

# Divine Consciousness

## Sermon #23

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Who am I and how does consciousness relate? Consciousness or conscious awareness can be used in different ways. It can mean awake vs. asleep, alive vs. dead or even existing vs. non-existence. We'll view these ideas in the context of who we are.

Who we think we are is most often not reality. When the amazing truth is discovered, it will change our lives forever. There are reasons we don't know this. To understand we go back to the beginning and the deception in the garden. Man determined that he would be able to discern and process life on his own apart from his Creator. There would be no need for another to assist in the process since man was seemingly quite comfortable doing so on his own. As far as maintaining a relationship with God went, he could see no reason why he wasn't up to the task alone. His partaking of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would provide them everything they would need to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it. Who needs God? I will be God. In a later recounting of this occurrence by the prophet Isaiah, he describes God's plea to the young couple.

Isa 14:13 "For you have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God,

14 I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High'

15 Yet you will be brought down to Sheol (grave), to the lowest depth of the Pit."

The term in Hebrew isn't to be brought down by an outside force but to descend or fall. The action wasn't something God did but Adam. God never said I will kill you; He said if you pursue this behavior, it will cause you to die. It is a sobering warning that should have penetrated their minds, however, it didn't because that's exactly where the problem lay. They had broken relationship with life and wholeness itself, resulting in vulnerability to sickness, corruption and ultimately death. The disease of sin invaded their innocent minds causing them to forget who they were. It convinced them that in their fallen state they could still achieve and maintain a heavenly state of mind, equal to if not greater than God.

This is, of course, the event that explains the thinking of man, even to this day. We don't need God. What was the actual effect this had on mind and body? Let's start by examining what we mean when we think of the term I Am-ness which is our conscious awareness that we exist. In his conversation with God, Moses asked who he should tell Pharaoh had sent him. God's simple response was tell him "I Am" has sent you. When Rameses asked the name of his god Moses responded with "I Am." This had to be confusing to Pharaoh since the response from Moses continued to be "I Am". There's of course profound truth in these words, however, we won't see this clearly for another fifteen hundred years when Paul will write

1 Cor 13:12 "For now we see dimly as in a mirror but then face to face (that is when I become a man). Now I know in part but then I shall know even as I am known."

Jesus refers to Himself as I Am fourteen times in John's gospel alone. It's to make a point for we exist in Him. We are I am in the I Am, sons in the Son for His life and ours are one. The New Covenant is a covenant of sonship.

Sadly, most people, including the church, see themselves quite apart from this view. When speaking of "I", the most common perception is merely the body. Anything outside the body isn't "I". If we associate our being as merely our body, we've now tethered that being to the purely physical world. It means that when our bodies die, and they will, our existence ceases. Most who refuse God subscribe to this conclusion. It is unfortunate since the only life this provides is one of emptiness, bitter loneliness and unfulfilled experience. Relationships are finite and seen as short term. Life in the physical passes rapidly and fails to cultivate the richness in relationship for which we are designed.

Most religious views, on the other hand, hold to a life that continues after death. But what is it that continues? If conscious awareness doesn't cease then my I Am-ness is not my physical body.

If not my body what about my mind or my thoughts? This is the most popular view. But if our mind is perpetual and in control, who are we referring to when we say "I" will control my mind or more often "I" change my mind? If "I" is something beyond the mind that can alter or control it then obviously the mind isn't the essence of who we are. Mind and body are one. The brain is simply another organ of the body that through cognition takes our life experiences and forms subjective thoughts in order to explain meaning. These collective responses within the brain are what we refer to as the mind. I'm not downplaying our mind at all as it is a marvel of creation. Yet, as amazing as it is, it isn't our consciousness. Both body and mind come from the earth and are composed of its elements. For that matter it goes beyond the earth for the famous astronomer Carl Sagan said decades ago that we are made of "star stuff". The same elements found in the stars are found in us. The psalmist tells us in

Psalms 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds,  
4 He counts the number of stars and calls them all by name."

He identifies us as brilliant stars calling us forth by name, the special name He has given each. We are truly amazing creations.

Our bodies consist of trillions of cells that are in various states of dying and being replenished throughout our lifetimes. For example, it only takes 4-6 weeks for our skin to be completely renewed. So why don't we continuously appear to be young? Simply because renewal can't keep up with the decay. This is true of the entire body. The person you see at age 20 isn't the same person you see at 70.

