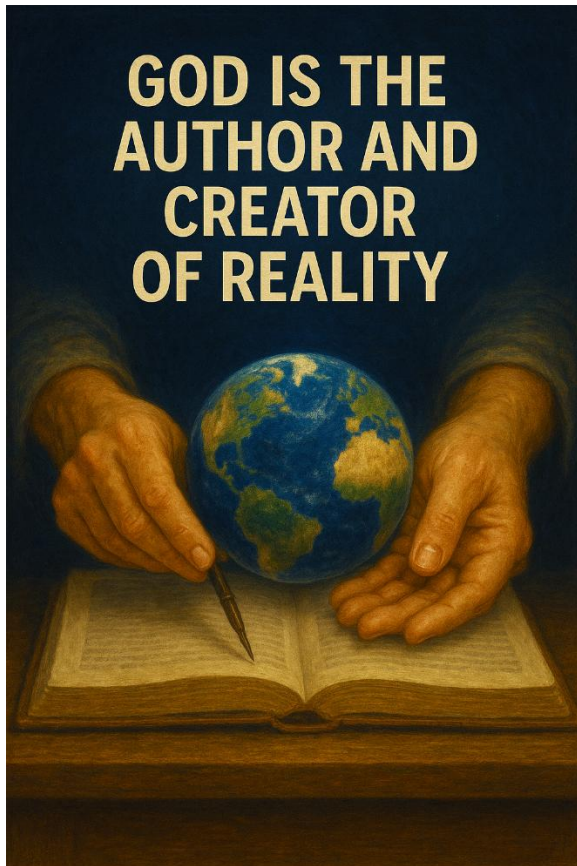




INTRODUCTION

1.1. Up until now, I've tried to gradually present through sermons the DOCTRINES which, in my opinion, are BIBLICAL DOCTRINES. In other words, I believe that the biblical doctrines — as explained in my sermons — are the same ones believed by Old Testament and New Testament writers.

1.2. Although I'm not a formally trained theologian (and I'm sure my writing makes that clear), I can increasingly say with confidence that Christian tradition (its teaching) has drastically missed the mark in presenting, both internally and publicly, what they consider to be biblical doctrines.

1.3. Please don't misunderstand me right away — this is not a competition between me and everyone else. If you've been studying Luke with me from the very beginning, then you know that I believe individuals from all the Christian groups I mentioned will be saved, even if they believe wrong doctrines. In other words, believing the wrong doctrines does not mean you lack a NEW HEART that sincerely loves God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

1.4. But with wrong doctrines, we unfortunately cannot grasp the idea Jesus is trying to convey here; we cannot fully understand the ASSURANCE OF FAITH that He speaks about in John 6¹ if we don't understand who God is.

1.5. If I had to choose a slogan that motivates me as a believer to write all of this to you, it would be called: **THE JOY OF FREEDOM**. By FREEDOM, I mean freedom from this world, and by WORLD, I mean the wisdom the world possesses.

1.6. Once again — I'm not urging you to leave your church, nor am I urging you to start a new denomination. That is not what I primarily want for you. My desire for you is that you be freed from the fear that comes from not knowing who God is. By fear, I mean this: life sooner or later puts us in situations where we are literally dying of fear —
"Why am I losing my loved ones?"

¹ Sermons 57. – 61. (Gospel of Luke/John 6)

“Why am I incurably ill?”

“Will peace ever come to my war-torn and devastated homeland?”

“My God, I feel in my soul that I am drifting away from You; I won’t be able to withstand this flood of trouble that just won’t stop.”

“Why don’t You give me what was promised through the mouths of Your spiritual leaders (priests, pastors, ministers, teachers)?”

“Will I really inherit Your kingdom?”

“Why is life so unfair to me?”

“Why do those who don’t love You seem to have everything go well for them?”

