

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD
PRESENTED BY
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OUR LESSON TONIGHT DEALS WITH THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. LAST WEEK IN OUR LESSON WE LEARNED THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR MAN TO KNOW GOD, THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR MAN TO GAIN INFORMATION CONCERNING GOD, BUT THAT THIS IS POSSIBLE ONLY AS MAN IS WILLING TO OPEN UP HIS HEART AND LISTEN TO THE REVELATION GOD HAS MADE OF HIMSELF. IT IS TO THAT REVELATION THAT WE WISH TO LOOK NOW TO DISCOVER WHAT IT HAS TO SAY ABOUT GOD--THAT WE MIGHT KNOW MORE ABOUT HIS CHARACTER, THAT WE MIGHT KNOW MORE ABOUT HIS NATURE, THAT WE MIGHT APPRECIATE WHAT HE IS AND APPRECIATING WHAT HE IS, LIKEWISE APPRECIATE WHAT HE IS ABLE TO DO FOR YOU AND FOR ME. WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, WE MUST DIVIDE THEM INTO TWO SEPERATE CATEGORIES. THESE CATEGORIES ARE VARIOUSLY REFERRED TO, BUT I THINK PERHAPS THE TWO MOST SIMPLE DESIGNATIONS ARE SIMPLY THOSE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD WHICH ARE INCOMMUNICABLE AND THOSE WHICH ARE COMMUNICABLE, AND BY THAT WE SIMPLY MEAN THOSE ATTRIBUTES THAT BELONG TO THE NATURE OF GOD, THE CONSTITUTION OF GOD, THAT CONSTITUTE HIM TO BE GOD, ATTRIBUTES WHICH BY THEIR VERY NATURE GOD COULD NOT COMMUNICATE TO MAN, THAT HE COULD NOT BESTOW UPON MAN. THEY ARE INCOMMUNICABLE. ON THE OTHER HAND THERE ARE CERTAIN ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE TRUE BOTH OF GOD AND OF MAN. GOD HAS BESTOWED THESE ATTRIBUTES UPON MAN WHO IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

WHEN WE TURN TO THE INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, WE FIND THERE ARE SEVERAL. AND THE VERY FIRST ONE WHICH WE FIND IS IN THE VERY FIRST WORDS OF SCRIPTURE. GENESIS 1:1 STATES, "IN THE BEGINNING, GOD." THIS SPEAKS OF THE SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD. THIS SIMPLY SAYS THAT GOD IS FROM THE BEGINNING. IT SAYS THAT FROM ETERNITY EVEN UNTO ETERNITY, THOU ART GOD. SOMETIMES MEN, CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF GOD, SAY THAT GOD CAUSED HIMSELF, BUT IT IS NOT REALLY PROPER FOR US TO SAY THAT GOD CAUSED HIMSELF, FOR IF HE COULD CAUSE HIMSELF TO BE, HE COULD ALSO CAUSE HIMSELF TO CEASE TO BE, AND BY HIS VERY NATURE, THIS CANNOT BE SO, FOR GOD IS ETERNAL. HIS SELF-EXISTENCE IS IMPLIED IN EXODUS 3:14 WHERE HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF UNTO MOSES AND SAID, "I AM THAT I AM." IN OTHER WORDS GOD IS BY HIS VERY NATURE GOD AND IT CANNOT BE OTHERWISE.

ANOTHER OF THE INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IS DISCOVERED IN JOHN 4:24 WHEN JESUS, SPEAKING TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN, SAID, "GOD IS SPIRIT." THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS WHICH THIS TELLS US ABOUT GOD, HIS NATURE AND HIS ATTRIBUTES. IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT TELLS US THAT GOD IS IMMATERIAL. IT TELLS US THAT GOD IS WITHOUT PHYSICAL BODY. IN LUKE 24:39 JESUS SAID, "A SPIRIT HATH NOT FLESH AND BONES, AS YE SEE ME HAVE." THUS WE UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN JESUS SAID "GOD IS SPIRIT" THAT HE DOES NOT RESIDE IN A FLESHLY BODY. SOMETIMES THIS CAUSES MEN DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING FOR THEY TURN TO OTHER PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE AND READ THAT GOD HAS EYES AND WE LOOK AT OUR EYES AND ASSOCIATE THE EYES OF GOD WITH OURS. WE READ THAT GOD HAS EARS AND WE LOOK AT OUR EARS AND ASSOCIATE THE EARS OF GOD WITH OURS. BUT THIS LANGUAGE IS USED SIMPLY IN ORDER THAT GOD MIGHT REVEAL HIMSELF TO THE FINITE. HE MUST REVEAL HIMSELF IN LANGUAGE THAT YOU AND I CAN UNDERSTAND. WHAT BETTER LANGUAGE COULD HE USE WHEN HE WANTS US TO KNOW THAT HE HAS THE CAPACITY TO HEAR, THAT HE HAS THE CAPACITY TO SEE, THAN TO TELL US IN TERMS THAT ARE FAMILIAR TO US--THAT HE HAS EARS AND THAT HE HAS EYES. IN THE SECOND PLACE, WHEN JESUS SAID THAT "GOD IS SPIRIT" HE