This is not only true in terms of the physical but the mind as well for it too is in a dynamic state. Are the thoughts we had thirty years ago the same as those we had ten years ago, two years ago or even one hour ago? Thoughts continually come and go. Our brain is in perpetual motion processing both internal and external stimuli that comprise a vast amount of information in a lifetime. In the last hour you've experienced approximately 1200 thoughts, 20 thoughts per minute or a different thought every 5 seconds. Whatever we're processing through the senses is generating new or different thoughts, attitudes, beliefs or neural pathways. The mind doesn't remain static. Therefore, when we encounter someone we haven't seen in 20 years, for example, we're interacting with someone whose body and mind has changed many times over. So, what is it about them that remains unchanged? It's the essence of who they truly are that remains. It is the "I" that is them that is unchanged and recognizable. Their

perception of you also remains in spite of the years past and the changes to your body and mind. Take notice of the fact that as far back as we can remember there has always been an ever-present awareness of everything we've experienced. This awareness has always been cognizant of the changes to our body and mind yet it has not changed at all for it transcends the physical. When we look in a mirror now, in spite of the wrinkles and gray hair, we still see ourselves much as we always have. I am aware of the objects I'm surrounded by in time and space but I am not those objects. I have a body and mind but I am not my body and mind. I have thoughts and feelings but I am not my thoughts and feelings, they come and go. My I Am-ness is constant while everything else in the physical universe comes and goes.

Like most people I believed that the thoughts and chatter in my head were me. But the logical question arises as to who or what is it that is aware of these thoughts. My conscious awareness of existence, my I am-ness isn't dependent upon thought, including feeling or emotion, it is simply aware of them. I am feeling happy, sad, joyful, fearful, anxious, depressed, excited, etc. Notice these things aren't feeling I but it is I feeling all these things. They are the transient objects that take place within us but are not us. The often-horrible thoughts we believe define us are an evisceration of who we truly are. **Do not own any thoughts that contradict who God says you are.** They are a twisted distortion of truth. Rather think on these things; whatever is true, noble, just, pure, good, lovely and praiseworthy, meditate on these things for they are His thoughts about you. Live overwhelmed in His opinion of you.

Near Death Experiences are an interesting phenomenon that actually support these truths. I'm not saying you should believe in all the testimonies given; I certainly don't. But of the hundreds of thousands attested to there must be some truth. They almost all give account in common to the heart stopping, vital signs flat lining and the brain becoming completely inactive, yet somehow consciousness continues. The people describe looking down and seeing their dead body, usually with people gathered around, often attempting to resuscitate them. They generally report seeing a bright light and experiencing profound sensations of peace, joy, love or a feeling of being home. They see and sometimes even speak with loved ones who have passed on. Interestingly, they see all this while at the same time observing efforts to bring them back. They can even accurately recount the conversations of those around them. Apparently I am-ness is able to transcend reality between dimensions, not only validating their existence but our ability to exist in both.

There are many that say these encounters take place because the brain still contains a residue of oxygen and is continuing to produce thoughts and feelings, even hallucinations that create the illusion of continued awareness. This in spite of cases being pronounced clinically dead for as long as seventeen hours. Their view clearly subscribes to the belief that life and consciousness exist exclusively in the activity of the brain. The fear derived is that at the death of the brain we cease to exist.

In an article published several years ago in "Psychology Today", I quote,

"The prevailing consensus in neuroscience is that consciousness is an emergent property of the brain and its metabolism. When the brain dies, the mind and consciousness of the being to whom that brain belonged cease to exist. In other words, without a brain, there can be no consciousness. But according to the decades-long research of Dr. Peter Fenwick, a highly regarded neuropsychiatrist who has been studying the human brain, consciousness, and the phenomenon of near-death experience (NDE) for 50 years, this view is incorrect. Despite initially being highly incredulous of NDEs and related phenomena, Fenwick now believes his extensive research suggests that consciousness persists after

death. In fact, Fenwick believes that consciousness actually exists independently and outside of the brain as an inherent property of the universe itself like dark matter and dark energy or gravity.

Hence, in Fenwick's view, the brain does not create or produce consciousness; rather, it filters it. As odd as this idea might seem at first, there are some analogies that bring the concept into sharper focus. For example, the eye filters and interprets only a very small sliver of the electromagnetic spectrum, and the ear registers only a narrow range of sonic frequencies. Similarly, according to Fenwick, the brain filters and perceives only a tiny part of the cosmos' intrinsic "consciousness."

