

God is Spirit

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[0 : 00] Can you please take out your Bibles and turn with me to John chapter 4. John chapter 4. As you all know, just for the last couple of weeks, actually the last couple of months, we've been doing a series on the attributes of God.

I pretty much figured that we're going to be away from one another and the practical designs of worship that we can do for one another. It's an opportunity for us to know more about God. So the last couple of weeks were a little bit more practical on practical holiness, driven from the understanding that God is holy and the necessary questions that flow from that. So we dealt with that the last couple of weeks. But today I want to get us back to the subject of God and God alone.

The question that I have for you, is it possible for us to have any higher thoughts than God? Is there anything more majestic, more great, more awesome that we can think about in regards to God?

[1 : 22] Who is God? Where is God? What is God made up of? These are all the basic questions that humanity thinks about when we think about this subject of God.

And the reality is these are big questions. They are implications to these questions and to the answers. And the greatest and deepest thoughts man's can ever have is to be about God.

The wonderful thing about this is we're not left to our own intuition. We're not left to our own thoughts. We're not left to our own opinions. In trying to figure out God.

God spoke to us. And that demonstrates his graciousness and his desire to be known as he's given us this Bible.

This is a Bible that we are to read, to study, to know him, to know what he says about himself. Think about it for a second.

[2 : 38] Would it be possible for us to have a right concept of God without God telling us?

One of the ways, and I haven't really talked about it that much, is this sermon is unlike the ways that I usually preach. Usually I preach in an expositional fashion.

It's based on a passage of Scripture, and we take it apart. The way I've designed this sermon is it's to be systematized.

And what we're doing is I'm pulling apart different parts of God's Word that point to this subject. Theologians call this theology proper.

And that is essentially the theology of God. It is the understanding that everything we are to understand about ourselves, this world, this universe, our relationships, has to flow from a right and proper and true understanding of God.

[3 : 42] So our theme verse for this series is found in Jeremiah 9.23. And Jeremiah clearly tells us what God tells us should be of the utmost importance to us.

He teaches us what we should boast about. He tells us that the wise man is not to boast in his wisdom. The mighty man is not to boast in his might.

The rich man not in his riches. But if there's anything worth boasting about, it is this, that he understands and knows God.

And that God is the Lord who practices righteousness, steadfast love, justice in the earth. For as God says, he delights in these things.

My friends, this study is not a small, inconsequential study. This should be a study and desire for us to know of primary importance.

[4 : 56] My desire is, as we look at what years of ministry looks like in this church, it has to flow from a right understanding of God.

It's a delight to know God as he has presented himself to be.

A few weeks back, we learned that with God, there is no beginning. There is no end. There simply was always God.

He was never created. He is the creator. He is the one who creates all things. He is the fountainhead of all fountains. And us, we were created for his glory.

Revelations 4.11 says, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things.

[6 : 02] And by your will, they existed and were created. The reality is, everything is small to God.

But small does not mean insignificant. Everything is of concern to our Lord and Savior. So let me ask you this question.

This is the question I'm going to try to answer this morning. What is God? What is God?

Is God just a thought? Is God an idea? Is God a power?

Do you define God as an energy? Or maybe you just think of God as beyond?

[7 : 06] One of the most theologically enlightening conversations on who God is, or what God is, is actually found in John chapter 4.

So please turn with me to John chapter 4. And many of you will remember this scene, because Pastor Dave preached on this at the very beginning of the year.

And he looked at something else in this as he was looking at Jesus. But within this passage, we're going to see Jesus make a very simple, profound statement about what God is.

Now, as you know, this is the story of the woman at the well. This is when Jesus Christ is passing through Samaria. The disciples have gone on for a bit to get more supplies, and he's resting at the well.

In case you forget, the Samaritan was kind of an offshoot of the Jewish faith. To some degree, they were considered apostate by the Jewish faith.

[8 : 13] Essentially, if you look back at 2 Kings 17:24, the writer tells us that when Babylon had come in and took southern Israel to Babylon in their captivity, their exile, for 70 years, it was very common in those days for those nations to put other groups of people in that land.

If you remember, we were just teaching on Ephesians, that there was a strong Jewish community in Ephesus, because Rome at that time sent a community of Jews to live in that area.

So they'd send different groups to populate the land. Some of these people, there was still some Jews living in that area.

They were, don't remember, Israel was gone for over 70 years. So there was intermarriage. It was time for a couple of generations. And through that time, this people group evolved.

Now, what was interesting is when Israel came back, the Jews came back from Babylon and desired to build the temple in Jerusalem, they didn't want them to participate because they were considered apostates.

[9 : 34] So what they did is said, all right, you're not going to let us build that temple. We're going to build our own temple in Mount Gerizim. So ever since that time, there's this schism. They don't have anything to do with one another.

So here's this woman that's a part of that people group. And she says to Jesus, she says, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain.

But you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

So he's giving us a hint of what's coming. It's not going to be a temple-based worship. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know.

For salvation is from the Jews. Now, when he's saying she does not know, she's not knowing what she's doing as far as the worship, but she has no idea that that worship is actually based on any sense of truth.

