

02:GOD

“...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.” Isaiah 46:9

*The gravest question before a person is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God...Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, “What comes into your mind when you think about God?” we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man...Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God...
The Knowledge of the Holy – A. W. Tozer*



The Scriptures, which we discussed last week, are clear that God has revealed Himself because we would never know who He is on our own, but we are also told that God hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15). The word “hide” does not mean evasive, it has the idea of counter intuitive. This means that we may know about God, have a relationship with Him, while not yet knowing Him fully because He is infinite and therefore He can never be known in totality.

God is not known by any instrument or human ability, we cannot find Him by going on a ‘vision quest.’ God Himself is known only through self-disclosure; we call this “revelation.” God reveals Himself by what He has created (known as General Revelation), He also reveals Himself by the deeds performed by Him alone and the employment of language (known as Special Revelation). Language, like the words written in the Bible, is employed because of human necessity and limited capacity, not a deficiency of God’s character.

Special Revelation is represented exclusively in the Bible and is particularly important, as discussed last week, because God speaks to us about Himself, our relationship with Him and others, and the nature of being image bearers of Him, reflecting His very character to other humans, as well as, rulers and authorities in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10).

HOW MANY GODS ARE THERE?

The Bible is clear that there is only one true God (2 Chr. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:20-21) and that all other “gods” are false and therefore mere idols that are not “gods” at all (Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Psa. 96:5; Isa. 37:19; 41:23-24, 29; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19-20). Demons (fallen angels) may pose as gods and illicit worship, possibly even through counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles (Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:37; I Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8).

The Old Testament contains a number of clear statements that there is only one God (Deut. 4:35, 4:39, 6:4-5, 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22, 22:32; Ps. 86:8-10; Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5, 14, 21-22; 46:9). The New Testament also very clearly states that there is only one God (John 5:44; Rom. 3:30, 16:27; I Co. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 1:17, 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25).

Scripture clearly teaches that there is no one like God (Ex. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chr. 17:20; Psa 86:8; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Isa. 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5, 9; Jer. 10:6-7; Micah 7:18). Scripture also teaches that any claim that we know better than God is a lie (Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:14; John 8:44).

WHAT ARE GOD'S ATTRIBUTES?

God is not an idea or a proposition but instead a living and free person who is completely “other” (we use the word “holy”). Trying to put who God is into context can be difficult so we often use two main terms to describe His attributes (as best we can): Shared Attributes and Unshared Attributes. We see the attributes that He has revealed to us in Scripture and attributes that He has revealed through our relationship with Him

His attributes are not something merely attributed to Him, but qualities inseparable from His being. In every way that God exists, He exists without limit, that is, in perfection. His **Unshared Attributes** belong only to God, while His **Shared Attributes** are found in people to a limited degree since we are created in His image and likeness. We can know God by our experiences through relationship with Him: when we recognize His presence all around us; when we recognize His provision in our lives; when we confess our sins and live in His grace by faith. In His loving fatherhood and friendship we come to a fuller realization of who He truly is as revealed in Scripture.

UNSHARED ATTRIBUTES

- **Omnipresence** - God is everywhere at all times. (Psalm 139:7-12, see also Jer. 23:24, Prov. 15:3, Deut. 31:6, Col. 1:17).
Application - Since God is present everywhere at all times, it is foolish to think we can avoid Him or hide our sins from Him (Job 34:21-22). Also, it is comforting to know that He is there in times of trouble (2 Kings 6:14-17).
- **Omniscience** - God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and everything actual or potential (Psalm 147:5, see also Is. 40:12-14, 46:10; Ps. 139:1-6, Job 42:2, Heb. 4:13).
Application - It is comforting to know that God knows all about us, yet still loves and forgives us. Since God knows everything, nothing can separate us from Him, nothing can surprise Him, and He knows our all our needs.
- **Omnipotence** - God is all-powerful and able to do all that He wills (Job. 42:2, see also Ps. 147:5, Mt. 19:26, Eph. 3:20).
Application - It is God's power which guarantees us assurance of our salvation (Rom. 8:35-39, see also 1:16). Also, we can trust God to work out our seemingly impossible situations (Gen. 18:14, see also Jer. 32:17 & 27, Luke 1:37). No being visible or invisible, committee, nation, or federation can add or detract from God's power. God is not aided or defeated by opposition from what He chooses to do. What God has decreed will be.
- **Immutability** - God does not change (Malachi 3:6, see also Num. 23:19, Ps. 102:27, Rom. 11:29, Heb. 13:8, James 1:17).
Application - God has decreed the right order to the universe. He has set a course for His story, which He will not edit later. He has made promises, which He is sure to fulfill. He has chosen you to be part of Christ's household, not as slave but as son or daughter with a shared estate with Him, which He will not rethink later and change. So, it is comforting to know that God remains the same even when we change. Also, it is reassuring to know that we can trust what God has said because His Word never changes.

