

# The Nature of God

## Introduction

- First we must establish the difference between nature and character.
- What kinds of statements are these:
  - God is spirit.
  - God is love.
  - God is light. (1 John 1:5)  
1 John 2:10 "The one who loves his brother abides in the light..."

## A. God's Natural Attributes

### 1. God is spirit. (John 4:24)

- God has substance, but it is non-material substance. The Bible does not tell us what spirit is, but it is real, and so is the material realm.
- Nothing has God's form. (Deuteronomy 4:15–19)
- "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)
- There are no different levels of reality. It is a Greek idea that there are different levels of reality and that the material is the lowest level.
- A spirit is different from a physical body. Jesus said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

### 2. God has location and extension in space.

- Location has no extension in itself (geometrically speaking).
- We also have location and extension in space.
- God's spatial extension is unlimited. He can be anywhere he chooses to be.
- There are places that God is not.
  - II Thessalonians 1:7–9 "...eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord..."
  - Psalm 51:11 "Do not cast me away from Thy presence..."
  - Gen 11:7 "Let us go down there and confuse their language."
  - Gen 18:20-21 "...I will go down now, and see..."
  - Gen 3:8 "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God"

- Hebrews 13:5 “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU.’”
- “...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)
- "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." (John 8:29)
- John 14:15-23
  - <sup>15</sup>"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
  - <sup>16</sup>"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;
  - <sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.
  - <sup>18</sup>"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.
  - <sup>19</sup>"After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.
  - <sup>20</sup>"In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.
  - <sup>21</sup>"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."
  - <sup>22</sup>Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"
  - <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.
- “Omnipresence”
  - “Omnipresence” is not a Biblical term.
  - The term “omnipresence” may encourage us to have a pantheistic view of God.
  - God has the *ability* (or capacity) to be everywhere He may *choose* to be.
  - Ps 139:7-8, in its context (the whole Psalm), is referring to knowledge.
    - <sup>7</sup>Where can I go from Your Spirit?
    - Or where can I flee from Your presence?
    - <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
    - If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
- Some Difficult Scriptures
  - “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Hebrews 1:3)
  - He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:17)

- “For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. (Psalm 33:9)

### 3. God is powerful.

- Power to create, restore, heal, renew, guide us, provide.
  - [the LORD said to Abraham] "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." (Genesis 18:14)
  - "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You," (Jeremiah 32:17)
  - "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27)
- “Omnipotent” is not a Biblical term.
  - It does occur once in the King James Version, “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 [Greek: “pantokratwr”] reigneth.” (Revelation 19:6), but it refers to his power to rule all, not “all power to do all things.”
- Putting “God can...” in front of something doesn’t make it possible:
  - a rock so big that He Himself can’t lift it.
  - a 4-legged tripod
  - a square circle
  - a determined free-agent

### 4. God has knowledge.

- Having knowledge is a *natural* attribute.
- Knowledge is different from reasoning.
 

“Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?” (Isaiah 40:14)
- God has knowledge of all eternity past.
- God has knowledge of His creation.
- “Omniscient” is not a Biblical term.

### 5. God has unity and diversity in His being or God is three and God is one (Trinity).

- God is one in essence and God is three in essence.
- Unity and diversity.

- It is incomprehensible in the creation as well as in God.
- It appears as if unity and diversity are an essential aspect of reality.
- The Hebrew “Elohim” is plural feminine of God. “In the beginning God [Elohim - they] created [singular] the heavens and the earth.”
- Plural pronouns are used: Gen 1:26, 3:22, 11:7.
- Old Testament
  - Yahweh
  - The Messenger of Yahweh (“The angel of the Lord.”)
  - The Spirit of Yahweh (Called the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.)
- New Testament
  - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- God’s unity and diversity revealed in the Bible explains the existence of unity and diversity in the creation.
- It does not violate our reason to accept the Trinity as rational.
 

