

The Incomprehensible

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Far in the Heavens my God retires:
My God, the mark of my desires,
And hides His lovely face;
When He descends within my view,
He charms my reason to pursue,
But leaves it tir'd and fainting in th' unequal chase.
Or if I reach unusual height
Till near His presence brought,
There floods of glory check my flight,
Cramp the bold pinions of my wit,
And all untune my thought;
Plunged in a sea of light I roll,
Where wisdom, justice, mercy, shines;
Infinite rays in crossing lines
Beat thick confusion on my sight, and overwhelm my soul....
Great God! behold my reason lies
Adoring: yet my love would rise
On pinions not her own:
Faith shall direct her humble flight,
Through all the trackless seas of light,
To Thee, th' Eternal Fair, the infinite Unknown.

O Mind immutable!

O Light inscrutable!
Thine is the eye that guides the lightning fire,
In Thee the ages live,
Thou dost their limits give,
Who can Thy praises reach, Eternal Sire?
Thou art beyond the dreams of men;
Beyond the reach of mind, or highest angel's ken.
Eternity springs from His Infinite Mind—
All time and all space from His fingers unwind,
His intricate, limitless, unbounded skill
Spins threads of His sovereign, inscrutable will.

(Unknown)

"There can be no condensed learning of God; the very thought is an insult to His transcendent majesty. Rather we have to learn...what it is to slow down and meditate on the truth of His Being, to ruminate over, to ingest and digest the revelations concerning His holy character, to wonder overwhelmingly, to "be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10)

What does, "Be still and know that I am God" mean to you?

What comes into your mind when you think about God?

Why is a pursuit of the knowledge of God vital to our spiritual well-being?

What are some of the difficulties you have when thinking about God?

What does 'God is Spirit' mean?

What questions do you have about the nature and character of God?

How has God revealed himself to us?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

God's 'Transcendent' Qualities

1. God is God
2. God is Spirit
3. God is Utterly Above and Beyond
4. No Boundaries as to Power
5. No Boundaries as to Knowledge
6. No Boundaries as to Space and Time
7. No Boundaries as to Perfection
8. No Boundaries as to Freedom
9. No Boundaries as to Self Awareness
10. No Boundaries as to Self Existence
11. No Boundaries as to Mystery : God is One and Three; God is Inscrutable

God's 'Personal' Qualities

All these attributes are possessed to infinite perfection.

All these attributes are perfectly united in Him.

1. God is Good
2. God is Just
3. God is Loving
4. God is Righteous
5. God is Truthful
6. God is Kind
7. God is Jealous
8. God is Patient
9. God is Faithful
10. God is Joyful
11. **God is Incarnate**

GOD'S SELF EXISTENCE means everything other than God depends on God, but God depends on nothing besides himself. God has eternally existed without any external or prior cause. His self-existence is seen in the Name by which He revealed Himself -- Yahweh -- the One who says 'I am that I am' Ex 3:14

THE INFINITY OF GOD means that He is limitless, measureless and boundless. Divine infinity indicates that the limitations of finite creatures do not apply to him. Whatever God is (love, faithful, righteous, wise, etc), He is without limit, and whatever He is cannot be measured. He is not bound or restricted by space, time, or matter. There is no point, edge, or line confining God, and no size or weight that can catalog Him.

To attribute size to God is to make Him subject to degrees, which He can never be, seeing that the very idea of degree relates to created things only. That which is infinite cannot be greater or less, larger or smaller, and God is infinite. God simply is without qualification.

Infinitude can belong to but One. There can be no second.

GOD'S HOLINESS is in many ways God's central attribute. One writer actually defines it this way, "Holiness is that which makes God God." Dr. Reginald Showers calls it "the foundational truth of revelation."

GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE is a theological term referring to the relation of God to creation. God is "other," "different" from His creation. He is independent and different from His creatures (Is 55:8, 9). He is higher than and surpasses in every respect His creation. He is beyond it and not limited by it or to it. This simple understanding of this awesome attribute makes it all the more humbling & praiseworthy that His transcendence never removes Him from intimate involvement in His peoples' lives. Remember that our transcendent God is also the omnipresent God & is never farther than a prayer away.

