

What Is God Like?

John 4:24 “God is a Spirit.”

The Text, John 4:24

- All we can know of spirits is:
 - 1. That a spirit is the most perfect and excellent of beings, more excellent than the body, or any thing that is purely material.
 - 2. That a spirit is in its own nature immortal, having nothing in its frame and constitution tending to dissolution or corruption.
 - 3. That a spirit is capable of understanding, willing, and putting forth actions agreeable to its nature, which no other being can do.

How We Should Conceive of God

- As a being that is more perfect and excellent than all other spirits and beings. Hence he is said to be *incorruptible*, Rom. 1:23; *immortal* and *invisible*, 1 Tim. 1:17. He has understanding and will; and so we conceive of him as the creator and governor of all things; which he could not be, if he were not an intelligent and sovereign spirit.

How We Should Conceive of God

- Though angels and the souls of men are spirits, yet their excellence is only comparative; that is, they excel the best of all material beings in their nature and properties. But God, as a spirit, is infinitely more excellent than all material beings, **and all created spirits**. Their perfections are derived from him; and therefore he is called “the Father of spirits,” Heb. 12:9; and “the God of the spirits of all flesh,” Numb. 16:22; and his perfections are not derived; and he is independently immortal. Hence it is said of him, that “he only hath immortality,” 1 Tim. 6:16. He is an infinite spirit; and it can be said of none but him, that “his understanding is infinite,” Ps. 147:5.

How We Should Conceive of God

- Hence we may infer:
 - That God has no body nor bodily parts
 - That God is invisible, and cannot be seen with the eyes of the body
 - That God is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits
 - That it is sinful and dishonorable to God, either to make images or pictures of him outside us, or to have any image of him in our minds
 - That externals in worship are of little value with God, who is a spirit, and requires the heart

God Has No Body Or Bodily Parts

- How then are eyes, ears, hands, face, and the like, attributed in scripture to God?
- **Answer:** They are attributed to him not properly, but figuratively; they are spoken of him after the manner of men, in condescension to our weakness; but we are to understand them after a sort becoming the Divine Majesty. We are to consider what such bodily parts serve us for, as our eyes for discerning and knowing, our arms for strength, our hands for action, &c.; and we are to conceive these things to be in God infinitely, which these parts serve for in us. Thus, when eyes and ears are ascribed to God they signify his omniscience; his hands denote his power, and his face the manifestation of his love and favor.

God is invisible

- God cannot be seen with the eyes of the body, not even in heaven; for the glorified body is still a body, and God is a spirit, which is no object of the eyes, any more than sound, taste, smell, etc. 1 Tim. 1:17.
- God is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits; and can communicate himself, and apply those things to them, which only can render them happy, as he is the God and Father of our spirits.

Images of God

- It is sinful and dishonorable to God, either to make images or pictures of him outside ourselves, or to have any image of him in our minds, which our unruly imagination is apt to frame to itself, especially in prayer. For God is the object of our understanding, not of our imagination. God expressly prohibited Israel to frame any similitude or resemblance of him, and tells them, that they had not the least pretence for so doing, inasmuch as they “saw no similitude of him, when he spake to them in Horeb,” Deut. 4:12, 15, 16. And says the prophet, “To whom will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?” Isa. 40:18. We cannot form an imaginary idea of our own souls or spirits, which are absolutely invisible to us; and far less of him who is the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see. Therefore, to frame a picture or an idea of what is invisible, is highly absurd and impracticable; nay, it is gross idolatry, prohibited in the second commandment.

Externals In Worship

- They who would be accepted of God must worship him in spirit and in truth, that is, from an apprehension and saving knowledge of what he is in Christ to poor sinners. And this saving knowledge of God in Christ **is attainable in this life**; for it is the matter of the divine promise, “I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord,” Jer. 24:7. “It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God,” John 6:45. And therefore, it should be most earnestly and assiduously sought after by us, because unless we attain to it, we will perish for ever.

What Sort of Spirit Is God?

- We must consider God's attributes (incommunicable and communicable), which we gather from his word and works, and that two ways:
 - By denying of, and removing from God, in our minds, all imperfection which is in the creatures (Acts 17:29), “we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.”
 - Thus we come to the knowledge of his incommunicable attributes; so called, because there is no shadow or vestige of them in the creatures, such as infinity, eternity, unchangeableness.
 - By attributing unto him, by way of eminency, whatever is excellent in the creatures, seeing he is the fountain of all perfection in them (Ps. 94:9), “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?”
 - Thus we have his communicable attributes; whereof there are some scant vestiges in the creature, such as being, wisdom, power, etc., amongst which his spirituality is to be reckoned.

God's Incommunicable Attributes

- Both sorts of attributes in God are not qualities **distinct from himself**, but they are God himself.
 - God's infinity is God himself, his wisdom is himself; he is wisdom, goodness, etc. (1 John 1:5), "God is light and in him is no darkness at all."
 - "Neither are these attributes so many different things in God; but they are each of them God himself: for God swears by himself, Heb. 6:13; yet he swears by his holiness, Amos 4:2. He creates by himself, Isa. 44:24; yet he creates by his power, Rom. 1:20. Therefore, **God's attributes are God himself**. Neither are these attributes separable from one another; for though we, through weakness, must think and speak of them separately, yet they are truly but the one infinite perfection of the divine nature, which cannot be separated therefrom, without denying that he is an infinitely perfect being." – Thomas Boston, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 57.

God Is Infinite

- In respect of his Being
- In respect of Place
- In respect of Time and Duration
- In respect of all his Communicable Attributes

God Is Eternal 1 Tim. 1:17

- Angels and the souls of men are eternal, because they shall never have an end, but they are not eternal in the same sense as God, i.e. having no beginning.
- The covenant of grace is eternal, because the mercies of it shall last for ever, but it too has a beginning.
- The gospel is eternal, because the effects of it shall never wear away.
- The redemption by Christ is eternal, for the same reason.
- And the last judgment is so, because the consequences will be everlasting.
- But the eternity of God is his being without beginning and without end, Ps. 90:2, “From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.” He was from everlasting before time, and will remain unto everlasting when time shall be no more; without beginning of life or end of days.

God Is Unchangeable

- God is immutable, that is, always the same, without any alteration.
- Jas. 1:17, “With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”
- Mal. 3:6, “I am the Lord, I change not.”
- When God is said to repent in scripture (Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11), it denotes only a change of his outward conduct according to his infallible foresight and immutable will.
- Numb. 23:19, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.”
- 1 Sam. 15:29, “The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.”