****

Section: Doctrine of God

**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q7. Describe God: What is God like?**

He is holy, He is good, He is love, He is wrath, He is just, He is wise, and He is in control of all things.

* **Attributes: What and Why?**

The word “attribute” refers to a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic of someone or something--qualities that uniquely define them.

When we say the *attributes of God*, what are we talking about?

This refers to His character, His person, His nature; in the highest sense, it refers to the perfections of God, the being of God, and the qualities of God.

“Your thoughts of God are too human.” – Martin Luther

**Psalms 50:21** “… you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.”

Scripture has to be the authority.

**Jeremiah 9:23-24** (NKJV) Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.

Who you believe God to be and what He is like is the single most important factor in your life.

If we are wrong about who God is, we will be wrong about the highest things--the central things--the gospel.

* **God’s Attributes: An Overview**

**Aseity**:God does not owe His existence to anything or anyone outside Himself, nor does He need anything beyond Himself to maintain His existence. He is self-contained, self-existent, self-sufficient, and independent (Psalm 90:2; Psalm 102:24-27; John 5:26; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:8).

**Eternal & Infinite**:God is timeless, having always existed, and without measure or limit in greatness or duration. He transcends time and has no beginning and no end. God is infinite in essence—absolutely perfect. There are no constraints upon Him from outside of Himself (Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 90:2; Psalm 147:5; Psalm 145:3).

**Goodness**: All that God is and does is perfectly good, and He alone is the final standard of good. There is such an absolute perfection in God’s nature and being that nothing is lacking or defective in Him, and nothing can be added to make Him better (Psalm 34:8; Psalm 145:9; Psalm 25:8; Matthew 7:7-11; Romans 8:28-29).

**Grace**: Grace is a perfection of the divine character, which is exercised only toward the elect. Grace is distinguished from “mercy.” God gives unmerited grace to the guilty and unworthy that He has chosen. This includes blessings such as regeneration, faith, reconciliation, sanctification, and eternal life (Ephesians 1:2-14; Romans 11:6; Romans 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 4:16).

**Immutability**: God, in His being, perfections, will, purposes, ordinations, and promises, does not change in any way. He has always been and will always be exactly the same (Numbers 23:19-20; James 1:17; 1 Samuel 15:29; Exodus 3:14; Acts 14:15).

**Impassibility**: God does not experience emotional changes either from within or effected by His relationship to creation. He remains unchanged and unchanging, both prior and subsequent to creation (Numbers 23:19-20; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; 1 Samuel 15:29; Exodus 3:14).

**Omnipotence**: God is able to do all His holy will. He is all-powerful (Psalm 33:9; Isaiah 46:10; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26; Job 42:2).

**Omnipresence**: God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with His whole being. Nothing in the universe exists outside the presence of God (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24; Deuteronomy 4:39; Hebrews 13:5; Revelation 14:10).

**Omniscience**: God has perfect, complete knowledge. He knows all things that exist and all things that could have existed. He never learns, nor does He forget. God cannot grow in understanding, knowledge, or wisdom, because He lacks nothing (Job 37:16; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 46:9-10; Romans 11:33-34; Matthew 11:21, 23).

**Spirituality**: God is spirit. He exists as a being that has no parts or dimensions, is not made of any matter, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence. He is an invisible, immaterial, and infinite being that is fundamentally distinct from visible, material, and finite creatures (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Matthew 1:23; Colossians 1:15; Luke 24:39).

**Truthfulness & Faithfulness**: God is the original truth, the source of all truth, and the truth in all truth. All that proceeds from Him—all His words, ordinances, paths, works, commandments, and laws—are pure truth. God does not lie. He is faithful and without deceit. All His knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth. He keeps all His promises (Isaiah 40:8; Numbers 23:19; John 14:6; John 17:17-19; 2 Timothy 2:15).

The six attributes specifically mentioned in our catechism answer this week:

**Holiness**: God is distinct, separate, and in a class by Himself (set apart). He is superior to creation in every way and above all. He is morally pure (without any sin), and He is holy in relation to every aspect of His nature and character. Purity and the sum of all moral excellency are found in Him (Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Revelation 4:8; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 1:5; Psalm 99:3).

**Revelation 4:8** … “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

In both the Old and New Testaments of Scripture, we find declarations of God as holy, holy, holy. This tri-part formula (meaning something is repeated three times) is the strongest form of speech in the Hebrew language. Scripture does not exalt any other attribute of God in this way.

This distinction between God and everything else is both quantitative (God is greater) and qualitative (God is a completely different being). The holiness of God also stresses He is separate from all that is profane and sinful. He is faultless, pure, and infallible!

**Love**: God is love; it is not simply that God loves, but that He is love itself, and any true love has its origin in Him. God gives Himself for the blessing and salvation of undeserving sinners. The love of God is uninfluenced; there was nothing in the recipients of His love to call it into exercise, and nothing in the recipients to attract or prompt it (1 John 4:8; Ephesians 5:1-2; John 15:9-11; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:2-6).

**1 John 4:8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

**Romans 5:8** … God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God’s love is much more than an attitude, emotion, or work. God not only loves—He is love. He is the God of love. He is the very essence of what true love is, and all true love flows from Him as its ultimate source.