- **Eternality** - God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time (Psalm 90:2, see also 93:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:21).
Application - God endows you with eternal life made possible because God Himself possesses it unequivocally. It is, therefore, comforting to know that God sees things from an eternal perspective. Despite what might happen to you in this life He has secured an eternity with Him.
- **Sovereignty** - God is supreme in rule and authority over all things (Psalm 103:19, see also 2 Sam. 7:28, I Chron. 29:10-13), though He does allow human freedom (Gen. 50:21, 22).
Application - The freedom of God to rule without opposition is the security we have to trust Him through terrible trials. No attribute can supply the security and comfort like God's sovereignty, because within our trials is the reminder that God is working out all things for our eventual good (Romans 8:28, see also account of Joseph in Genesis 50:20).
- **Righteousness and Justice** – Inherent with God being the exclusive creator of all was a right and perfect creation. All the laws of order, including human conduct were right. No court exists in which God can be brought to trial by His creatures to be questioned and condemned of wrong doing. This being the case, all rebellion is justly declared wrong. The righteous consequence is punishment as God sees fit, punishment Biblically described as “wrath.”

The gospel announces God's just punishment of wrath was thrust at Jesus on the cross. He endured the full, just brutal force of wrath to redeem those He saves, so God is satisfied fully. Those under Jesus' headship are seen with favor. They are eternally secure, because they are in union with Jesus (Rom 3:21-26, 6:5).

SHARED ATTRIBUTES

- **Spirit** - God is invisible and immaterial (John 4:19-24, see also John 1:18, 3:1-10, 14:16-17, 16:12-16, 2 Cor. 3:15-17, 1 Tim. 6:15-16). A Spirit is personal with a mind (Ps. 139:1-4), emotions (Eph. 4:30), and a will (John 6:40).
Application - It is encouraging to know that since we are created in the image and likeness of God we have a spirit and will go on to eternal life if we know Him.
- **Holiness** - God is absolutely separate from any evil (I Peter 1:16, see also Ex. 3:5; Lev.19:2; Psa. 5:4-6, 99:5; Isa. 6:3, 8:13, 57:15; Hab. 1:12-13; 1 Jn. 1:5, I Pet. 1:14-19).
Application - The Holiness of God is both fearful and awe-inspiring. Since He is absolutely holy, it is only through His holy work that we can come into a relationship with Him and one day enter into His presence. We are made holy by His sanctifying work in our lives (I Peter 1:2, 2 Cor. 3:18).
- **Love/Goodness** - God alone is perfectly good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love (1 John 4:8-16, see also ex. 34:7, Ps. 84:11, Jn. 3:16, Eph. 2:4-7, Gal. 5:22).
Application - All that we do in life should be motivated by our love for God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). Also, we must remember that love may involve rebuke or chastisement when we sin (Hebrews 12:6, Prov. 13:24).
- **Truth** - God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth (Jn. 17:17, see also John 14:6, Titus 1:2, Num. 23:19, 2 Cor. 1:20).
Application - It brings great confidence and comfort to know that we can completely trust God and His Word.

- **Justice/Righteousness** - God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of His character (Exodus 34:7, see also Gen. 18:25, Deut. 32:4, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:11).
Application - It is comforting to know that God deals fairly with all people, not allowing the guilty to go unpunished, but providing love and mercy to those who live in the life He gives.
- **Mercy** - God does not give some people what they deserve because He is loving and gracious (Titus 3:5, see also Eph. 2:4-7, Ex. 34:6-7, Matt. 18:23-35, Rom. 12:8)
Application - Jesus dying for our sin and saving us from the deserved wrath of God was the ultimate act of mercy for which we should be eternally grateful. Due to His mercy, we should be merciful to those in our lives.
- **Beauty** – God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. God made men and women in His image and likeness to also create works of beauty (Psalm 27:4, see also Psalm 50:2, Isaiah 33:17, Ecc. 3:11).
Application - In response to God's beauty we should take time to enjoy the creation He has surrounded us with. We should also appreciate the reflection of His beauty that we find in the arts and creative process, recognizing that creating is a part of being made in the image and likeness of God, an act that gives Him glory.

GOD IS A TRIUNE GOD (A TRINITY)

Throughout the Scriptures, the Father is unequivocally called God (John 6:27, 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3).