TOLD US THAT GOD WAS INVISIBLE. THE INVISIBLE NATURE OF GOD IS THE REASON FOR ONE OF THE PROHIBITIONS IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—"THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THYSELF ANY GRAVEN IMAGE." TURNING TO DEUTERONOMY 4:15-19 WE READ, "TAKE YE THEREFORE GOOD HEED UNTO YOURSELVES; FOR YE SAW NO MANNER OF SIMILITUDE ON THE DAY THAT THE LORD SPAKE UNTO YOU IN HOREB OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE FIRE; LEST YE CORRUPT YOURSELVES, AND MAKE YOU A GRAVEN IMAGE, THE SIMILITUDE OF ANY FIGURE, THE LIKENESS OF MALE OR FEMALE, FOWL THAT FLIETH IN THE AIR, THE LIKENESS OF ANYTHING THAT CREEPETH ON THE GROUND, THE LIKENESS OF ANY FISH THAT IS IN THE WATERS BENEATH THE EARTH; AND LEST THOU LIFT UP THINE EYES UNTO HEAVEN, AND WHEN THOU SEEST THE SUN, AND THE MOON, AND THE STARS, EVEN ALL THE HOST OF HEAVEN, SHOULDEST BE DRIVEN TO WORSHIP THEM, AND SERVE THEM, WHICH THE LORD THY GOD HATH DIVIDED UNTO ALL NATIONS UNDER THE WHOLE HEAVEN." GOD SIMPLY TOLD HIS PEOPLE THAT HE WAS INVISIBLE AND THEREFORE THERE WAS NOT ANY LIKENESS THAT THEY COULD MAKE WHICH WOULD RESEMBLE THE ALMIGHTY AND THE ETERNAL GOD. NOT ONLY SO, BUT WERE THEY ABLE TO LOOK UPON HIS FACE AND TO SEE HIM THEY SHOULD NOT LIVE, FOR IN EXODUS 33:20 GOD SAID, "THOU CANST NOT SEE MY FACE; FOR THERE SHALL NO MAN SEE ME, AND LIVE." JOHN 1:18: "NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME; THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, HE HATH DECLARED HIM." AND FINALLY IN COLOSSIANS 1:15 PAUL SAYS OF JESUS CHRIST, "WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD." THEY WOULD IMPRESS UPON US THAT WE CANNOT SEE GOD, THAT HE IS INVISIBLE AND CANNOT BE BEHELD BY EITHER THE NAKED EYE OR THE EYE AIDED BY THE INVENTIONS OF MAN. IN THE THIRD PLACE WHEN JESUS SAID "GOD IS SPIRIT" HE TOLD US THAT GOD WAS ALIVE, FOR WHEN WE UNDERSTAND GOD TO BE SPIRIT WE AUTOMATICALLY UNDERSTAND THAT HE CANNOT BE ANY MATERIAL SUBSTANCE AND WE LIKEWISE UNDERSTAND THAT HE CANNOT BE ANY INANIMATE SUBSTANCE, THAT GOD IS SPIRIT AND THAT GOD IS LIVING, AND THEN FINALLY WHEN JESUS SAID THAT "GOD IS SPIRIT," HE GAVE US THIS IMPORTANT CONCEPT OF THE NATURE OF GOD--HE TOLD US THAT GOD IS A PERSON. THERE ARE NOT MANY THINGS THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE NATURE OF SPIRIT. THERE ARE NOT MANY THINGS THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND ABOUT OUR OWN SPIRIT, SO HOW CAN WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE SPIRIT OF GOD? BUT, YET, ONE THING WE DO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE SPIRIT OF MAN, ONE THING THAT I UNDERSTAND ABOUT MY OWN SPIRIT IS THAT IT IS PERSONAL IN ITS NATURE. THEREFORE, IF GOD IS SPIRIT, GOD MUST ALSO BE PERSONAL. HE MUST BE A PERSON, FOR IF THIS IS NOT SO THEN HE IS OF A LOWER ORDER THAN MAN HE HAS CREATED. THE BIBLE REPRESENTS GOD AS POSSESSING ALL THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS OF PERSONALITY, FOR THE BIBLE SAYS OF HIM THAT HE HAD INTELLECT (GENESIS 18:19, EXODUS 3:7, ACTS 15:18), THE BIBLE SAYS OF HIM THAT HE HAS SENSIBILITY (GENESIS 6:6, PSALMS 103:8-13, JOHN 3:16), THE BIBLE SAYS OF HIM THAT HE HAS VOLITION (GENESIS 3:15, PSALMS 115:3, JOHN 6:38), THE BIBLE ASCRIBES TO GOD ALL OF THE QUALITIES OF PERSONALITY AND DESCRIBES HIM AS SPEAKING (GENESIS 1:3), SEEING (GENESIS 11:5), HEARING (PSALMS 94:9), REPENTING (GENESIS 6:6), BEING ANGRY (DEUTERONOMY 1:37), BEING JEALOUS (EXODUS 20:5), BEING COMPASSIONATE (PSALMS 111:4), ALL OF THESE THINGS ARE SIMPLY THOSE CONCEPTS WHICH IMPRESS UPON US THAT GOD IS A PERSON, AND LET US NOT FORGET IT, FOR THIS WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPT, I THINK OF OUR ENTIRE LESSON.