1.7. It’s practically impossible to get answers to the above questions — and many others — if we don’t have the authentic teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles. In other words, a believer taught wrong doctrines will often feel fear, confusion, and maybe even bitterness during their walk of faith. But the one taught biblical doctrine will walk in faith freely, despite life’s circumstances. My conclusion is this: the journeys of both believers are radically different, even though both will ultimately inherit the Kingdom of God. While one walks in joy and freedom, the other walks in confusion and fear.

DEFINITION OF THE BIBLICAL GOD

2. Now the little philosopher in me wakes up — please don’t hold it against me, but I don’t know how else to begin explaining who the God of the Bible is. Everything I’m about to say I will later clarify through life examples that will make the idea of who God is easier to grasp. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

2.1. God, as a transcendent² being, is a radically different belief model from all the others found in religious writings. A supporter of this belief holds that there is only one God, that He is a person, and the God of our reality. He is self-existent, and as a person, He is the author of everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen. The Bible also teaches us that He is a good God, that He alone existed before the creation of the universe and everything in it (the created order). He was the only personal being, the only person, who existed before the world began.

2.2. And when such a God decided to create man, He made him in His own image. What does that actually mean? In short, it means God created people to be PERSONS who, in their lives, would reflect the PERSONALITY of God Himself. Man is a being with a mind, with free will, and has the ability, as a person, to understand, connect with, and relate to other people who are also persons.

2.3. But likewise, being made in God’s image, we can understand the concept of transcendence. Here’s an example: in the time of my intense meditation (which sometimes lasted two to three hours a day), I tried in my mind to escape the reality I was living in — “I am incurably ill, and that will not change.”

² The general meaning of the word *transcendent*: that which goes beyond a certain domain, level, or boundary; that which is imagined as belonging to a particular realm of things and events, that which is beyond the world.

2.5. During meditation, I would imagine myself in another place, where I was completely healthy and happier than ever. After a while, I began to believe inside that the life I desired for myself was more real than the one I was actually living. In other words, I was transcendent in that experience. I imagined a different scenario for myself, and out of nothing it became almost real in my mind, and my body and mental state reacted accordingly. Put another way, human beings have the ability to imagine themselves in a life scenario different from the one they are actually in. If we stop for a moment and really think about that truth, we should conclude that it's an incredible ability to have. I also believe we are the only creatures on the planet with that ability, though I can't prove it.

2.6. Alright, let's move on — what about the Christian view of God's transcendence?

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF TRANSCENDENCE

3. By "Christian view," I mean all the denominations that exist today. To understand the Christian view of transcendence, let me try to put our reality in a frame. A painting has a frame (boundaries), right? In this case, our reality is the painting, and the frame is the limit of our reality. Outside the frame, there is no time and no material. This means that everything that exists — the universe, planets, galaxies, our planet — is inside the frame as the painting.

3.1. Unlike a believer who believes in a God who is outside the frame, the church, almost from the beginning, has believed that God lives inside the painting, not outside the frame. In other words, the church believes God is transcendent in the sense that He lives somewhere "up there" high within the created order. I believe the interior of a Catholic church best visually portrays the Christian view of God's transcendence.

On the ground floor of the church are pews where we, as believers, come to worship our God—meaning we are on the ground floor, in our own reality. High above, on the ceiling of the church, we see heavenly beings who dwell together with God in their own reality. What separates us is the space in between, yet in the end, it is the same space. This means that we are in the same reality as the heavenly beings and God; only they are in a much higher and more significant position of dwelling. The biblical perspective on God is that He is beyond our reality. He dwells where no one can go. In other words, we dwell on planet Earth, angelic beings dwell in the heavens (the universe), and God dwells beyond time and space.



COMPARISON OF GOD TO A WATCHMAKER

4. Now that we know a little more about God, let's make a comparison that will describe in more detail the idea that God is the creator of everything created. This comparison has been used among biblical teachers who, in debates with atheists, have tried to prove — through analogy — to them and to the whole world that there is a creator, designer, and maker of all things. And how did they do it? By comparing the mind of God to the mind of a human being

— and by that, I mean this: human beings create, design, and bring into existence something they have first formed as an idea in their minds.

