

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

I read a book recently which made the following statement – “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

I don't know if that is true, but it is very important what we think about God, how we picture Him, because that has a vital influence on our relationship with Him. Maybe a better statement would be “Our relationship with God is the most important thing about us.”

Today I'd like to cover this very basic and foundational subject, yet a very important subject, of “What is God like?”

The first thing to realise is that He is very great, very powerful, incredible and awesome. Of ourselves we can't really understand Him, He is incomprehensible.

Job 11:7-9 ⁷“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? ⁸They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know? ⁹Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.”

Humanly, He is incomprehensible, but the Bible does reveal things about Him, so that is where we need to go to find out what God is like.

In Exodus 3:13, Moses asked God who He was.

In Exodus 3:14, God said His name was “I Am.” That means He is self-existent. He has no origin, no beginning, and He is the only being like that. He created everything else in existence – everything had a cause and an origin, except for God. He is the reason for His own existence. In Him is life (John 1:4).

That fact that everything was created by God means that all of our problems have a theological answer – God is involved with everything.

Col.1:16-17 ¹⁶“For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

This talks of God's self-existence, and goes on to say that everything consists in Him. If there was no God, there would be nothing. It's ridiculous to say “God is dead” because if He was dead, so would we all be.

(Col. 1:16-17 is talking of Jesus the Son, but shows that He is the same as the Father, i.e. they are both one God. Verse 19 states that all the fullness of God dwells in Jesus Christ.)

Another way of saying God is self-existent, is to say He is Eternal.

Psalms 90:2 “From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

Isaiah 46:9-10 ⁹“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’”

God declares the end from the beginning. He sees the end and the beginning in one view, because He created time and lives outside it. He doesn’t have to wait for the sun to move from East to West to live through a day. For Him everything that is going to happen has already happened.

We divide time into past, present and future, but God doesn’t recognise any divisions – He is always Now (I Am) – that excludes any measurement of time, it asserts pure existence.

That’s hard to comprehend! 1,000 years is like a day to God. One way to picture it is that if a line represents the timeline of human history, God is the whole page it is drawn on. But He is much more than a page with borders – He has no boundaries, like an infinite page that has no ending.

That’s another way to describe God – He is infinite! That means He has no boundaries, no limits, He is measureless. It is hard for us to imagine or grasp this, because we are talking of someone who is spiritual, in a different realm to us, outside our familiar world of matter, space and time, something on a different level to us, a mode of being that is foreign to us and unlike anything else we know.

The reason we have trouble comprehending this is that God is greater than our mind itself. His greatness can’t be conceived or imagined. If we could conceive it in our minds, then our minds would be greater than Him.

Romans 11:33-36 ³³“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! *³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor?” ³⁵“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” ³⁶For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.”

God’s love is infinite too – it is measureless, it has no bounds. Because it isn’t really something God possesses, but it is God Himself. God is Love (not God has love). Because He is infinite, His love is infinite.

These are difficult things to comprehend; this is profound theology (the study of God). But it is important to think about, because that helps us realise how Great God is – so great that He is incomprehensible.

*Verse 34 shows something else about God. No one has counselled Him or taught Him anything. This is made clearer in Isa. 40:13-14

¹³“Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as His counsellor? ¹⁴Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten Him, and who taught Him the right way? Who was it that taught Him knowledge, or showed Him the path of understanding?”

God knows everything – He is omniscient. He cannot learn. If He could at any time receive knowledge He hadn’t already possessed from eternity, then He would be imperfect and less than God.

God knows everything that can be known. That's because He created everything that exists, everything that can be known, and it doesn't change without His knowing it.

Isaiah 40 is a great chapter about how awesome God is.

Verses 18 and 25 show that He is incomparable – greater by far than anything, not even able to be compared to anything. Because everything was created, except Him.

Verse 28 His understanding cannot be searched. He knows everything, therefore He is infallible, incapable of error.

Psalm 147:5 “Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit.”

As well as being omniscient, He is also All-Wise. This is very important – it is one thing to know everything, but to do what is right involves wisdom as well as knowledge.

God is “the only wise God.” (Hebrews 4:13).

It has been said that wisdom is His greatest attribute, because it combines all the other attributes with the sole purpose of doing the best thing, in the best way, at the best time.

As well as being omniscient, He is also omnipotent.

This is stated in the Bible:

Rev. 19:6 (KJV) “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Rev. 19:6 (NIV) Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.”

“omni” = all, “potent” = powerful. The NIV renders it as “Almighty”.