IN THE THIRD PLACE, WHEN WE SPEAK OF THOSE ATTRIBUTES THAT GOD COULD NOT BESTOW UPON MAN WE DISCOVER THAT GOD IS IMMUTABLE. THIS SIMPLY MEANS THAT PERFECTION OF HIS NATURE BY WHICH HE IS FREE FROM ALL CHANGE. IN JAMES 1:17 JAMES SAID, "EVERY GOOD GIFT AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE, AND COMETH DOWN FROM

THE FATHER OF LIGHTS, WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING." IN MALACHI 3:6, GOD SPEAKING SAID, "FOR I AM THE LORD, I CHANGE NOT." WHEN WE CONSIDER THE NATURE OF GOD, WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO KNOW GOD CANNOT CHANGE FOR BY ITS VERY NATURE CHANGE MUST BE EITHER FOR THE BETTER OR FOR THE WORSE. GOD CANNOT CHANGE FOR THE BETTER FOR HE IS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT, AND HE CANNOT CHANGE FOR THE WORSE BECAUSE OF THE SAME REASON. WHEN WE SAY GOD IS IMMUTABLE AND HE DOES NOT CHANGE, WE OUGHT NOT TO REACH THE CONCLUSION THAT GOD IS IMMOBILE AND HE CANNOT MOVE, FOR GOD INDEED CAN MOVE AND GOD INDEED DOES MOVE AND GOD INDEED DOES ACT IN THE AFFAIRS AND IN THE LIVES OF MEN. SOMETIMES WHEN WE SAY THAT GOD IS IMMUTABLE, THAT GOD DOES NOT CHANGE, THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE GOD AND DO NOT BELIEVE HIS WORD TO BE A TRUE REPRESENTATION OF HIS CHARACTER RESPOND AND ASK, HOW DO WE EXPLAIN SUCH PASSAGES AS I SAMUEL 15:29 WHICH STATES, "AND ALSO THE STRENGTH OF ISRAEL WILL NOT LIE NOR REPENT: FOR HE IS NOT A MAN, THAT HE SHOULD REPENT," AND II SAMUEL 24:16 WHICH STATES "AND WHEN THE ANGEL STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND UPON JERUSALEM TO DESTROY IT, THE LORD REPENTED HIM OF THE EVIL, AND SAID TO THE ANGEL THAT DESTROYED THE PEOPLE, IT IS ENOUGH: STAY NOW THINE HAND." WE HAVE ONE PASSAGE IN I SAMUEL SAYING THAT GOD DOES NOT REPENT, HE IS NOT A MAN THAT HE SHOULD REPENT, AND THEN IN II SAMUEL THE WRITER SAYS THAT GOD REPENTED HIMSELF. NOW, HOW DO WE HARMONIZE THESE TWO STATEMENTS AND UNDERSTAND THAT GOD DOES NOT CHANGE? I BELIEVE THE ANSWER ITSELF COMES FROM THE WORD OF GOD. WE TURN TO JEREMIAH 18:8 AND READ, "IF THAT NATION, AGAINST WHOM I HAVE PRONOUNCED, TURN FROM THEIR EVIL, I WILL REPENT OF THE EVIL THAT I THOUGHT TO DO UNTO THEM." IN OTHER WORDS, SOME OF THE THREATS OF GOD ARE CONDITIONAL. GOD SAYS, "IF YOU DO NOT REPENT, I WILL PUNISH YOU." IF MAN REPENTS, IF MAN TURNS UNTO GOD, GOD STAYS HIS HAND. GOD HAS NOT CHANGED, MAN HAS CHANGED, GOD HAS REMAINED IMMUTABLE AND UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS DETERMINATION TO BLESS THE GOOD AND PUNISH THE BAD. WHEN MAN REPENTS AND TURNS TO THE GOOD, THEN GOD DOES NOT CHANGE, GOD TURNS TO BLESS MAN BECAUSE MAN HAS MADE THE CHANGE.

WE ALSO READ FROM THE SCRIPTURE THAT THIS GOD WHO IS GREAT, WHO IS HOLY, IS CHARACTERIZED BY INFINITY. THIS SIMPLY MEANS THAT HE IS FREE FROM ALL LIMITATIONS. YOU AND I ARE SO LIMITED. YOU AND I ARE FINITE AND YOU AND I ARE SURROUNDED BY TIME AND SPACE AND WE CANNOT GET AWAY FROM THE HOLD THAT THESE THINGS HAVE UPON OUR EXISTENCE, BUT THIS IS NOT TRUE OF GOD. GOD IS CHARACTERIZED BY ABSOLUTE PERFECTION, AND THERE A NUMBER OF CONCEPTS WHICH ARE RELATED TO THIS PERFECTION. FOR INSTANCE, AS WE CONSIDER THIS PERFECTION, WE WOULD SAY THAT GOD IS OMNIPRESENT. THIS IS HIS INFINITY. THIS IS HIS ABSOLUTE PERFECTION, AS IT IS RELATED TO HIS CREATURES, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE IS A PIECE OF GOD IN EVERY PLACE, THAT GOD HAS A PART OF HIMSELF HERE AND OVER HERE THERE IS ANOTHER PART OF GOD AND ALL OF GOD IS NOT ANYWHERE. WHAT IT SAYS IS THAT THERE IS NO PLACE IN ALL OF THIS WORLD WHERE THE ENTIRETY OF GOD IS NOT TO BE FOUND. THIS WAS THE CONCEPT OF THE PSALMIST IN PSALMS 139:7-12: "WHITHER SHALL I GO FROM THY SPIRIT? OR WHITHER SHALL I FLEE FROM THY PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND UP INTO HEAVEN, THOU ART THERE; IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, BEHOLD, THOU ART THERE. IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE MORNING, AND DWELL IN THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE SHALL THY HAND LEAD ME, AND THY RIGHT HAND SHALL HOLD ME. IF I SAY, SURELY THE DARKNESS SHALL COVER ME; EVEN THE NIGHT SHALL BE LIGHT ABOUT ME. YEA, THE DARKNESS HIDETH NOT FROM THEE; BUT THE NIGHT SHINETH AS THE DAY; THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT ARE BOTH ALIKE TO THEE." PAUL SAID THE SAME THING IN ACTS 17:27,28 WHEN HE SAID, "THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LORD, IF HAPLY THEY MIGHT FEEL AFTER HIM, AND FIND

