

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

LESSON ONE:

Read Job 22:21

THE UNITY, PERFECTION, AND BEAUTY OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

When theologians ask what is God like, they talk about the divine attributes. God's attributes are also referred to as His perfections, His properties, His virtues, and His predicates.

The Attributes of God Characterize His Nature in Character

We should never think of God's divine attributes as somehow extra to God's being or essence. No, God's attributes are His being itself as demonstrated to us and shown to us in biblical revelation. The attributes of God are too numerous to list but they include infinity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, perfection, beauty, simplicity, eternality, spirituality, love,

wrath, justice, holiness, truth, faithfulness, wisdom, goodness, patience, love, righteousness, unity, supremacy, transcendence, grace, mercy, self-sufficiency, immanence, indivisibility, sovereignty, immeasurable, personality, glory, blessedness, and freedom among others.

“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.” Job 22:21

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:23-24

A spiritual and a saving knowledge of God is the greatest need of man. *“An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshipped. Something more than a theoretical knowledge of God is needed by us.”*¹

To Know God, We Must Yield to Him

To truly know God, we need to yield ourselves to Him, submit to His authority, and regulate the details of our lives by His holy precepts and commandments. *“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord:” Hosea 6:3a. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” John 7:17. “And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall*

¹ (Pink, 1975)

he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” Daniel 11:32. We need to know God, we need to know our God.

WHAT ARE ATTRIBUTES?

We are talking about the attributes of God, starting a once-a-month series on that topic, so what do we mean by attributes? Attributes are qualities or characteristics of a person or thing.

Although general revelation may give us a glimpse of God's attributes it is not until we come to God's Word that we understand the character of God as He has revealed it to us. Special revelation is absolutely necessary in order to understand our Creator. God's nature is best revealed by His attributes. We must be careful not to think of them as abstract but as a vital medium through which His nature is revealed to us.

One commentator described them this way:

“The term attribute in its application to persons or things, means something belonging to persons or things. The attributes of a thing are so essential to it that without them it could not be what it is; and this is equally true of the attributes of a person. If a man were divested of all the attributes belonging to him, he would cease to be a man, for these attributes are inherent in that which constitutes him a human being. If we transfer these ideas to God, we shall

find that His attributes belong inalienably to Him, and therefore what He is now, He must ever be.”²

The attributes of God are then those essential permanent and distinguishing characteristics which may be affirmed of His being. His attributes are inseparable from His nature and conditioning on His character. We will now begin to look at several of God's attributes more in depth.

THE UNITY OF GOD

GOD IS UNITY – The divine nature of God is indivisible. There is only one infinite and perfect being, and there can only be one infinite and perfect being. The Jewish nation was incessantly exposed to polytheism³ in Egypt and Canaan.

The people around them thought they needed more than one god, because one was not enough, not sufficient to meet all their needs, one was just not powerful enough to take care of all the different aspects and concerns of their lives.

So, these cultures had a multiplicity of gods. But the very idea of two or more gods is self-contradictory in that each successive god would limit the power and authority of the next god and thereby destroy the sovereignty and omnipotence of all gods.

When Scripture speaks of the attributes of God it never singles out one attribute of God as more important than

² (Pendleton)

³ Polytheism – the belief or worship of more than one god.

another attribute. It is always assumed that each and every attribute of God is completely true of God and is true of all of God's character.

For example, the apostle John can say that “*God is light*” (*I John 1:5*) and later say that “*God is love*” (*I John 4:8*). There is no suggestion that just part of God is light, and part of God is love, and you put all these parts together and mix them up and you somehow get the whole God.

Rather God is completely love and completely light: and so it goes with all of His attributes. He is completely all of His attributes simultaneously.

We should not think of God as some kind of collection of various attributes added together. Nor should we think of the attributes of God as external to Him, or something that is added to Him. Rather we must remember and know that God's whole being includes all of His attributes, He is entirely all of His attributes, yet He is also not in any way a sum creation of all of His attributes.

Deuteronomy 6:4 “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:*”

The Hebrew language has two different words for *one*. The first is singular, and the other is collective (i.e. one bushel of apples). The word for *one* in ***Deuteronomy 6:4*** is the collective *one*. You see even in the Old Testament, in a reference declaring the oneness of God, we get a glimpse of His Trinity.⁴

⁴ (Bere, 2008)

Psalms 86:10 “For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.”

Isaiah 44:6,8 “Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

Isaiah 45:18 “...I am the Lord; and there is none else.”