[10 : 45] They just made up their own rules. So it's displaying their ignorance as to who God is and what God requires and what God asks of his people. So when we look at verse 23, it says, But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. And this is our key verse. God is spirit. And those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. God is spirit. God is spirit.

And those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. Today I want to expand and help us understand the attribute of God being spirit.

Of God being spirit. Not talking about the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. That's another subject altogether.

[12:02] Perhaps we'll talk about that in the next couple of weeks. But I want to talk about this idea of God being spirit. And God being spirit falls under three different areas.

So God being spirit, we mean that God is immaterial. God is immaterial. The second area that I want to speak on today or preach on is that God is invisible.

God is invisible. So we have God is immaterial. God is invisible. And the third characteristic of God being spirit, that God is infinite. God is infinite.

And I want us to not just only understand these things for sake of understanding. But I want for you to see the significance of God being spirit, of God being immaterial, God being invisible, God being infinite.

And how that directly impacts our worship and our absolute knowledge of who he is. And why it's important to understand these things.

[13:08] So the first point is God is immaterial. Now I think you guys understand that when I say God is immaterial, I'm not saying that God is irrelevant.

You know, we've all had that saying. That's an immaterial argument for our discussion. That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about when I say immaterial is that God is not made up of material.

He's not made up of this type of physical substance. God is a spirit being. And I believe most of you understand this. You comprehend this.

That God is not confined to a physical body. He is not bound by the rules of having a physical body. Jesus, on the other hand, is a physical body.

And I think it's important for us to understand that. And we're going to get into that later. But now it's important for us that God himself, God the Father, does not have a physical body.

[14:10] The Apostle John has testified that God does not have a material body by stating that he is spirit. And as we learned, God was not created.

Therefore, he's not a product of creation. So how do we describe immateriality? Some people are going to argue that God is just energy.

But that does not contain an understanding of who God is as we see in Scripture. Now some of you might be thinking, well, wait a second, BK.

There's these verses in Scripture that talk about God having human-like characteristics. We see in Jeremiah 18.6 that God tells us that he has hands.

Jeremiah 18.6 reads, Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. We read in 2 Chronicles 69 that God has eyes.

[15:21] For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth. So there's this idea that Scripture is telling us that God sees.

And we also read in Isaiah 53.1 that God has arms. And to whom has the arm of the Lord revealed? We also read that God has ears.

Psalms 132. God has ears. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy, writes the psalmist.

Now what the authors are doing, and it's very important for us to understand that, they're using figures of speech. They're using what theologians call an anthropomorphic expression.

You don't need to be a theologian that uses that term. We see that when we give humans like cartoons. If you see a Disney cartoon, they're giving man-like abilities.

[16:27] They talk, they reason, and they do all those type of things. But I want you to understand that when God uses those expressions, that is God demonstrating his great love for us.

As he communicates so wonderfully. This is an infinite God communicating to us clearly infinite stupid beings.

If there's anything that this world chaos reveals, is that we are so incapable. But this is what God demonstrates in this Bible.

This isn't just a holy book that is meant to collect dust. It's not just a guide for religion. But it was God himself testifying truth to us to help us understand him.

So when it speaks of God's hands, it means that God is actively intervening in our lives. When we read that God has eyes and ears, it reveals that he is active with us.

[17 : 47] He sees us. He hears us. And through his arms, he reveals his might and power. This is an incredible God.

This isn't a God that we need to form a special chant or build a special shrine in order to get his attention. It's here, right now.

You see, God is not restricted or limited by a physical body. If he had a physical body, he could only be in one place. You see, but God reveals himself as so much more than just a spirit.

Through our understanding of God, we understand that he has a personality, that he reveals himself as a person, not as an impersonal force of energy.

When people think he's energy, they want to say there's power there. But when you say he's just energy, it's this idea outside of personhood. He's a non-sentient being if you watch a science fiction TV show.

[18 : 58] The Bible teaches us that God has both a mind, emotion, and intellect. And he's totally a person, but he doesn't have a material presence.

And the fact is, we as people get caught up in material presence. The fact of the matter is, a rock is a material presence.

But a rock has no personhood. Rock has no will, emotion, or being. So sometimes we have to remove the idea that having physical substance is the highest order of things.

It's not. It's not even close. So that is an area where people struggle in. The fact of the matter is, God has intellect.

He thinks, he knows, he reasons. He comprehends, he compares, he makes judgments. We know from the pages of Scripture that God has emotion.

[20 : 04] He feels, he loves, he hates things. He rejoices. He takes pleasure in. He grieves. He is angered. And we see very clearly that God has a will.

He chooses. He purposes. He plans. He determines. He resolves. He says, God is spirit in John 4, 24.

And those who worship must worship in spirit, in truth. What that passage is saying is that our worship must contain elements of our intellect, elements of our emotion, and elements of our will. Often, when we say that someone is spiritual, we almost have this understanding in this day and age, the cultural context, is that there's some higher sense of being, that they need to travel outside of themselves, almost a transcendental meditation, something beyond ourselves that allows us to get in touch with this power, this energy that they claim to be throughout all the nature.

