

# UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

## Section 13: God's Spirituality and Invisibility

*Assigned Reading:*  
A. W. Pink – *The Attributes of God*  
No Assigned Reading

### Introduction:

We have spent several weeks speaking of the “infinite” of God. We’ve spoken of God’s infinitude in relation to Time (God’s Eternality), in relation to Location (God’s Omnipresence), in relation to Ability (God’s Omnipotence), and in relation to Knowledge (God’s Omniscience). In coming weeks we’ll be looking at God’s Supremacy, Freedom, and Decrees, but before this, we will discuss two attributes that are termed by Wayne Grudem as “Attributes describing God’s Being” – namely, Spirituality and Invisibility. It is appropriate to discuss these now, having studied several of God’s attributes of Greatness...

**Q1:** What is God made of? Matter? Pure Energy? Pure Thought? Something Else?

**Q2:** Are images helpful in worshipping our God? If so, how should images depict God?

**Q3:** How does your answer to question 2 affect your opinion of art or teaching materials?

### Outline:

#### I. What is God “made of?”

##### A. *God is Spirit*

1. **Strong’s** definition of God: “God is the infinite and perfect Spirit in whom all things have their source, support, and end” (p52)
2. The Woman at the Well Passage...
  - a. Jesus gives one of the most clear and explicit statements regarding what God is “made of” in **John 4**. It is in His discussion with the woman at the well. She asks a question regarding the proper location to worship God – Jerusalem or Samaria...
  - b. Jesus responds by telling her that proper worship is not dependent on location because... **John 4:24** "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
  - c. Something of God’s being “spirit” means that He is in no way limited to a spatial location... (omnipresence)
3. God does not have “spatial dimensions” – He is wholly present everywhere (not dispersed throughout space).
  - a. **Psalm 139:7** Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, <sup>10</sup> Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
  - b. **1 Kings 8:27** "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!
4. God’s existence is utterly unlike anything else in creation. God’s kind of existence is far superior to all material existence...
  - a. **Grudem**, “We might say that God is ‘pure being’ or ‘the fullness of essence of being’

- b. "... God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence."

### B. *God is Invisible*

1. **Grudem**, "God's invisibility means that God's total essence, all of His spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows Himself to us through visible, created things."
2. **Scriptures:**
  - a. **John 1:18** No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.
  - b. **John 6:46** "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.
  - c. **1 Timothy 1:17** Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
  - d. **1 Timothy 6:16** who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen.
  - e. **1 John 4:12** No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
3. **What about Moses?**
  - a. **Ex 33:11** Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend...
  - b. **Exodus 33:20-23** But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" <sup>21</sup> Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock; <sup>22</sup> and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."
4. **What about Theophanies** – "an appearance of God"
  - a. **Gen 18:1-33**
  - b. **Gen 32:28-30**
  - c. **Ex 13:21-22**
  - d. **Ex 24:9-11**
  - e. **Judges 13:21-22**
  - f. **Is 6:1**
  - g. **Feinberg:** "What these passages show. . . is that although God's essential nature is spirit, that does not preclude him from making his presence known through some physical phenomenon that manifests his presence to those who see or hear it. This shouldn't be entirely surprising, for God, as creator of matter and spirit, certainly ought to be able to supply whatever matter he needs on any occasion to manifest his presence" (*No One Like Him*, 220).
5. **Jesus Christ is the fullest visible manifestation ever given by God...**
  - a. **John 14:9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and *yet* you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
  - b. **Colossians 1:15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
  - c. **Hebrews 1:3** And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

6. **All of God cannot be seen, but God provided some outward form which was able to be seen by man...** *In other words, God's total essence cannot be seen by us...*
- a. What about in our "glorification?"
    - (1) **1 Cor 13:12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.
    - (2) **2 Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
    - (3) **1 John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
    - (4) **Rev 22:3-4** There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; <sup>4</sup> they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.
  - b. Looking upon God will change us and make us like Him! We will find pure joy and delight in this consummation – seeing & knowing God... *called the "beatific vision"*
  - c. **Numbers 6:24-26** The LORD bless you, and keep you; <sup>25</sup> The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.' – Heb. Parallelism: Blessing is found in the Lord's presence – the Blessing is found in His keeping us, being gracious to us, and granting us peace.

