

# God is Spirit

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] let's again just bow our heads briefly let's pray lord as we come to your word tonight again we come seeking your help if we know that spiritual things are spiritually discerned that we need the help of the holy spirit to the the natural man your word says the things of god are foolishness and he cannot understand them and so we come to the one who is the author of the word the spirit himself and we ask that you would give grace to lead us into your truth that you would take it and plant it deep upon our hearts that you would give us ears to hear give us minds to understand give us eyes to see give us hearts that seek to obey and i pray that as i turn to your word that you would help me to rightly handle your word of truth as we are called to do that the words of my lips and the meditation of my heart might be pleasing in your sight lord bless your word to us we ask in jesus name amen if you have a bible with you and please open to john chapter four call and spoil the surprise we are coming to we've looked at god as love we've looked at god as light and tonight we're in verse 24 where jesus says god is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth god is spirit they say that seeing is believing don't they maybe that's been your watchword or maybe you've had others say that to you seeing is believing i'll believe it when i see it and maybe tonight that sums up your attitude to god and to the things of god great that you're here but maybe you're not entirely sure whether you think that god is real maybe you're not sure what you make of what you hear sunday after sunday seeing is seeing believing remember having a fascinating conversation with my with my next door neighbor some time ago and we'd often have some great conversations over the wall one memorable time he said i was watching this documentary about swallows and how they can go all over the world and come back to to the same place isn't it amazing and i said that's god's creation for you and he said don't give me any of this god talk anyway these swallows they're a blooming miracle so ah and then off he went but another day we were having a conversation and he said tell me this he says if there is a god why doesn't he make himself clearer why doesn't he make himself more obvious now that's essentially the same idea as well seeing is believing i'll believe when i see him for myself i think i flummoxed him a wee bit when i said well andy god put you next door to a manse you've had conversations with ministers for the last 40 years how much clearer do you need it to be he saw the funny side and he went off chortling to himself saying well i never thought of that and off he went now tonight we're back thinking about god as we've been doing all weekend thinking about who and what god is and what we're going to do tonight is think about what it means when we say or when the scripture says god is spirit so it's going to be very basic tonight i want us to look at what does that mean and then i want us to look at why does that matter okay what does it mean to say god is spirit and then why does that matter what relevance does that have for you and for me so first of all tonight we're going to look at what does it mean when jesus says god is spirit

now notice that notice what jesus doesn't say jesus doesn't say god is a spirit okay he says god is spirit he doesn't say god is a spirit in other words he's not saying that god is one of a particular class of beings he's he's one amongst a group of others like we might say well they're a human being jesus is saying god is spirit so what does that say to us about who god is now the obvious answer to that is quite simple it says that god does not have a body he doesn't have a physical form like we do jesus uses the same analogy in luke chapter 24 he comes back from the dead and the disciples think he's a ghost and jesus says to them touch me and see a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see i have so we say god is spirit we're saying he doesn't have a physical body we're saying that he is invisible he does not have physical parts that's why in john chapter 1 verse 18 john would say nobody has ever seen god because he is spirit he is invisible we cannot he is spirit now i'm going to quote i don't often quote this but i'm going to quote the westminster confession of faith tonight if you don't know what that is it's a it's an old document written a long time ago but it