Regarding the reality of love, *our* opinion and ways do not define or measure love; real love is God’s love.

Because God is love, He hates sin, and we see this godly love commanded to us in **Romans 12:9**: “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.”

**Wrath**: God is a God of wrath. The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. God has justice against all evil and decreed eternal punishment against unredeemed sinners (Romans 1:18; Psalm 5:5-6; Psalm 11:5; Psalm 7:11; Revelation 14:9-10).

**Justice**: Based on God’s own perfect righteousness and holiness, He deals with all things rightly and completely. All that God has decreed and all that He does is completely just. He hates sin and always judges perfectly (Job 34:12; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 9:7-8; Romans 12:19; Romans 3:26).

**Revelation 16:7** … “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”

**Hebrews 12:29** for our God is a consuming fire.

**Psalm 5:5-6** The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

In considering the wrath of God, it is important to understand that it is not uncontrollable, irrational, or sinful; rather, His wrath is in perfect harmony with and flows from His holiness, righteousness, love, justice, etc.

God is love and zealously loves all that is good. Such intense love for righteousness manifests itself in an equally intense hatred of all that is evil.

In the greatness of His excellence, He will deal with those who have rebelled against Him and send forth His burning anger to punish them. In both the Old and New Testaments, God is described as a consuming fire and as a God who inflicts wrath.

**Psalm 9:7-8** ... the Lord sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness. (cf. Ephesians 5:6)

**Wisdom**: God is eternally wise and the source of all wisdom. God possesses wisdom perfectly and has decidedly ordained all things perfectly, including the best ways to accomplish His decisions. The wisdom of God is manifest in His creating, ordering, providence in, and governing of all things (Job 12:13; Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33; Romans 11:36; Acts 2:23).

**Job 12:13** “With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.”

**Isaiah 55:9** “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We see in Scripture that God is all-wise.

God’s wisdom means that God always chooses the best results and the best means to those results. Our definition goes beyond the idea of God knowing all things.

His wisdom specifies that God’s decisions about what He will do are always wise decisions; that is, they always will bring about the best results (from God’s ultimate perspective), and they will bring about those results through the best possible means.

**Romans 8: 28** …we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

God’s wisdom is also seen gloriously in His great plan of redemption. In 1 Corinthians 1, we are told that Christ is “the wisdom of God” to those who are called.

**Sovereignty**: (When we say, “He is in control of all things” in our catechism answer, we are talking about His sovereignty and providence.) As the one true Ruler and Owner of creation, God has rightful and complete authority over all things. He has legitimate claim to absolute lordship, and His governing is just. Providentially, God controls and directs all things, and He does so to fulfill His purposes after the counsel of His own holy will for His glory. God is the Supreme Being who answers to no one and who has the absolute right to do with His creation as He desires; nothing happens without His ordination (Psalm 115:3; Ephesians 1:11; Daniel 4:35; Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 45:7).

**Psalm 115:3** Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

**Daniel 4:35** all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

**Ephesians 1:11** … [God] works all things according to the counsel of his will

* **God’s Attributes: Understanding Them Correctly**
  + All of these attributes are present in the entire Godhead. They are found fully and equally in all three Persons of the Trinity.

The differences we do perceive in the Persons are in their roles and their ministries. One example of this is that it was God the Son who took on flesh, not the Father or the Holy Spirit.

* + All of these attributes are eternally permanent in God. Each of these attributes has always and will always belong to God.

This is important for us to know because sometimes people make a false distinction between the “God of the Old Testament” and the “God of the New Testament,” as if these are two different gods, or somehow He has changed attributes or plans. No, the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. He never changes.

* + All of these attributes are inseparably interconnected. No one divine attribute can be separated from any other attribute. Each attribute is dependent and works in perfect unity with the other attributes.

As we think about the attributes of God, it is not as though each attribute is a part of God like a slice of a pie (I.e. this is a part of God and here is another part of God). In this kind of wrong thinking, sometimes we end up playing one attribute of God against another attribute of God. God does not have “parts.”

* **The Practical Outworking of Knowing God’s Attributes**

**Psalm 73:25-26** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

~High and correct views of God are the foundation to high and holy living, worship, evangelism, and service.

~Low and incorrect views of God lead to a low and incorrect way of living; of interacting with God, self, and others.

There is a necessary connection in truthfully knowing God and growing as a Christian.

If we are to live godly lives, then we must know what God is like.

**1 Peter 1:16** … “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

But it’s not just our obedience that is in view; our joy is, because the more accurate our understanding of what the Bible says regarding who God is, it will be only to that extent that we can truly grow in an experiential joy in God within our hearts. In other words, our thinking must be correct in our heads in order for our hearts to enjoy and worship God truthfully.

So, we need to get past any assumptions, preconceived notions, and possible misleading teachings from our past when it comes to God; instead, we shall seek the truth about God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in His ordained way: pursuing what He has revealed about Himself in the holy Bible.

Scripture alone is authoritative.

**Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

We must have an accurate understanding of who God is informed by Scripture.