

Essentials of Christianity (pt 7)
4/4/2010

Introduction _____

Christ our King has risen from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

NAU Hebrews 10:12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

¹³ waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Glory be to our Lord and Savior who has made Himself known to us by His word and Spirit-- through the foolishness of preaching (1Cor 1).

Today we'll continue to learn more about the Great God that we serve. What a fitting way to spend our resurrection Sunday together, learning about the very attributes of God that our eyes **are now opened to see.**

Today, the Lord is going to make known to us more of His awesome character. He wants us to know as much about Him as we're able to take in during the short time we have on this earth.

NAU Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

¹⁸ *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

¹⁹ *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might*

²⁰ *which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

²¹ *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

²² *And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,*

²³ *which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

PRAY

To help us reach this goal, today we are going to continue in our study in the area of **Theology--the doctrine of God.**

We're covering:

- 1. The Person of God**
- 2. Attributes of God**
- 3. Acts of God**
- 4. God as Trinity**

Today we will be focusing all our attention on the **attributes of God.**

The Attributes of God _____

What are they, and why are they essential components of the Christian faith? To begin, let's read an introductory quote about the attributes of God.

Nature of Attributes: when we speak of the attributes of God, we are referring to those qualities of which constitute *what* He is. They are the very characteristics of His nature. These attributes are permanent qualities. They cannot be gained or lost. They are intrinsic.

Thus, holiness was not an attribute (a permanent, inseparable attribute) of Adam, but it is of God. God's attributes are essential and inherent dimensions of His very nature.¹

As I mentioned toward the end of last weeks study, the attributes of God are typically broken down into **two main categories**:

A. God's Incommunicable Attributes- those unique qualities for which no counter part can be found in humans (e.g. omnipresence).

B. God's Communicable Attributes- those qualities of God for which at least a counterpart can be found in humans; those He can share with us. (e.g. love).²

A. God's Incommunicable Attributes

We'll begin with God's incommunicable attributes, starting with a subset of these attributes-- called **absolute attributes**: this means *qualities belonging to God in, and of Himself-- those attributes God possesses apart from any relationship He sustains toward His creation.*

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology Unabridged (1 Vol. Edition)* (Baker Book House, 1996).

² Communicable: capable of being imparted from one to another. (communicate)

This we'll make sense to you when we get into it.

God is Eternal (Infinite) This is an attribute no other being shares. **Turn to Psalm 90:2--read.**

^{NAU} Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth (created) to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

The eternity of God by definition means that God is not limited or bound by time; with God there is no succession of events; He is above all temporal limitations. "With Him there is no distinction between the present, past, and future; but all things are equally and always present to Him.

God's eternity extends backward to infinity and forward to infinity. Moreover, God's eternity is also related to His eternal rule in His universal kingdom (Ps. 102:12).

God's eternity is also related to His name. In Exodus 3:14 He informed Moses that His name is "I AM WHO I AM." Hence, God's name reflects His eternity in that He is the "continually existing One." To be "infinite" is to be unlimited, and this doctrine teaches that time does not limit God.

However, this is not to suggest that time is unreal or non-existent with God. While God sees everything as an eternal now, He nonetheless, in relation to man and creation, sees a succession of events in time.

It is evident throughout Scripture that God acts within time and acts differently at different points in time.

Indeed, the repeated emphasis on God's ability to predict the future in the Old Testament prophets requires us to realize that God predicts his actions at one point in time and then carries out his actions at a later point in time. And on a larger scale, the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation is God's own record of the way he has acted over time to bring redemption to his people.

We must therefore affirm both that God has no succession of moments in his own being and sees all history equally vividly, and that in his creation he sees the progress of events over time and acts differently at different points in time; in short, he is the Lord who created time and who rules over it and uses it for his own purposes.

God can act in time because he is Lord of time. He uses it to display his glory. In fact, it is often God's good pleasure to fulfill his promises and carry out his works of redemption over a period of time so that we might more readily see and appreciate his great wisdom, his patience, his faithfulness, his lordship over all events, and even his unchangeableness and eternity.³

Let's look at a few more support verses. **Turn to 1Tim 6:14-16; Dan 4:34; Rev 21:6: read.**

^{NAU} 1 Timothy 6:14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

¹⁶ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

^{NAU} Daniel 4:34 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

*^{NAU} Revelation 21:6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the **Alpha and the Omega**, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.*

A-Ω is a designation for the eternality of God. **Alpha**: being the first letter of the Greek alphabet, **Omega** being the last.

³ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989); Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan Publishing, 1994).

He is the beginning: signifying He had no beginning; He is the end: signifying He has no end.

If you really want to dig into the subject of our Infinite God, grab a copy of the series by Chuck Missler called “*The Creator Beyond Time and Space.*”

Next up...

God is Immutable (Unchanging) Turn to James 1:17: read.

^{NAU} James 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

This attribute signifies unchangeableness. In His essence, attributes, counsel and will, God Himself remains unchanged and unchangeable.

All His attributes are like Himself: unalterably fixed, enduring forever. His perfections, purposes and promises are ever the same.

Turn to Malachi 3:6

^{NAU} Malachi 3:6 "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Man at his best is but a creature of eclipses and changes, ups and downs, high tide and low ebb, but the glory of God shines with a fixed brightness.

Many of the angels created as “morning stars” became “falling stars.” They were fashioned as holy ones, yet mutable so left their first estate! God however, is never taken for better or for worse-- not for better, for then He is not perfect: nor for worse, for then He would cease to be perfect.

God is immutably good and holy: there is no shadow of change in Him.⁴

This is what proves God to be reliable and steadfast in all He said He would do. This is why His word is perfect and without contradiction (as we learned earlier in this series).