Mark 12:29 “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.”

I Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

GOD IS TRINITY – The Trinity of God is well stated in the Athanasian Creed, which states:

“We worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost

eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinities, but one uncreated; and one infinite."⁵

Charles Spurgeon said this regarding the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed:

"We do not find the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity set forth in Scripture in formal terms, such as those which are employed in the Athanasian creed; but the truth is continually taken for granted, as if it were a fact well known in the church of God. If not laid down very often, in so many words, it is everywhere held in solution, and it is mentioned incidentally, in connection with other truths in a way which renders it quite as distinct as if it were expressed in a set formula. In many passages it is brought before us so prominently that we must be willfully blind if we do not note it."

God is one essential being, but He exists in three Persons. Each Person of the Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is fully God. Another man put it this way:

"Within his own mysterious being God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The designations are just ways in which God is God. Within the Godhead there are three "persons" who are neither three

⁵ Most likely written in the 5th or 6th centuries.

Gods nor three parts of God, but coequally and coeternally God.”⁶

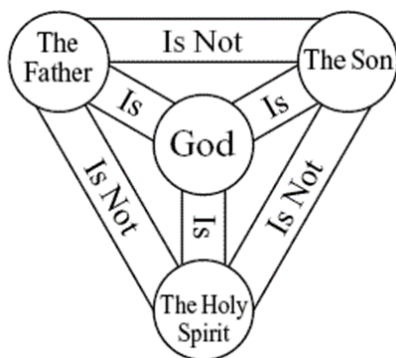


Illustration of the Trinity⁷

THE TRINITY IS DECLARED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Trinity is declared in the very first verse of the Bible, in the plural name for God used in ***Genesis 1:1***. One of the Hebrew names of God is *Elohim*. This verbal construction of this name is very interesting. It is a compound unity. It is a singular noun with a plural ending.

The *im* ending, in *Elohim*, in Hebrew is the plural form, as in *cherubim*, and *seraphim*, and *Elohim*. As the name *Elohim* is a singular noun with a plural ending, God is a singular God, He is one God with three parts.

⁶ (Shelley, 1985)

⁷ <https://thatfaith.wordpress.com/2012/04/03/the-trinity-explained-in-simple-terms/>

It is so wonderful to see how God expresses Himself in Scripture, and how essential doctrine and truths are so effortlessly weaved into every page of the Bible.

This should also demonstrate to us that God is always working in our lives, we may not notice, it may be hidden under the surface, and we may not understand it until later, but He is always working in our lives, and He is always there to help us, encourage us, and supply our needs.

Notice the Trinity revealed in the following verses:

Genesis 1:26a *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:”*

Genesis 11:7a *“Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language,”*

Isaiah 6:8a *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”*

THE TRINITY IS OPENLY DECLARED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Trinity is declared at Christ’s baptism (**Matthew 3:16-17**) the **Father** speaks, the **Son** is baptized, and the **Holy Spirit** descends like a dove.

The Trinity is expressed in the baptismal formula, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”* **Matthew 28:19**.

The Trinity is referenced by Paul in the closing of his second letter to the Corinthians *“The grace of the Lord*

Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” II Corinthians 23:14.

All three Persons of the Trinity are called God in the New Testament:

Romans 1:7b “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews 1:8a “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:”

Acts 5:3-4 “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” Peter in those verses calls he Holy Ghost God.

POINT OF DISCUSSION:

CONCERNING THE UNITY OF GOD

***As you think of the unity of God and all His differing attributes, can you see an application of that to the church and our families as a whole?

***Now think of how necessary all of God’s different attributes are to the essence of who God is. If God was omnipotent, but possessed no wisdom, or if He had all knowledge, but

possessed no love or grace, how different things would be?

***Consider how man has three parts that make us whole (body, soul, and spirit) just as God has three parts to Him. How God made us a little reflection of Him. What does this teach us or demonstrate to us?

THE PERFECTION OF GOD

Psalm 50:2 “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”

In Psalm fifty and verse two, we have three words that are in special relation with each other – “*perfection*,” “*beauty*,” and “*God*.” Although in this verse it is Zion that has “*the perfection of beauty*,” Zion had “*the perfection of beauty*” because she had God shining out of her. God’s perfection means that God possesses completely all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for Him.⁸

Today there is an ever-increasing amount of Christian literature that is being published and disseminated. It is much easier to get the message of the gospel, and teachings based on the Word of God out today than it ever has been,

⁸ (Gruden, 1994)

in large part because of better communication systems, radio, television, computers, and of course the internet.