HIM. THOUGH HE BE NOT FAR FROM EVERYONE OF US: FOR IN HIM WE LIVE, AND MOVE, AND HAVE OUR BEING." IT IS BECAUSE OF GOD'S BEING IN EVERY PLACE THAT WE DO LIVE AND WE DO MOVE AND WE DO FIND OUR BEING IN HIM.

GOD IS ALSO ABSOLUTELY PERFECT IN HIS POWER AND THUS WE SAY THAT GOD IS OMNIPOTENT. WHILE GOD CAN DO WHATSOEVER HE WILLS, LET US REMEMBER THAT THE EXERCISE OF HIS POWER IS ALWAYS LIMITED BY HIS WILL. GOD CAN DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE IN HARMONY WITH HIS NATURE. IN GENESIS 17:1 GOD SPEAKING TO ABRAHAM DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS BEING ALMIGHTY, "I AM THE ALMIGHTY GOD." IN JOB 42:2 JOB SPEAKING TO GOD SAID, "I KNOW THAT THOU CANST DO EVERYTHING." IN MATTHEW 19:26 JESUS SAID, "WITH MEN THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE; BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE." YET WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD, WE MUST REALIZE, AS ALREADY STATED, THAT THE EXERCISE OF THIS GREAT POWER IS LIMITED BY HIS VERY NATURE, AND THERE ARE SOME THINGS BY THE VERY NATURE OF GOD THAT GOD CANNOT DO. FOR INSTANCE, IN HABAKKUK 1:13 WE READ THAT GOD CANNOT LOOK ON INIQUITY. IN II TIMOTHY 2:13 WE FIND THAT GOD CANNOT DENY HIMSELF. IN HEBREWS 6:18 WE LEARN THAT GOD CANNOT LIE. IN JAMES 1:13 WE LEARN THAT GOD CANNOT SIN. GOD CANNOT DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE SELF-CONTRADICTORY AND GOD CANNOT DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE ABSURD. SOMETIMES UNBELIEVERS THINK THEY HAVE REDUCED THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD TO ABSURDITY BECAUSE THEY SAY, "GOD SAYS HE IS OMNIPOTENT, THAT HE IS THE ALMIGHTY GOD, THAT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, BUT GOD CANNOT MAKE TWO MOUNTAINS WITHOUT A VALLEY IN BETWEEN. GOD CAN'T MAKE A SQUARE CIRCLE." NO, GOD NEVER CLAIMED THIS TO BE THE CASE. GOD CANNOT DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE ABSURD, AND HE CAN'T DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE NOT IN KEEPING WITH HIS WILL. WHAT THESE MEN NEED TO LEARN IS THAT YOU CAN'T MAKE SENSE OUT OF NONSENSE BY PUTTING THE WORDS "GOD CAN" IN FRONT OF THEM. GOD CANNOT DO THOSE THINGS THAT ARE OUT OF KEEPING WITH HIS NATURE AND WITH THE WORLD THAT HE HAS CREATED.

