

26 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING!

QUESTION #2: WHO IS GOD?

Q. How can limited, sinful human beings ever know who God truly is?

A. Through the Bible, God has granted us a true and trustworthy revelation of himself, even though he himself is beyond human comprehension. He reveals attributes of himself that we do not share in, and attributes that we do share in.

1. ATTRIBUTES UNIQUE TO GOD

Several attributes of God are unique to him, emphasizing the difference between the Creator and all of his creation.

A. INDEPENDENCE

God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy .

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (Acts 17:24-25)

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zeph 3:17)

B. UNCHANGEABLENESS

God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Is 62:5)

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. (Jonah 3:10)

C. ETERNITY

God has no beginning, end , or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time (Ex 3:14, 2 Pet 3:8, Acts 17:30-31).

D. OMNIPRESENCE

God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places (Jer 23:23-24, 1 Ki 8:27). God's presence can be to sustain, to punish, but most frequently spoken of to bless (Col 1:17, Amos 9:1-4, Ps 16:11).

E. UNITY

God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times (1 Jn 1:5, 1 Jn 4:8, Ex 34:6-7).

2. ATTRIBUTES GOD HAS SHARED WITH US

Many of the attributes of God he has shared with us, as those created in his image. But as we are finite, we imitate him but do not match him. We share certain elements of his being, mind, morality, purpose, and some summary attributes.

A. BEING

i. Spirituality

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 sense, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence (Jn 4:24). God has given us spirits in which we worship him and with which we pass into his presence when we die (Jn 4:24, Phil 1:23-24).

ii. Invisibility

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. While we'll never see him completely, we will one day see an entirely true and clear and real vision of God.

...he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. (1 Tim 6:15b-16a)

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Ps 19:1)

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 Jn 3:2)

B. MENTAL

i. Omniscience

God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act (Job 37:16, 1 Sam 23:11-13). We know some things, but God's knowledge is exhaustive and eternal (2 Pet 3:8).

ii. Wisdom

God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals. We can ask confidently for wisdom at need, even though we can never fully share his wisdom, and it pleases him when we trust his wisdom even when we don't understand.

...to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom 16:27)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (Rom 11:33)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Pet 4:19)

iii. Truthfulness

God is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth (Jn 17:3, 17). All pursuit of knowledge is ennobled as it enables us to understand more of his truth (Col 3:10). God cares greatly that our words in particular are truthful (Col 3:9-10).

C. MORAL

i. Goodness (including Mercy, Grace, Patience)

God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval (Lk 18:19, Gen 1:31). Mercy is his goodness to those in distress, grace his goodness to those deserving only punishment, and patience his goodness to those who continue to sin. In imitation, we need to do good (that which God approves), give and receive mercy, depend on grace, and be patient (Gal 6:10, Matt 5:7, Rom 4:16, Jam 5:8).

ii. Love

God eternally gives of himself to others (1 Jn 4:8, Jn 14:31). So we imitate God by loving him in return, and loving others as he loves them (Matt 22:37-38). Our giving of ourselves actually brings joy to God's heart (Zeph 3:17-18).

iii. Holiness

God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honour (1 Pet 1:16). We too are to separate ourselves from sin and grow more devoted in service to God (Heb 12:14). One day everything on earth will be holy. (Zech 14:20-21).

iv. Peace (Order)

In God's being and in his actions he is separate from all confusion and disorder, yet he is continually active in innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions (1 Cor 14:33, Rom 15:33). As we walk in his ways, we experience more of his peace and self-control as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

v. Righteousness (Justice)

God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right. God is worthy of worship and he is our confidence that justice will ultimately prevail.

I the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right. (Is 45:19b)

The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deut 32:4)

vi. Jealousy

God continually seeks to protect his own honour (Ex 34:14, Is 48:11). God alone is right to seek this, because he fully deserves all honour and glory from his creation (1 Cor 4:7, Rev 4:11). This is the secret of true worship.

vii. Wrath

God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin (Rom 1:18). In imitation, we too should hate great evil, injustice and sin (Heb 1:9).

D. PURPOSE

i. Will

God approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation (Eph 1:11). God's will includes his secret and revealed will (Deut 29:29, Acts 4:27-28). We should find great encouragement and humility in knowing that all things happen according to the will and plan of God (Acts 4:27-28, Jam 4:13-15).

ii. Freedom

God's freedom is that attribute of God whereby he does whatever he pleases. Because God is free, we should seek no more ultimate answer for his actions than his own will.

all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (Dan 4:35)

iii. Omnipotence (Power and Sovereignty)

God is able to do all his holy will (Jer 32:17). Our ability to exercise power and choice is both one of our most God-like abilities and that most prone to sinful ways. In imitation of him, we must use these abilities in ways pleasing to God and consistent with his will.

E. SUMMARY

i. Perfection and Beauty

God completely possesses all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him. He is the totality of all desirable qualities. We are called to imitate in a finite way his perfection and beauty, which will bring him glory.

This God—his way is perfect; (Ps 18:30a)

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. (Ps 73:25)

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt 5:48)

...so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:27)

ii. Blessedness

God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character (1 Tim 6:15, Gen 1:31). When God rejoices in us, he is rejoicing in our reflection of his own excellent qualities (Is 62:5, Jam 1:17, Rom 11:36).

iii. Glory

God's glory is the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of himself (Rev 21:23). We are being transformed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18).

3. IMPLICATIONS & APPLICATIONS

A. TRUTH

We know true truths about God, because he has revealed them. He shows himself as being infinitely worthy of trust, infinitely worthy of obedience, and infinitely worth of honour.

B. HUMILITY

God is absolutely unique, the Creator, not the creature. Even as he shares parts of himself with us, in each attribute he is far more than we can comprehend. We are a sponge, but he is the whole ocean.

C. DELIGHT

Every aspect and attribute of God should delight us. He is infinitely excellent and beautiful, never changes, is completely reliable, always powerful and always present and always good, and he gives us the incomprehensible blessing of sharing in his attributes and in his eternity.