We have the greatest transportation system man has ever had. A preacher could preach in Chicago in the morning and Los Angeles in the evening. Yet with so many additional means of getting the message of God's Word out, it seems to be:

- less influential,
- less regarded,
- and of less importance to even many churches today.
- There is a flippancy and irreverence among many to the things of God today.

POINT OF DISCUSSION:

***Why do you think this is?

***What could be contributing to this?

I believe the answer lies in our next point and that is...

NO AWARENESS

Many in our society have lost awareness of the invisible and the eternal. They have lost awareness of the divine person of God. They have lost the concept of reverence and

majesty toward the God of creation. A.W. Tozer had these comments on this lost awareness:

*“The modern Christian has lost a sense of worship along with the concept of majesty, and of course, reverence as well. He has lost his ability to withdraw inwardly and commune in the secret place with God in the shrine of his own hidden spirit. It is this that makes Christianity, and we have all but lost it.”*⁹

APPLICATION: What can help with this lack of awareness? First for the Christian to truly grasp the concept of the perfections of God, and then once ignited with this newfound fire of devotion to the Lord, and in turn with zeal this knowledge would impart, seek to better fulfill and execute the Great Commission and follow our orders from the Lord Jesus Christ, and have as our goal to once again be labeled by the world as those *“that have turned the world upside down”* **Acts 17:6**.

What are we doing to reach the lost with the good news of the Gospel?

What are we doing to make others around us aware of Christ, His love, His sacrifice, and His salvation available to all?

How are we helping to disciple others with the knowledge of Christ and His Word?

⁹ (Tozer, 2007)

NEXT, WHAT IS PERFECTION? What does perfection mean? According to the Webster's 1828 Dictionary it means, "*The state of being perfect or complete, so that nothing requisite is wanting; as perfection in an art or science; perfection in a system of morals.*" It goes on to say perfection is the following:

"Metaphysical or transcendental perfection is the possession of all the essential attributes or all the parts necessary to the integrity of a substance. This is absolute, where all defect is precluded, such as the perfection of God; or according to its kind, as in created things. Moral perfection is the complete possession of all moral excellence, as in the Supreme Being; or the possession of such moral qualities and virtues as a thing is capable of."

Webster's finally ends its definition of perfection with the following, "*An inherent or essential attribute of supreme or infinite excellence; or one perfect in its kind; as the perfections of God. The infinite power, holiness, justice, benevolence and wisdom of God are denominated his perfections.*"

Perfection lacks nothing it should have and has nothing it should not have. Perfection is fullness and completeness. Perfection is completeness in your nature. A. W. Tozer explains the perfection of God this way:

"When we apply the perfection of God, we mean that He has unqualified fullness and completeness of whatever he has. He has unqualified plentitude

of power. He also has unqualified fullness of wisdom. He has unqualified knowledge. He has unqualified holiness.”¹⁰

POINT OF DISCUSSION:

CONCERNING THE PERFECTION OF GOD

***How can this comfort us knowing that God is perfect and complete?

***Since we serve a perfect God, should we strive for excellence in all we do for Him or just settle for mediocrity in our Christian life?

Next, let's look at...

THE BEAUTY OF GOD

God's beauty is the attribute whereby He is the sum of all desirable qualities. This attribute is especially related to the perfection of God and will be implicit in a number of the proceeding attributes we will be studying. There is a great encouragement to be found for us in the attribute of the Beauty of God.

This attribute reminds us that all of our good and righteous desires, all of the desires that should be in us or in anyone

¹⁰ (Tozer, 2007)

else, find their ultimate fulfillment in God and in no one else.

David speaks of the beauty of the Lord in **Psalm 27:4** “*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*”

A similar idea is expressed in **Psalm 73:25** “*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*”

In both references, the psalmist recognizes his desire for God and the beauty of the perfection of God, who is the sum of all desirable qualities, and far surpasses all other desires.

This desire for God and His beautiful and perfect attributes culminated in a longing to be near God, to cultivate a close personal relationship with Him, and to enjoy His presence and communion forever more.

This desire implants within our spirit the knowledge and comprehension that the greatest blessing and the most beautiful moment there will ever be, will be when we “*shall see his face;*” **Revelation 22:4**.

