important and how they have the power to secure our souls in Yahweh.

The first thing we need to actively believe is that **Yahweh is the sovereign Lord**, in control of all things all of the time.

## 3 Things – Part 2

Unbeknownst to most, this is an unbending truth that governs our lives, our world, the universe, and all of creation. Yahweh is absolutely, without exception, sovereign over all things all the time. Hence, the idea that He is the Lord.

Whether we like it or not, this is a truth that governs our lives. We may fight against it and we may say we do not believe it, but there is no escaping it. It is all over the Bible, and one has to choose to be blind to this truth to assert any other conclusion. There are things in the Bible that are subject to opinion and things that are presented as facts, and in this area, God has declared it to be a fact.

This idea that Yahweh is the Lord means that He is not a demi-god, responsible for some things some of the time, but He is the Lord God Almighty, responsible for all things all of the time. And simply no one or nothing can thwart His will, whether seen or unseen.

The reason many people struggle with this concept is because it would mean that God was responsible for all the terrible, dark, and evil things that occur in our lives, the trauma, the hate, the betrayal, the hurt, the pain, etc. And if we were to say that God was responsible for evil, how then could He be good. But since we say that God is good, we have to find someone else to blame for the wrongs of this world.

Therefore, instead of attributing such events to Yahweh, we tend to blame the devil, demons, other people, ourselves, sin, fate, mother nature, the stars, global warming, and so on. There are some who are bold enough say that God **allows** such things, but they fall far short of saying that God causes them. In fact, they usually are very adamant that He does not cause the bad things in our lives.

This sort of projection and denial is what we tend to do when we cannot fathom how God, who is supposed to good, loving, kind, and righteous, can cause (not just “allow”) all manner of evil and disruption in our lives and in this world.

Yes, we will deal with this issue of blame when we get to the fact that Yahweh is good, but first let us lay the groundwork. We are going to look at just a couple of titles used by Yahweh to communicate this truth about His absolute sovereignty, and we will examine what these titles have to say about His Him being **THE LORD**—the one who is responsible for all things all the time.

### **The Alpha and Omega<sup>1</sup>**

The **Alpha** and **Omega** refers to Yahweh’s complete Sovereignty in all things as all things start, are initiated, or originate, with Him and all things end with Him or are completed by Him. In fact,

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<sup>1</sup> *Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13*

### 3 Things – Part 2

nothing comes in to being that He did not create. For from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.<sup>2</sup> “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. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”<sup>3</sup>

This phrase the "Alpha and Omega" is lifted from a Jewish practice of using the beginning and end of the Hebrew alphabet to declare the totality of any event. For example, Adam transgressed the whole law from Aleph to Taw whereas Abraham kept the whole law from Aleph to Taw. Thus, this is another way of Yahweh declaring that He is everything—the sum totality of all things, from Aleph to Taw.

Jesus being the “Alpha and Omega” communicates to us the idea that He is eternal, outside of time, and all of time is held in His sovereign hands. He not only sees the beginning from the end (knowing all things all at the same time), He is the Beginning and the End.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we can be confident that nothing is initiated that He did not initiate, nothing comes to closure that He does not bring to fruition, and even the journey through is a result of His sovereign hand. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”<sup>5</sup> Yes, **ALL** things.

I know this is hard to swallow, but as King David said, “And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.”<sup>6</sup>

What David said should bring us great comfort to know that everything, absolutely everything that has occurred in our lives has been from Him, through Him, and its purpose is found in Him. In other words, nothing that has occurred in our lives is random, nothing is arbitrary, and most importantly, nothing is capricious. It has all been written in His book. And since we are told that God loves us with His *agape* love, everything that we have experienced, both evil and good, has been an expression of His great love for us.

Nothing in our lives has been an accident, there has been no randomness; rather, it has all been purposeful. And in His sovereignty, He has directed peoples, family, nations, individuals, and the very hosts of heaven (both angles and demons) to accomplish His eternal and beautiful purposes in our lives.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> **Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 8:6, 11:12; Hebrews 2:10**

<sup>3</sup> **Colossians 1:16-18**

<sup>4</sup> **Revelation 22:13**. Note, the Father also uses this title in **Revelation 21:6**.

<sup>5</sup> **Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6, 11:12; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 2:10**.

<sup>6</sup> **Psalms 139:16**

<sup>7</sup> His name is *Yahweh Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hosts (angels) or the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, including both the good and the bad angels.

## 3 Things – Part 2

### ALL THAT WE HAVE EXPERIENCED HAS BEEN AN EXPRESSION OF HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US.

#### The First and the Last<sup>8</sup>

Since all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him, we must conclude that He must know everything all the time. Hence, when Yahweh declares that He is the **First and the Last**, He is making a point about His prophetic voice which declares events in advance—events that always come true with unfathomable precision.<sup>9</sup> It's as if He is saying, I have the **first** word in determining what will be, and I have the **last** word in enforcing what will be. When I speak, it is assured. Let's just read about His prophetic voice, for He says it far more potently than I ever could.

