

I. Intro. & Review

A. Review

1. What are the five parts of Theology? Answer: essence, names, attributes, persons, works.
2. What four words do we use to describe God’s essence? Answer: Personal, spiritual, transcendent, immanent.
3. How does God’s name differ from ours? Answer: Ours are mere labels; God’s name is the revelation of Himself. His main names are God, Lord, Jehovah.

B. Attributes

1. What is an attribute? Answer: A quality or characteristic of something or someone.
2. How do God’s attributes differ from ours? Answer: His attributes are essential to Him; His attributes are perfectly and infinitely His; God IS His attributes. What alternative name to attributes: perfections, virtues.
3. Explain the distinction incommunicable and communicable. Answer: Some of God’s attributes are shared with and reflected in God’s children in a creaturely, finite way. It is part of salvation (II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:29).
4. God’s incommunicable attributes are *independence*, *simplicity* (oneness), *infinity* (eternity and omnipresence), *immutability*, *omnipotence* (sovereignty) and *omniscience*.

II. God’s Incommunicable Attributes (continued).

A. IMMUTABILITY

1. **The word immutable means unchangeable and means that God does not change in His being or in His attributes.**
 - a. This means that God IS; He does not develop, change or become something different. He does not grow older; He does not become more wise, or more holy, etc. He IS infinitely and perfectly what He IS. His name Jehovah, “I AM THAT I AM” reflects this perfection of God (Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17).
 - b. Change implies imperfection: if something changes it either becomes better (so it was not perfect before the change) or it becomes worse (it has ceased by the change to be perfect).
 - c. This means, too, that God cannot be changed by something outside of Himself. “There is change around, about and outside of Him and there is change in people’s relations to Him; but there is no change in God Himself” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. II, p. 158).
2. **God’s immutability also applies to God’s will or purpose.**
 - a. Remember, that God’s will or purpose is God willing or God purposing. God’s will cannot be separated from God Himself. Since, God is immutable in His being, His is also immutable in His will (Heb. 6:17; Job 12:32; Ps. 115:3; Num. 23:19).
 - b. However, the Bible speaks of God’s repentance, and of God changing in response to the actions of men. How can we understand *this* in light of God’s immutability? Quite simply, we understand such language as describing not what happens in God but how God’s dealings *appear to have changed* in relation to His creatures. For example, Gen. 6:6 is an expression of divine abhorrence for sin; the repentance of God at the repentance of Nineveh shows that it was never God’s purpose to destroy Nineveh at this time, but the threat was the means used to stir them up to seek the mercy of God, etc. In addition, the immutability of God means that prayer cannot change God’s mind.
 - c. God is immutable in all of His attributes: inflexibly holy and just to the terror of the wicked, and immutably merciful and loving to the consolation of His people.

B. OMNIPOTENCE or SOVEREIGNTY

1. Omnipotence means “All powerful.”

- a. God’s omnipotence is His ability to rule (might) and His right to rule (authority)
- b. God possesses all power and might and authority.
- c. God’s power is His ability to do all things which He wills to do which are in harmony with His nature.
- d. There are things which God cannot do: for example, God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2); God cannot deny Himself (II Tim. 2:13); God cannot die (I Tim. 1:17); God cannot become unholy, unrighteous, unwise; He cannot divest Himself of any of His attributes, etc.

2. Omnipotence also means sovereignty, His rule as King.

- a. God’s sovereignty is His rule over and control of all things without exception.

- b. Because God is sovereign He is able to and *actually does* accomplish all things which He has purposed. Ps. 135:5-6; Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11).
- c. Because God is sovereign none can thwart His will. He is the supreme King.
- d. God's sovereignty is especially seen in salvation, choosing to save some, and not all, as He pleases.

C. OMNISCIENCE

1. Omniscience means "All knowing."

- a. God's omniscience is His perfect knowledge of all things, past, present and future; because He is omniscient, He never learns, He never remembers and He never forgets.
- b. When Scripture speaks of God *remembering* His people it means a regard of love, a thinking upon with favor, or an acting in accordance with a promise, e.g., God remembered Noah (Gen. 8:1); God remembered His covenant (Gen. 9:16); the dying thief asks Jesus to remember him when He comes into His Kingdom (Luke 23:42); when Scripture speaks of God *forgetting*, it means a deliberate disregard (e.g., Hos. 4:6).
- c. Since God knows all things it is foolish to try to hide from Him. All our secret deeds are open before Him; that is a terrifying thought to the wicked; but at the same time it is our comfort (Ps. 139:1-6).

2. God knows the *future* with an infallible knowledge

- a. He knows the future, not because He good at predictions as if He had a crystal ball, but because He knows exactly what He will do with His creation. Nothing surprises Him. Nothing unexpected happens which takes Him off guard. Acts 15:18 ("Known unto God are all His works from the beginning ...").
- b. God's knowledge means that He can reveal the future to His prophets. Omniscience concerning the future is unique to Jehovah. Men can guess, make intelligent predictions but only God knows with certainty (Is. 41:21-24). Think of some of the detailed prophecies of Scripture: Gen. 15:13-14; Is. 44:26-28; Dan. 7-8; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 24, etc.
- c. God's foreknowledge of His people is *not that He sees what they will do* (repent and believe) and then reacts to that, but is His knowing them in love before the foundation of the world (see Amos 3:2; Matt. 7:23; Rom. 8:29).

III. These, then, are God's incommunicable attributes.

- A. We can never become *independent*; we can never become *one and simple*; we can never become *infinite* with respect to time or space; we can never become *immutable*; we can never become *omnipotent*; we can never become *omniscient*.
- B. Our response to these attributes of God is to worship Him, for who indeed is like God?!
- C. Next week we shall look ay God's communicable attributes, one which can in the miracle of salvation be reflected in us.