

Digging Deep: Exploring the Joy of Systematic Theology

Class 7: The Doctrine of God, part 3

God's Incommunicable Attributes

"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" – Ex 15:11

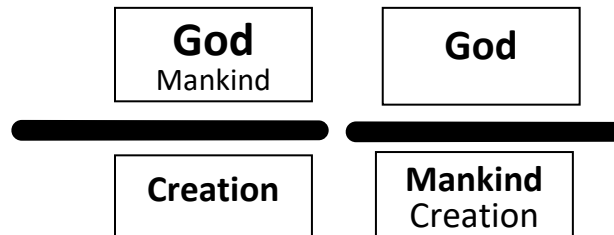
I. What We Covered Last Time

- a. **We can never fully understand God** – This is called the incomprehensibility of God – We can understand some things about God, but cannot fully understand Him
- b. **We can know true things about God** - We know about God from His Word, the Scriptures. They tell us about God and His works. And everything they tell us about God is true about Him.
- c. **We can truly know God, not just facts about Him or His actions** - God not only says in His word that we can know Him, but it is also the greatest privilege and joy of the Christian life. We can have a personal relationship with the eternal, living God, in Jesus Christ and to spend eternity knowing Him and being in His presence.
- d. **Theologians talk about communicable and incommunicable attributes of God** – Those attributes we share with God and others we don't, but our sharing in any/all of God's attributes is a matter of degree, in that we are made in His image, but He is infinite

II. God as Distinct

- **Ex 15:11** - *"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"*
- **1 Sam 2:2** – *"There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God."*

- **Views of God and Man**
 - Francis Schaeffer



- We must always remember that God is unique. We are made in His image, but He is distinct ***from all creation***, which includes us. We are not Him and He is not us.
- Yet, Jesus came into creation and was made like us, yet w/o sin. How wonderful!
- **Heb 2:14-18** *"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things.... he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God...."*

III. The Character of God: His Incommunicable Attributes

Independence, Self-existence or Aseity of God - God does not depend on or need anything. He is self-existent and dependent. Yet He receives glory from us and His creation

What do the Scriptures say about God's self-existence?

- **Acts 17:24-25** - *"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."*
- **John 17:5** - *"And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed."*

Why did God create mankind or anything, given His self-existence?

- **Revelation 4:11** - *"Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created."*

God does not and CANNOT need the creation or anything else

- **Deuteronomy 32:4** - *"The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He."*

Yet God delights in His people, and we can bring Him joy and glory

- **Zephaniah 3:17** - *"The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy. He will be quiet in His love; He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy"*

Do we share God's independence in any way? How do we NOT share it?

Unchangeableness - God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

We consider God's unchangeableness in three areas: His being, purposes, and promises.

- **Being** - God cannot change His essential being. He remains perfect and unchangeable forever
 - **Psalms 102:25-26** - *"Of old You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain, they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end."*
 - **Mal 3:6** - *"I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob are not consumed."*
- **Purposes** - Once determined, God does not change His purposes
 - **Psalms 33:11** - *"The counsel of the Lord stands forever; the thoughts of His heart to all generations."*
- **Promises** - God will never change what He has promised.
 - **Numbers 23:19** - *"God is not a man that He should lie...He has said, and will he not do it?"*

What about when God seems to change His mind? **Example: Ex 32:9-14**

- God responds differently in different situations yet remains unchanged in being and purpose. We do the same. If he didn't do this our actions would make no difference to God.

Impassability of God

- God does have emotions but not sinful ones. He rejoices, has wrath, loves, hates sin, can be grieved, delights in goodness and righteousness. Many verses in the Bible here.

Do we share God's unchangeableness in any way? How do we NOT share it?

Eternity - God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in His own being, and He sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.

God is timeless in His being – with no beginning or end. There has always existed and always will

- **Psalm 90:2** – *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.”*

God is outside of time – Time was created by God. His is not bound by it in any way

- **Ps 90:4** – *“For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, as a watch in the night.”*

God knows the beginning from the end. All of time, history and eternity are before Him in one view

- **Isaiah 46:9** – *“I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning...”*

God can and does act WITHIN time

- *Jesus coming among us (the Incarnation) is the supreme example.*
- **Matt 3:17** – *“behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*
- **John 19:30** – *“It is finished...”* Bridging time and the eternal plan of God!

Do we share God’s eternity in any way? How do we NOT share it?

Omnipresence – God does not have size or special dimensions and is present at every point of space with His whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.

Biblical view – God is present everywhere but DISTINCT from creation. See earlier diagram.

Pantheism – believes everything is God or God is in everything. STAR WARS – the force

God can be present in two ways:

- **Being everywhere, all the time, in His fulness**
- **Being present to act**

God is present everywhere, all the time, in His fulness

- God is not part of, and is in no way limited by, creation. He is separate from it
 - **Deuteronomy 10:14** – *“Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.”*
- God is present everywhere – You cannot go somewhere where God is not present
 - **Psalm 139:7** – *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where shall I flee from Your presence?”*
- God does not have “dimensions” – He cannot be contained. There is no physical limitation, since that would tie Him to creation. Not a biblical view → that God somehow expands to fill up the space in creation so He can be everywhere. He is present in fulness in all places at all times.

God is present to act

- God is present to bless, to judge, to punish, etc
 - **Amos 9:1** – *“Note one of them shall flee away, not one of them shall escape. Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them...”*

Do we share God’s presence in any way? How do we NOT share it?

Unity - God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.

No single attribute of God is more important than the other

All of God's attributes are entirely present within His being

- "God is light" – **1 John 1:5**
- "God is love" – **1 John 4:8**
- "God is good to all..." - **Psalm 145:9**
- "...for I am holy" - **1 Peter 2:9**

God is entirely love, entirely holy, entirely just and merciful, and all the others, all the time.

- He cannot be loving one moment then wrathful another. Both are always present with the other attributes

God is always consistent in all His attributes

- He would never do something loving to the detriment of justice, wrathful w/o love, etc
- "Everything God does is an act of the whole person." - Wayne Gruden

Implication: Do not single out one attribute of God as more important than the others. They are all together, all the time, in all fulness.

Do we share God's unity in any way? How do we NOT share it?

Eternity will be knowing God in all His ways and attributes. It will take eternity to do that!

"The happiness promised us in Christ does not consist in outward advantages-such as leading a joyous and peaceful life, having rich possessions, being safe from all harm, and abounding with delights such as the flesh commonly longs after. No, our happiness belongs to the heavenly life!"

John Calvin