

The **Bible** Unpacked

Intermediate Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers growing in the faith

paul mallison

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A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers growing in the faith

Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

Composed by Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are eight booklets in the series, based on the eight parts of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Intermediate Edition*. Each booklet has five chapters, with two sections each. These ten sections can be used for ten or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

1. God's Being

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I. Basics

The concepts in the first half of this chapter are fundamental to understanding what God is like, as they concern basic attributes of his being. These include attributes which show God to be very different to us, but also attributes which indicate that he is like us in that he is a personal being.

God's Form

God is one

[JESUS, QUOTING MOSES:] Listen, Israel, *the Lord our God, the Lord is one.* ... ³²The expert in the law said to him, “*That is true, Teacher; you are right to say that he is one,* and there is no one else besides him. MARK 12:29B, 32

God is a single entity. He is only one being.

God is spirit

God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. JOHN 4:24

God's nature is spirit; he is a spiritual being. So God is not a physical being, in contrast to people and particularly to idols.

God is everywhere

“*I am a God who is near,*” says the LORD. “*I am also a God who is far away.*” ²⁴“*No one can hide where I cannot see him,*” says the LORD. “*I fill all of heaven and earth,*” says the LORD. JEREMIAH 23:23–24 NCV™

Note that “LORD” is the personal name of God.

So, God is always near

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Where can I go to escape your spirit? Where can I flee to escape your presence?* ⁸*If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there. If I were to sprawl out in Sheol [the world of the dead], there you would be.* ⁹*If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn, and settle down on the other side of the sea,* ¹⁰*even there your hand would guide me, your right hand would grab hold of me.* PSALMS 139:7–10

God's Glory

The Bible often speaks of God's glory in reference to his wondrous being. In doing so, it has in view God's essence and/or his attributes. Regarding his essence, God's glory pertains to his essential being itself, such that his presence is on occasions perceived as his glory and spoken of in terms of it. Regarding his attributes, God's glory emanates in part from his attributes – such as his power – which in a sense reflect the glory of God's essence and presence.

Glory is a prominent and key attribute of God

They [kings] will sing about the ways of the LORD, for *great is the glory of the LORD!* PSALMS 138:5 ISV

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. ROMANS 3:23 CEV

The fact that it is God's glory that people are measured by or compared to, underlines that glory is a key attribute of God.

God's glory manifests his presence

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and *saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* ACTS 7:55

Here “the glory of God” is correlated with “God” himself – and so God's presence.

In association with his glory, God is surrounded by brilliant light

[EZEKIEL, DESCRIBING A VISION OF GOD:] I then saw what looked like a throne made of sapphire, and sitting on the throne was a figure in the shape of a human. ²⁷From the waist up, it was glowing like metal in a hot furnace, and from the waist down it looked like the flames of a fire. *The figure was surrounded by a bright light,* ²⁸*as colorful as a rainbow that appears after a storm. I realized I was seeing the brightness of the LORD's glory!* EZEKIEL 1:26–28A CEV

God's glory is evidenced by the universe that he has made

The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky displays his handiwork.

PSALMS 19:1

God's Personhood

God is not a “thing” but a personal being with who we can interrelate.

God has a mind – knowing and understanding things

For the LORD is a God who knows; he evaluates what people do.

1 SAMUEL 2:3B

[DAVID:] And you, Solomon my son, obey the God of your father and serve him with a submissive attitude and a willing spirit, for *the LORD examines all minds and understands every motive of one's thoughts.*

1 CHRONICLES 28:9A

God has a will

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] In the Messiah we were also chosen when we were predestined according to the purpose of the one [God] *who does everything according to the intention of his will*, ... EPHESIANS 1:11 ISV

God has feelings and character

But *the LORD God felt sorry for his people*, and instead of destroying the temple, he sent prophets who warned the people over and over about their sins. 2 CHRONICLES 36:15 CEV

You have heard of Job's endurance and you have seen the Lord's purpose, that *the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.* JAMES 5:11B

God communicates

After *God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets,* ²*in these last days he has spoken to us in a son*, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world. HEBREWS 1:1–2

God interacts with people, responding to their needs

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. JAMES 4:8A

[GOD, SPEAKING OF A PERSON DEVOTED TO HIM:] *When he calls out to me, I will answer him. I will be with him when he is in trouble; I will rescue him and bring him honor.* PSALMS 91:15

God's Eternity

God has always been alive, the first of all things

Your throne, O LORD, has been firm from the beginning, and you existed before time began. PSALMS 93:2 GNT

This is what the LORD, Israel's king, says, their protector, the LORD who commands armies: "*I am the first and I am the last, there is no God but me.*" ISAIAH 44:6

God will live forever

[KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR:] *I extolled the Most High, and I praised and glorified the one who lives forever. For his authority is an everlasting authority, and his kingdom extends from one generation to the next.* DANIEL 4:34B

[PAUL, SPEAKING OF GOD:] *Now to the eternal king, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen.*
1 TIMOTHY 1:17

Moreover, God transcends time

Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that *a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day.* 2 PETER 3:8

God dwells outside of the limitations of time, not bound by its finite perspective. From his eternal perspective, diverse periods such as a day and a thousand years are both small, even insignificant. To God the distinction between them is merely relative.

God is self-existing

For as *the Father has life in himself*, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. JOHN 5:26 ESV

God does not change

All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from *the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.* JAMES 1:17

How does (or how should) the realization that God is always near affect you?