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN RELATION TO HIS ABSOLUTE PERFECTION, WE SAY THAT GOD IS OMNISCIENT. GOD KNOWS HIMSELF AND HE KNOWS ALL OTHER THINGS AND IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER THESE THINGS BE ACTUAL (HAVING BEEN DONE) OR WHETHER THEY ONLY BE POSSIBLE (WITHIN THE REALM OF BEING DONE). IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER THEY ARE PAST OR WHETHER THEY ARE PRESENT OR WHETHER THEY ARE FUTURE. GOD KNOWS THEM AND GOD KNOWS THEM PERFECTLY AND GOD KNOWS THEM EVEN FROM ETERNITY. IN ISAIAH 46:10 ISAIAH SAID OF GOD, "DECLARING THE END FROM THE BEGINNING." FROM THE VERY BEGINNING GOD COULD LOOK OUT AND HE COULD SEE THE END AND IT WAS IN THE POWER OF GOD TO DECLARE IT. IN HEBREWS 4:13 THE WRITER SAID, "NEITHER IS THERE ANY CREATURE THAT IS NOT MANIFEST IN HIS SIGHT: BUT ALL THINGS (IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHAT THEY MIGHT BE, THERE ARE NO LIMITATIONS UPON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD) ARE NAKED AND OPENED UNTO THE EYES OF HIM WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO." HERE SOME INDIVIDUALS ASK, "HOW DO WE HARMONIZE THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD WITH THE FREE WILL OF MAN? IF GOD KNOWS SOME THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN, DOES THIS NOT MEAN THAT HE HAS PREDETERMINED THEM? THE ANSWER IS NO! FREE ACTIONS DO NOT TAKE PLACE BECAUSE THEY ARE FOREKNOWN; THEY ARE FOREKNOWN BECAUSE THEY WILL TAKE PLACE. FOREKNOWLEDGE IS NOT CAUSATIVE. FOREKNOWLEDGE DOES NOT DEMAND THAT THOSE THINGS THAT ARE FOREKNOWN OCCUR. IT IS WITHIN MY POWER AND IT IS WITHIN YOUR POWER TO FOREKNOW SOME THINGS THAT ARE GOING TO HAPPEN, TO LOOK AND SEE SOME INEVITABLE RESULTS IF THINGS CONTINUE AS THEY ARE. OUR FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THESE THINGS DOES NOT MAKE THEM HAPPEN. IT IS NOT CAUSATIVE IN ITS NATURE. I MIGHT FORESEE A TRAGIC, FATAL ACCIDENT. I MIGHT SEE IT COMING. I MIGHT KNOW IT IS GOING TO OCCUR, BUT MY FOREKNOWLEDGE DOES NOT PREDETERMINE IT. NEITHER IS IT TRUE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. GOD FOREKNOWS, BUT GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE DOES NOT PREDETERMINE.

WHEN WE THINK OF GOD'S ABSOLUTE PERFECTION IN RELATION TO TIME, WE THINK OF GOD'S ETERNITY. THIS IS IMPLIED IN II PETER 3:8 WHEN THE WRITER SAID, "THAT ONE DAY IS WITH THE LORD AS A THOUSAND YEARS, AND A THOUSAND YEARS AS ONE DAY." BUT IT IS MORE THAN IMPLIED, IT IS STATED IN GENESIS 21:33 WHERE THE WRITER SPEAKS OF GOD AS BEING THE EVER-LASTING GOD. IN PSALMS 90:2 WE READ, "BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE BROUGHT FORTH, OR EVER THOU HADST FORMED THE EARTH AND THE WORLD, EVEN FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, THOU ART GOD." PSALMS 102:27, "BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL HAVE NO END." ISAIAH 57:15, "THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE THAT INHABITETH ETERNITY." SO GOD, THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER INHABITS ETERNITY, IS CHARACTERIZED BY BEING ETERNAL IN HIS NATURE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT TIME AS IT NOW EXISTS HAS NO MEANING FOR GOD, BUT IT SIMPLY MEANS THAT GOD IS ABOVE TIME, AND THAT GOD SEES THE PAST AND THAT GOD SEES THE FUTURE JUST AS CLEARLY AS HE SEES THE PRESENT.

IN ADDITION TO THESE INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES, WE HAVE SAID THAT THERE ARE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES. THERE ARE THOSE ATTRIBUTES WHICH MAY BE STATED BOTH OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND OF THE SPIRIT OF MAN. AS WE THINK OF THESE QUALITIES WE SHALL DISCOVER THAT THEY ARE SO HUMAN IN THEIR NATURE. IN FACT, AS WE CONSIDER THEM AND AS SOME HAVE CONSIDERED THEM, THEY HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO ASK IF WE CAN EVEN ASCRIBE THEM UNTO GOD, AND IF WE ASCRIBE THESE QUALITIES UNTO GOD, ARE WE NOT DOING THAT OF WHICH WE HAVE BEEN SO OFTEN ACCUSED—SIMPLY MAKING GOD NOTHING MORE THAN A GREAT BIG MAN UP THERE IN THE SKY POSSESSING THE QUALITIES OF MAN—NO LESS, BUT NO MORE. THE ANSWER IS NO, FOR WE MAY ASCRIBE QUALITIES THAT MAN POSSESSES TO GOD FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, WE MAY ASCRIBE THEM TO GOD BECAUSE WE ARE SIMPLY THINKING OF GOD AS MAN, BUT IN THE SECOND PLACE (AND THIS IS THE REASON REVEALED IN THE WORD OF GOD) WE MAY ASCRIBE QUALITIES THAT ARE POSSESSED BY HUMANITY TO GOD BECAUSE MAN IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF ALMIGHTY GOD, AND WE WOULD NATURALLY SUPPOSE THAT IF MAN IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF ALMIGHTY GOD THAT BOTH MAN AND GOD WOULD POSSESS SOME COMMON ATTRIBUTES. WHAT ARE THESE?

FIRST, GOD'S HOLINESS. THIS SIMPLY STATES THAT GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SEPARATE FROM HIS CREATURES AND HIS CREATION, AND IS SEPARATE FROM ALL EVIL AND SIN. SOMETIMES WE ATTRIBUTE A MORAL QUALITY TO THE WORD HOLINESS WHICH REALLY DOES NOT BELONG TO IT. THE HEBREW WORD FROM WHICH WE GET THE WORD HOLINESS MEANS SIMPLY "TO CUT" OR "TO SEPARATE." WHEN WE LOOK TO THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE WORD WHICH IS THERE TRANSLATED HOLINESS, WE FIND THAT IT CONVEYED THE VERY SAME IDEA. THUS, WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE, WE ARE SIMPLY SAYING THAT THEY ARE "CUT APART FROM," THEY ARE "SEPARATED FROM" THE WORLD, AND WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD WE ARE SAYING THAT GOD IS "SEPARATED FROM," THAT GOD IS "CUT AWAY FROM," THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENT LEVEL OF BEING IN GOD AND IN MAN.