Do not tremble; do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim my purposes for you long ago? You are my witnesses—is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!"<sup>10</sup>

But I have stirred up a leader who will come from the north. I have called him by name from the east. I will give him victory over kings and princes. He will trample them as a potter treads on clay. Who told you from the beginning that this would happen? Who predicted this, making you admit that he was right? No one said a word! I was the first to tell Zion, 'Look! Help is on the way!' I will send Jerusalem a messenger with good news. Not one of your idols told you this. Not one gave any answer when I asked. See, they are all foolish, worthless things.<sup>11</sup>

There is no other God—there never has been, and there never will be. I, yes I, am the Lord, and there is no other Savior. First I predicted your rescue, then I saved you and proclaimed it to the world. No foreign god has ever done this. You are witnesses that I am the only God, says the Lord. From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can snatch anyone out of my hand. No one can undo what I have done.<sup>12</sup>

Consult together, argue your case. Get together and decide what to say. Who made these

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<sup>8</sup> *Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13*

<sup>9</sup> *1 Kings 22:19-22; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; 2 Chronicles 18:18-22; Daniel 4:34-35, 6:26-27; Psalm 24:1, 89:11, 103:19, 115:3, 135:6; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Job 1-2, 9:21-24; Lamentations 3:37-38; Isaiah 46:10; Ezekiel 21:105, 12, Amos 3:6; Romans 8:28, 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 8:6, 11:12; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 2:10; Jude 4; Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13*

<sup>10</sup> *Isaiah 44:8*

<sup>11</sup> *Isaiah 41:25-29*

<sup>12</sup> *Isaiah 43:10-13*

### 3 Things – Part 2

things known so long ago? What idol ever told you they would happen? Was it not I, the Lord? For there is no other God but me, a righteous God and Savior. There is none but me.<sup>13</sup>

Long ago I told you what was going to happen. Then suddenly I took action, and all my predictions came true. For I know how stubborn and obstinate you are. Your necks are as unbending as iron. Your heads are as hard as bronze. That is why I told you what would happen; I told you beforehand what I was going to do. Then you could never say, 'My idols did it. My wooden image and metal god commanded it to happen!' You have heard my predictions and seen them fulfilled, but you refuse to admit it. Now I will tell you new things, secrets you have not yet heard. They are brand new, not things from the past. So you cannot say, 'We knew that all the time!' Yes, I will tell you of things that are entirely new, things you never heard of before.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, no one can accurately declare the future, in detail, unless they have the sovereign authority to pull off everything they predicted. By its nature, the prophetic voice requires ultimate knowledge, ultimate sight, ultimate authority, and ultimate power. And this is why we say that Yahweh is the sovereign Lord God Almighty.

#### Lord God Almighty<sup>15</sup>

The title: “Lord God Almighty” separates Yahweh from every other so-called god that people tend to worship. As we are discovering, the “**LORD**” means that He is the sovereign, the ruler, the monarch, the despot, so to speak: a hands-on God who is, without exception, over **all** the little details of our lives.<sup>16</sup>

He is our only Lord and Master. He calls the shots in this world, and all things happen just as He decided long ago.<sup>17</sup> He is the most high and He claims to be over all the affairs of man, over the heavens—the angels and demons, over all creation (including the actions of animals), and over all minutia, even seeming incidentals like the toss of the dice; yes, even the toss of the dice.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Isaiah 45:21*

<sup>14</sup> *Isaiah 48:3-8*

<sup>15</sup> *Genesis 17:1, 35:11; Exodus 6:3; Revelation 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 19:6, 21:22*

<sup>16</sup> *Psalms 139:1-6, 37:23-24*

<sup>17</sup> *Ephesians 1:11; 3:11; Romans 8:28; 9:10-24; Hebrews 6:17-18*

<sup>18</sup> See: *Genesis 8:22, 45:5, 50:20; Exodus 4:21; Numbers 22:28; Deuteronomy 32:39-40; Judges 14:1-4; 1 Samuel 2:6-8, 16:14-15; 1 Kings 17:4, 22:19-37; 1 Chronicles 21:1/2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Chronicles 29:11-14; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Job 1:6-12, 9:21-24, 12:12-25; Psalm 24:1-2, 29:9-10, 33:11, 48:1, 76:1-10, 97:9, 103:19-22; 104:4, 104:5-35, 115:3; 135:6; Proverbs 16:1, 4, 9-10, 33, 21:1; Ecclesiastes 9:1; Isaiah 14:24; 30:26, 40:23, 44:24-28, 45:1-7; Jeremiah 5:22, 8:7, 27:5-11, 21-22, 31:35, 32:17-30, 40; Lamentations 3:37-38; Ezekiel 32:4; Daniel 6:22; Hosea*

## 3 Things – Part 2

There is only one Lord.