## II. Discussing God's Spirituality

### A. God's Being is like nothing else...

1. Creation does truly declare elements about God... God reflects something of His own character through what has been made...
  - **Rom 1:18-20** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.
2. We are forbidden from thinking of God's being in terms of anything in the created universe, for to do so is to think of Him as less than He really is... All comparisons come up short, all are lacking, all fail to communicate God's being completely!
  - **Isaiah 46:5-9** "To whom would you liken **Me** And make **Me** equal and **compare Me**, That we would be alike? <sup>6</sup> "Those who lavish gold from the purse And weigh silver on the scale Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it *into* a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. <sup>7</sup> "They lift it upon the shoulder *and* carry it; They set it in its place and it stands *there*. It does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; It cannot deliver him from his distress. <sup>8</sup> "Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. <sup>9</sup> "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,
  - **Isaiah 40:18** To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?
3. **The Prohibition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment:**
  - **Exodus 20:1-6** Then God spoke all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>3</sup> "You shall

have no other gods before Me. <sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup> but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

- **This must mean** even the making of images in worshipping God Himself, otherwise it would merely be repeating the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment again...
- **Charles Hodge**, "idolatry consists not only in the worship of false gods, but also in the worship of the true God by images."
- **Packer**, "The commandment thus deals not with the object of our worship, but with the manner of it; what it tells us is that statues and pictures of the One whom we worship are not to be used as an aid to worshipping him."

## B. Implications...

### 1. Occasion for Worship:

**God, not being made of matter, is "indestructible, imperishable, invisible."**

### 2. Deterrent from Improper Modes of Worship...

#### a. The principle against "idolatry and images"

(1) **To picture God in creaturely ways is to dishonor Him...**

(2) **Grudem**, "... to picture God as *existing* in a form or *mode of being* that is like anything else in creation is to think of God in a horribly misleading and dishonoring way."

#### b. Interesting to see that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment is under girded by the fact that God is a "jealous god" – He is angered when His glory is diminished!

(1) **Ex 20:5** "You shall not worship them or serve them, for I, the Lord your god, am a jealous God..."

(2) **Deuteronomy 4:23-24** "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you. <sup>24</sup> "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

#### c. What about the use of pictures of Jesus?

(1) In Worship? Prayer?

(2) In Sunday-school materials? For instruction?

(3) What about religious art?

#### d. Two points by Packer...

(1) Images dishonor God, for they obscure His glory

○ **Calvin**, "A true image of God is not to be found in all the world; and hence... His glory is defiled, and His truth corrupted by the lie, whenever He is set before our eyes in a visible form... Therefore, to devise any image of God is itself impious; because by this corruption His majesty is adulterated, and He is figured to be other than He is."

○ **Packer**, "The heart of the objection to pictures and images is that they inevitably conceal most, if not all, of the truth about the personal nature and character of the divine Being whom they represent." **Ex) Aaron & golden calf**

○ **The Danger:** What images FAIL to display...

- (2) Images mislead us, for they convey false ideas about God
  - Beware of the perversion of our thoughts toward the Lord...
  - **Packer**, “Psychologically, it is certain that if you habitually focus your thoughts on an image or picture of the One to whom you are going to pray, you will come to think of him, and pray to him, as the image represents him. Thus you will in this sense “bow down” and “worship” your image; and to the extent to which the image fails to tell the truth about God, to that extent you will fail to worship God in truth.”
  - **Note:** forming molten images and dreaming up mental images are both wrong
- e. **Meanwhile, this is not to say that illustrations or analogies are utterly inappropriate when speaking of God... just as they relate to God’s being!**
  - (1) We are reminded again of our discussion of language of condescension
  - (2) Use of analogies and anthropomorphisms for our understanding...
  - (3) **Jesus in Luke 24:39:** "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."
- 3. **Packer summarizes**, “Positively, it is a summons to us to recognize that God the Creator is transcendent, mysterious and inscrutable, beyond the range of any imagining or philosophical guesswork r which we are capable—and hence a summons to us to humble ourselves, to listen and learn of him, and to let him teach us what he is like and how we should think of him.”