What is the relationship between God's glory and his presence?

What makes God a personal being?

What evidence is there that God interacts with people?

How can we relate to God if we cannot see him?

II. God's Pre-Eminence

(→ *God is holy*, p. 12)

A failure of many of us in the church today is that we have an inadequate view of God, failing to fully appreciate his pre-eminence. All Christians need to understand and be mindful of God's surpassing greatness and incomparable capabilities – notably his power, knowledge and wisdom.

God's Greatness

God is great and awesome

[MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] For *the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God* who is unbiased and takes no bribe, ... DEUTERONOMY 10:17

God is greater than all others

[JESUS:] *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,* and no one can snatch them from my Father's hand. JOHN 10:29

There is no one like God

[JEREMIAH:] I said, "*There is no one like you, LORD. You are great. And you are renowned for your power.*"⁷ Everyone should revere you, O King of all nations, because you deserve to be revered. *For there is no one like you among any of the wise people of the nations nor among any of their kings.* JEREMIAH 10:6–7

God is in fact beyond our comprehension

Yes, God is great – beyond our knowledge! The number of his years is unsearchable. JOB 36:26

*Can you discover the essence of God? Can you find out the perfection of the Almighty?*⁸ *It is higher than the heavens – what can you do? It is deeper than Sheol – what can you know?*⁹ *Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* JOB 11:7–9

The extent of God's being and attributes are far beyond our understanding.

God's Power

God's power is incomparable and unlimited

He [Jehoshaphat] prayed: “O LORD God of our ancestors, you are the God who lives in heaven and *rules over all the kingdoms of the nations. You possess strength and power; no one can stand against you.* 2 CHRONICLES 20:6

[PAUL, SPEAKING OF GOD:] You will also know *the unlimited greatness of his power as it works with might and strength* for us, the believers. EPHESIANS 1:19 GW

God can do all things – nothing is too hard

[JOB, TO GOD:] I know that *you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.* JOB 42:2 ESV

[THE ANGEL GABRIEL, TO MARY:] Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. ³⁷*Nothing is impossible for God!* LUKE 1:36–37 CEV

God performs awesome deeds

[ISAIAH, TO GOD:] When *you performed awesome deeds that took us by surprise*, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. ISAIAH 64:3

God's Knowledge and Wisdom

God knows everything

God is greater than our conscience and *knows all things.* 1 JOHN 3:20B

God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do

The LORD watches from heaven; *he sees all people.* ¹⁴From the place where he lives *he looks carefully at all the earth's inhabitants.* ¹⁵He is the one who forms every human heart, *and takes note of all their actions.* PSALMS 33:13–15

God knows people's minds

This is what the LORD says: *'This is what you are thinking, O house of Israel; I know what goes through your minds.'* EZEKIEL 11:5B

God knows the future

[GOD, TO ISRAEL:] *From the beginning I revealed the end. From long ago I told you things that had not yet happened, saying, "My plan will stand, and I'll do everything I intended to do."* ISAIAH 46:10 GW

God has incredible wisdom

Our Lord is great and has awesome power; *there is no limit to his wisdom.* PSALMS 147:5

God's Name

God declared his name to be the "LORD"

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with Moses, and *the LORD called out his name: the LORD.* EXODUS 34:5 NCV™

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and *they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?'*" ¹⁴*God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."* And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"¹⁵*God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.* EXODUS 3:13–15 ESV

"LORD" (v. 15) can be derived from "I AM" (v. 14). For the actual Hebrew that is rendered as "LORD" is "YHWH" (most likely pronounced "Yahweh") and it "is derived from the verb *HAYAH, to be*" (NASB text note) to which "I AM" is also related. Note that "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14) may well have the sense: "I will be who I will be". This title and its shortened form "I AM" (v. 14) appear to express God's unchanging nature, self-existence, self-determination and omnipresence.

Why is God greater than everyone and everything else? (Do not limit your answer to just what is mentioned in the verses.)

What is something about God that is beyond your ability to comprehend?

What are the implications of God's supreme power for the world?

Knowing that God can do all things, is there anything that you should ask and trust him to do?

How do you feel about God knowing everything? How does it encourage or challenge you?

2. God's Character

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I. Holy Characteristics

A good understanding of God requires a balanced understanding of his character, including the fundamental attribute of holiness. To obtain such an understanding, we must “take to heart” all aspects of his character. As well as the many characteristics that we find consoling, we also need to appreciate those that inspire godly fear.

Holiness

God’s holiness involves his moral purity. It concerns God’s separateness from and his intolerance of that which is morally impure. Holiness is fundamental to the other characteristics that follow in the first half of this chapter.

God is holy

And one [angelic being] called to another and said: “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*” ISAIAH 6:3 ESV

Note that the title “the LORD of hosts” points to God’s sovereign power over all things.

There is nothing bad in God . . .

[A PSALMIST:] They will say that the LORD is good. He is my Rock, and *there is no wrong in him.* PSALMS 92:15 NCV™

. . . and God cannot tolerate evil

[HABAKKUK, TO GOD:] *You are too just to tolerate evil; you are unable to condone wrongdoing.* HABAKKUK 1:13A NET

God shows himself to be holy by what he does

The LORD All-Powerful will receive glory by judging fairly; *the holy God will show himself holy by doing what is right.* ISAIAH 5:16 NCV™

There is no one holy like God

No one is holy like the LORD! There is no one other than you! There is no rock like our God! 1 SAMUEL 2:2

Righteousness

God is righteous and just

But *the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.* ISAIAH 5:16 ESV

All God does is right and just

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for *all his deeds are right and his ways are just.* DANIEL 4:37A

As such, God is truthful . . .