Jesus is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures (Matt. 28:9, John 1:1-4, 1:14, 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 12:37-41 cf. Isaiah 6:9-11; 20:28-29, Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Col. 1:16-17, 2:8-9, Php. 2:10-11, Heb. 1:8; 1 Co. 8:4-6, 1 Tim. 6:15, Titus 2:13; I John 5:20; Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13-16). The fact of Jesus' deity was spoken clearly by Himself and recognized as a claim to be God by the Jewish leaders without Jesus' apology or correction (Matt. 26:63-65; John 5:17-23, 8:58-59, 10:30-39, 19:7). The Scriptures are also clear that Jesus was fully human (Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:16, Rom. 8:3, I John 4:2).

The Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament He is all-powerful (Micah 3:8; see also Acts 1:8, Rom. 15:13, 19), eternal (Heb. 9:14) all knowing (Isaiah 40:13-14; see also 1 Cor. 2:10), creator (Gen 1:2; Ps. 104:30) and all present (Psalm 139:7). In the New Testament, He is also clearly declared God (Acts 5:3-4, see also John 14:16, 2 Co. 3:16-18). The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), and insulted (Heb. 10:29).

Though one God, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, The Father and Son are two persons in frequent salutations (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3) as well as in other Scriptures (John 3:17, 5:31-32, 8:16-18, 11:41-42, 12:28, 14:31, 17:23-26, Gal. 4:4; I Jn 4:10). The Scripture is also clear that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not the same person (Luke 3:22; John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7; I John 2:1). Likewise, the Father is not the Holy Spirit (John 14:15, 15:26; Rom. 8:11, 8:26-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Gal. 1:1).

The word "Trinity" does not appear in Scripture, but the concept very clearly is. Church father Tertullian (155-220 ad) was the first to use the word trinity. Tertullian was a lawyer in the second century and used an analogy taken from Roman legal practice. Many times in the Roman Empire an emperor shared

power with his son, declaring him “co-emperor,” in these cases the empire itself was not divided, but each emperor had full imperial authority over all the land. ***Each was fully an emperor, each was in full possession of imperial power, and that power was not divided.*** Tertullian said, “*divinity is shared by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is only one divinity, only one God, just as there is only one empire.*” Just as the emperor and his son are both fully emperors without creating more than one empire, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are fully divine without this resulting in more than one God.

To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods, or that one God merely manifests Himself as either Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on various occasions. To say that God exists as a Trinity is to say that there is one God with a unified essence who exists in three equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By “person” we mean that God thinks, feels, acts and speaks. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) summarizes the doctrine by saying, “*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.*”

- *Isaiah 48:16b* And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit.
- *Matthew 3:16-17* As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”
- *Matthew 28:18-20* Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- *Romans 14:17-18* For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.
- *Romans 15:16* ...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- *1 Corinthians 2:2-5* For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.
- *1 Corinthians 6:11* And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- *1 Corinthians 12:4-6* There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
- *2 Corinthians 1:21-22* Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
- *2 Corinthians 13:14* May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- *Ephesians 2:18* For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- *Ephesians 3:16-17* I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love...

- *Ephesians 4:4-6* There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- *Colossians 1:6-8* ... All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.
- *I Thessalonians 1:3-5* We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.
- *II Thessalonians 2:13* But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Summary:

- All the attributes of God are knowable in part because they are revealed in scripture.
- Each member of the Trinity is fully active and powerful.
- Each member of the Trinity is full in harmony with another.
- Each member of the Trinity can be fully expressed simultaneously with another without conflict.
- The capacity to understand how this is possible is incomprehensible. It belongs to God alone.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

WHAT ARE SOME NAMES OF GOD?

In Scripture, a person's name is closely linked to the person's character and purpose, this is true of the names of God in Scripture. All the names of God reveal a glimpse of God and his character. We know that even with the many names describing God, there is no name that will ever be able to completely describe or understand the fullness of God and his character.

Primary Old Testament Names:

1. **Jehovah** (YHWH) meaning **Self-Existent One** (from Ex. 3:14, "I am that I am"). The characteristics of this name are in the relationship between the true God and His people and, when used, emphasize God's holiness, hatred of sin, and love of sinners.
2. **Elohim** meaning **Strong One** (Gen. 1:1). The characteristics are used of the true God and of false gods. It is a plural word and is the plural of majesty. The plural does allow for the subsequent revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament, but does not teach the Trinity per se. This name is often used when pertaining to God's sovereignty and work (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 32:27; Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:18; Deut. 5:23; 8:15; Ps. 68:7).
3. **Adonai** meaning **Lord or Master** marks Him out as a ruler (Joshua 5:14; Isaiah 6:8-11). The characteristics of this name are used of men and of God and indicate the master-servant relationship.