summarizes the main teachings of the bible it says about god in chapter 2 it says there is but one only living and true god who is infinite in being and perfection a most pure spirit invisible without body or parts or as my old systematic theology professor don mcleod says it means that god is immaterial and incorporeal there's some big words in this but we'll unpack them in a moment he is immaterial and incorporeal yahweh unlike the gods of the nations did not have a form or similitude he was not flesh but he was invisible and invisible and incorporeal yahweh he was invisible and incorporeal yahweh he had no bodily parts or passions he had no physical needs or dependence and consequently no frailty he fainted not nor became weary god is spirit he does not have a body he is invisible in form he does not have any physical needs or frailty psalm 121 he does not slumber or sleep he doesn't get tired he doesn't get hungry he doesn't get exhausted he doesn't get sick he doesn't change god is spirit as spirit god is invisible as spirit god is everywhere he is not contained he is infinite as the bible itself says the highest heavens cannot contain god god is spirit he doesn't have bodily parts or passions he doesn't have physical needs or dependence and no frailty so why does that matter you might be thinking i'm tired it's sunday night why is he talking about theology why does it matter it might seem just a semi-interesting or complete irrelevance to you when we talk about god being spirit but it's not at all it speaks to us in some very real and some very important ways and the first thing it says to us is this the physical is not all there is the physical is not all there is so just take a step back and make this this that point this evening god is spirit the physical is not all there is you see we can fall into a few different traps here we can compartmentalize spiritual things by that i mean i'm not going to ask you to put your hands up but this was certainly my experience growing up in church it was like what we heard in church on a sunday was totally disconnected from the rest of the week there was church life there was sunday and then there was life on monday to saturday we can compartmentalize our lives and we can make the mistake of thinking well there's church and then there's real life the rest of the time and to be fair sometimes that's my fault our fault as preachers if we're not connecting what we're talking about on a sunday to our life outside of these walls or we can take the seeing is believing tack and be skeptical life's what we see every day we get up brush our teeth have our breakfast probably not in that order go up go to work get the kids up or whatever it might be the created world is where we live move and have our being but the bible is clear that the physical world is not all that there is what we can see or touch is not all that there is there are spiritual realities all around us angels demons principalities powers there is a spiritual realm that is very real there are the holy spirit is real the lord is real but equally there are evil spiritual forces that are equally real the principalities and powers in the heavenly places that the bible speaks of in ephesians 6 isn't it fascinating well at least it is to me daniel for example when i can never remember which one it is so i'm going to look to call on here one of the archangels i can't remember is gabriel or michael comes to daniel and he says your prayer was heard as soon as it's as soon as it was made but i was delayed in getting to you because the prince of purge and the king of greece withstood me who's the king of greece and the prince of persia they're powerful spiritual beings and there's these principalities and powers that paul references in ephesians 6 they are real and here's what i want to say to us tonight spiritual beings are no less real for not having bodies spiritual beings are no less real because they don't have a body why should the spiritual be any less real than the physical just because you and i cannot see it doesn't mean it's not real just because you can't see it does not mean it's not real so the physical is not all there is we need to have this category in our minds and in our understanding for spirit when god created the human race he can the bible says very clearly he created us body and soul there's a physical part of us and there's a spiritual part of us and god has joined those two together and he said that is very good that's how god has made us and by the way that is the way we're going to be for all eternity i was chatting about this we touched on this this morning was chatting about this with someone after church a believer when he dies his soul goes to be with the lord but that's not the end of the story there's going to be a day of resurrection when bodies will rise soul and body will be reunited because that's how god has made human beings to be body and soul united together and equally the same is true for those who go to a lost eternity they will have a resurrection as well they will have bodies raised but as daniel says it'll be a resurrection to condemnation in the lake of fire in the outer darkness but god has made human beings to be physical and spiritual and we need to care for both we need to look after our bodies but we also need to look after our souls you are more than your physical body you have an eternal soul that needs cared for that needs rescued that needs saved by jesus are you caring for your soul you see the bible is clear the death is not the end for anybody but what happens at death is that there is a

separation our spirit souls leave our bodies and the apostle paul would use the language of being unclothed he says it doesn't say ceases to exist he his soul and his body are separated and actually it's

fascinating that paul says i don't want to be unclothed i don't want it and jesus warns us actually as well what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul what does it profit a man to gain all the physical world can offer if he loses his soul the most precious thing that you and i have so do you see what i'm getting at tonight just because we cannot see the spiritual doesn't make it any less real and god has made you and me to have physical and spiritual components and we need to care for both you have a spiritual part to you it's how god has made you to be are we caring for our souls are we feeding our souls are our souls safe jesus is the only one who can nourish our souls jesus is the only one who can save us and forgive us so that when we die we can have the assurance that our soul will go to be with him in paradise until he comes again and raises us from the dead jesus tells a story of two men we don't know the name of one of them the other one was called lazarus and they both died but when you listen to jesus they both continue to exist the rich man opens up his eyes in hades jesus says in a place of torment but lazarus opens up his eyes in paradise and is comforted by abraham death was not the end for either of them they continued to exist their souls continued to exist even in the book of revelation we have this amazing picture of the souls of martyrs in heaven saying to jesus how long lord how long until you come again and bring justice on the earth that even in heaven there's still a sense of anticipation there's still a sense of waiting there's still a sense of it's not complete yet how long till you come back fix all that's broken in the earth and we get our new bodies to be with you forever it's a thought isn't it where would we wake up is our soul safe the physical is not all there is we need to get this category in our mind spirit and spirit is just as real as physical so first of all we've said the physical is not all there is second of all the invisible god has made himself known if god is spirit means god is invisible where does that leave us you see that might be you might think that's a convenient get out clause for a preacher saying ha you're telling me you want to believe in god but i can't see him because he's invisible well that's very convenient you're asking me to take a leap in the dark to trust in a god that i can't see to trust in the invisible is that really what i'm asking you to do well let me say this to you tonight the invisible god has made himself known the invisible god has made himself known and he's made himself known in three ways firstly he's made himself known in the creation the world around us the world around us screams to us there is a god and the world around us screams to us what kind of god he is he could have created the world black and white he creates a world full of beauty and color when he created the world he put adam and eve in the garden in eden and he all manner of fruits and for the delicious things for them to eat he could have just made a world where all they could eat was brussels sprouts and that's it he didn't he gave them variety he gave them abundance he gave them good things everything they needed was there it looked good it tasted good the garden in eden even smelled good we're told there was aromatic spices and things there god loves to give and he does good things and the world around us shows us that he is good and that he is beautiful that he is real do we really think a world like the one we enjoy and live in has happened by accident

