

L LORD

OF HEAVEN & EARTH:

*LESSONS ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER
OF THE GOD OF SCRIPTURE*

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LORD OF HEAVEN & EARTH: Lesson Notes

****Class participants can prepare for each session by reading through the lesson notes and being prepared to discuss the Thought Questions in class****

LESSONS

1. TOTHEPRAISEOFHISGLORY

A lesson on Christian theology as a basis for praise to God

2. ETERNAL POWER & DIVINE NATURE

A lesson on the results and limitations of recognizing God in nature

3. MAKER OF HEAVEN & EARTH

A lesson on the identity of God revealed in the act of creation

4. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

A lesson on the transcendent nature of God

5. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A lesson on the immanent character of God

6. HOW LONG, O LORD?

A lesson on God and the problem of evil

7. THE GOD OF ISRAEL

A lesson on the story of Yahweh, Israel, and the blessing of the world

8. GOD WITH US

A lesson on the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth

9. FATHER, SON & SPIRIT

A lesson on the Trinity revealed in salvation

10. ALPHA & OMEGA

A lesson on the God who makes all things new

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LESSON 4: HOLY, HOLY, HOLY – God’s Transcendent Nature

- ❖ TRANSCENDENCE – God is separate and distinct from his creation. He transcends the realities, standards and limits of the present universe.
- ❖ The Unspeakable Name
 - Exodus 3 – The Angel of the LORD appears to Moses in the burning bush, but God (Elohim) calls to him. Moses must keep his distance and remove his sandals. Also, when Moses asks God’s name, he replies “I am who I am.” – What do these mean?
 - Angel of the LORD – God is only visible through another form (e.g. an angel in fire)
 - Sandals – Moses is standing on Holy Ground
 - God’s Name – ‘I am who I am’ means ‘the self-existent one’ and/or ‘I am beyond any name’
 - God’s Name (YHWH > English equivalent LORD or Jehovah) was un-pronounced by Jewish people, even in reading it in Scripture! (based on 4th commandment)
 - These odd events and practices relate to the concept of God’s HOLINESS. Holiness affirms God’s transcendence by creating a boundary between the sacred and the profane.
- ❖ God’s Holy Attributes
 - These are attributes unique to God; he does not share these with human beings.
 - ETERNAL/INFINITE – the fundamental attribute of God’s transcendent being. All other attributes of God flow from this one. God is self-existent, not created, and always exists as God. He exists outside of space and time and so is not subject to the limitations of such dimensions. God is ‘perfect’ in that his being, capacities and abilities are limitless. (Ps. 90:2 / Jn. 4:24)
 - IMMATERIAL – God is not composed of matter or substance, and has no tangible qualities. He is pure ‘spirit,’ and is often described as being ‘invisible’ or ‘un-seeable.’ (1 Tim. 6:15-16)
 - INDEPENDENT – God is free in that he is not subject or accountable to any other beings or forces. He is the source of all things and thus can act by any means he sees fit. This further implies that God does not adhere to a separate principle of ‘goodness’ or ‘beauty’ – rather those principles exist within God’s nature itself. (Ps. 115:1-3)
 - OMNIPOTENT – God is all-powerful. He can always carry out all of his purposes without being thwarted. God’s power is expressed in his authority over the realms of heaven and earth, including control of physical properties and human minds/hearts. The biblical word often associated with God’s power is ‘Almighty.’ There are some caveats to God’s power – he cannot do anything that is illogical (e.g. make a squared circle) or act against his own nature (e.g. lie, break promises, etc.). (Is. 46:9-10 / Gen. 17:1)
 - OMNIPRESENCE – God is present everywhere in heaven and on earth. To be clear God does not exist within all things, but better said, all things exist in God’s presence. Because God has access to all things, nothing escapes his notice. (Ps. 139:7-12 / Jer. 23:34 / Heb. 4:13)

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- OMNISCIENCE – Because God is present everywhere, he also knows everything. He not only knows all past, present and future, but he also knows all actual things and even potential things that have not or will not happen. Thus, God has insight into all realities, including the thoughts and intentions of humans. (Rom. 11:33 / Ps. 139:1-6)
- OMNISAPIENCE - Because God knows all actual and potential realities, he is always able to determine the best course of action to accomplish his purposes. Thus, he is all-wise. He will always produce the right and best outcome. (Is. 55:8-11 / Rom. 16:27)
- IMMUTABLE – God is not a changing entity. He is always and constantly God. His infinite power, knowledge and presence never decrease, but nor do they increase for that would imply that God had not previously had the fulness of divine nature. His purposes and character are never modified. (Mal. 3:5 / 1 Sam 15:29)
- IMPASSIBLE – This means that God is affected by ‘passions’ or ‘emotions.’ Not that God is apathetic, but that he is not controlled by involuntary emotional reactions. This sometimes is expressed in the idea that God cannot suffer.
- Because these attributes describe God’s utter transcendent holiness, our heads often spin trying to contemplate these ideas, and how they could be absolute. That is precisely the point of believing in a transcendent God.
- ❖ Biblical images of Transcendence
 - Glorious – refers to the ‘heaviness’ or ‘weight’ of God’s being and reputation. Glory is often associated with loud sounds/voices and brightness and/or shining. It is a sensory representation of the stunning quality of God’s holiness, and often evokes a response of fear or powerlessness on the part of humans. (Ez. 1)
 - King – God is pictured as the king sitting upon a throne in the heavenly realm. Indeed, God is not just a king, but the King of all Kings, with ultimate power and authority over earthly rulers (Is. 66:1 / 1 Tim 6:15)
 - High/Exalted – Scripture frequently uses language that God is spatially elevated above humans and the earth, ruling it from above. (Ps. 113: 4-6 / Is. 40:22)
 - Rock – Especially in the Psalms, the image of God as the strong, fixed place of protection and safety gives assurances of salvation to those who serve him. (Ps. 18:1-3)
- ❖ In Praise of God
 - Revelation 4:8-11
- ❖ Thought Questions
 - How would you describe God’s transcendence to a person who asked you what that idea meant?
 - Review some of the divine attributes discussed in this lesson. How many of them make complete sense? Which are the most difficult to comprehend? Are there any problems or questions you could see arising from these attributes?
 - A common definition of ‘omnipotence’ is to say “God can do anything.” Do you agree or disagree with this claim?