4.1. Here's the analogy: before the watchmaker begins the complex work of making a watch, he first forms the idea of the watch in his mind. Then he takes the necessary materials and begins the process of creating it. Once he has put all the parts in place, he winds the watch, and the watch begins to show time. Why do I call it complex work? Because a basic mechanical wristwatch usually has between 100 and 200 individual parts, while luxury models with additional functions (so-called complications such as chronographs, date displays, moon phases, etc.) can have more than 1,000 parts.

4.2. Similarly, when God created our reality, He first conceived the idea in His mind, and then, out of nothing, the idea became real. Likewise, no one can deny the truth that everything created is incredibly complex in its nature, and that such a machine (reality) requires someone to guide it.

These theologians often use the image of the watchmaker winding the watch and then letting it run on its own — and so with God, they say, He wound the universe and let it move forward on its own. In other words, both God and the watchmaker, from that point on, are merely observers watching their creation move on its own “batteries.”



4.3. In my opinion, they are only partially right. That is not the COMPLETE biblical perspective. The God of the Bible did not let His creation be independent — that is, separate from His own. In Job chapters 38 and 39, we have a description of God's Creative Wisdom. I'll quote a few verses, but I warmly recommend you read both chapters: **“Do you know how God commands them, how He sends lightning from His cloud? Do you know the laws of the clouds above? Have you ever commanded the morning, or told the dawn its place? Does the rain have a father? Who gives birth to the drops of dew? Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loosen the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs?”**

4.4. In the Book of Job, we have proof that God plans, as an author, every second of our reality. He sustains all that He has created so that they (rain, dew, stars, morning) can perform the role for which He made them. In other words, God cannot conceive something into being and then keep it in existence if He is inside the frame of our reality. To simplify this, I'll go back to the watchmaker example: the watchmaker cannot wind a watch to make it run if he himself lives inside the watch. He must be transcendent to do so. Let's continue exploring this together — the more examples I give you, the more you might understand why I'm convinced God is the author of our reality.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

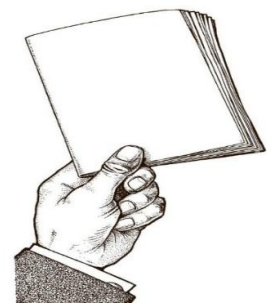
5. I titled this sermon *God is the Author and Creator*. You might ask, “Isn’t that the same thing, Danijel?” Yes, it is — an author creates, which means he is the creator. But there is a difference between God and the watchmaker I mentioned earlier. The watchmaker, after creating his watch and winding it, lets it run on its own. But the watch is not ALIVE, while everything God has created IS ALIVE. In other words, someone must sustain what is alive — what breathes, grows, and moves.

5.1. Paul explains this perfectly in Acts 17:26–28 when speaking to the Athenians: “**From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being.** As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring.’”

5.2. I’ve underlined what’s most important here: God, as the author, sustains everything in life. If He were to withdraw His Spirit from our reality, everything would cease to exist. That was Paul’s belief — and it is mine as well.

5.3. Before we move to the practical part of this sermon, I want to compare God to the author of a novel. The author, within the novel, creates: characters, events, reality, the setting, time — everything that makes up the story. The author does not live in the same reality as the characters in his book. Although the author has written absolutely everything that will happen within the novel, the people in the story, through their free will, decide how they will live their lives. To use Paul’s words — the people in the novel live, move, and decide everything through their own free will. But by Him they live, and by the Author they move! They cannot escape the SCRIPT the author has written. Through their free will, the author accomplishes the PLAN he envisioned for his story.

This image gives us a visual of the relationship between the author and his created reality: He is outside the created reality, and without His presence, it cannot exist. Everything that happens within the written reality is intertwined with the author’s will and plan for that reality. Our reality is that book; we live within its covers, and the God of the Bible holds it firmly in His hands to accomplish His PLAN, which He predetermined before our reality began.