WE NEED TO LEARN SOME VALUABLE LESSONS FROM THIS. AS WE THINK OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND ITS VERY NATURE WHICH SEPARATES GOD FROM MAN WE NEED TO LEARN THAT THERE IS A GULF BETWEEN GOD AND A SINNER. WE READ OF ONE GULF IN LUKE 16 WHICH IS THAT "GREAT GULF FIXED" BETWEEN HEAVEN AND BETWEEN HELL. THERE IS LIKEWISE A GULF BETWEEN MAN AND HIS GOD. IT WAS NOT THAT WAY IN THE BEGINNING BUT IT WAS PLACED THERE BY SIN. "BEHOLD, THE LORD'S HAND IS NOT SHORTENED, THAT IT CANNOT SAVE; NEITHER HIS EAR HEAVY, THAT IT CANNOT HEAR: BUT YOUR INIQUITIES HAVE SEPARATED BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOD, AND YOUR SINS HAVE HID HIS FACE FROM YOU, THAT HE WILL NOT HEAR." THE FACT THAT GOD IS HOLY, THAT GOD IS PURE, AND THAT GOD IS EVERYTHING THAT IS GOOD IN ONE ETERNAL BEING PROHIBITS HIS BEING ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL, EVEN TO THE EXTENT OF NOT BEING ABLE

TO LOOK UPON INIQUITY AND SIN (HEBREWS 1:3). I BELIEVE THIS EXPLAINS THE REASON THAT JESUS CRIED OUT ON CALVARY'S TREE, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" WHEN GOD PLACED MY SINS UPON JESUS, HE COULD NO LONGER LOOK AT HIS SON, FOR GOD CANNOT LOOK UPON SIN.

WE ALSO LEARN THAT MAN CAN APPROACH GOD, BUT IF MAN APPROACHES GOD AT ALL, HE MUST APPROACH HIM THROUGH THE MERITS OF ANOTHER. ROMANS 5:2, SPEAKING OF JESUS SAYS, "BY WHOM ALSO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND AND REJOICE IN THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD." WHY DO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO GRACE? BECAUSE WE COME UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. IN EPHESIANS 2:18 WE READ THAT "THROUGH HIM (THAT IS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST--THROUGH THE MERITS OF CHRIST) WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS BY ONE SPIRIT UNTO THE FATHER." FINALLY, IN HEBREWS 10:19 WE READ THAT "HAVING THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BOLDNESS TO ENTER INTO THE HOLIEST BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS." BY THE BLOOD OR BY THE MERITS OF THAT BLOOD WE CAN COME INTO THE HOLY PLACE, INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

WE OUGHT ALSO TO LEARN FROM THE HOLINESS OF GOD THAT WE SHOULD APPROACH GOD WITH REVERENCE AND WITH GODLY FEAR. WE MAY COME UNTO GOD WITH BOLDNESS, BUT WHEN WE COME TO GOD WITH BOLDNESS, WE OUGHT ALSO TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY HUMILITY, AND IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT FOR US TO RESOLVE THESE TWO ATTITUDES, BUT IT CAN AND IT MUST BE DONE. WHEN WE COME INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD, WE MUST COME WITH REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR FOR HEBREWS 12:28,29 TELLS US THAT "OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE." WHEN WE CAN DEVELOP THIS VIEW OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD, WHEN WE HAVE SEEN IN ITS PROPER PERSPECTIVE THE HOLINESS OF GOD, THEN WE SHALL HAVE AUTOMATICALLY THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN. THIS WAS THE CASE WITH JOB WHO SAID, "BEHOLD, I AM VILE; WHAT SHALL I ANSWER THEE? I WILL LAY MINE HAND UPON MY MOUTH. ONCE HAVE I SPOKEN; BUT I WILL NOT ANSWER; YEA, TWICE; BUT I WILL PROCEED NO FURTHER (JOB 40:3-5)." WHEN JOB LOOKED AND SAW THE HOLINESS OF GOD, WHEN JOB WAS ABLE TO SEE WHAT GOD WAS AND WHAT THE NATURE OF GOD INVOLVED, THEN HE SAID, I WILL GO NO FURTHER IN CONTROVERSY WITH GOD. PERHAPS GREATEST EXAMPLE OF MAN WHO SAW THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND HAD THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO IT WAS THE PROPHET ISAIAH. IN ISAIAH 6:5 HE SAID, "THEN SAID I, WOE IS ME; FOR I AM UNDONE; BECAUSE I AM A MAN OF UNCLEAN LIPS, AND I DWELL IN THE MIDST OF A PEOPLE OF UNCLEAN LIPS; FOR MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING, THE LORD OF HOSTS." WHEN ISAIAH SAW GOD, HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH HIS OWN SINFULNESS.