“I can believe in both the proper divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. That he is both God and man, is a fact that I can understand. Thus far I can believe. But how his divinity and humanity are united I cannot understand. Therefore, I only believe that the fact that they are united; the *quo modo* [the way or manner] of their union I know nothing about, and I believe no more than I know. So I can understand that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God. That the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Spirit is God; that these three are Divine persons, I can understand as a fact. I can also understand that there is no contradiction or impossibility in the declared fact, that these three are one in their substratum of being; that is that they are one in a different sense from that in which they are three; that they are three in one sense, and one in another. I understand that this can be a fact, and therefore I can believe it. But the *quo modo* of their union I neither understand nor believe: that is, I have no theory, no idea, no data on the subject, have no opinion, and consequently no faith, as to the manner in which they are united. (*Finney’s Systematic Theology*, page 311)

## 6. God is personal.

- God has intellect, emotions, and will.
- Because he is personal, and we are personal (like Him), we can know Him.
- God has intellect.
- God has emotions.
  - “The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” (Genesis 6:6)

- “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.” (Proverbs 15:8)
- Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. (Micah 7:18)
- “But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.” (Isaiah 63:10)
- “And He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.’” (Mark 14:34)
- Jesus wept. (John 11:35)
- We can’t comprehend the degree or extent to which He grieves or feels emotions because His capacity is so much greater than ours.
- The quantity is different, but the quality is the same.
- Objections
  - a. Isaiah 55:8-9
 

<sup>8</sup>“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.  
<sup>9</sup>“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.”

The context of the entire chapter of Isaiah 55 reveals that it is a statement about God’s holiness versus our sinfulness, not about our natural attributes.
  - b. Anthropomorphism and Anthropopathism
  - c. Examples of anthropopathism:
 

“The clouds look angry.”  
“My hair must hate me today!”
  - d. Anthropopathic interpretations of scripture aren’t necessary
- God has a will. His will is in every sense free. He has always exercised it in making perfectly loving choices.

7. God has duration and sequence, but without beginning or end; or God is eternal.

- “Was, and is, and is to come.” (Revelation 1:4, 1:8, and 4:8)
- In the Bible, God’s eternal attribute is always described with reference to time:
  - “His *years* in the past are beyond finding out.”
  - “His *years* in the future will have no end.”
  - “I remember when I brought you out of Egypt...”

- “I know the plans that I have for the future. Plans of peace and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope.
- Two major theories
  - God has temporal location and extension (or duration); or
  - The eternal now, the ever-present now.
- What does the Bible teach?
- God’s timelessness in relation to His government—foreknowledge and predestination must go together.

## **References** **(New American Standard Bible)**

### **John 4:24**

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

### **Deuteronomy 4:15-19**

"So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,

so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky,

the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth.

And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven."

### **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**

and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...

### **Isaiah 40:14**

Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

### **Isaiah 55:7-9**

Let the wicked forsake his way

And the unrighteous man his thoughts;

And let him return to the LORD,

And He will have compassion on him,

And to our God,

For He will abundantly pardon.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

### **Revelation 19:6** (KJV)

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.

### **2 Peter 3:8–9**

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

## The Trinity

*Jesus Is God (a.k.a. "the Deity of Christ")*

### **John 1:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup>All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

<sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

<sup>5</sup>The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

<sup>6</sup>There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

<sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

<sup>8</sup>He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

<sup>9</sup>There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

<sup>11</sup>He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

**John 1:14**

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**John 1:18**

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

**John 5:17-18**

<sup>17</sup>But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

<sup>18</sup>For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

**John 9:38**

And he [the man blind from birth whom Jesus healed] said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

**John 20:28**

Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"  
[He was not rebuked for doing this.]

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

<sup>6</sup>For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders;

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,

On the throne of David and over his kingdom,

To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness

From then on and forevermore

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

**Colossians 2:9**

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form"

### **Philippians 2:5-11**

<sup>5</sup>Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup>who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

<sup>7</sup>but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

<sup>8</sup>Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup>For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup>and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### **2 Peter 1:1**

1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

### **Hebrews 3:1, 3-4**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

<sup>2</sup>He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.