It cannot be that His word states that He is one way when He's actually another way. The fact He is immutable is why we can call Him a "Rock."

He's not just a "Rock" because He rescues us from danger, he is a Rock because He's always the same.

God is unchanging in His **purposes** and His **promises**.

Purposes:

^{NAU} Psalm 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

^{NAU} Isaiah 46:9 "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,

¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

Promises:

^{NAU} Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

⁴ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible: A Study and Analysis of Major Bible Doctrines* (Zondervan Publishing Company, 1966).

One last thing about this.

What, then, shall we say with regard to such scriptures as Jonah 3:10 and Gen. 6:6—“*And God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them.*” “*And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*”

Seeming changes in God are due to changes in His creatures. His promises and purposes never change, though his actions necessarily vary according to our conduct. While the Bible speaks of God repenting, this is only a human way of speaking of God, and simply indicates a change in man’s relation to God.

If God chooses to respond to a change in man’s disposition toward Him, this is perfectly consistent with His unchanging nature, because mercy is an attribute of God’s character.

Humans depend on the consistency of God’s nature to forgive them when they ask for mercy.⁵

NAU James 2:13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

I’ve heard atheists argue against the existence of God because they think that the scriptures referring to God “repenting” demonstrate a fundamental change in His “unchanging nature.”

They see this as a chink in the armor of God’s claim to immutability. Such a bogus claim can be rejected outright, and they should bow their hearts in humility to the One who’s immutable ways make Him unchanging in His mercy toward the vilest of sinners, even when they’ve spit in His face in the past.

Final verse on God’s immutability.

⁵ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible: A Study and Analysis of Major Bible Doctrines* (Zondervan Publishing Company, 1966).

^{NAU} Hebrews 6:16 *For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.*

¹⁷ *In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,*

¹⁸ *so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.*

¹⁹ *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,*

God is Self Existent (Independent, Self-Sufficient)

Another essential attribute of God is that He's **Self Existent**. Turn to **Acts 17:24-25: READ**.

^{NAU} Acts 17:24 *"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;*

²⁵ *nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;*

God's self-existence means "He has the ground of His existence in Himself. God is independent in His Being, but also . . . He is independent in everything else; in His virtues, decrees, works, and . . . causes everything to depend on Him."

Exodus 3:14 emphasizes His self-existence in His identification, "I AM WHO I AM." This self disclosure emphasizes He has continual existence in Himself. John 5:26 further stresses that the Father has life in Himself.

An unborn child is dependent on its mother for life; animals are dependent on their surroundings for life; trees and plants are dependent on sun and rain for life; every living thing is dependent on someone or something else; but God is independent and existent in Himself. ⁶

⁶ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

NAU Romans 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The next group of attributes are still in the category of incommunicable attributes, but, like the previous one's, they too are commonly classified as a subset. They are called **Relative Attributes...**

Relative Attributes: that is specific qualities that represent God in His relationship to His creation. They reflect the characteristics of Lordship.⁷

The first group was unrelated to whether anything was ever created by God. These last one's are totally related to that.

These next three attributes all begin with the prefix "omni" which comes from the Latin word *omnis* meaning "all."

God is Omnipotent

The term omnipotence signifies that God is all powerful. The omnipotence of God is that attribute by which He can bring to pass everything which He wills. God's power admits of no bounds or limitations. God's declaration of His intention is the pledge of the thing intended being carried out.

Turn to Revelation 19:6; Ephesians 1:9-12

KJV Revelation 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

NAU Ephesians 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

⁷ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible: A Study and Analysis of Major Bible Doctrines* (Zondervan Publishing Company, 1966).

¹⁰ *with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him*

¹¹ *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*

¹² *to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.*

Scriptural Declaration of the Fact;

In General:

Job 42:2 (rv)—“I know that thou canst do everything [all things], and that no purpose of thine can be restrained.”

The mighty review of all God’s works as it passes before Job brings forth this confession: “There is no resisting thy might, and there is no purpose thou canst not carry out.” Gen. 18:14—“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” What had ceased to be possible by natural means comes to pass by supernatural means.

Scriptural Declaration of the Fact;

In the world of nature

Gen. 1:1-3—“God created the heaven and the earth. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” Thus “he spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.”

He does not need even to give His hand to the work; His word is sufficient. Psa. 107:25-29—“He raiseth the stormy wind... he maketh the storm calm.” “Even the winds and the sea obey him.”

God’s slightest word, once uttered, is a standing law to which all nature must absolutely conform. Nahum 1:5, 6—“The mountains quake at him... the hills melt... the earth is burned at his presence... the

rocks are thrown down by him.” If such is His power how shall Assyria withstand it? This is God’s comforting message to Israel. Everything in the sky, in sea, on earth is absolutely subject to His control.

In the experience of mankind

How wonderfully this is illustrated in the experience of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4; and in the conversion of Saul, Acts 9; as well as in the case of Pharaoh, Exod. 4:11. James 4:12-15—”.... For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.”

All human actions, whether present or future, are dependent upon the will and power of God. These things are in God’s, not in man’s, power.

The heavenly inhabitants are subject to His will and word.

Dan. 4:35 (rv)—“He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven.” Heb. 1:14—“Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Even Satan is under the control of God.

Satan has no power over any of God’s children saving as God permits him to have. This fact is clearly established in the case of Job (1:12 and 2:6), and Peter (Luke 22:31, 32), in which we are told that Satan had petitioned God that he might sift the self-righteous patriarch and the impulsive apostle.

Finally Satan is to be forever bound with a great chain (Rev. 20:2). God can set a bar to the malignity of Satan just as he can set a bar to the waves of the sea.⁸

Our time is out for today, but we’re not done talking about God’s omnipotence... **Closing thoughts**

⁸ THE GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE By William Evans MOODY PRESS CHICAGO