



attributes of *God*

WEEK 3 — GOD IS SPIRIT



CHARLES SPURGEON

“There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-contentment, and go on our way with the thought, ‘Behold I am wise.’ But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, ‘I am but of yesterday and know nothing.’”

JOHN TODD

“And we shall find, the more we think about God, the more we shall be lost in wonder”

PSALM 33:8

“Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!”

Review:

Remember – We are not projecting our attributes onto God. We are seeking as best we can with limited, finite minds to describe God as He has chosen to reveal Himself to us in Scripture.

- 1) The Unity of God
- 2) God is Independent
- 3) God is Eternal

God Is Spirit

GOD'S SPIRITUALITY DEFINED

James P. Boyce – "... not only that God has a spiritual nature, but that he is a pure spirit without outward form or material organization"

Herman Bavinck – "God is a substance distinct from the universe, immaterial, invisible to human eyes, and without composition or extension"

Wayne Grudem – "God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily sense, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence."

Sometimes called God's **invisibility**

JOHN 4:24 --- "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

What Does This Attribute Mean?

1. God is immaterial

Isaiah 31:3 --- "The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit."

Luke 24:39 --- "... for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

Acts 17:29 --- "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man."

2. God has no limitations

BECAUSE GOD IS SPIRIT, TIME HAS NO LIMITS ON GOD

James P. Boyce --- *"To have an omnipresent and eternal mode of existence is possible for a spiritual nature, because spirit has not of necessity succession of time and specific limitation of location. But these of necessity belong to matter. It is of necessity that it has a here, and not an everywhere; spirit alone can combine the two, the here and the everywhere. It is also of necessity that matter exists in time; we know that it exists now, that it existed yesterday, that it may exist tomorrow. But with the eternal God there can be no succession of time, and consequently he can have no material nature but must be purely spiritual."*

The only way God can be eternal is also to be a spirit.

BECAUSE GOD IS SPIRIT, NOTHING CAN LIMIT HIM

Boyce --- *"If God have body, he is capable of being influenced from without, for all matter is thus capable of being influenced, or being moved, divided, added to and diminished. But if thus capable of influence from without, he is not independent. Therefore the independent God cannot be material."*

The only way God can be independent is not to be made of matter.

3. God cannot be considered in terms of space

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

God is in every point in space

Psalm 139:7-8 --- *"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!"*

No point of space can fully contain Him.

1 Kings 8:27 --- *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!"*

Isaiah 66:1 --- *"Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"*

4. God has always existed this way

What Does This Reality Affect Us?

1. We cannot see God

Deuteronomy 4:12 --- “Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice.”

Job 9:11 --- “Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not...”

John 1:18 --- “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.”

1 Timothy 1:17 --- “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Timothy 6:16 --- “He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”

2. It is a serious sin to try to create an image or likeness of Him

We are not allowed to think of God's being as similar to anything else in creation.

Exodus 20:4-5 --- “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God...”

Romans 1:22-23 --- “Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

BUT WAIT! Questions arise...

1. If God is a spirit, why does the Bible speak of God's face, hands, and arms?

ANTHROPOMORPHISM – Attributing human characteristics to non-humans

God gives us this figurative language in the Bible to help us understand who He is and how He acts.

Psalms 51:9 --- “Hide your face from my sins...”

Isaiah 53:1 --- “... to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

Acts 7:56 --- “... I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

2. If God is a spirit, does Jesus have a body?

Did Jesus have a beginning?
 Did Jesus always have a body?
 Does Jesus have a body now?

John Piper: "Now, when it says, 'except he who is from God; he has seen the Father,' he means, not with physical eyes. The Son of God didn't have physical eyes before the incarnation, and that is what he is contrasting our seeing with. Only the Son can see the Father with non-physical, unmediated, direct seeing. We cannot see God spiritually the way the Son of God in unmediated directness can see him."

3. Why does the Bible mean when it says we will see God?

Psalm 17:15 --- "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness."

1 Corinthians 13:12 --- "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

1 John 3:2 --- "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

Seeing God on that day means we will more fully than now understand the glory of God and we will see Jesus face to face.

Herman Bavinck: "The Bible does indeed teach that the blessed in heaven behold God, but it does not describe the nature of that vision and it maintains God's invisibility everywhere.... Every vision of God is therefore, not a vision with respect to his essence. Every vision of God presupposes a divine condescension, a revelation by means of which God descends to our level and makes himself known to us; Matthew 11:27 retains its force in heaven. The vision of God in his essence implies man's deification, the wiping out of the line of demarcation that exists between the creature and the Creator."

John Piper: "We use the word 'see' to mean that we finally understand and discern the beauty and glory of God after being blind to it. Like when we say: Oh, now I see.... And the second way is that, in the narrative of the Bible, we see the glory of God and finally we will see him face to face through Christ — by seeing Christ.... So, we see God by seeing Jesus. And 1 John 3:2, 'We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.'

4. Are we also spiritual?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reread the quotes on the front page.
 - Do you agree that the more we study about God the more we will be lost in wonder?
 - Should we expect the increased study of God to always result in more clarity in our thinking?
2. Are we prone to doubt God's presence because we cannot see Him?
Are there things we would have done differently if we remembered that God was there?
3. How does God's spirituality affect how we pray?
Should we try to picture God when we pray?
If so, how?
If not, how do we think about God when we pray to Him?
4. How does God's existence as a spirit help us in our times of trials?
5. What Christian songs do you know that remind us of this truth that God is a spirit who is immaterial and invisible?
6. Read 1 John 4:11-12
How does God's invisibility affect how we treat one another in community?