5.4. An author can also insert himself as a character in the work he’s written. A great example is from a series I love called *Blue Bloods*. Frank Reagan is the main character in that series — he’s the police commissioner, a father of four, a husband, and a son. And as we watch the show, we realize that the author of the series wanted to present himself (his values, his personality, his essence) to the world through Frank Reagan.

5.5. In other words, Frank, by the way he lived, portrayed the ESSENCE of the author. Here are a few examples: how he handled certain situations, how he lived, how he reacted to injustice, what mattered to him in life and what didn’t. To express it biblically: Frank Reagan is the image of the unseen author of the series. Likewise, no one in the series would exist if the

author hadn't first had in mind the one for whom the script was written. Every character in the story exists because of one name — Frank Reagan.

5.6. The God of the Bible did the same with His reality — He wanted to present His ESSENCE to us. And He did that through His Son, Jesus Christ. Though Jesus Christ had a role to fulfill within God's reality — by that I mean: He was the son of Joseph and Mary, He was a brother to His brothers and sisters, He was an Israelite — that same man was the image of the invisible God, meaning that, in His life, He reflected the personality, values, and ESSENCE of God Himself.

5.7. That being said, there is no more important figure in our reality than Jesus Christ. For Him all things were created, and because of Him all things were created. He is the main character for whom God, as author, created His reality. It's exciting to see God this way — I realize I would not exist if God had not had a plan, and the core of God's plan is the name — Jesus Christ.

5.7.1. An interesting thought came to me as I was writing this: while we are created *in the image* of God, Jesus *IS the image* of God. Do you see the difference in the wording used by the authors of the Bible? What I'm trying to say before moving on is this: the authors of the Bible could not understand who Jesus truly is unless they first understood who God is — that He is the author who wanted to present Himself to us as one of us, as a man who had the role of being the image of the invisible God.

5.8. I'm aware that the doctrine of the Trinity doesn't hold up under this model of belief (of who God is). For the purpose of this sermon, I don't want to go deeper into that topic — though it deserves it. My intention is to write about it in the future, probably when we get closer to Jesus' journey to the cross.

5.9. Now, let's move toward the end — let's go to the Book of Exodus, where, through the life of Joseph, I believe we'll get an even clearer picture that God is the One I'm representing here. And all of this will ultimately help us better understand John 6.

JOSEPH AS AN ADVOCATE OF GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE

6. Let's go back almost to the very beginning of history. I've already spoken about the pagans and their polytheistic beliefs, so I'll move straight to the Old Testament writers.

They believed that their God was a transcendent God. I believe Jesus inherited this teaching — as a true Israelite, He followed in the footsteps of His fathers in the faith. One of those fathers was Joseph. His life personally reminds me of a biography³. That's why I chose Joseph as an example — to prove my convictions.

6.1. First, a short introduction to Joseph, the son of Jacob, and then we'll go to the Bible verses you'll better understand after this. Joseph was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of

³ Biography: a description of a life, usually of a notable and interesting person. It is a literary genre with a long tradition of development. It has regularly not aimed at a mere description of a person's life, but such accounts were meant to serve religious, philosophical, political, and similar purposes.

Isaac, and Isaac was the son of Abraham. This means Joseph was Abraham's great-grandson. He had eleven brothers. Jacob, Joseph's father, loved Joseph more than any of his other sons⁴. That was surely one reason his brothers were jealous of him. But the main reason they decided to sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt was because of a dream Joseph had⁵.

6.2. From the moment Joseph was sold into slavery to the Egyptians until the moment he appeared before Pharaoh, Joseph could have easily concluded that life was very unfair to him (I encourage you to read Genesis chapters 35–45 for Joseph's life story). But that didn't happen — Joseph was very patient throughout the process, and his focus was on how best to promote the image of God given the circumstances he found himself in. One of those circumstances was his time in prison, where he met Pharaoh's chief baker and cupbearer. After a few years, the chief cupbearer mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh summoned him to his court, where Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream. When everything happened just as Joseph said it would, Pharaoh appointed Joseph as his right-hand man. In time, Joseph invited his brothers to come to him in Egypt.