ANOTHER ATTRIBUTE THAT BOTH GOD AND MAN POSSESS IS RIGHTEOUSNESS OR JUSTICE. THESE WORDS SIMPLY MEAN STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE LAW. WE CERTAINLY KNOW THAT THERE IS A LAW ABOVE MAN UNTO WHICH MAN MUST CONFORM. WE MIGHT THEN ASK IF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE ARE STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, WHERE IS THE LAW THAT IS ABOVE GOD AND TO WHICH HE MUST CONFORM? THE ANSWER IS THERE IS NO SUCH LAW. THAT TO WHICH GOD CONFORMS IS HIS OWN NATURE AND HIS OWN HIGHEST BEING. THIS IS THE HIGHEST STANDARD TO WHICH GOD CAN CONFORM. IT WAS GOD'S JUSTICE WHICH DEMANDED ATONEMENT. "BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS; WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, TO DECLARE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS THAT ARE PAST, THROUGH THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD; TO DECLARE, I SAY, AT THIS TIME HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; THAT HE MIGHT BE JUST, AND THE JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHICH BELIEVETH IN JESUS" (ROMANS 3:24-26). YOU SEE GOD HAD A PROBLEM, HE WAS JUST, HE WAS JUSTICE, AND HIS JUSTICE DEMANDED THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SINNER. BUT HIS JUSTICE COULD ALSO ACCEPT THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE OF ANOTHER. WHILE THE JUSTICE OF GOD DEMANDED PUNISHMENT, WHILE THE JUSTICE OF GOD DEMANDED ATONEMENT, THE LOVE OF GOD FOUND A WAY AND THROUGH JESUS CHRIST GOD COULD BE BOTH JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER OF THOSE THAT BELIEVE IN HIM.

THEN THERE IS THE GOODNESS OF GOD, AND THIS IS FOUND IN AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT ASPECTS. 1) THE LOVE OF GOD. I KNOW THAT WE NEED NOT DWELL UPON IT FOR WE HAVE HEARD SO MANY SERMONS CONCERNING THE WONDERFUL LOVE OF GOD, BUT YET SOMEHOW I THINK WE MUST EMPHASIZE THIS ONE THING—WE SEEM TO HAVE DEVELOPED THE IDEA THAT THE LOVE OF GOD IS LIMITED IN ITS SCOPE AND THAT THE LOVE OF GOD BELONGS ONLY TO THOSE WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN. THIS IS NOT SO. THE LOVE OF GOD BELONGS TO ALL OF HIS CREATION AND THE LOVE OF GOD BELONGS TO ALL OF HIS CREATURES. GOD CANNOT HATE THAT WHICH HE MADE. GOD LOOKED DOWN UPON EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE AND SAID, "IT IS GOOD." GOD COULD NOT HATE IT. GOD LOVED IT. THE THING THAT GOD CAN HATE AND THE THING THAT GOD DOES HATE IS THAT WHICH HAS BEEN ADDED TO HIS CREATION AND THIS MEANS THAT GOD DOES HATE SIN AND THOSE THINGS THAT SIN HAS BROUGHT INTO THE LIFE OF MAN. IN PSALMS 145:9, 15, 16, THE PSALMIST SAID, "THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL; AND HIS TENDER MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS WORKS... THE EYES OF ALL WAIT UPON THEE; AND THOU GIVEST THEM THEIR MEAT IN DUE SEASON. THOU OPENEST THINE HAND, AND SATISFIEST THE DESIRE OF EVERY LIVING THING." IN MATTHEW 5:45 JESUS SOUGHT TO IMPRESS UPON HIS FOLLOWERS THAT IF THEY WOULD BE LIKE GOD THEY MUST LOVE NOT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE THEIR FRIENDS BUT THEIR ENEMIES AS WELL. "THAT YE MAY BE THE CHILDREN OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN; FOR HE MAKETH HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND ON THE GOOD, AND SENDETH RAIN ON THE JUST AND ON THE UNJUST."

2) THE GOODNESS OF GOD AS IT IS MANIFESTED TOWARD THOSE WHO ARE IN MISERY AND DISTRESS IS LOOKED UPON AS THE MERCY OF GOD. THE EXERCISE OF GOD'S MERCY IN ANY PARTICULAR CASE IS OPTIONAL. GOD DOES NOT HAVE TO EXERCISE HIS MERCY, FOR IF GOD HAD TO EXERCISE HIS MERCY THEN IT WOULD BE OF DEBT AND NOT OF GRACE AND IT WOULD BE NO LONGER MERCY AT ALL. CERTAINLY WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT THOSE WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN ENJOY THE MERCY OF GOD IN A SPECIAL WAY (FOR LUKE 1:50 SAYS, "AND HIS MERCY IS ON THEM THAT FEAR HIM FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION), ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN IN THE FLESH RECEIVE OF THE MERCY OF GOD. LUKE 6:35, 36, READS, "BUT LOVE YE YOUR ENEMIES, AND DO GOOD, AND LEND, HOPING FOR NOTHING AGAIN; AND YOUR REWARD SHALL BE GREAT, AND YE SHALL BE THE CHILDREN OF THE HIGHEST; FOR HE IS KIND UNTO THE UNTHANKFUL AND TO THE EVIL. BE YE THEREFORE MERCIFUL, AS YOUR FATHER ALSO IS MERCIFUL." THE MERCY OF GOD IS MANIFESTED UPON AND IS ENJOYED BY ALL GOD'S SPIRITUAL CHILDREN IN A SPECIAL WAY, BUT THERE IS LIKEWISE A GENERAL BLESSING OF THE MERCY OF GOD UPON ALL OF HIS CREATION.