...This is not to be taken as joining God or a creator because the cosmic consciousness that Fenwick describes did not create the universe but is simply a property of it. Obviously, despite his impressive body of research into this subject, there is no current way to empirically establish the validity of Fenwick's cosmic consciousness hypothesis. Ultimately, it aligns more with faith than science. Thus, it seems the answer to the question in this post's title is "No." There is no empirically established explanatory framework for understanding how consciousness can exist independently and outside of the brain."

Although his conclusion contains an element of truth, overall, he "misses the mark." This consciousness is pervasive in all creation and is not a portion nor is it simply an energy. It is a Person and therefore organic. What if we have it reversed? What if conscious awareness is not something taking place inside of a body and mind but that our particular body and mind are taking place inside of consciousness, within the mind of the Trinitarian God?

The Spirit is the revelation of the consciousness of God. To become aware of it is to know that our source for being is found in its perfect, infinite and consuming Love. For example, substitute the word consciousness for spirit in

1 Cor 2:11 "For what man knows the things of a man except the consciousness of the man within him. Even so no man knows the things of God except through the consciousness of God.

1. Now we have received not the consciousness of the world but the consciousness who is from God that we might know the things freely given by God."

14 "But the natural man does not accept the things from the consciousness of God for they are foolishness to him."

Consciousness is our awareness of being. God doesn't have being; He is it. What He so desires is to impart this awareness to us that was lost but has now been restored in Jesus Christ. I believe that the fruit of the Tree of Life hold the mystery of these truths within itself. Adam refused it and rather than know the vastness of God he withdrew into himself, struggling in the smallness of his own mind. If God is infinite consciousness and truth is reality, then man turned away from what is real to stand face to face with something else, something heretofore unknown in God's very good creation, a lie, non-reality! If in order to experience reality one must first be aware of it, then therein lay the problem. Man's mind was darkened, filled with fear and anger. This state of mind can only produce separation and death. This is God's warning. If you feed upon this forbidden fruit, you will no longer be conscious of what is true nor real. We see in Col 1:21 "And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now He has reconciled."

Reconciled to what exactly? Awareness of truth apart from our dependence for life upon our physical being. We innately know that body and mind are passing away, thus we dare not tether our existence to them. I'm not referring to unbelievers only but to sincere believers as well. Why is this the case? Because of the confusion concerning who we truly are. We believe we are our thoughts and feelings, that life exists in the mind. We've made this connection because we're taught this from the science class to the pulpit. They are the measuring stick by which we determine the kind of person we believe we actually are. As demonstrated, we see this can't be true. We connect our eternal well-being at our peril resulting in a repressed primal fear of a death from which we never arise.

Only a knowledge of that which is real and eternal within produces the assurance we hunger for. A popular analogy to see this is to think of radio waves that flood the creation and our brain as a radio receiver. Unlike the conclusion of the neuropsychiatrist, these waves are unlimited and the universe is completely immersed in them. It tells us that God's creation truly is very good in spite of our perception. It is man that introduced evil to it through the alienation of our minds from His presence.

The radio, our brain, performs as a filter to the sounds transmitted within these waves and interprets them. The sounds we receive translate into our thoughts, feelings and emotions derived from the grid of our subjective beliefs. It is our perception of what is being received. Adjusting our radio's tuning and volume can influence the clarity of our experience while interference can produce unwanted noise consisting of disturbances and distortions. The false self will have us identify with the radio rather than the radio waves. In so doing, we accept any distorted messages as being our own. That garbles our identity leading to a sense of separation. It is separation that evokes a fear of death at our deepest level. We read in

Heb 2:14 "...that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, 15 and release those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to its bondage."

Herein lies the key. The word used here for devil is 'diablos' in Greek and consists of two words. 'Dia' means because of or as a result of and 'ballo' to be cast down or fallen. It is speaking of the fallen mindset of Adam who was determined to exalt his throne above God yet he was brought down to the grave in the death and burial of Christ Jesus. But we were then resurrected with a new mind, the mind of Christ, the seed of God. The awareness of eternity within replaces our fear and anxiety toward immortality with the perfect peace of awareness, a knowing of the eternal being we already are.

We are not the thoughts of a mind that tells us "we are not". If so, there is a distortion in our radio receiver. We're not hearing the purity of the message being continuously transmitted both to us and within us. That message is always addressed to the "true you". He is always present to us. The only question is to our awareness of that presence. He encourages us to meditate in His consciousness for all things are reposed and made light in His light.

There are many names for God: Immanuel, I Am, the Way, Truth and Light, the Divine Witness, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End, among many others. But because all existence is summed up in Him, we know that He is the Seed of Divine Consciousness, He who is all and in all.

Amen.