

November 26, 2023

Session 6 - The Attributes of God/Questions

Understanding the Attributes of God

What were we made for? To know God. What aims should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. John 17:3, "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? The knowledge of God. -J.I. Packer, Knowing God

Knowing about God is *not* the same as knowing God. Is it? So, what's the benefit of knowing *about* him at all?

There is tremendous benefit!

When we grasp God's love, then we will be drawn to him in turn and want to respond and love him. When we truly comprehend God's holiness, then we'll turn away from our sins with loathing and will reverence God with awe. When we understand God's aseity, then we will fall on our faces before him in humility. When we see God's power, then we will go forth for him in confidence and triumph. When we learn of God's omniscience then we can trust him and his guidance, as we go through the trials and valleys of life. And we can quit depreciating ourselves and understand and accept ourselves rightly as those who are beloved by God. – William Lane Craig, Defenders Series: Doctrine of God

The more we know about God, through what he has revealed to us, and walk in light of this knowledge, the more we know him, and the more deeply we trust, and the more fully we love him.

Who is this God? – God is Infinite and he is Personal

GOD: INFINITE	GOD: PERSONAL
-----CHASM-----	Man
Man	-----CHASM-----
Animals	Animals
Rocks	Rocks

- In so far as God is Infinite, God exists A Se, he is Omnipresent, he is Omnipotent, he is Omniscient, and he is Immutable.
- These are also called the **Incommunicable Attributes** of God – He doesn't *communicate* or *share* these with us.

- The next few weeks, we'll learn about the **Personal** or **Communicable Attributes** of God – Those He does *communicate* or *share* with us.

QUESTIONS ON GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

The Omnipresence of God

Question 1: [God's Omnipresence] If God is immediately and fully present everywhere and at all time, why do some passages in the Bible indicate that God is more present with some than with others, or closer to some than others?

God is Near

- **Psalm 34:18** – *"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."*
- **Isaiah 55:6** – *"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near."*
- **Psalm 23:4** – *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me"*

God is Far

- **Proverbs 15:29** – *"The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous."*
- **Psalm 10:1** – *"Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"*

- The Bible often uses RELATIONAL terms to speak of God, rather than LOCATIONAL terms.
- We do this as well!

What does this mean for me?

1. God is never actually far. He is always present.

But he could be relationally distant from us for a number of reasons

2. God desires that we seek Him. It is for our good.
 - **Psalm 63:1** – *"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."*
 - **Jeremiah 29:13** – *"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."*
3. He could be distant due to sin in our lives.
 - We grieve the Spirit of God.
 - God hid himself from Israel in Isaiah 1.

Question 2: If God is actually present everywhere, doesn't this also mean that God is in hell?

But, isn't hell the absence of the presence of God?

- After all, Paul says in **2 Thessalonians 1:9** that unbelievers will “*suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,*”
 - This is referring to God’s relational presence
- Have we misunderstood what hell actually is?
 - Not Satan’s domain, but God’s domain!

The idea of God’s omnipresence has sometimes troubled people who wonder how God can be present, for example, in hell... This difficulty can be resolved by realizing that God is present in different ways in different places, or that God acts differently in different places in his creation. – Grudem, Systematic Theology 2nd ed, p. 208.

- **Amos 9:1-4** – A terrifying display of God’s presence in judgment.
- **Psalm 16:11** – “*in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*”
 - For the believer, the news is always good!

The Immutability of God

Pastor Peter’s definition – *God cannot experience any change whatsoever to His Nature and Character*

Psalm 102:25-27 – “*Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ²⁶They 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, ²⁷but you are the same, and your years have no end.*”

“The doctrine of God’s immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in him alone, for only he is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called the Rock.” – Herman Bavinck, Dutch Reformed Theologian

Question 3: [Immutability] If God doesn’t change, why does scripture show him changing his mind about certain things?

- **Exodus 32:11-14** – The Lord did what??

Does this infringe on God’s immutability? I don’t think so.

“These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God’s present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment. If the situation changes, then of course God’s attitude or expression of intention will also change. This is just saying that God responds differently in different situations.” – Grudem, *Systematic Theology 2nd ed*, p. 195.

- Scripture is full of conditional situations.
- Scripture also shows that God has built into his plan that certain things change what he would have done in certain situations.
 - The power of Repentance
 - **Jonah 3:4-10**
 - Prayer