The Beauty of God can be Found in His Words

What are we doing with the word of God? Are we seeing God’s beauty of character through its pages? Do we seek to get intimately acquainted with the words of God so we might better know Him, better recognize Him when He

moves in our life, and so we might become more like Him and reflect this same beauty to others?

ILLUSTRATION:

It was 1898 and Ben had left the East 8 years ago to head out West in hopes of making his fortune. Well, he wasn't rich, but he had accumulated over 300 acres of good land and built a comfortable farmhouse on it. He grew wheat, corn, and all of his vegetables. He had managed to build his herd of cattle to over 200 head. Having accomplished all of this in only 8 years, he decided that it was now time.

The ad that he placed in the New York newspaper said, "Wanted: A good woman willing to be a pen pal. Marriage is a possibility for the right woman." Before long, he began receiving letters from Molly. Their correspondence soon turned into love for each other. Now, here he stood in the Kansas City train station waiting to finally meet her.

When the train arrived, there were a lot of women getting off. Suddenly, he yelled, "Molly -- over here!"

She looked his way, walked over to him, smiled, and held out her hand. He took it for a moment, then let it go. She said, "How did you know who I was?"

He then reached into the back pocket of his overalls and said, "From these here letters."

"But there are no pictures in them."

He dropped his head a bit and said, "Oh yes there are! There are lots of pictures in your words." You see, he had spent hours reading every word -- looking for every little clue that would tell him who Molly really was. He had fallen in love with her words -- words that had painted her portrait.

God's precious word paints a vivid portrait of who he is. We as His bride should fall in love with His word so that we can then fall in love with its Author.¹¹

Anne R. Cousin had a proper perspective on the beauty of God and Heaven, in the last stanza of her hymn, "*The Sands of Time are Sinking*" she wrote:

*The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face.
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace:
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Emmanuel's land.*

APPLICATION: We reflect the beauty of God in our lives when we exhibit that which is pleasing to Him. Peter tells wives in the church that their "*adorning*" (their source of beauty) should be "*the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and*

¹¹ From: Many A Tear Has To Fall by Wayne Hudson, Padon Press

quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” I Peter 3:4.

Are our hearts and spirits a reflection of the beauty of God, or if someone could look at our hearts would they see ugliness and filth?

Are we seeking and working to adorn our hearts with the kind of spirit that will be a good reflection and testimony of God to those around us?

If we have a right heart and a right spirit that reflects the goodness and beauty of the Lord, Peter tells us this is of great value to God.

The beauty of our life is so important to Christ that His purpose now is to sanctify the entire church “*That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” **Ephesians 5:27.**

Thus, we each individually, and all of us corporately reflect God’s beauty in every way in which we live out in our lives and exhibit for the world His character. When we are reflecting God’s character, He delights in us and finds us beautiful in His sight.

POINT OF DISCUSSION:
CONCERNING THE BEAUTY OF GOD

***What are some ways as individuals we can reflect the beauty of God to the lost world and also to each other?

***What are some ways as a church corporately we can reflect the beauty of God to our community and be a good testimony for Him?

CONCLUSION

We studied the Unity of God, the Perfection of God, and the Beauty of God. These are all three very important attributes of God and very important attributes of God for the church and Christians to have in our lives.

- We need unity in our families,
- we need unity in our churches,
- we need unity in our state and our country.

In our families, we are one person of possibly several other members. We need to seek to repair strained or broken family relationships. We can do this through the power of the Lord, through the power of praying to the Lord.

We need to work at achieving, if needed, and maintaining unity in our church. A church can do much for the Lord if it is uniting around one thing, the gospel, and one mission: the Great Commission.

We need to be praying as Christians for unity in our country around solid biblical principles of government and laws that agree with the Bible and do not go contrary to it.

We need to ponder and meditate on the perfection of God and how that can apply to our lives. God is complete, He is completely perfect, He has all the attributes He needs and none that He does not need. He can be completely and perfectly trusted by us to always do what is right, and what is needed in our life.

We need to be seeking to be complete (perfect) mature Christians, in that we have a daily prayer life, we are in the Word daily, we are sharing the gospel with others, we are seeking to be good testimonies, we are seeking to teach others also about God and His precious Word.

We also need to consider the awesomeness of the beauty of God.

- His beauty in nature,
- His beauty in His attributes,
- His beauty in the wonderful things He has done for us and plans to bring into our life.

Are we a good reflection of this wonderful beauty of God? We should be seeking to be. We should also give all praise and glory, for our salvation and all the blessings on our life, to our One, Perfect, and Beautiful God!

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