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Natural Attributes of God - by Wayne S. Walker

We must seek to learn more about the God who is revealed in the pages of the Bible and in whom we must believe to be saved, so that we can know what is involved in having a personal relationship with Him. The God who created all things is not just some impersonal force. He is a being, albeit totally spiritual, who exhibits the characteristics of personality. In **Job 11:7**, Zophar asked, "Canst thou by searching out find God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

While there are some things about God that we can conclude from the creation, no one, merely by searching, can find God by himself. We must turn to God's revelation of Himself in scripture. And even then, with our finite minds, none of us can find out the Almighty to perfection. We must simply be satisfied with what God has revealed and the evidence that He has provided us to accept it. In this article, we want to delve a bit deeper into the nature of this God who created us as we study His natural attributes. There are six terms which are commonly used to describe God, three of which we shall notice in this article.

The first is infinity (no, not the car!). This means that God is unlimited. Even the name that He gave Himself in speaking to Moses indicates this. In **Exodus 3:14**, God called Himself, "I AM THAT I AM." This simply means, "I am because I am," and expresses absolute, unlimited being.

Solomon gave us another expression of God's infinity in **1 Kings 8:27** as he said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?" The fact that God is unlimited implies complete self-sufficiency. Paul said of God in **Acts 17:25**, "Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, breath, and all things." We depend on God for life, breath, and all things. He does not need us to sustain His existence.

The second term that we shall notice is eternity. This means that God is everlasting or has existed and will exist forever. Insofar as this physical universe is concerned, "in the beginning" there was already God (**Genesis 1:1**). What about before the beginning of creation? "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (**Psalms 90:2**). Even before this world came into existence, God had existed from time everlasting. We humans have a spirit that will always exist, but we had a beginning. God had none. Thus, time is no element with God. "...One day is with the Lord as a thousands years, and a thousand years as one day" (**2 Peter 3:8**). This is not intended as some kind of formula for figuring out prophecies, but as a statement that God is not bound by the limits of time as we

know it.

The third term that we shall notice is omnipotence. This means that God is all powerful. Sarah was made to understand this after she laughed upon hearing that she would bear a child in her old age. In **Genesis 18:14**, the Lord asked her, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?..." Jesus made another statement about God's omnipotence in **Matthew 19:26** when He said, "...But with God all things are possible." This is why God is referred to throughout the scriptures as the Almighty. "...Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (**Revelation 4:8**). The word "almighty" means holding sway over all things or ruling everything. Thus we conclude that God can do anything that is consistent with His nature.

Several questions have been raised about God's omnipotence. Some have asked if God could build two hills without making a valley between them, or make a rock so big that He Himself could not lift it. These are not "things" but absurdities, and God is not a God of absurdity. Another question that has been asked is, if God is omnipotent can He lie? The answer is no (**Titus 1:2**). The reason is that lying is completely inconsistent with His nature. Still another question that is worthy of consideration is this: is God God because He is omnipotent, or is He omnipotent because He is God? God could have raised up children to Abraham from stones but did not choose to do so (**Matthew 3:9**). The fact that God does not exercise omnipotence in some area does not impugn His deity.

Consider His omniscience. This means that God is all-seeing and all-knowing. The Psalmist wrote, "The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men...He considereth all their works" (**Psalms 33:13-15**). God is able to

see all men and thus knows everything that we do. He even knows our hearts. The early disciples prayed, "...Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men..." (**Acts 1:24**). Thus we cannot hide from God or escape His sight. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (**Hebrews 4:13**). God has the ability to know everything that there is to know because of His omniscience.

Next, consider His omnipresence. This means that the presence of God is everywhere. We read in **Job 34:22**, "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." This does not mean that the person of God is everywhere. God's person is in heaven (**Matthew 6:9**). But His spiritual presence is everywhere. Because God is everywhere, we cannot flee from His presence. He is always near. "...The Lord is at hand" (**Philippians 4:5**). This has nothing to do with the second coming of Christ but with the nearness of the Lord. To the Christian, such a thought is one of comfort to know that there is nowhere that we can go where our Lord will not be present with us. But to the sinner, it must be scary to realize that there is no place that he can go to escape the Lord. God's presence is such that it can "fill heaven and earth" (**Jeremiah 23:24**). So we need to recognize the omnipresence of God.

Finally, consider His immutability. This means that God is unchanging. "For I am the LORD. I change not..." (**Malachi 3:6**). This does not mean that God's law has not changed, because the Bible says that it has (**Hebrews 7:12**). Nor does it mean that His ways of revealing Himself have not changed, because the Bible says that miracles would cease when that which is perfect had come (**1 Corinthians 13:10**). Rather, it

means that His nature does not change. He remains the same forever. The writer of **Hebrews 1:10-12** draws a contrast between the created things and God, saying, "And as a vesture thou shalt fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Whatever is true of the character and qualities of God now will remain so as it has throughout all times in the past. Of God it is said, "...With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (**James 1:17**). We humans often change our minds capriciously in a second, but we never have to worry about God's being fickle. If He promises to do something, we can be sure that He will do it based upon His immutability.