the fine balance of nature that this world just popped into being by pure chance now i know this isn't a watertight argument because sam and i had this chat over lunch but maybe you've heard of the goldilocks hypothesis if not drop hypothesis you will have heard of goldilocks you see remember goldilocks in the story she would try them one porridge was too hot the other porridge was too cold the third porridge had nutella on it and was delicious no the third porridge was beautiful it was just right and the goldilocks hypothesis when you look around everything is so finely balanced to be just right to support life on earth if the planet was slightly further away from the sun be too cold and we'd freeze it was too bit closer to the sun and be too hot and no life could be sustained if we didn't have a moon just the particular size that we have the solar winds would strip away our atmosphere which is what happened to mars and would there be no oxygen if the balance of oxygen our atmosphere was slightly different it wouldn't be enough to support life as we know it no matter which way you look you cannot shake this impression that everything just seems to be so finely tuned to support life on this little third rock from the sun could that really be just all by chance the creation shows us that god is real the invisible god makes himself known in the world around us the invisible god secondly makes himself known in the bible god doesn't want us guessing about what he's like he's written it down for us he's given us a book he's given us a sure record that we can trust of who he is what he has done and what he is like he shows us himself he comes and tells us he comes and

tells you hey this is who i am and this is what i'm like and this is what i've done for you and this is the offer i want to make to you that you can be with me forever you don't have to figure it out on your own you don't have to imagine what i'm like you don't have to try and take a jump into the dark here it is for you it's all there for you all that you need to know is recorded for you in the words of the bible god wants you to know who he is and god wants you to know what he's like because when colin or myself or anyone stands here sunday after sunday and says put your trust in the lord jesus christ he wants you to know who it is that you're trusting he wants you to know how good and how merciful and how beautiful and how how amazing he really is he's not asking you just to take a jump into the dark he's revealed himself and as we come to see who he is and what he's done and what he's like it's in the light of that we're being called to put our trust in him he wants you to know what he's like so much that he's put it in a book the invisible god makes himself known in the creation he makes himself known in the bible and thirdly and most importantly he makes himself known in jesus john chapter 1 verse 18 no one has ever seen god but the one and only son who is himself god and is in closest relationship with the father he has made him known it blows my mind away that the very one the very one who spoke to the samaritan woman and said god is spirit was god imagine going out to get water one day and you bump into god in the flesh wow the very one who said that he was the messiah he says it very clearly one the one called christ is coming and jesus says i who speak to you am he and yet he's the same one that we're told that he was weary from his journey sitting thirsty by a well what a contrast that is the creator of the heavens and the earth the savior of the world sitting tired and thirsty asking you for a drink

