

The God of the Big Picture 2 Incommunicable Attributes Part 1

(Milne 64-65, Grudem 156-168)

◆The Attributes/Perfections of God

God has revealed himself in such a way that it is possible to attribute certain qualities and characteristics to him.

1. *Incommunicable* = Those attributes that have no analogy in humanity (self-existence)

2. *Communicable* = Those attributes that have a reflection in humanity (love, justice)

Two words of warning:

'God, to keep us somber, speaks sparingly of his existence' (Calvin)

'No attribute of God is completely communicable and there is no attribute of God that is completely incommunicable' (Grudem)

1. The Names of God

God's 'names' tell us something about him.

A. Creation

Lion (*Isaiah 31:4*); Eagle (*Deuteronomy 32:11*); Lamb (*Isaiah 53:7*); Hen (*Matthew 23:37*); Sun (*Psalms 84:11*); Morning Star (*Revelation 22:16*); Light (*Psalms 27:1*); Torch (*Revelation 21:23*); Fire (*Hebrews 12:29*); Fountain (*Psalms 36:9*); Rock (*Deuteronomy 32:4*); Hiding Place (*Psalms 119:114*); Tower (*Proverbs 18:10*); Shadow (*Psalms 91:1*); Shield (*Psalms 84:11*); Temple (*Revelation 21:22*)

God uses *anthropomorphic* language to describe himself (*anthropomorphic* = in human term or human form)

B. Human Experience

Bridegroom; Husband; Father; Judge; King; Builder; Shepherd; Physician

C. Human Action

Knowing; Remembering; Seeing; Hearing; Smelling; Tasting; Sitting; Rising; Walking; Wiping away tears

D. Human Emotion

Joy (*Isaiah 62:5*); Grief (*Psalms 78:40*); Anger (*Jeremiah 7:18-19*); Love (*John 3:16*); Hatred (*Deuteronomy 16:22*); Wrath (*Psalms 2:5*)

E. Human Body

Face; Eyes; Eyelids (*Psalms 11:4*); Ears; Nose; Mouth; Lips; Tongue; Neck; Arms; Hand; Finger; Heart; Foot

F. Human Characteristics

Good; Merciful; Gracious; Righteous; Holy; Just

- i) All of creation reveals to us something about God
- ii) God reveals himself to us in ways we understand
- iii) God made the universe to display the excellence of his character

2. God's Independence

i) God does not need us or anything in creation for any reason.

Paul in Athens - Acts 17:24-25... God does not need anything from humanity

God's conversation with Job - (*Job 41:11*)... *'whatever is under heaven is mine'* (Cf Psalm 50:1-12)

ii) Does God need people to bring him glory?

John 17:5 ... *'the glory I had with you before the foundation of the earth'*

Within the Trinity there is, has been and always will be, a giving of glory by the members of the Trinity, one to another, that far surpasses that which we could bestow.

John 17:24 ... *'in your love for me before the foundation of the earth'*

Within the Trinity there is, has been and always will be, perfect love, communication and fellowship.

iii) Does God need anything to exist?

God exists by virtue of his nature;

Genesis 1:1 *'in the beginning, God...'* (cf Psalm 90:2; John 1:3; Romans 11:35-36)

"God is not dependant upon any part of creation for his existence or his nature" (Grudem)

Yet we (and all creation) can glorify him because he has determined that we would be meaningful to him. (*Isaiah 62:3-5*, *Zephaniah 3:17-18*)

4. God's Immutability (unchangeableness)

A. God is unchanging in his...

- i) Being (*Psalms 102:25-27*; *James 1:17*)
- ii) Perfections (*Malachi 3:6*)
- iii) Purposes (*Psalms 33:11*; *Isaiah 46:9-11*)
- iv) Promises (*Numbers 23:19*; *Romans 11:29*)

B. God does not change his mind

- Moses' prayer (*Exodus 32:9-14*)
- Hezekiah's prayer (*Isaiah 38:1-6*)
- Jonah's preaching (*Jonah 3:4*)
- God repenting that he made men (*Genesis 6:6*, 'or that he made Saul King (*1 Samuel 15:10-11*))

Each example shows God's present attitude with respect to a particular situation as it exists at that moment.

C. God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in different situations

- i) God rejoices (*Isaiah 62:5*)
- ii) God is grieved (*Psalms 78:40*; *Ephesians 4:30*)
- iii) His wrath burns against his enemies (*Exodus 32:10*)
- iv) He pities (*Psalms 103:13*)
- v) He loves with an everlasting love (*Isaiah 54:3*; *Psalms 103:17*)

God is both infinite and personal *not* passionless

D. This is important for three reasons

- i) We can trust that he is the best possible being
- ii) We can trust his purposes are unchanging
- iii) We can trust that his promises remain

"If God is not unchanging, then the whole basis of our faith begins to fall apart, and our understanding of the universe begins to unravel" (Grudem)