[GOD:] *I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.* ISAIAH 45:19B ESV

. . . and God does not show favoritism

For *there is no partiality with God.* ROMANS 2:11

Faithfulness

God is faithful

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; *great is your faithfulness.* LAMENTATIONS 3:22–23 ESV

God never forsakes nor fails

[DAVID, TO GOD:] Your loyal followers trust in you, for *you, LORD, do not abandon those who seek your help.* PSALMS 9:10

David also said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and brave, and do the work. Don’t be afraid or discouraged, because the LORD God, my God, is with you. *He will not fail you or leave you until all the work for the Temple of the LORD is finished.* 1 CHRONICLES 28:20 NCV™

God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises

God is no mere human! *He doesn’t tell lies or change his mind. God always keeps his promises.* NUMBERS 23:19 CEV

Anger

Although we usually view anger in a negative light, this is not how the Bible depicts God’s anger, or wrath. God’s anger is always justified and righteous, consistent with his holiness. Moreover, it arises in response to that which is contrary to his holiness. Unlike human anger, God’s anger is never uncontrolled, wayward or spasmodic – and is tempered by his mercy, notably where his own people are concerned.

God expresses anger, which has awesome consequences

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Who can really fathom the intensity of your anger? Your raging fury causes people to fear you.* PSALMS 90:11

Therefore [due to their evil] *the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.* ISAIAH 5:25 ESV

God is slow to anger and often holds it back . . .

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in loyal love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty . . .

NUMBERS 14:18A

Yet he is compassionate. He forgives sin and does not destroy. *He often holds back his anger, and does not stir up his fury.* PSALMS 78:38

. . . and God does not stay angry

He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.

MICAH 7:18B NKJV

God’s anger arises in response to sin and disobedience

[GOD, TO BAASHA THE KING OF ISRAEL:] Yet you followed in Jeroboam’s footsteps and encouraged my people Israel to sin; *their sins have made me angry.* 1 KINGS 16:2B

[GOD:] *I will angrily seek vengeance on the nations that do not obey me.* MICAH 5:15

What does holiness involve?

What are the implications of God's holiness for us?

Why is there so much injustice in the world when God is righteous and just?

How has God shown his faithfulness to you?

If God is good, how can anger be one of his characteristics?

II. Loving Characteristics

God's love is one of the two primary characteristics from which his other personal characteristics emanate, the other primary one being his holiness. Comprehending and persistently being mindful of God's love and his associated characteristics provides great encouragement for believers.

Love

God is love – as shown in him giving his only Son, to save us

The person who does not love does not know God, because *God is love*. ⁹*This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent his unique Son into the world so that we might live through him.* ¹⁰*This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ...* ¹⁶*We have come to know and rely on the love that God has for us. God is love, and the person who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

1 JOHN 4:8–10, 16 ISV

The phrase “God is love” (vv. 8, 16) implies that God's nature is fundamentally love, rather than that love is simply a characteristic of God. It also suggests that God is the sole source of love and so that love does not exist apart from him.

God's love is great

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *For your loyal love extends beyond the sky, and your faithfulness reaches the clouds.* PSALMS 108:4

God's love is constant

How precious, O God, is your constant love! PSALMS 36:7A GNT

God's love lasts forever

[ETHAN, TO GOD:] *I know that your love will last for all time, that your faithfulness is as permanent as the sky.* PS 89:2 GNT

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for *his steadfast love endures forever*. ²Give thanks to the God of gods, for *his steadfast love endures forever*. PSALMS 136:1–2 ESV

Mercy

God is merciful

[MOSES, TO ISRAEL:] *The LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not abandon you, destroy you, or forget the promise to your ancestors that he swore he would keep.* DEUTERONOMY 4:31 GW

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Because of your great mercy, I come to your house, LORD . . .* PS 25:6A CEV

God is also compassionate

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on his faithful followers. PSALMS 103:13

Due to his mercy and compassion, God is long-suffering

[LEVITES, PRAYING TO GOD AND MAKING REFERENCE TO THEIR ANCESTORS:] Then, when they were at rest again, they went back to doing evil before you. Then you abandoned them to their enemies, and they gained dominion over them. *When they again cried out to you, in your compassion you heard from heaven and rescued them time and again.* ²⁹And you solemnly admonished them in order to return them to your law, but they behaved presumptuously and did not obey your commandments. They sinned against your ordinances – those by which an individual, if he obeys them, will live. They boldly turned from you; they rebelled and did not obey. ³⁰*You prolonged your kindness with them for many years, and you solemnly admonished them by your Spirit through your prophets. Still they paid no attention, so you delivered them into the hands of the neighboring peoples.* ³¹*However, due to your abundant mercy you did not do away with them altogether; you did not abandon them. For you are a merciful and compassionate God.* NEHEMIAH 9:28–31

Due to his mercy and compassion, God is forgiving

Who is a God like you? *You forgive sin and overlook the rebellion of your faithful people. You will not be angry forever, because you would rather show mercy.* ¹⁹*You will again have compassion on us. You will overcome our wrongdoing. You will throw all our sins into the deep sea.* MICAH 7:18–19 GW

Goodness

God is good

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *You are good and you do good.* PSALMS 119:68A

God exercises kindness

How can I repay the LORD for all his acts of kindness to me?

