

### 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 NET

### 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 NET

## 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?*"<sup>14</sup>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.*'"<sup>15</sup>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.

## CHAPTER 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.* ... <sup>32</sup>The 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 NET

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 NET

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 cannot be seen by people

[PAUL, SPEAKING OF GOD:] He alone has endless life and lives in inaccessible light. *No one has ever seen him, nor can anyone see him.* Honor and eternal power belong to him! Amen. 1 TIMOTHY 6:16 ISV

#### God is everywhere

*“I am a God who is near,” says the LORD. “I am also a God who is far away.”* <sup>24</sup>*“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.

## 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 NET

[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. <sup>37</sup>*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 NET

## God's Knowledge and Wisdom

### God knows everything

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

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

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

## II. God's Pre-Eminence

See also: *God is holy*, p. 14

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 NET

#### 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 NET

#### There is no one like God

[JEREMIAH:] *No one is like you, O LORD. You are great. Your name is powerful. Everyone fears you, O King of the Nations. This is what you deserve. No one is like you among all the wise people in the nations in all their kingdoms.* JEREMIAH 10:6-7 GW

#### God is beyond our comprehension

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

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

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

## 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 NET

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. From 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, 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 NET

## 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 NET

[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 NET

### 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 NET

### God communicates

After *God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, <sup>2</sup>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 NET

### God interacts with people, responding to their needs

*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.*

JAMES 4:8A NET

[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 NET

## 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 NET

### 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 NET

[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 NET

### 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 NET

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 NET