

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines

Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24

6 | Doctrine of God - Beholding Who God Is, cont.

## BEHOLDING WHO GOD IS

### Reviewing Last Time

1. Getting Started - Qualifications to Help Us Discuss the Being of God:
  1. Order of Knowing - Only God can define who and how God is.
  2. Our language of God is always, as humans, analogical.
  3. Properly approaching God as incomprehensible mystery, rather than a problem to be solved and comprehended
  4. Humble Posture of Receiving Truths Passed Down
  5. Never Forgetting the Trinity
  6. The Thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy

### Attributes of God - Read WCF 2.1-2

#### 1. Incommunicable Attributes

1. *Simplicity* [more on last week's handout]
2. *Aseity*: God is self-existent. In short, God doesn't need the world, yet the world needs God. The world is not necessary for God's happiness. "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).
  1. How can this be good news? What does it tell us about his love?
3. *Unchangeability*: If we define change as either improvement or loss, God cannot be both eternally perfect and change.
  1. What are we to do with passages that seem to show God reacting or being affected?
  2. God's unchangeability does not mean that he is untouched or unprovoked. He isn't distant or removed from his creation like the Stoic or Deistic god. Yet, he is not overcome by surprise or anger. Why is this good news?
    1. In other words, because God is wholly unlike us and wholly transcendent, can He be utterly near and compassionate. The wonderful mystery is that the very same God who is unchanging

and impassible became fully human. One is not like the other because God's nature does not compete with human nature on the same "plane."

4. ***Eternal and Omnipresent:*** God transcends both time and place. God can be present with us and for us in all circumstances.

1. God is a Spirit (John 4:24)...He does not have a body like humans.

What implications does this have for us?

1. Note: Scripture will use images to help us relate to him (God has a listening ear, mighty arm, powerful hand).

## 2. **Communicable Attributes**

1. G.I. Williamson explains that this distinction is like a person and her mirror image. There are some things that are communicated, but others that belong only to the real person.

2. God is a being (Ex. 3:14), wisdom (Ps. 147:5), power (Rev. 4:8), holiness (Rev. 15:4), justice, goodness, and truth (Exod. 34:6-7).

3. We know these attributes more intimately than the incommunicable, yet God has all of these in an unlimited degree, and He sets the terms for what they mean *first*.

## 3. **Remembering the Purpose for all this - Praise!**

1. "I never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise. The world rings with praise — lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game... Men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?" Indeed we can't help doing it...because praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation." - C.S. Lewis

## BEHOLDING THE TRINITY

### Summarizing the Doctrine:

**WCF 2.3** - "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

### **WLC 9-10**

Q. 9. How many persons are there in the Godhead? A. There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

Q. 10. What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead? A. It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

### - **Key Ideas:**

1. Substance vs. Persons - Christ is "*homoousion*" (of one essence or substance) with the Father
2. Equal in Power and Glory - there is no hierarchy
3. Distinct in "personal properties" or "relations" - yet there is no Father without a Son, no Spirit without a Father and Son, etc.
4. **From the Nicene Creed:**
  1. Lord Jesus Christ - "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."
  2. Spirit - "Lord, the Giver of Life, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified"

### Key Fundamentals in Scripture for How the Church came to Articulate the Trinity

1. God is One - The "Shema" - "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*" (Deut. 6.4-5)

2. Jesus is worshipped by monotheistic Jews!
3. Jesus does things only the God of the Old Testament would/could do - forgives sins, walks on water, calms the storm
4. The NT ascribes to Jesus and the Spirit actions and prerogatives that belong to God alone, yet there are also distinctions within the unity
  1. 2Cor. 3 - *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."*
  2. John 1 - *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*
  3. 1Cor. 8.6 - *"for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."*
  4. Heb. 1 - *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"*
  5. 2Cor. 13.14 - *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*
  6. Matt. 28.18-20 - *"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
  7. Rom. 10.9-13 - *"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord . . . for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" [quoting Joel 2]*
5. Jesus is opposed and condemned for claiming to be God
6. Jesus claims eternal and unique communion with the Father and the Spirit
  1. See John 14-17

**How ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?**