Compound Old Testament Names:

1. With the name El.

- El Elyon, translated the Most High, exalted one (lit., the strongest strong one, Gen. 14:19; Ps. 9:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 25; Isa. 14:13-14).
- El Roi, the Strong One who sees (Gen. 16:13).
- El Shaddai, the Almighty God, points to His gracious power (Gen. 17:1-20;28:3; 35:11; Ex. 6:31; Ps. 91:1, 2).
- El Olam, the Everlasting God, the unchanging God (Gen. 16:13; Isa. 40:28).

2. With the name Jehovah (YHWH).

- Jehovah Jirah, the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:13-14).
- Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner (Ex. 17:15).
- Jehovah Shalom, the Lord is peace (Judg. 6:24).
- Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts (1 Sam. 1:3).
- Jehovah Maccaddeshcem, the Lord your Sanctifier (Ex. 31:13).
- Jehovah Raah, the Lord is my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).
- Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6).
- Jehovah El Gmolah, the Lord God of recompense (Jer. 51:56).
- Jehovah Nakeh, the Lord who smites (Ezek. 7:9).
- Jehovah Shammah, the Lord who is present (Ezek. 48:35).

Names of God in the New Testament:

When looking at the names of God in the New Testament, Jesus emerges as the predominant name. Jesus claimed to be the revealed name of God in John 17:6. Jesus is the culmination of the promise that God would dwell with His people.

“Jesus”: Derived from the Hebrew “Joshua” (Y’shua) or “Je-Hoshua” meaning Jehovah Is Salvation.

“I AM”: Jesus upset his generation especially when He said, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” John 8:58. Note also his claim to be Jehovah in such phrases as “I AM the Light of the world,” “the bread of life,” living water,” “the Resurrection and the Life,” and “the Way, Truth and the Life” in John’s Gospel. From the Hebrew Old Testament verb “to be” signifying a living, intelligent, personal being.

Christ: is equivalent to the Hebrew ‘Messiah’ (Meshiach), “The Anointed One.”

What are some poetic images of God?

There are two areas in which God is spoken of in poetic images:

- human experience (anthropomorphic)
- experiences taken from creation

The anthropomorphic poetic images of God

God is called:

- Bridegroom (Isa. 61:10).
- Husband (Isa. 54:5).
- Father (Deut. 32:6).
- Judge and King (Isa. 33:22).
- Man of War (Ex. 15:3)
- Builder and Maker (Heb. 11:10).
- Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

The poetic images of God from creation

God is compared to:

- A lion (Isa. 31:4).
- An eagle (Deut. 32:11).
- A lamb (Isa. 53:7).
- A hen (Matt. 23:37).
- The sun (Ps. 84:11).
- The morning star (Rev. 22:16).
- A light (Ps. 27:1).
- A torch (Rev. 21:23).
- A fire (Heb. 12:29).
- A fountain (Ps. 36:9).
- A rock (Deut. 32:4)
- A shield (Ps. 84:11).

The poetic images of Jesus Christ

- Shepherd of the Sheep (1 Pet. 5:4).
- Master (Jn. 13:13).
- King of kings (Rev. 19:16).
- Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).
- Bishop and Guardian of our Souls (1 Peter 2:25).
- Daystar (Rev. 2:28).
- Deliverer (Rom. 11:26).
- Advocate (1 John. 2:1).
- Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45,47).
- Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13).
- Vine (Jn. 15:5).
- Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).
- Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14).
- Firstborn (Rom. 8:29).
- Head of the Body (Col. 1:18).
- Physician (Lk. 4:23).
- Rock and Stone (1 Cor. 10:4).
- Root of Jesse (Rom. 15:12).
- Potentate (1 Tim 6:15).
- Chief Apostle (Heb. 3:1).
- Great High Priest (Heb. 3:1).
- Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith or Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2).
- Lamb of God and Lamb Slain before the Foundation of the World (Jn 1:36 & Rev. 13:8).
- Lord God Almighty (Rev. 4:8).

There was an extreme reverence for using or honoring the name of God. That is why we hear Jesus tell us to start our prayer “Hallowed be your name” (Matt. 6:9). Our desire at Element is that people would pray and speak of God in a similar way that is not only honoring to Him, but also true to His character.

FOR FURTHER READING

- **God In Three Persons** by Millard J. Erickson
- **Why Should You Believe In the Trinity**, An Answer to Jehovah’s Witnesses by Robert Bowman
- **The Trinity** by Edward Henry Bickersteth
- **The God You Can Know** by Dan DeHaan
- **The Knowledge of the Holy** by A.W. Tozer
- **The Doctrine of God** by Herman Bavinck
- **The Forgotten Trinity** by James R. White
- **The Attributes of God** by A.W. Pink
- **The Pleasures of God** by John Piper
- **Systematic Theology** by Wayne Grudem
- **It’s All About Jesus: A Christian Theology** by Breshears and Driscoll
- **Knowing God** by J. I. Packer

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