PSALMS 116:12

God is generous

But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask *God, who gives to all generously* and without reprimand, and it will be given to him. JAMES 1:5

The phrase “without reprimand” may be implying that God “won’t correct you for asking” (CEV). In any case, the verse points to the fact that God gives “ungrudgingly” (AMP, NRSV; cf. NLT).

Jealousy

The Hebrew and Greek words translated as “jealousy” convey a very forceful passion. When used of God, “jealousy” is spoken of in a positive light, as a virtuous attribute aligned with his profound commitment to and love for his people.

God’s jealousy in regard to his people is comparable to that of a husband or wife. Their jealousy is a product of their intense love for each other and evoked by anything that poses a threat to their relationship. As such God’s jealousy is expressed in action against whatever threatens his people or his relationship with them. Thus it is expressed both against hostile forces – bringing salvation to his people – and in punishing any unfaithfulness of his people, leading them back to him.

God is a jealous God

[MOSES, TO ISRAEL:] For the LORD your God is a consuming fire; *he is a jealous God.* DEUTERONOMY 4:24

Here God’s jealousy is compared to fire devouring or destroying that which has aroused it.

God's jealousy arises in response to his people's sin

Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD. *They made him more jealous by their sins than their ancestors had done.* 1 KINGS 14:22

God is also jealous for his people's well-being

Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. ³Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. ⁴Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. ⁵And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.

ZECHARIAH 8:2–5 ESV

God's jealousy for Zion (v. 2) – i.e. Jerusalem - has in view her restoration (vv. 3–5; cf. GNT) and expressing wrath towards her enemies (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT).

Explain in your own words what the Bible means by saying that “God is love” (1Jn 4:8, 16)?

What do you find particularly remarkable about God’s love? How has God shown his love to you?

What does “compassion” mean? How does God show compassion?

How would you explain God’s jealousy to a non-believer?

Choose one of God’s personality characteristics that you either: (a) greatly value; or (b) need to be more conscious of. Say why you choose this.

3. Jesus Christ

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I. General

The NT makes remarkable claims about aspects of Jesus Christ's being and his character. In doing so it shows Jesus Christ's nature to mirror that of God, and so points to his deity (his "God nature"). The NT also often refers to Jesus Christ's "name", making it a further concept that is important to grasp.

Jesus Christ's Eternity

Jesus Christ existed in the beginning . . .

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] I am writing to you, fathers, because you know *him who has existed from the beginning*. 1 JOHN 2:13A GNT

Jesus Christ existed in the beginning, before all time.

. . . Jesus Christ was before all things

[JESUS, TO GOD:] And now, Father, glorify me at your side with *the glory I had with you before the world was created*. JOHN 17:5

Jesus Christ will be alive forever

But because *Jesus lives forever, he will never stop serving as priest*.
²⁵*So he is able always to save those who come to God through him because he always lives, asking God to help them*. HEBREWS 7:24–25 NCV™

Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is “the life”

For as the Father has life in himself, so *he has granted the Son also to have life in himself*. JOHN 5:26 ESV

Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life*. The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live. JOHN 11:25 ISV

Descriptions of Jesus Christ as “the life” reflect the fact that he has life inherent (cf. 5:26 ↑) as part of his essential nature, and as such is self-existing. Primarily they point to Jesus Christ as the source of life – the one who gives life – as the latter part of this verse suggests.

Jesus Christ remains the same

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever! HEBREWS 13:8

Jesus Christ's Pre-Eminence

Jesus Christ is greater than all things

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, ¹⁶for all things in heaven and on earth were created by him – all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers – all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things. COLOSSIANS 1:15–18

Jesus Christ has divine glory

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. MATTHEW 25:31

Note that “the Son of Man” was the title Jesus used for himself the most. It is a messianic title, but it also underlines his humanity.

Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But our citizenship is in heaven – and we also await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of *that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.* PHILIPPIANS 3:20–21

Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom

[THE DISCIPLES, TO JESUS:] Now *we know that you know everything ...* JOHN 16:30

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] For *I will give you the words along with the wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.* LUKE 21:15

Christ has wisdom superior to that of any adversary that we face.

Jesus Christ is everywhere

So Jesus came down, and he is the same One who went up above all the sky. *Christ did that to fill everything with his presence.*

EPHESIANS 4:10 NCV™

Jesus Christ's Character

Jesus Christ is holy and righteous

[BELIEVERS, TO GOD:] Then they turned against *your holy Servant Jesus*, your chosen Messiah. ACTS 4:27 CEV

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, *Jesus Christ the righteous One*, ... 1 JOHN 2:1B

Jesus Christ is faithful

But *the Lord is faithful*, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 2 THESSALONIANS 3:3

Jesus Christ is loving

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power to *understand the greatness of Christ's love—how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is*.¹⁹ *Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know*, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God. EPHESIANS 3:18–19 NCV™

Jesus Christ's Name

In biblical times, a person's name represented their whole person – including their nature, authority and significance or purpose. This concept is in view in references to the “name” of a person.

Jesus Christ's “name” signifies Jesus Christ himself

For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses *all who call on him*.¹³ *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*. ROMANS 10:12–13

These verses illustrate that the “name” of Jesus Christ signifies or embodies Jesus Christ himself by the use of the equivalent phrases “call on him” (v. 12) and “calls on the name of the Lord” (v. 13).

What aspects of Jesus Christ's being and character mark him as being divine?

What points does Colossians 1:15–18 make that indicate that Jesus Christ is greater than all things?