GOD'S IMMANENCE is the idea that the creation is forever dependent on God, and He is always involved in it. Wayne Grudem writes:

"God is also very much involved in creation, for it is continually dependent on Him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term used to speak of God's involvement in creation is the word immanent meaning "remaining in" creation. The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in his creation. The Bible is the story of God's involvement with his creation, and particularly the people in it. Job affirms that even the animals and plants depend on God: "In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). In the New Testament, Paul affirms that God "gives to all men life and breath and everything" and that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). Indeed, in Christ "all things hold together" (Col 1:17-note), and he is continually "upholding the universe by his word of power" (He 1:3)"

God's transcendence and immanence are both affirmed in Ephesians where Paul writes that there is "...one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:6)

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD means "all-powerful" and refers to the fact that God's power is infinite and unlimited. He can do with power anything that power can do. Said another way, God has the power to do all he wills to do. He has both the resources and the ability to work his will in every circumstance in the universe.

However, although God has all power He cannot do that which contradicts His holy character or essence and thus He cannot annihilate Himself because He is eternal, immutable, and all wise. He cannot lie because He is truth (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18). He cannot not keep His Word because He is faithful (2Ti 2:13). God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13). The omnipotence of God gives every Christian a firm foundation to trust Him and confidence in His ability to keep the precious and magnificent promises in Scripture.

If you prefer a simpler definition, just think of these three words—"God is able." That's what omnipotence means. He is able to do everything he needs to do or wants to do.

GOD'S OMNISCIENCE is His knowledge of **all** things including actual and possible, past, present, and future (foreknowledge). His knowledge is in no way restricted by temporal considerations. He knows and sees everything at once, with equal clarity and absolute certainty. To Him, all is the present.

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE means God is everywhere at the same time. His circumference is nowhere, but his center is everywhere.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "This is the fundamental thing, the most serious thing of all, that we are always in the presence of God."

- He knows what needs to be done—that's omniscience.
- He has the power to do it—that's omnipotence.
- He's always wherever he needs to be to do whatever needs to be done— that's omnipresence.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD means that God is not subject to change, that He is invariable. In His nature and character, God is absolutely without change. "To deny the immutability of God is to deny that He is God."

Still restless nature dies and grows,
From change to change the creatures run:
Thy being no succession knows,
And all thy vast designs are one.
Isaac Watts

A W Tozer: "The immutability of God appears in its most perfect beauty when viewed against the mutability of men. In God no change is possible; in men change is impossible to escape."

A. W. Pink: "God cannot change for the better, for He is perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse."

- God is immutable in His essence.
- He is immutable in His attributes
- He is immutable in His will.
- He is immutable in His consciousness

Because God has no beginning and no ending, He can know no change. He is everlasting-- “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17)

GOD’S JUSTICE is God's fair and impartial treatment of all people. The justice of God is a necessary correlate of His holiness or moral excellence. Since God is infinitely and eternally perfect, He must be impartial in His judgments and always treat His creatures with equity.

God is just and He always acts in a way consistent with the requirements of His character as revealed in His law. He rules His creation with rectitude, He keeps His word, and He renders to all His creatures their due. God is just and fair, completely rational and predictable in His dealings, without any shadow of capriciousness.

Justice is not an optional product of His will, but an unchangeable principle of His very nature.

Augustine said. “We are speaking of God. Is it any wonder that you do not comprehend? For if you comprehended Him He cannot be God. Let this be a pious confession of great ignorance rather than a rash profession of knowledge. To have a very slight knowledge of God is a great blessing. To comprehend Him is altogether impossible.”

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY means God has total control over the universe. Sovereignty is defined by Webster's dictionary as “supreme power, especially over a body politic”. It describes freedom from external control or of other controlling influences. God is the ultimate authority in every sphere and place. It follows that all creation is subject to Him and that all creation is answerable to Him. In other words, God has the absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure

A. W. Pink: “The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy...Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of "heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him. So His own Word expressly declares: “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Is 46:10); “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand” (Da 4:35). Divine sovereignty means that God is God in fact, as well as in name, that He is on the Throne of the universe, directing all things, working all things “after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11).