6.3. What I'm about to read from Genesis 45:5–8 is a revolutionary truth that I believe Christians still do not fully grasp today: **"And now, do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt."**

6.4. As you can see, I've underlined Joseph's understanding of who, in the end, was the One leading him through life. The question arises: how do we reconcile human free will and God's predestination⁶? We see that Joseph understood both very well. In other words, Joseph understood that his brothers, by their own free will, decided to sell him into Egypt — but at the same time, he understood that God had predestined it to happen that way.

GOD CANNOT FULFILL HIS PLAN IF HE IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF OUR FREE WILL

7. I'll start with the event where Potiphar, an Egyptian who was Pharaoh's official and captain of the guard, appointed Joseph as the manager of his household. Potiphar had a wife who wanted to sleep with Joseph. After Joseph refused her, she spitefully decided to take revenge (wounded pride, of course) and told her husband that Joseph was the one who tried to sleep with her. Because of this, Potiphar decided to throw Joseph into prison⁷. Here's what I want to point out: Joseph's imprisonment — where he met the chief cupbearer, who eventually introduced him to Pharaoh — would not have happened if Potiphar's wife had not, of her own free will, decided to set a trap for Joseph. In other words, if God is not the author of

⁴ (Book of Genesis 37:3)

⁵ (Book of Genesis 37:5–11)

⁶ Definition of predestination: to determine in advance for a particular purpose.

⁷ (Book of Genesis 39:1–20)

someone's free will, then He cannot accomplish what He intends. In this case, God wanted Pharaoh to meet Joseph and appoint him as his right-hand man.

7.1. Let me put it another way — what if Potiphar's wife had decided *not* to set a trap for Joseph? What would her decision have meant for God's plan? If she had decided differently, Joseph would not have gone to prison, he would not have met the cupbearer, and ultimately, he would not have met Pharaoh. And if he had not met Pharaoh, then he would not have called his brothers and father to come to him in Egypt. And if they had not come to Egypt, then there would be no Moses, no Book of Exodus, and if there's no Book of Exodus, then there's no Law of Moses given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. And if that's missing, then there's no King David, no Prophets, no Psalms — and ultimately, no Jesus Christ.

7.2. Do you see where I'm going with this? I hope you do. This reality is interwoven with the life stories of individuals, and their free will, one way or another, influences the narrative⁸ God wants to tell within our reality. And that story has a PLAN — and that plan was, and still is, the arrival of the main character (Jesus Christ) onto the scene. And His coming would not have been possible if God had not, as the author, predetermined what would happen through the free will of every person since the beginning of the world.

CONCLUSIONS

7.3. Listen to me, please — the Bible teaches that we are all created **BECAUSE OF HIM** (Jesus), right? And if we look at that truth through the lens of the belief paradigm I've tried to present in this sermon, then we understand that our LIFE STORIES are written solely BECAUSE OF HIM. That should put us into a state of humility — and if it doesn't put us into humility and joy, I honestly don't know what will.

7.4. I hope you've understood the heart of the message. Personally, it took me several years to accept this belief paradigm — to see who I am, and what this world is, through the lens of that paradigm. In the end, IT WAS WORTH IT — everything fell into place.

7.5. In a way, I want to encourage you with these words: you don't have to believe in this paradigm right away — no one can demand that from you. But what I can ask is this: give it time. Use the reason God has given you, and through daily life experiences and studying the Bible, convince yourself of one of the two possible truths that will come from examining this paradigm: "This makes sense" or "This doesn't make sense."

I deeply hope you will choose the FIRST — that is all I can do in the end: hope.

⁸Definition of narrative: a story, that is, any account of a sequence of connected events or experiences, whether non-fictional (memoirs, biography, news report, documentary, travelogue, etc.) or fictional (fairy tale, fable, legend, thriller, novel, etc.).