Our Perceptions Of God

Introduction: It is essential that we have an accurate perception of God. A wrong concept of God may result in serious consequences. Sometime we hear it said that we worship the same God as the Muslims and Jews. Is this true? Well, let me say that I do not even worship the same God as many who claim to be Christians! And I will try to prove that from Scriptures in just a moment. People who worship a wrong perception of God worship a different god. Since we tend to become what we worship, our whole life will be affected by this difference of perception. May I repeat that last sentence?

* Please pray with me.

I) Wrong Perceptions

A) The Samaritans insisted that they worshipped the "God of Abraham," yet Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not know" (John 4:22). People thinking they are worshiping the true God, but aren’t!

B) When Jereboam, king of Israel, erected his golden calf he said, "Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12:28). What?! What that golden calf represented was not the true God that delivered them.

C) The Muslims insist that they worship Allah, "the God of Abraham," but their perception of him is totally different from the God of the Bible. If they personally hate their enemies and seek to personally destroy as many as they can who are
unbelievers then that is not the God I know. The true God says, Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who does not love, does not know God; for God is love. (I John 4:7-8). And in another place He says, Love your enemies. Muslims may be "godly people" but their god is a god of their own devising, not the one of Scripture.

**D) The Mormons** have a different view of God. They claim God is an exalted man. "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret." (Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, VI:305). They also claim God was not always God. "We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see." (Ibid.). And that God once lived on an earth. "These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; and I will show it from the Bible." (Ibid.)

T. A. McMahon says the following: *Mormonism teaches that God has a physical body and lives on a planet near a star called Kolob. He is but one of an infinite number of Gods, each ruling over his own world located somewhere in the universe. Supposedly, each God has untold numbers of goddess wives who produce millions of spirit children. Amazingly, these spiritual offspring of God and his goddesses must then be birthed through physical beings (non-gods) on earth. This obtains for them the physical bodies necessary to become Gods and goddesses, who create and rule over their own worlds. Polygamy was a major part of Mormonism. It met the need for producing bodies for the spirit babies birthed by multiple mother goddesses. It is still practiced among Mormon sects today. The*
Latter-day Saints' focus on the family has more to do with the Church's biblically unorthodox theology than with domestic well-being.

E) The Hindu & Buddhist Concept of God. It is sometimes referred to as Pantheism. Hindus believe that God is ultimately an impersonal, eternal force, essence, or power of existence, which has none of the attributes or characteristics of persons (such as knowing, thinking, loving, etc.). This force is called Brahman. God (Brahman) is present everywhere in everything in nature, especially in all living things: every plant, every animal, and especially every man. Brahman can be thought of as a sort of spirit force which has no personal qualities, but which pervades everything in the Universe. This impersonal essence, pervading all things, is also found within us. Hence, the "spirit" within us is Divine. It is part of God. The real inner you is God. Your inner essence is the essence of Deity. “May The force be with you” - Star Wars. It is also Polytheistic manifested in many gods of many forms. There are three Supreme gods: (1) Brahma, the creator, (2) Vishnu, the preserver, and (3) Siva, the destroyer. These are generally recognized as equal. There are also many lesser deities having various levels or realms of authority. Some rule over certain areas of the earth or certain aspects of nature, such as fire, sun, wealth, water, etc. Dead ancestors and religious teachers are also worshiped. This worship often involves the use of many images.

F) How about the Jewish Perception of God? Nope. Jesus said to some during His days on earth that they did not know God (John 7:28). Much of this due to their not perceiving Him (Jesus) to be God on earth. Read I John 5:20-21. The TRUE God is known through Jesus Christ. Jews reject Him. They therefore do not know the true God. As verse 21 says, they serve an idol.

G) Misc. Misconceptions of God
* He who willfully walks in sin does not know God (I John 3:6). Not really.
* Anyone denying Jesus came in the flesh **does not know God** (I John 4:2-3).

* The pre-millenial perception of God is one of failed promises. Not my God! He never fails...but every promise, He keeps.

* The modern perception of God is one where it seems most everyone is going to heaven. The Bible says most will perish in hell. Do they even KNOW God?

* The Scripture speaks of some changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man (Romans 1:23). How true?! Any change of how God is into how man wants Him to be amounts a misperception of God to say the least.

* And sober word of warning for us in this room...If the worship and lifestyles of others can be so wrong because of a misconception of God, we should be warned of such a possibility in our own efforts to be godly. Do not think for a moment it can never happen.

**II) The Right Perception**

**Obtaining The Right Perception:** Unaided human reason cannot attain a correct knowledge of God. "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom **did not know God**..." (I Corinthians 1:21). God will just have to tell us what He is like and by faith we then develop the correct perception of Him based on that.

Here are some **Bible** descriptions of God’s nature and character. I will gladly make a copy of this list for anyone. I will keep my comments brief.
To truly know God He must be viewed (perception) as:

**Impartial (Acts 10:34)** - no favoritism, no respect of persons...a God equally of all people, no matter their race, color, ethnicity, background, or whatever.

**Loving (I John 4:8)** - He defines love...He epitomizes love...he IS love

**Jealous (Exodus 20:5)** - He is very exclusive in His place and accepts only such in our hearts

**Omnipotent (Revelation 19:6)** - Nothing is impossible...absolutely NOTHING.

**Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7)** - He is everywhere and thus near to every man all the time.

**All-wise (Romans 11:33)** - Nothing is hidden from his sight and He knows everything about everybody. EVERYTHING!

**Good (Matthew 19:17)** - Only one is good in the absolute sense...GOD!

**Severe (Romans 11:22)** - He can at the very same time be strict...very strict.

**A consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)** - And the punishment on evil can be a fiery destruction.

**Vengeful (Romans 12:19)** - He not only keeps track of things done by man to one another, but repays where necessary...make things come out even.
Not worshipped with men’s hands (Acts 17:25) - He does not require physical maintenance

Not dwelling in buildings made by men (17:24) - He is not restricted to a building

The source of life (17:25) - He is before all things...all things depend on Him for their existence...continually

Near to everyone of us (17:27) - Mentioned already...close at hand, anywhere, anytime

Spirit (John 4:24) - Invisible. No man has seen God at anytime.

Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6) - Keeps not only track of wrongs, but rights, things done well, and pays back accordingly.

From everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2) - He is eternal, without beginning or end. Before there was time. He formed time.

Light (I John 1:5) - Brightness, enlightenment, understanding, truth, reality

Cannot lie (Titus 1:2) - It is impossible. He is the truth...bank on it.

Cannot be tempted (James 1:13) - Corruption is impossible, sin is impossible

Does not tempt man (James 1:13) - blame someone or something else, but not God. Don’t go there.
Unchanging (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17) - He is constant and unalterable in His being.

Source of all good things (I Timothy 6:17; James 1:17) - If it is good, it came from Him. Satan has no originality powers.

No flesh and bones or blood (Luke 24:39; I Cor. 15:49) - He is spirit, remember?

Holy and reverend (Psalm 111:9) - Awesome, special, unique, most high

The Same, yesterday, today & forever (Hebrews 13:8)

Conclusion: Our perceptions of God affect how we live our lives. Let us be certain that our view of God is true.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. - I John 5:20-21