<sup>3</sup>For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.

<sup>4</sup>For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

### **1 John 5:20**

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God* and eternal life.

### **John 8:51-59**

<sup>51</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

<sup>52</sup>The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'

<sup>53</sup>"Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

<sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';

<sup>55</sup>and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

<sup>56</sup>"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

<sup>57</sup>So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

<sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

<sup>59</sup>Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Other times He said "I am."

### **John 8**

<sup>24</sup>"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."

<sup>28</sup>So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

### **John 10:29-33**

<sup>29</sup>"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

<sup>30</sup>"I and the Father are one."

<sup>31</sup>The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

<sup>32</sup>Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

<sup>33</sup>The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

[He did not deny that He was making himself out to be God, nor did he rebuke them for saying this.]

### **John 12:45**

He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.

### **John 13:19**

"From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He." ["I am He." means nothing in itself, nor in the context, but it is a reference to the name of God spoken to Moses.]

### **John 17:5**

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

**John 17:24**

"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

**John 18:37**

Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

**John 19:7**

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

**Matthew 9:2-6**

<sup>2</sup>And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven."

<sup>3</sup>And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes."

<sup>4</sup>And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?"

<sup>5</sup>"Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'?"

<sup>6</sup>"But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home."

*See also Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-25*

**Hebrews 1:1-3, 8-12**

<sup>1</sup>God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

<sup>2</sup>in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

<sup>3</sup>And He is the radiance of His glory and the *exact representation of His nature*, and upholds all things by the word of His power When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

<sup>8</sup>But of the Son *He [the father] says*,

"YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,

AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

<sup>9</sup>"YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;

THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU

WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

<sup>10</sup>And,

"YOU, LORD [in the old testament passage this is quoting, Psalm 102, this is referring to YHWH], IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH,

AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

<sup>11</sup>THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN;

AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT,

<sup>12</sup>AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;

LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED

BUT YOU ARE THE SAME,

AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END."

*The Holy Spirit Is God*

## **2 Corinthians 3:17**

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*

## **Matthew 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,

<sup>17</sup>and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

## **John 14:15-26**

<sup>15</sup>"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

<sup>16</sup>"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

<sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

<sup>18</sup>"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

<sup>19</sup>"After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

<sup>20</sup>"In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

<sup>21</sup>"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

<sup>22</sup>Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

<sup>24</sup> "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

<sup>25</sup> "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you.

<sup>26</sup> "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

### **John 16:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

<sup>14</sup> "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

<sup>15</sup> "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

### **John 15:26**

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

*God Is One*

### **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

<sup>5</sup> "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

(Jesus quoted this verse in Mark 12:28-31)

## Glossary

**exegesis** (èk´se-jê´sîs) noun

plural exegeses (-sêz)

Critical explanation or analysis, especially of a text.

[Greek exêgêsis, from exêgeisthai, to interpret : ex-, ex- + hêgeisthai, to lead.]

**eisegesis** (plural eisegeses)

An interpretation, especially of Scripture, that reflects the personal ideas or viewpoint of the interpreter; reading something into a text that isn't there.

[Greek *eis*, into]

**anthropopathism** (contrast with anthropomorphism)

Attribution of human feelings to things not human, such as inanimate objects, animals, natural phenomena, or God

[Late Greek *anthropopathês*, involved in human suffering (from Greek, having human feelings, from *anthropopathein*, to have human feelings : *anthropo-*, anthropos, human being + *pathos*, feeling). See pathos + -ism.]

**anthropomorphism** (contrast with anthropopathism)

Attribution of human form or shape to things not human, such as inanimate objects, animals, natural phenomena or God.

[Greek: *anthropo-*, anthropos, human being- + *morph*, shape]