Again, we might ask, is God divine because He has these attributes, or does He have these attributes because He is divine? This is not an idle question. For example, we have seen that God is omniscient. But if God chooses not to be omniscient in any particular area, such as in the case of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, does that make Him any less divine (see **Genesis 22:12**)? Of course not. God is divine not just because of His attributes but because of who and what He is. "O LORD, thou has searched me, and known me....Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?....For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb" (**Psalms 139**). Indeed, God is great! May we ever praise Him and serve Him according to His will.

GOD WITH US

We affirm a belief in Jesus Christ who was God and took on human form. Jesus came and lived among us, suffered the same trials we suffer, and experienced the same feelings we experience. Jesus was purely human and purely

divine. Although, Jesus was God incarnate, He never drew attention to Himself but always pointed to God, the Father.

Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian of another century, tells a story of a prince who wanted to find a maiden suitable to be his queen. One day while running an errand in the local village for his father he passed through a poor section. As he glanced out the windows of the carriage his eyes fell upon a beautiful peasant maiden. During the ensuing days he often passed by the young lady and soon fell in love. But, he had a problem. How would he seek her hand?

He could order her to marry him, but even a prince wants his bride to marry him freely and voluntarily and not through coercion. He could put on his most splendid uniform and drive up to her front door in a carriage drawn by six horses. If he did this, he would never be certain that the maiden loved him or was simply overwhelmed with all of the splendor. The prince came up with another solution. He would give up his kingly robe, move into the village, and enter, not with a crown, but in the garb of a peasant. Thus, he went and lived among the people, shared their interests and concerns, and talked their language. In time, the maiden grew to love him for who he was, and because he had first loved her.

This very simple, almost child like story, explains what we Christians mean by the incarnation. Jesus, (the Immanuel, God with us) was willing to come to this earth and live among us. He was willing to go all of the way for us, even to the cross, that we might be redeemed, and someday live with Him forever.

(Originally Written and/or Compiled by Tom Sutherland for Brief Phone Messages.)

THE WORD OF GOD

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and

sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (**Heb. 4:12**)

By the aid of a new scientific instrument, the ophthalmoscope, with its condensing mirror and myriad of little lenses, the ophthalmologist can look into a person's eye and not only determine approximately the necessary strength of glass required to give perfect vision, but also the existence of tumors pressing on the brain tissue, the conditions of the general nervous system, the presence of disease in various organs, and the richness of the blood current as they are clearly traced on the sensitive plate of nature's camera. (**From Illustrations of Bible Truths, p. 10**).

What the ophthalmoscope is to the ophthalmologist, the word of God is much more to our higher nature. The word of God has the vitality and power to determine and repair our spiritual health. Let us study and meditate on it daily because it has the ability and power to mold us into what we ought to be.



What the Bible Does Not Say

Instead of going by what the Bible teaches, many seek heaven by following what the Bible does not say. They neglect or ignore the clear and plain appointments of God, but scrupulously attend to rites and rituals unknown to the Bible. What a shame!

1) **Worship**. Men ridicule us for breaking bread upon every first day of the week, just like the Bible says (**Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16**). Yet they are very careful not to miss their church's perverted form of what is called "holy communion". They meticulously keep their traditions unknown to the word of God, whether Easter, Christmas, or some other "holyday"; but they will not observe the simple worship the Lord revealed in the New Testament. They heap great scorn upon us for not using mechanical instruments of music in worship even though the "oracles of God" (**1 Pet. 4:11**) specify we are to "teach[ing] and

admonish[ing] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (**Col. 3:16**).

2) **Name**. We are disparaged for pointing out that many wear names not found in Scripture. We are criticized for wearing the name of Him who purchased us "with His own blood" (**Acts 20:28**); for Him who promised to build His church (**Mt. 16:18**); for calling ourselves "the churches of Christ" even though that is exactly what God's inspired apostle called God's people in the first century (**Rom. 16:16**). Men serve man-made denominations and designate themselves with man-made names with utmost devotion though the Bible teaches there is only "one body", the church of Christ (**Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4**). Even though the "oracles of God" (**1 Pet. 4:11**) are absolutely silent concerning the names and organizations they serve, they persist in empty devotion.

3) **Teaching**. They attend to their baby's baptism but take great offense if we point out that such is wholly unrelated to anything taught in the Bible. First, baptism is immersion, not sprinkling (**Rom. 6:4**). Second, baptism is for penitent believers, for "men and women," not for oblivious infants (**Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12**). Despite these undeniable facts, they persist in their dedication to a ceremony not found in the Bible. They pray to dead men and women. They kneel and devote themselves before material objects, according to rites and rituals invented by men, but look with disdain and disgust upon those who contend for humble prayers offered as true priests of God to the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, to the "one mediator between God and men", Christ Jesus (**Heb. 3:1; 4:14-16; 1 Tim. 2:5**). How utterly sad.

This is all done in a lame and vain attempt to serve God; expecting to go to heaven by doing what the Bible does not say. Truly, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (**Mt. 15:8-9**). By Craig Thomas