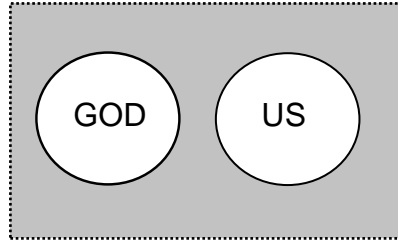
Romans 1:20 talks about “God’s eternal power”. He has power, and since He is infinite, whatever He has is without limit; therefore God has limitless power – He is omnipotent.

Since He has all the power in the Universe at His command, God can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that needs to be replenished because He is the source of all power. “He faints not, neither is weary.” (Isaiah 40:28). Nothing is impossible to God.

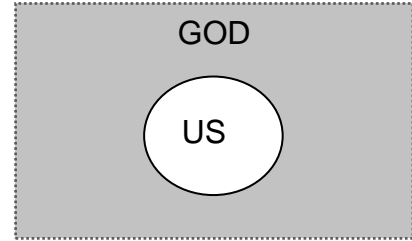
He is also omnipresent. He is everywhere. He is with His people in Australia now, He is in you and me now.

1. “There is nowhere we can hide from His presence: - Psalm 139:7-12
2. Psalm 139:1-6 describes His omniscience. Verse 6 is our response!
3. “In Him men live and move and have our being” – Acts 17:27-28. He is near and yet far off.

Rather than



it is –



Eph. 1:23 He fills everything in every way. (Heaven can't contain Him – 2 Chronicles 6:18.)

John 4:24 He is Spirit. That means He doesn't have a material, physical body. (Luke 24:39). He is invisible, immortal (1 Timothy 6:14-16.)

It is true that the Bible talks about "God's mighty arm," "God spoke to Moses face to face," mentions His hands, fingers and back, and talks of God walking, laughing, weeping and talking.

These are called "anthropomorphisms", i.e. descriptions of God put in human terms. This is a way of describing God in words we can understand – if God didn't reveal Himself in this way, we couldn't understand Him at all, because our finite minds can't grasp someone who is invisible, eternal and infinite.

God can't be an individual with a body of flesh and bone, because He would have to be both male and female, since He created both males and females "in His image." "Image" therefore can't mean physical shape! (It refers to spiritual qualities.)

He doesn't have spiritual shape either – spirit doesn't take up space.

What we have been looking at so far are His "essential attributes" – things He has because He is God; no one else has these. We can also look at His "moral attributes" – things He possesses or is like in character that He wants us to follow and shares with us through His Holy Spirit.

God is Faithful: doesn't change. He always keeps His promises. It is impossible for Him to lie. "Great is thy Faithfulness."

He is Good – that is shown in every page of the Bible, and in the way Jesus Christ lived on earth.

He is Just and fair, kind, merciful. "His mercy endures forever."

He is Gracious. (Ephesians 1:5-7)

He is Holy. (Exodus 15:11 – "Glorious in holiness" (KJV)

1 Peter 1:16 doesn't say "Be ye holy, as I am holy" (but "for" or "because" I am holy). Indeed we can't be Holy in the same way as He is Holy, because He alone is Holy (Rev. 15:4.)

“Holy” comes from a word meaning “well” or “whole”. We are to become holy, as pure and clean and whole as we can be, but even being as pure as we can imagine something or someone could be, doesn’t even begin to reach the holiness of God.

When human beings see the holiness of God, they fall on their faces in awe (Rev. 1:17). We can’t really grasp the wonder of it. The Holy Spirit helps us have some concept of it though.

“God is Love” (1 John 4:8).

Because He is eternal, His love had no beginning or end; because He is infinite, it has no limits; because He is omnipotent and omnipresent, it is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea of love, (as is well described in the hymn “The Love of God”.)

God is Personal. Even though He is so great, He wants to have an intimate, personal relationship with each of us. He is our Father. He knows when each hair falls from our head – that’s how closely He follows us!

Isaiah 57:15 God “inhabits eternity” (KJV), yet lives with him who is lowly and contrite of spirit. What an awesome God we serve!

Today we’ve looked at just some of His attributes:

Self-existent	Faithful
Eternal	Good
Infinite	Just
Incomparable	Holy
Omniscient	Kind
All-wise	Gracious
Omnipotent	Merciful
Omnipresent	Loving
Spirit	Personal – our Father, and Jesus is our brother

So awesome and great, yet He works with and dwells in each of us individually.

We can’t grasp the magnificence of this unless we have His Spirit. And He gives us this fantastic promise:

1 John 3:2 “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

What does that mean? What will it be like? Let’s be sure we’re there to see!