What is one attribute of Jesus Christ that you need to be more mindful of in your daily living? How would doing so affect you?

What does the Bible mean by trusting or calling upon the "name" of Jesus Christ?

II. Jesus Christ and God

The claim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is one of the most central teachings in the NT. In addition to this, the NT says much that associates Jesus Christ with God. This teaching forms the basis of a large portion of what distinguishes Christianity from other religions.

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General

Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . .

Therefore since we [believers] have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, *Jesus the Son of God*, let us hold fast to our confession. HEBREWS 4:14

. . . Jesus Christ is God’s only Son

God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. 1 JOHN 4:9B

Jesus Christ is the image of God

... the glorious gospel of *Christ, who is the image of God*. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4B

The assertion that Jesus Christ is the image of God – having the nature and fullness of God (as per the following subsection) – reflects and supports the assertion that he is the Son of God.

Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, ⁶who though *he existed in the form of God* did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, ...

PHILIPPIANS 2:5–6

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son ...

COLOSSIANS 1:19

The phrase “all his fullness” refers to: the fullness of God’s nature (cf. GNT) – “the sum total of the divine perfection, powers, and attributes” (AMP); and/or “all of himself” (NCV; cf. CEV, NLT), meaning that God himself in all his fullness dwells in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony

God testifies to Jesus Christ being his Son

After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened and *he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him.* ¹⁷*And a voice from heaven said, “This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight.”* MATTHEW 3:16–17

Others also testify to Jesus Christ being the Son of God

When evil spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before him and shouted, “You are the Son of God!” MARK 3:11 NCV™

And *John gave this testimony:* “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and stay on him. ³³I still did not know that he was the one, but God, who sent me to baptize with water, had said to me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and stay on a man; he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴*I have seen it,” said John, “and I tell you that he is the Son of God.”* JOHN 1:32–34 GNT

Jesus Christ’s deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God

Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹*But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* JOHN 20:30–31

The phrase “these are recorded” (v. 31) refers to the miraculous signs that John did record as testimony to Jesus Christ being the Son of God, his miraculous deeds giving credence to his miraculous claim.

Other events of Jesus Christ’s incarnation are further evidence

Then Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. ⁵¹*Just then the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks were split apart.* ⁵²*And tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had died were raised. ...* ⁵⁴*Now when the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were extremely terrified and said, “Truly this one was God’s Son!”* MATTHEW 27:50–52, 54

It [the gospel] is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: as to his humanity, he was born a descendant of David; ⁴*as to his divine*

holiness, he was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death. ROMANS 1:3–4 GNT

Jesus Christ's resurrection is a powerful testimony to him being the Son of God.

Jesus Christ and God Are One

Jesus Christ and God are one – each is in the other

[JESUS, TO THE JEWS:] *The Father and I are one.* ... ³⁶do you say about the one whom the Father set apart and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷If I do not perform the deeds of my Father, do not believe me. ³⁸But if I do them, even if you do not believe me, believe the deeds, so that you may come to know and understand that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me.* JOHN 10:30, 36–38

A number of commentators state that the Greek for "one" (v. 30) is neuter, meaning that it denotes "one thing", rather than "one person". God (the Father) and Jesus Christ are generally understood to have a unity of essence or nature, but not be the same person. This unity would include a unity of purpose, as vv. 37–38a suggest.

To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see God

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him.*" ⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be content." ⁹Jesus replied, "Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? *The person who has seen me has seen the Father!* How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" JOHN 14:7–9

Jesus Christ is called God

Thomas replied to him [Jesus], "My Lord and my God!" JOHN 20:28

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God.* JOHN 1:1 ESV

Jesus Christ is understood to be "the Word", with the man Jesus being the manifestation of "the Word" (cf. v. 14).

Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is

The fact that God's people relate to (or treat) Jesus Christ in ways in which they relate to God, reflects a unity or oneness of Jesus Christ with God. Thus the teaching in this section supplements the teaching in the previous section.

Jesus Christ is worshiped

While he [Jesus] was blessing them, he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. ⁵²*They worshiped him* and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. LUKE 24:51–52 ISV

People pray to Jesus Christ

They continued to stone Stephen while *he prayed*, “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*” ACTS 7:59

People obey and serve Jesus Christ

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.* MATTHEW 28:19–20A

From *James, a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
JAMES 1:1A CEV

What does the Bible mean in saying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? In what sense is he God's Son?

Why is the teaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God so central and significant to Christianity?

What do you think Paul means in saying that Jesus Christ is "in very nature God" (Philippians 2:6)?

In what way/s are Jesus Christ and God one?

In prayer, should we be conscious of whether we are addressing God or Jesus Christ (or both)? Does it matter?

4. The Holy Spirit

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I. General

(► II. *God's Holy Spirit in His People*, in Part D)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. This assertion is reflected by the Holy Spirit's divine and imposing attributes. However, the Bible also distinguishes the Holy Spirit from God, portraying him as a personal being in his own right.

The Holy Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .

Now [in the beginning] the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but *the Spirit of God* was moving over the surface of the water. GENESIS 1:2

The Holy Spirit is God's spirit. As such one should bear in mind that when the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, it is in effect speaking of God himself.

. . . Accordingly, God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit

I will no longer hide my face from them, *when I pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the sovereign LORD.* EZEKIEL 39:29

The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] Now *by this we know that God resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us.* 1 JOHN 3:24B

This correlates the Holy Spirit with God's presence by asserting that believers having God's Spirit verifies that God lives in them.

