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What Omnipresence Is

I want to explain briefly what omnipresence is and then show what it means in human experience. That God is omnipresent is of course believed by all churches who believe in the Bible. I am not introducing anything new. Omnipresence means that God is all-present. God is close to (for that is what the word means – “close to, near to, here”) everywhere. He is near to everything and everyone. He is here; He is next to you wherever you may be. And if you send up the furious question, “Oh God, where art Thou?” the answer comes back, “I am where you are; I am here; I am next to you; I am close to everywhere.” That’s what the Bible says.

There’s a reason to this as well as the evidence of Scripture. If we had Scripture and no reason, we’d still believe it. But since we have Scripture to declare it and reason to shout, “It’s true, I know it’s true,” then we may be sure that God is omnipresent. If there were

any borders to God, if there were any place where God is not, then that place would mark the confines or the limits of God. And if God had limits, God could not be the infinite God. Some theologians call the infinitude of God His *immensity*, but that is not quite a big enough word. *Immensity* simply means that whatever you are talking about is hugely, vastly large. But *infinitude* means there isn’t any way to say that God is large. Since He is infinite, then we can only say that God has no size at all; you cannot measure God in any direction. God is infinite and perfect. Whenever you have finitude you have *creaturehood*, not God.

God is equally near to all parts of His universe. We think rightly about God and spiritual things only when we rule out the concept of space altogether. God, being infinite, does not dwell in space; He swallows up all space. Scripture says, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24) and that sounds as if God were contained in heaven and earth. But actually God

fills heaven and earth just as the ocean fills a bucket which has been submerged in it a mile down. The bucket is full of the ocean, but the ocean surrounds the bucket in all directions. So when God says He fills heaven and earth, He does.

But heaven and earth are submerged in God, and all space is too. The “heaven of heavens cannot contain him” (2 Chronicles 2:6). God is not contained; God contains. And there is the difference. “For in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

We talk about God being close to us or about the problem of God being far away. We don’t think right because we think geographically or astronomically; we think in light-years or meters or inches or miles or leagues. We’re thinking of Him as dwelling in space, which He does not. Rather He contains space so that space is in God. There is never any problem about God being

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anywhere, for the fact is, as the texts say, God is everywhere.

I believe what God says and leave those who do not believe with the problems. Scripture says, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Psalm 139:8). I don't understand it, but remember that John Wesley said not to reject something just because you can't understand it. The omnipresence of God requires that wherever there is anything – even hell – the presence of God must be. Why is it, then, that the world thinks of God as being infinitely remote, or as the song says, "far away, beyond the starlit sky?" When the world prays, as a rule they pray without any sense of God's nearness at all. Always God is somewhere else. Always God is far away. Why is this?

Our Remoteness From God

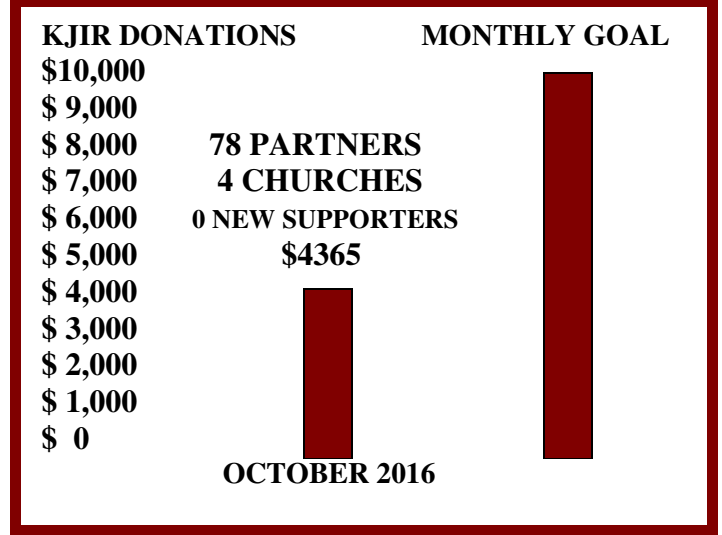
The reason is that in spiritual things closeness and likeness are the same thing. Remoteness means dissimilarity.

When it comes to personality, when it comes to spirits, when it comes to that which is not material, distance doesn't mean anything. Jesus could go to the right hand of God the Father and still say to people on earth, "I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20) because Jesus Christ is God, and God being spirit can be instantaneously everywhere at the same time.

But we are shut off from God – not because God is spatially far from us, not because He is remote like a far galaxy or star, but because there is a dissimilarity in nature. When we think on spiritual things, we project our own human concepts on them. One of the challenges of the Bible teacher is to break down those human concepts, though not very many Bible teachers try to do it. One of the challenges of the Holy Spirit – if He has any challenges – is to get His people so spiritualized that they no longer think in material concepts.

For instance, your friends are the ones who are closest to you, and the closer the friend, the nearer that person is likely to be. But your enemy wants to put as much space between you and him as possible. So we tend to think of our friends as being near to us and our enemies as being far from us. As the world sees it, the farther away your enemy is, the better off you are, because you think in spatial terms.

That isn't the way we should think about God. There isn't any place you could go and not find God. The psalmist says, "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as



the day: the darkness and light are both alike to thee" (Psalm 139:11-12). There isn't anywhere that we can go because "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off" (139:2). We do not have the problem of distance or remoteness when we come to God. What makes this a Christian assembly is that God is here.

A.W. Tozer