**God** means that He sits outside of time and therefore knows everything from beginning to end. He is all powerful, all knowing, and all present, all the time. He is the I Am, the self-existent one, from who comes all things.<sup>19</sup> He is the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

**Almighty** means that no one is bigger or more powerful; therefore, no one can thwart His will; everything happens just as He planned. He is at the top. He is, and what He says or does is accomplished without exception because He is the Amen!<sup>20</sup>

In **Revelation**, we come across a cry of beautiful adoration, Holy, Holy, Holy,<sup>21</sup> which ascribes the fundamental character and nature of God to the entirety of the Godhead. Thus, even though He is completely sovereign over all the affairs of men, and we do not understand so much of what He does or allows to be done on this earth, we can trust that it all stems from His perfect holiness. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!

### What About evil, what about choice, what about free will?

As I said before, many people struggle with this concept of God's absolute sovereignty because it would mean that God was responsible for all the terrible, dark, and evil things that occur in our lives, including the trauma, the hate, the betrayal, the hurt, the violation, the pain, the sickness, the death, etc. And that is something that they simply cannot fathom. They are convinced that good and loving God cannot cause evil—they even believe that evil cannot be in His presence.

Therefore, instead of attributing events to Yahweh, they blame the devil, demons, other people, themselves, sin, and so on. This sort of denial and projection is how they emotionally and intellectually cope with an exceedingly difficult concept that seems to be in contradiction to His goodness and love.

When we talk about the 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> truth, we will most definitely address the issues surrounding evil, pain, and trauma, but quickly I would like to address this question about choice and free will, since this seems like a contradiction to the idea that God is completely sovereign.

### Choice & Free Will

One of the most amazing things about the immensity of God is that His sovereignty works with our choices and it never violates our choice. You might be thinking that if God is in control of all

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**6:1-3; Amos 3:6; Mark 4:39; John 3:27, 15:16; Acts 2:22-24, 4:23-28; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:11, 2:10, 4:6; Philippians 2:9-13**

<sup>19</sup> **Exodus 3:13-15**

<sup>20</sup> **See Psalm 33:6-11; Lamentations 3:37-38; Amos 3:7-8**

<sup>21</sup> **Revelation 4:8**

### 3 Things – Part 2

things all the time, how can there ever be true choice. If there is true choice, how can God be sovereign since “me, myself, and I” get to decide things for my own life and the life of others for whom I am responsible?

And if God is sovereign, is choice is just a fiction, a delusion to make us feel like we have some element of control over our lives? Are we merely puppets doing as He has determined? If so, wouldn't that be akin to forced slavery of thought, feeling, and action? How can He say He loves us if we essentially are nothing more than dancing monkeys? Moreover (yes, I just said moreover), if He is the one who is truly responsible for all things all the time, how could He ever legitimately hold anyone accountable for their “choices” if they were NOT truly free to choose? And if He holds people accountable, how can He be fair and just?

Those are all good questions, but they are all missing something so much bigger and amazing that is found in the immensity of our God.

Practically, the issue of choice is extremely hard to get our minds around because our brain tends to inhibit our thoughts to all that is constrained within time. However, being outside of time, the one who sees the beginning from the end, the possibilities for what is possible are unconstrained.

Consider this. We are told that Yahweh is *intimately acquainted* with all of our ways, He knows our thoughts from afar, and even before we speak a word He knows it all.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, with such vast knowledge, He has the ability to know each and every choice we will make given a set of defined circumstances that He chooses to bring about (or predestine in our lives).<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, knowing in advance how we are going to respond, He makes His plans for our lives with not just an understanding of our choices but full and complete knowledge of our choices. Let me say this another way, the circumstances which He has prepared for our lives are perfectly orchestrated to bring out those choices, whether those choices are for good or evil.

**THIS DECLARES A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH: GOD NEVER REACTS TO US, HE NEVER IS SURPRISED BY US, AND HE NEVER IS TAKEN ABACK BY THE THINGS WE DO. THEREFORE, WE NEVER HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF HIM.**

This beautiful truth should strike fear down in our hearts. We should therefore never be afraid

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<sup>22</sup> *Psalm 139:1-18*

<sup>23</sup> *Romans 8:28-30*



## 3 Things – Part 2

that God is going to react to our bad choices, our sin, and stretch out His monstrous hand and punish us. He does not react – His foreknowledge prevents it. He already knows and more importantly, it is already a part of His marvelous plan for our lives.

All things have been contemplated and planned to fulfill His purposes in and through our choices, for which we, and we alone, are responsible. It is always our choice. He never has, or will, take away our ability to choose; thus, Yahweh never forces us and never violates our will. Instead, He always invites us to come to Him, to know Him, to enjoy Him, to fellowship with Him, to trust in Him, and to love Him, and we get to **choose** if we will answer the invitation.