God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

And *he* [God] *who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit*, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. ROMANS 8:27

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *The Spirit searches out all things, even the deep secrets of God.* ¹¹Who knows the thoughts that another person has? Only a person's spirit that lives within him knows his thoughts. It is the same with God. *No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* 1 CORINTHIANS 2:10B–11 NCV™

The Holy Spirit's Being

As well as being a spirit, the Holy Spirit is everywhere

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* PSALMS 139:7–8 ESV

Verse 7 links the Holy Spirit with God's presence, and so along with v. 8 implies that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent – i.e. everywhere.

The Holy Spirit is eternal

How much more is done by the blood of Christ. He offered himself through *the eternal Spirit* as a perfect sacrifice to God. HEBREWS 9:14A NCV™

The Holy Spirit has great power

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him [the Messiah], the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, *the Spirit of counsel and might*, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ISAIAH 11:2 ESV

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* 1 JOHN 4:4

The “one who is in you” is most likely referring to the Holy Spirit. As such, the description of the Holy Spirit as greater than Satan – “the one who is in the world” – is indicative of the Spirit's great power.

The Holy Spirit has great knowledge

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] But the Advocate, *the Holy Spirit*, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you.* JOHN 14:26

This points to the Holy Spirit's profound knowledge.

The Holy Spirit has great wisdom

But some men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen ... as well as some from Cilicia and the province of Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰*Yet they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.* ACTS 6:9–10

This suggests that Stephen's profound wisdom was a product of the Holy Spirit – indicative of the Holy Spirit having great wisdom.

The Holy Spirit's Personhood

The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] But *when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.* JOHN 15:26 ESV

The Holy Spirit has his own mind

And he [God] who searches our hearts knows *the mind of the Spirit*, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. ROMANS 8:27

The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through *the love of the Spirit*, to join fervently with me in prayer to God on my behalf. ROMANS 15:30

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, and self-control. GALATIANS 5:22–23A

Each of these characteristics is described as a “fruit of the Spirit” because – like fruit from a tree – their source and means of growth is the Holy Spirit. Arguably this implies that the Holy Spirit's own character is reflected in them.

The Holy Spirit communicates . . .

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But *the Spirit himself speaks to God for us, even begs God for us* with deep feelings that words cannot explain. ROMANS 8:26B NCV

. . . and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways

The church became stronger, as *the Holy Spirit encouraged it and helped it grow.* ACTS 9:31B CEV

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But if *you are led by the Spirit*, you are not under the law. GALATIANS 5:18

What does the Bible mean in describing the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of God”?

How do you find it helpful or encouraging recognizing the personal nature of the Holy Spirit, knowing that he is not simply a thing?

In what ways does the Holy Spirit communicate?

Are there any attributes listed that you had not previously associated with the Holy Spirit? Can you think of any other attributes of the Holy Spirit that were not mentioned here?

How you would explain the Holy Spirit to someone who had not heard of him.

II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as One

➔ *Jesus Christ and God are one – each is in the other, p. 28)*

The NT speaks of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as three identities, but also shows them as being related to each other in a unique and indivisible unity. From this comes the concept of them being three “persons” but also being one entity, the doctrine of the Trinity. This close-knit relationship between God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is one of the most intriguing and debated aspects of the Bible. The following provides some basic “building blocks” for coming to terms with this relationship.

Mutual Association

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are closely associated

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in *the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*, ... MATTHEW 28:19

The phrase “the name of” denotes a single name. Here it is applied to all three of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. As such it points to a very close relationship between the three.

The Holy Spirit is identified with God

[PETER, TO ANANIAS:] *Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit? ...*
⁴ ... *You lied to God!* ACTS 5:3B, 4B CEV

Ananias had attempted to deceive the church, and in effect had lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter indicates that to lie to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) is to lie to God (v. 4). As such Peter identifies the Holy Spirit with God.

The Holy Spirit is also identified with Jesus Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now *the Lord is the Spirit*, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from *the Lord, who is the Spirit*. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17–18

There are a number of interpretations of “the Lord is the Spirit” (v. 17) and “the Lord, who is the Spirit” (v. 18). The ones that are

arguably the most plausible are compatible with a literal reading, demonstrating the very close association between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed *the Spirit of God* lives in you. Now if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ*, this person does not belong to him. ROMANS 8:9

This not only closely correlates the Holy Spirit with God and with Jesus Christ, it also associates Jesus Christ with God, with the one Spirit being said to be of them both.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together

So Jesus said to them [the disciples] again, “Peace be with you. *Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.*” ²²*And after he said this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.* JOHN 20:21–22

God sent Jesus Christ to carry out his purposes and Christ sends his people empowered with the Holy Spirit to continue his work.

Mutual Divine Attributes

Common attributes and roles do not necessarily imply oneness, but as the shared attributes and roles in this and the following section are divine – and as the Bible teaches that there is only one God – they do point to the oneness of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Note that the subsections in this and the following section are each composed of three verses or passages – of which the first refers to God, the second to Jesus Christ and the third to the Holy Spirit.