[ 20 : 15 ] the one who said god is spirit was himself god in the flesh in jesus the invisible god can be seen in jesus the invisible god took on a physical form he took on flesh and blood and he came into this world and he made the invisible god visible you could see god when you look at jesus as jesus said if you've seen me you've seen the father if you've seen me you've seen what god is like so what is god like look at jesus my old systematics professor said this a lot and i'm sure he said it to colin as well in god there is no un-christ likeness at all in other words what you see in jesus is what god is like we see god in jesus because jesus is god and what does jesus show us about god what does he reveal to us about god that he reveals to us that god has a heart for you and for me he has a heart for us that he wants you to have life who cares for our sorrows and our struggles and who loves us to the extent that he would go to the cross to lay down his life for you and for me again my mind just can't cope with this god the invisible god who was spirit took on a physical form and in that physical form he let people that he had made drive nails through his hands and through his feet in order to be a sacrifice for your sin and mine we remembered this morning this is my body broken for you this cup is the covenant in my blood which is given for you he took on a body and then let us break it and pierce it in order to rescue us and to save us there is no greater love than the love that jesus has for you and he wants you to know that love and you can know it through your faith in him so if seeing is believing look at jesus and if you look at jesus and maybe tonight you think i know about jesus i've gone to sunday school i know some of the bible stories i just don't get what all the fuss is about i don't get why these people in church get so excited about jesus and sing songs about jesus and to jesus don't really get what's so exciting about him i'm going to give you a challenge i want you to pray to the lord and say i want to see jesus lord open my eyes that i might see you genuinely want to know what all the fuss is about jesus and why we get so excited about jesus ask god to open your eyes that you might see and you watch what happens so we've seen that the physical is not all there is we've seen that the invisible god makes himself visible and let me finish with this third application worship that's the context of the verse god is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth i love how the samaritan woman meets jesus he shows the supernatural knowledge of her go call your husband and she says i don't have a husband he says i know you don't you've had five and the one you're with now is not your husband and then she begins to realize this is not an ordinary guy i'm talking to i perceive you're a prophet what does she go straight into theological debate she asks him a theological question well she says our fathers worship on this mountain or worshipped on this mountain but you say that in jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship in other words so if we're to worship god where do we need to go do we do it here on this mountain or do we need to go to jerusalem where's the place that we need to go and jesus reply is woman believe me the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in jerusalem will you worship the father you worship what you do not know we worship what we know for salvation is from the jews but the hour is coming and is now here when true

worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such people to worship him god is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth so who's right those who say worship on this mountain or those who say worship in jerusalem i love jesus wordplay here she says our fathers worshipped here jesus doesn't talk about their fathers but he talks of the father the father is seeking worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth see the point that jesus is making it's not about geography it's not about the where it's not about whether it's in this building or that building or in this place or that place it's about the heart the father is seeking those who worship him in spirit and in truth god is spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth in some ways you could say what makes the true worshipper is not the physical the place it's the spiritual there's a lot of debate about what jesus meant when he said we must worship in spirit and truth what does that mean does he mean a reference to the holy spirit which the bible calls or who rather the bible calls the spirit of truth elsewhere or is he speaking about our inner attitude our attitude of heart that we come that from our heart that we're not just going through the motions that in our heart we are offering praise and worship to god what does jesus mean i think the answer is probably both it's a great cop-out isn't it it's both what does god look at when we come to worship him he looks at our hearts he looks at what our hearts say about jesus do we delight in him do we love him do we rejoice in him but here's the key thing we can't delight in god without the holy spirit we can't offer true worship without the holy spirit we cannot be a true worshipper of god without being born again and look at the language of jesus the father is seeking such people to worship him he's on the hunt he's looking he is seeking those who would come and worship him in spirit and in truth there's only one way we can worship in spirit and in truth when the holy spirit opens our eyes to see jesus have you seen the invisible god yet have you seen how amazing he is have you seen how much he loves you have you seen the extent of what he's done for you of what he's done for this world and do you see what he's going to do when he comes back and he rids this world of death and darkness and brokenness forever the gospel really is amazing god is spirit and god is seeking those who will worship him in spirit and in truth but i suppose the challenge for us tonight is this is that us are we worshipping him are we seeking after him are we pursuing him jesus has made the invisible god visible and we can be with him for all eternity if we put our trust in jesus have you done that are you caring for your soul the lord cares for you and he wants to save you and he has shown you himself and if you will put your trust in him you will be saved for time and for eternity amen let's bow our heads and let's pray together gracious god we thank you that in jesus the invisible has become visible that if we see jesus we have seen the father and for those of us who have had our eyes opened we thank you for that work of the spirit of god that there was many a time and year in our lives when we thought nothing of jesus we saw nothing desirable in jesus but you've changed that and we pray for any in here tonight who still see nothing desirable in jesus and we pray that by your spirit you would change that new hearts and new affections and new eyes and new spirits renew and give the gift of second birth only you can do it lord but we pray that that as this congregation moves forward that it will be marked by seeing new birth in their midst by seeing people coming from darkness to light to put their trust in the lord jesus christ do a work of power that will resound to the glory of your name for all eternity and we ask this in jesus name amen and we pray that