

## I. Intro. & Review

### A. We are now in Theology proper, the doctrine of God

1. Theology proper has five parts: God’s essence, God’s names, God’s attributes, God’s Persons & God’s works.
2. God’s essence: personal (rational, conscious being of activity and intelligence; capable of fellowship with other persons); spiritual (non material and invisible, not limited by space); transcendent (infinitely exalted above all creation); immanent (present in [but distinct from] creation with His whole being).
3. God’s Name is the revelation of who God is (not a mere label, but a revelation of His Being; indicates that God is personal, and the knowledge of His name gives us fellowship with Him); His names are God (the Mighty One), Lord (the Master, Ruler and Owner to whom we belong and to whom we owe obedience) & Jehovah (the unchanging faithful covenant God).

### B. This week we begin the third section of Theology proper, God’s attributes.

1. We will see, first, what an attribute is, and what is special about God’s attributes.
2. We will see, second, how God’s attributes are classified or divided.
3. We will examine God’s attributes in turn so that we might better know Him and worship Him.

## II. Attributes

### A. As Such

1. An attribute is the characteristic or the quality of a person or a thing.
2. Created things have attributes: e.g. a knife is sharp; fire is hot; ice is cold. But God’s attributes differ from the attributes, qualities or characteristics of created things.

### B. God’s attributes

1. God’s attributes are not something which we attribute or ascribe to God. We do not say, “I think God is [...]” but God reveals His attributes to us in Scripture. Without that revelation we could never know them.
2. The word *attribute* does not do justice to the reality of God’s attributes. It is the word used traditionally in theology. You might say that the attribute of water is wetness, but God’s attributes are infinitely greater than that. God’s attributes are His perfections, His virtues, His wonders, His praises. I Pet 2:9 speaks of God’s “praises” and the word there means excellent qualities or virtues.
3. The attributes of God are *essential* to His being; they are not additions to Him. Without His attributes He is not God. God cannot lose or lay aside His attributes. E.g. God cannot lay aside His sovereignty by “choosing to be less sovereign” to accommodate man.
4. God’s attributes are infinite perfections of His Being; they have no limit or measure. God is infinitely holy, infinitely wise, infinitely gracious, etc. God, being infinite, does not grow in holiness, wisdom, mercy, etc.
5. God IS His attributes. We might say that a person is wise. God IS wisdom. We might say that a person is loving. God IS love.

### C. We classify God’s attributes so that we can better understand them. The traditional classification is incommunicable and communicable.

1. The word *communicable* means something which can be *shared, transferred, passed on or transmitted*, and obviously *incommunicable* means something which cannot be shared. There are some of God’s perfections or qualities which He shares with creatures and which they can therefore *display or reflect*.
2. There are limitations to this distinction. For example, how do we classify them? *Which* are communicable? Are any *really* communicable? Can God *really* communicate some [or any] of His perfections to us? For example, the Essentials book seems to make omnipotence and omniscience communicable attributes, whereas I would classify them as incommunicable [with His infinity].
3. Our possession of God’s [communicable] attributes is essentially different to God: for example, God IS His attributes; we simply possess some of them as a gift; God’s attributes are infinite and perfect in Him; we have some of them in a creaturely measure, and we grow in them [e.g., wisdom].
4. Yet, this possession of some of God’s attributes is part of the wonder of our salvation. II Pet. 1:4 speaks of “being partakers of the divine nature.” And other passages speak about the image of God being restored in us, and us being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

### III. INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES (Independence, Simplicity, Infinity, Immutability, Omnipotence, Omniscience)

#### A. INDEPENDENCE

1. **God's independence means that He depends on no one and nothing outside of Himself (self-sufficiency).**
  - a. God is independent in His Being. No one created God. God IS.
  - b. God does not depend on any for the continuation of His existence. He has life of Himself (Is. 40:28; Acts 17:25; Rom. 11:35).
  - c. God does not need anyone or anything outside of Him to complete Him, to make Him more blessed or more glorious than He already is. No creature ever adds to Him. None gives Him something which He needed; none tells Him something which He did not know.
  - d. This has important application for salvation: God does not need the cooperation of sinners in salvation.
2. **It is of the nature of the creature to be dependent on the Creator, but of the Creator to be *absolutely independent*.**
  - a. God's independence means that He has made all creatures depend on Him. Ps. 104:27. An independent creature is an impossibility. Even in heaven we will depend on God for all things.
  - b. God is the source of all existence: He created; He sustains; He governs; He gives life and He takes it away.

#### B. SIMPLICITY & ONENESS (UNITY)

1. **God's Oneness & Simplicity means that God's essence or being is One: there is only ONE God.**
  - a. The Bible knows of only one God and God will not tolerate rivals, others gods before Him. Is. 43:10; 44:8
  - b. The doctrine of the Trinity is no denial of God's oneness, because God is one *in Being*, not persons.
  - c. There can only be one God because of the incommunicable attributes of God: there can only be one independent being (all other beings must be dependent); there can only be one infinite being (all other beings must be finite); there can only be one omnipotent being (all other beings must be less powerful than He is and must derive their power from Him), etc.
2. **God's Oneness & Simplicity also means that God is not composed of parts, but is one unified being.**
  - a. God IS His Being; God will is God willing, etc.
  - b. God is not made up of parts so that part of God is holiness, part is love, part is infinity, etc. God is infinite holiness, infinite love, infinite power, etc.
  - c. This means also (very importantly) that *all of God's attributes are one*. God does not have one primary attribute and then lesser attributes (some say that God IS love to the expense of His other perfections), and God's attributes in no way conflict within the Being of God. So, one attribute never overrides or contradicts or is in conflict with another attribute.
  - d. This is denied widely today by men who say that God has two contradictory wills, or that His love will triumph over His holiness.

#### C. INFINITY

1. **God's infinity is His *limitlessness* or His *boundlessness* first with respect to time (eternity).**
  - a. God has no beginning and no ending; He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Is. 44:6; Rev. 1:17), the alpha and the omega (Rev. 1:8, 22:12-13, 21:5-7).
  - b. He is not bound by, limited by or affected by time (Heb. 1:10-12; Ps. 90:1; Mic. 5:2). We become older with time but God is "The Ancient of Days" (Dan. 7:13).
  - c. With God there is no past or future but only eternal present.
  - d. God will never cease to exist; heaven is eternal life.
2. **God's infinity is His *limitlessness* or His *boundlessness* second with respect to space (omnipresence).**
  - a. God is present everywhere at all times with the whole of His Being; we creatures are limited by space. Space is a creature of God. In eternity, before the beginning of Gen. 1, there was no space.
  - b. Because of God's omnipresence He is not limited to temples made with hands but can be worshipped everywhere.
  - c. Because of God's omnipresent no man can escape Him: the wicked cannot find anywhere where He is not; even in hell, God is present in His punishing wrath; and God's people can never go anywhere where He is not; He never leaves us; He is with us wherever we are. I Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7-10.