Omnipresence – God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere

“Do you not know that *I am everywhere*?” the LORD asks. JEREMIAH 23:24B

Christ did that to fill everything with his presence. EPHESIANS 4:10B NCV™

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Where can I go to get away from your Spirit? Where can I run from you?* PSALMS 139:7 NCV™

Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power

I know, LORD, that you are all-powerful; that you can do everything you want. JOB 42:2 GNT

Our Lord Jesus Christ ²¹has power over everything ... PHILIPPIANS 3:20B–21A CEV

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* 1 JOHN 4:4

Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that *he knows everything.* 1 JOHN 3:20 GNT

[JESUS' DISCIPLES, TO JESUS:] Now *we know that you know everything* and do not need anyone to ask you anything. JOHN 16:30A

For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:10B

The Holy Spirit searches out or finds out all things (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

Mutual Divine Roles

As well as pointing to the oneness of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, their common roles also reflect the fact that God works through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation

You alone are the LORD. *You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, along with all their multitude of stars, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You impart life to them all, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.* NEHEMIAH 9:6

All things were created by him [Christ], and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. JOHN 1:3

[ELIHU:] *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.* JOB 33:4

They each give spiritual or eternal life

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 1 JOHN 5:11B

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also *the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.* JOHN 5:21

The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help!
JOHN 6:63A

They each make God's people holy

Obey my laws, because *I am the LORD and I make you holy.*
LEVITICUS 20:8 GNT

Husbands, love your wives just as *Christ loved the church and gave himself for her* ²⁶*to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word,* ²⁷*so that he may present the church to himself as glorious – not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.* EPHESIANS 5:25–27

[PAUL:] I do this in order that I might bring the nations to God as an acceptable offering, *made holy by the Holy Spirit.* ROMANS 15:16B GW

What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit's relationship to God and Jesus Christ?

How does Matthew 28:19 imply a very close association – even a oneness – between God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?

What is the significance of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit all having divine attributes?

In acts that are attributed to all three of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (e.g. giving life, making people holy), do the three of them have the same roles or different ones?

In what ways are God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit one? In what ways are they different?

5. Angels, Satan and Demons

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II. Satan and Demons

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I. Angels

The Bible often mentions angels. The existence and role of these mighty servants of God should be a great encouragement to believers. This is in no small part due to the fact that their work often involves believers, including giving believers supernatural help.

Note that while the great majority of references to angels in the Bible are to God’s holy angels, evil angels are also mentioned. These are commonly identified with demons. In headings in this book, “Angels” primarily refer to angels of God. But bear in mind that some concepts, such as angels being very powerful, are applicable to all angels.

Attributes of Angels

Angels have a human-like form, but are very awesome

[DANIEL, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen; around his waist was a belt made of gold from Upaz. ⁶His body resembled yellow jasper, and his face had an appearance like lightning. His eyes were like blazing torches; his arms and feet had the gleam of polished bronze. His voice thundered forth like the sound of a large crowd.* DANIEL 10:5–6

This is describing an angel. The reference to the angel as a “man” and the mention of his human-like features (waist, face, eyes, arms and feet) suggest that angels have a human-like form.

Angels are very powerful

He will do this when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with *his mighty angels*, ... 2 THESSALONIANS 1:7B GNT

Suddenly there was a severe earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. MATTHEW 28:2

The accompanying earthquake is indicative of the angel’s awesome power. The stone was the very large one that had sealed Jesus’ tomb.

Angels can communicate and interact with others

Suddenly an angel came to him [Elijah] and touched him. “Get up and eat,” the angel said. ⁶Elijah saw near his head a loaf baked over coals and a jar of water, so he ate and drank. Then he went back to sleep. ⁷Later the LORD’S angel came to him a second time. *The angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat. If you don’t, the journey will be too hard for you.”* 1 KINGS 19:5–7B NCV™

Angels and God

Angels surround God, and even stand in his presence

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION OF A SCENE IN HEAVEN:] *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels in a circle around the throne, as well as the living creatures and the elders.* REVELATION 5:11A

The angel answered him [Zechariah], “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God ... LUKE 1:19A

Angels worship God and Jesus Christ

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION OF A SCENE IN HEAVEN:] The angels who stood around the throne knelt in front of it with their faces to the ground. The elders and the four living creatures knelt there with them. *Then they all worshiped God* ¹²*and said, “Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen!”* REVELATION 7:11–12 CEV

And when God brings *his firstborn Son* into the world, he says, *“Let all God’s angels worship him.”* HEBREWS 1:6 NCV

Angels serve God and Jesus Christ

Praise the LORD, *you angels of his, you powerful warriors who carry out his decrees and obey his orders!* ²¹*Praise the LORD, all you warriors of his, you servants of his who carry out his desires!* PSALMS 103:20–21

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everything that causes sin as well as all lawbreakers. MATTHEW 13:41

Angels and God's People

Angels help and care for God's people

What are all the angels? They are spirits sent to serve those who are going to receive salvation. HEBREWS 1:14 GW

The LORD's angel camps around the LORD's loyal followers and delivers them. PSALMS 34:7

Angels give people messages, including instructions . . .

About three o'clock one afternoon *he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius."* ⁴Staring at him and becoming greatly afraid, Cornelius replied, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said to him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have gone up as a memorial before God." ⁵*Now send men to Joppa and summon a man named Simon, who is called Peter.* ACTS 10:3–5

Note that the Hebrew and Greek words for "angel" carry the meaning "messenger".

. . . They also give messages about future events

[PAUL:] *For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve came to me* ²⁴*and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul! You must stand before Caesar, and God has graciously granted you the safety of all who are sailing with you.'* ACTS 27:23–24

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, . . . REVELATION 1:1 ESV

Have you or anyone close to you been aware of having an experience with angels? If so, what was it?