3) GOD'S GOODNESS OR GOD'S LOVE AS IT IS MANIFESTED TOWARD THE GUILTY IS LOOKED UPON AS THE GRACE OF GOD. WE SHALL NOT DWELL UPON THIS FOR WE ARE GOING TO DEVOTE AN ENTIRE LESSON TO IT AS WE THINK OF GOD AND HIS GREATNESS.

BUT NOW AS WE HAVE LOOKED AT THESE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND WE HAVE DETERMINED FROM WHAT HE HAS SAID WHAT HE IS, THERE IS STILL SOMETHING THAT IS MISSING. THERE IS STILL SOMETHING WITHOUT WHICH ALL OF THESE OTHER THINGS (GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE, AND GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE, AND GOD'S LOVE, AND GOD'S MERCY, AND GOD'S GRACE) ARE NOTHING MORE THAN EMPTY WORDS. WHAT IS THIS THING? WE SUGGESTED EARLIER THAT PERHAPS THE GREATEST CONCEPT OF THE ENTIRE LESSON WAS THAT GOD IS A PERSON. NOW IF GOD IS A PERSON AND IF MAN IS A PERSON (AND BOTH OF THESE THINGS ARE TRUE), THEN ALL OF THESE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD DO NOT HAVE ANY MEANING IN OUR LIVES NOR ANY VALUE FOR US UNTIL "PERSON" HAS HAD AN ENCOUNTER WITH "PERSON." GOD'S BEING A PERSON DEMANDS THAT YOU MAKE A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO GOD. AN INTELLECTUAL RESPONSE IS NOT ENOUGH. THEORETICAL BELIEF IN GOD IS NOT ENOUGH. TO STAND UP AND SAY I BELIEVE WITH ALL OF THE MIND AND THE MIND ONLY THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD DOESN'T GET YOU ANY CLOSER TO GOD THAN YOU WERE WHEN FIRST YOU STARTED DOWN THE ROAD. AS WE LOOK ABOUT US IN THE

WORLD TODAY WHICH IS CHARACTERIZED BY MORAL LOOSENESS AND MORAL DEGRADATION, WE CAN SEE THE CATASTROPHE THAT HAS BEEN WROUGHT BY THE ABSENCE OF A LIVING FAITH IN A LIVING GOD. WHAT THIS WORLD NEEDS TONIGHT IS A RESTORATION OF BIBLICAL FAITH IN A BIBLICAL GOD. THIS IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE BECAUSE THIS WORLD, WHETHER IT BELIEVES IN HIM OR NOT, OR WHETHER IT BOWS BEFORE HIM IN THIS WORLD OR NOT, WILL SOMEDAY GO INTO THE PRESENCE OF THIS OMNIPOTENT AND OMNIPRESENT GOD AND SHALL STAND BEFORE HIM IN JUDGMENT DETERMINED TO FORGIVE AND RECEIVE THOSE WHO COME THROUGH EMMANUEL (GOD WITH US, THE SECOND PERSON OF THE GOD-HEAD, HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON) AND DETERMINED IN ALL OF HIS IMMUTABLE UNCHANGEABLENESS TO PUNISH THOSE WHO ARE LIVING IN SIN, WHO HAVE NEVER COME TO HIM THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

WHAT WE NEED IS WHAT JESUS SAID IN JOHN 17:3, "THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST, WHOM THOU HAST SENT." I AM PERSUADED THAT THIS IS WHAT IS SORELY NEEDED EVEN BY SOME WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY OF GOD. WE MUST GO BEYOND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD TO A KNOWLEDGE OF A LIVING GOD. AND WE MUST POSSESS THE KNOWLEDGE OF A LIVING GOD BECAUSE THIS GOD IS LIVING AND MOVING IN US.

YOU CAN SEE GOD IF YOU WILL LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST. THE ATONEMENT AND THE INCARNATION ARE THE REVELATION OF THE INNER HEART OF GOD, AND THE ATONEMENT AND THE INCARNATION ARE OPENING UP THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ACCESS FOR YOU UNTO THE FATHER. OH, WHAT A WONDERFUL GOD THIS GOD IS. HOW WONDERFUL HE HAS CREATED THE WORLD FOR US TO ENJOY. BUT MORE THAN THAT, HOW GRACIOUS HE WAS IN GRANTING UNTO US OF HIS ETERNAL SPIRIT AND WHEN MAN COULD NOT CONTAIN IT, WHEN MAN COULD NOT CONTROL IT AND WHEN MAN WANDERED AWAY IN SIN, HOW GREAT GOD WAS IN COMING HIMSELF IN JESUS CHRIST TO PROVIDE A WAY FOR US TO RETURN TO THE FATHER. THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TONIGHT--TO COME UNTO THE GOD BEFORE WHOM YOU SHALL ONE DAY SURELY STAND AND GET YOUR LIFE RIGHT WITH THIS GOD, KNOWING THAT HE HAS THE POWER TO SAVE AND BEYOND AND ABOVE THAT HE HAS A POWER TO SUSTAIN AND SANCTIFY.