Again, His plan for our lives, incorporating all of our choices to the circumstances He ordained, was laid out from the beginning, before we even experienced a single day of life.

I like to say that God always operates according to **Plan-A**, because there is no Plan-B and never can be a Plan-B (much less a C, or D, or E). He does not react because He cannot react. What we choose has already been determined by what He planned.

To me this is so relieving. I lived in fear of God for so many years of my life convinced that each time I did something wrong or disappointing that He would react to my actions and punish me, or said in a more Christian tone, “discipline” me. But He already knew how I would choose and what I would do with all that He predestined for my life. If you think about it, He can never be disappointed with us, for His circumstances were intended to draw out our failures and our sins. It is how He gives us an opportunity to learn.

### Choice + Intervention

With that being said, I must make a point. Even though He has not taken from us the power to choose, we would never be able to answer His invitations without help. We need help, for without Him we can do nothing.<sup>24</sup> Thus, His Holy Spirit is always at work in and around our lives, giving us the capability to choose outside of our own selfish heart. The Holy Spirit is our helper, and He comes along side of us and within the construct of time, encourages us, teaches us, leads us, and guides us in such a way that we can choose, given the circumstances God has provided, to be in relationship with Him. But make no mistake, left to us, we would never make this choice; God has to help us.<sup>25</sup>

This is another reason we can all be so thankful that He made atonement for all our choices. Yes, we made them, both evil and good (well, actually evil and evil, since only God is good), but

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<sup>24</sup> *John 15:5*

<sup>25</sup> *See John 14:16, 25, 15:26, 16:7; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 10:14-15; Titus 3:5; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:5*

### 3 Things – Part 2

He has already forgiven us each and every choice that honored ourselves and not Him. He dealt with the problem of our bad choices on the cross. In fact, each and every accusation that could ever be levied upon us, He nailed to the cross. He literally cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of accusations and decrees against us deriving from all of our terrible choices.<sup>26</sup> Praise the Lord for His intervention.

Thus, when understood properly, there is a beautiful intersection between sovereignty and choice. This is what Paul tries to explain when he says, "...those He (*Yahweh*) foreknew He also predestined."<sup>27</sup>

#### **Job Declares God's Absolute Sovereignty**

You may or may not be familiar with the story of Job, but God had something He wanted to teach Job and so He engaged Satan in a discussion over the faithfulness and righteousness of Job; as a result, God sent Satan who worked through nature and people (regional enemies) to destroy Job's life. His children were killed, his livelihood was destroyed, his animals captured and stolen, his servants killed, and so on. It was a sudden and quick dismantling of all that Job valued in this world.

Despite the overwhelming destruction, Job refused to slander God or literally ascribe evil to God for all that had been taken from him. Therefore, a second time God engaged Satan in a discussion over the integrity of Job, the one who is blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. God even told Satan that he had incited God to ruin Job without cause. In effect, God took the blame even though Satan did the deed.

Satan then said that the reason Job did not make accusation against God is because Satan did not touch Job's body, for all a man has he will give for his life. Satan was then sent to afflict Job's physical body with sores, pain, and rot from the sole of his feet to the top of his head. It was terrible. But God put a limit on what Satan could do as Satan was instructed not to kill Job.

But what is remarkable is that the entire time, Job did not blame Satan, he did not blame the enemies which attacked his livelihood, and he did not blame "mother nature" for the tornado that collapsed the house over his children, and to our complete surprise, he did not even blame global warming; rather, he blamed God. And the wild thing is that at the end of this amazing book, God said that Job spoke correctly about Him. In fact, He said it twice to make sure we got it.<sup>28</sup> God took full responsibility even though it all came to be by the hand of Satan.

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<sup>26</sup> *Colossians 2:8-13*

<sup>27</sup> *Romans 8:29*

<sup>28</sup> *Job 42:7-9*

## 3 Things – Part 2

The point is that it does not matter the agency through which the pain and destruction came into Job's life, it all originated from the Alpha and Omega, and nothing could have been done to Job unless God not just "allowed," but directed it, and was fully responsible for it. God owned it!

Therefore, the first thing we need to believe is that Yahweh is the Sovereign Lord in control of all things, all the time. As stated previously, nothing in our lives, down to the toss of the dice, is random or arbitrary, but all originates with Yahweh and all of it has purpose and intention in Him.

For some this brings great, deep, and lasting comfort. For others, however, they are locked in an emotional battle over the fairness, goodness, and justice of God. And this leads us to the second thing we need to believe, that **Yahweh is good**.

**However, we will stop right here, and pick up in our next Podcast as we continue our deep dive into the 3 Things we need to actively believe.**