Why are angels so special?

What does the teaching about angels in this section show about God?

In what ways do angels help God's people?

In what way/s should the Bible's teaching about angels encourage us?

II. Satan and Demons

(⇒ II. *Spiritual Warfare*, in Part H)

Many people find the existence of Satan (i.e. the devil) and demons disturbing and choose to avoid the subject. But to live the Christian life it is vital to understand our chief opponents. Moreover, the Bible has a lot to say about Satan and demons – much of which is in fact encouraging to believers.

Satan's Evilness

Satan is evil and is opposed to God's kingdom

When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one [Satan] comes and snatches what was sown in his heart; this is the seed sown along the path. MATTHEW 13:19

Satan is deceitful

[JESUS, TO THE JEWS:] You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.* JOHN 8:44

Satan's Power

Satan has great power and authority in the world

Then *the devil* led him [Jesus] up to a high place and showed him in a flash *all the kingdoms of the world.* ⁶*And he said to him, "To you I will grant this whole realm – and the glory that goes along with it, for it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish.*

LUKE 4:5–6

[JOHN:] ... *the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* 1 JOHN 5:19B

Satan works in and through unbelievers

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS IN EPHEBUS:] Yes, in the past you lived the way the world lives, following the ruler of the evil powers that are above

the earth. *That same spirit [Satan] is now working in those who refuse to obey God.* EPHESIANS 2:2 NCV™

And they [false teachers] may wake up and escape from *the trap of the devil, who catches them to do what he wants.* 2 TIMOTHY 2:26 NCV™

But, Satan is not as powerful as God, . . .

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet.* ROMANS 16:20A

. . . nor is Satan as powerful as Jesus Christ

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the man who had been mute began to speak, and the crowds were amazed. . . . ²¹[JESUS:] *When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his possessions are safe.* ²²*But when a stronger man attacks and conquers him, he takes away the first man's armor on which the man relied and divides up his plunder.* LUKE 11:14, 21–22

In v. 22 Jesus is referring to his overpowering of Satan, stripping him of his power and taking what was his – a truth demonstrated by Jesus driving out demons (v. 14) and thus releasing people from Satan's grip.

Moreover, Satan stands condemned

... the ruler of this world has been condemned. JOHN 16:11B

Satan's Work against God's People

Satan tempts God's people

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA:] *So when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter somehow tempted you and our toil had proven useless.* 1 THESSALONIANS 3:5

Satan can afflict God's people

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and he afflicted Job with a malignant ulcer from the sole of his feet to the top of his head.

JOB 2:7

[JESUS CHRIST, TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA:] Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. *The devil is about to have some of you thrown into prison so you may be tested, and you will experience suffering for ten days.* REVELATION 2:10A

But Satan’s influence is limited by God and Jesus Christ

[PAUL:] So that I would not become too proud of the wonderful things that were shown to me, *a painful physical problem was given to me. This problem was a messenger from Satan, sent to beat me and keep me from being too proud.* ⁸*I begged the Lord three times to take this problem away from me.* ⁹*But he said to me, “My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you.”* So I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ’s power can live in me. 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7–9 NCV™

Paul’s affliction apparently came from Satan. But Paul implies that Jesus Christ permitted it, using it both to keep Paul from becoming conceited (v. 7) and to make Paul receptive to Christ’s power working in him. Thus this passage illustrates that God and Jesus Christ may permit Satan to afflict (or tempt) their people, but only in accordance with their purposes. As such his power and influence is limited by them.

Demons

Evil spiritual forces are referred to by a number of names, including “demons”, “evil spirits”, “spirits” and (evil) “angels”. In order to be concise, generally only “Demons” (or “demons”) has been used in this and the following subheadings.

Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.* EPHESIANS 6:12

The terms “rulers” and “powers” are indicative of the great – but limited – power of demons. The last two clauses appear to together refer to the whole of the spiritual realm.

Demons are aligned with Satan

Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon [Satan], and *the dragon and his angels fought back.*

REVELATION 12:7

This illustrates that evil angels or demons are aligned with Satan.

Demons can possess people . . .

When he [Jesus] came to the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes, *two demon-possessed men* coming from the tombs met him. They were extremely violent, so that no one was able to pass by that way. MATTHEW 8:28

. . . and demons can cause such people much harm

[A FATHER OF A DEMON-POSSESSED BOY:] *A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions and causes him to foam at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves him alone, torturing him severely.* LUKE 9:39

Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ

You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that – and tremble with fear. JAMES 2:19

But *Jesus rebuked him* [a demon-possessed man]: “*Silence! Come out of him!*” ²⁶*After throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.* ²⁷They were all amazed so that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! *He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him.*” MARK 1:25–27

Demons face eternal punishment

Then he [Jesus Christ] will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into *the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!*’ MATTHEW 25:41

What is one way that Satan deceives people?

Why should you be wary of but not frightened of Satan?

What role do you think Satan plays in:

- (a) temptation (as opposed to sinful human nature)?
- (b) bad things that happen to Christians (as opposed to God's providence and/or "chance")?

How does a person come to be possessed by a demon?

What can we do for a person possessed by a demon?

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There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to www.thebibleunpacked.net.

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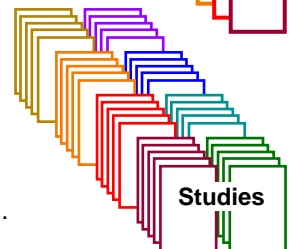
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Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/; www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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