

"THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD" – PART II

Preface: This lesson deals with what are referred to as the attributes of God. To grow in faith is to grow in understanding and affirming what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible. Becoming comfortable discussing the attributes of God helps one articulate one's faith more clearly and provides a foundation from which to become discerning.

I. The Attributes of God

A. Match the attribute to the most appropriate definition from those provided.

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| <u>7</u> Justice | 1. God is all-powerful. |
| <u>6</u> Eternity | 2. God is compassionate and tender-hearted. |
| <u>4</u> Goodness | 3. holiness applied to relationships |
| <u>9</u> Holiness | 4. God's benevolence, mercy, and grace |
| <u>3</u> Righteousness | 5. God is unchanging. |
| <u>2</u> Mercy | 6. God exists above and apart from time. |
| <u>8</u> Omnipresence | 7. God reflects the perfect application of His law. |
| <u>10</u> Omniscience | 8. God is present everywhere. |
| <u>1</u> Omnipotence | 9. God is perfect & absolutely righteous—free from sin. |
| <u>5</u> Immutability | 10. God knows all things past, present, and future. |

B. Read the following scriptures and identify the attribute addressed.

1. 1 Peter 1:16
holiness
2. Psalm 103:13
mercy
3. Psalm 145:9
goodness
4. Psalm 19:7-9
righteousness
5. Matthew 19:26
omnipotence
6. Jeremiah 23:23-24
omnipresence
7. Psalm 90:2
eternal
8. Psalm 139:1-4
omniscience
9. James 1:17
immutability
10. Acts 10:34-35
Justice

C. Consider the following:

1. Some suppose that Christ's sacrificial death was not truly necessary since God can simply choose to overlook man's sin. What attribute are they forgetting?
justice
2. One particular approach to interpreting the Scriptures offers the notion that God has had a series of plans (dispensations) for mankind since Eden. Each time one has failed, He has simply initiated a new one. What attribute does this interpretive approach ignore?
immutability
3. This attribute is the basis for God's moral law. It reflects the essence of God's character as much or more than any other attribute. (hint: Isaiah 6)
holiness
4. If it were not for this attribute, fallen men would be doomed to eternal condemnation.
mercy
5. Some suggest that God is only in heaven — not in hell or on earth. What attribute corrects this misunderstanding?
omnipresence
6. We do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. What two *omnis* assure us of this?
omniscience and omnipotence
7. Why do the questions *Who made God* or *When was God created* make no sense?
Because God is eternal, thus He had no beginning and will have no end.
8. What attributes assure us that God will always do what is best for His children?
goodness and righteousness

D. Discuss the following questions.

1. Why do Christians often ignore the study of God's nature and attributes, preferring studies on marriage, parenting, financial management, etc.?
We live in a pragmatic age in which people value what seems to have an immediate benefit. What is not always obvious is that ultimately our theology (or lack thereof) comes out in our lives in unexpected ways. Further, doing the right things for the wrong reasons can have unintended consequences such as pride, moralism, and judgmentalism.
2. When preachers say they are going to *call the Holy Spirit down* and insist that God must do their bidding, what aspect of God's nature are they ignoring?
The doctrine of the Trinity — that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal in power and glory and that God is sovereign and subject to no man's bidding. God the Holy Spirit cannot be called down. This sort of attitude is blasphemous.
3. What key question would you ask a Mormon to help them understand how they differ with genuine Christianity?
Their view of Jesus is the most fundamental error they make. You can't claim to be Christian and deny that Jesus is the eternal second Person of the Godhead. They also teach a works salvation. Helping them understand who Jesus is and how He accomplished the work of redemption is crucial to their repentance and correction, neither of which is likely to happen without God removing the blinders from their eyes.

4. Do men have the liberty to choose Christ?
Yes, but they lack the ability to do so since they are dead in trespasses and sin. This question will be difficult for many to deal with. G.I. Williamson's commentary on the Westminster Confession is helpful. He says that before the Fall, man had both liberty and ability to choose to obey God. After the Fall, man lost the ability to obey but still had liberty. This explanation answers the complaint some offer that the doctrine of election makes man an automaton (robot). Strictly speaking, God doesn't keep anyone from coming to Christ. The fact is that unregenerate man cannot or will not of his own volition. Nevertheless, he could if he only would. Once man is regenerated, his ability to obey God is restored.

5. Why do you think believers in our day tend to diminish the importance of addressing or dealing with sin?
Believers lack a sufficient appreciation for God's holiness, hence they fail to realize how much they miss the mark (the definition of sin). There are undoubtedly other reasons for this as well — relativism, subjectivism, ignorance of the Bible, etc.

6. Our Lord said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." What do you think He meant by this?
People do reap what they sow, and the manner in which we treat others is an important factor in how we are treated by others, though in a fallen world this is not perfectly reflected. However, the more likely point regards our willingness to forgive others. Our Lord said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14-15). God is merciful, as evidenced by His willingness to forgive us, which is an act of mercy. God's attribute of mercy should also be reflected in our own lives.

7. Some of God's attributes are communicable (shared in some degree by man) and some are incommunicable (unique to God). List God's attributes that you believe are not shared by man (even before the Fall).
The most obvious answer would be the three *omnis*. Also eternity, since man has a beginning. Immutability is unique to God. The other attributes listed were or are shared by men (though to a lesser degree) who are created in the image of God.