That is not what the pages of Scripture tells us. When he's calling us to worship him, it is not simply an emotional act.

[21 : 53] It is not simply a mental act, mental ascent. And it's not simply actions. It's not simply an emotional act.

It's not simply an emotional act. It's not simply an emotional act. It is an engagement of our will. And this act needs to spring forth from the core of our heart.

It's not reserved for a specific time or place. Why? It's because God doesn't have a physical body. Because God is immaterial and without body, he is able to keep his promises to be with all his people.

When we're at night and we're teaching our young children to pray to God that God is with them, we are speaking truth. We're not needing to only take them to the temple, to the church where they can experience God, to be in his presence.

That's why right now at your homes as you watch these sermons and we're connecting with one another on Facebook or whatever means, God is present with all of us.

[23 : 36] We don't have to be here on Reed Crescent to be experiencing that presence of God. Because God is spirit, we can be assured that wherever we go and no matter how alone we may feel, God is always with us.

You see, it's because of this understanding of God being spirit that intimacy is possible with God. That's why it's so important for us to understand God's, what it means that he is immaterial.

Second element that I want to talk about in regards to God being spirit is that God is invisible. God is invisible to our eyes.

He cannot be seen. 1 Timothy 1.17 says, To the king of ages, immortal, invisible. It's what we're saying today.

Because God does not have a material body, we cannot see him with our human eyes. Now, there is a reason God gave a commandment not to make any graven image of him.

[24 : 54] It was one of the first commandments he gave his people when Moses came down from the mountain. You see, no matter how opulent or great we think we can create can ever resemble God.

Nothing. It just simply always falls short of who he is. We can say all we want, well, I created this with the best intentions of my heart.

It was worshipful. Do you understand? It's still an insult to God. Because it falls short of who he is in his completeness.

It will always lack something. It's actually going to lack most things. Our minds are unable to do such a thing. See, what God is telling us when we do not create an idol to him, it's he's saying that we can never capture all his glory.

So don't even think about starting. Because God is actually so different from creation. You see, this is what's messed up man so much.

[26 : 12] They worship the created rather than the creator. Think about how insulting to God that is.

I created wood. So person take wood and they make an idol and they worship the idol. Or take gold and make it into a golden calf to worship.

It's an absolute insult to a just, holy, and powerful God. The fact is we are never to limit him.

We are called never to misrepresent him. To do so is to think of him less than who he is. The only way we are to understand God in physical way is Jesus Christ.

That's the only form we can think of God in a human material form. John 1.18 No one has ever seen God.

[27 : 20] The only God who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. If anyone tells you they've seen God, they're lying.

Why? Because they'd be dead. The pages of Scripture tell us quite clearly that we could not handle seeing him. Even Moses, who walked with God, who fellowshiped with God, who had the most humanly close relationship with God, had to hide from a rock and was just able to gaze his glory outside of that rock.

Well, how can we really know God if we can't see God? Well, we know God from creation and examining the world around us.

We know that he's intelligent and he's powerful. We know God by reading his word and learning what he has to tell us about himself. That tells us that this is a God who wants to be known, that desires this relationship with us.

And we know God by entering into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God in human form. That means believing the words that Jesus Christ said and agreeing with those words.

[28 : 48] It's obeying those words. Just because we do not see God does not mean he is not present. Paul in Colossians simply writes, Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

He is the image of the invisible God. So what does that mean for us? What is the consequence for us?

Well, God being spiritual and invisible means he can be right here, right now. It means we're all able to call upon the name of Jesus Christ.

That presence is there. God is here as much as he is in heaven. That's why we don't have to create elaborate physical beings just to get his attention.

He's here now. What's also important is because he is invisible, we have to engage him by faith. By faith. By faith.

[29 : 55] Not by works, but by faith. And we hope one day for the day when we shall see him in his physical presence, when we are made perfect to be without sin.

The third element of God being spirit is that God is infinite. God is infinite. Because God has no material body, his being has no limits.

There are no boundaries to him. It means that God is without end. He has no limitations. There is no restrictions placed upon him. God exists in every part of time.

And God exists in every part of space. That he is free from any and all physical limitations. Not just part of him, but all of them.

It's interesting while doing some reading on this subject, even an attempt to quantify God in human terms does God a disservice.

[30 : 59] It's so difficult. You see, God isn't someone we can even place into a size or dimension. This is what the writer of Psalm 139, verses 7 to 10 writes.

He says, It's amazing.

He's always there. He's always holding us. There is no place that we can go on this earth where God cannot see us, where God cannot hear us, and where he cannot get a hold of us.

You see, all of God's greatness surpasses all our understanding.

There is no knowledge that God does not have in full. There is no secret we can keep from him.

[32 : 47] There is no power that he does not possess in full. God is not limited by any other being.

There's nothing that limits God. Job 5.9 says, The great things God does are unsearchable.

You can't find it. You can't figure it out. It is beyond you. The reality is, if you could figure it out, if you could explain it, if you could understand it, congratulations, you're God.

It's beyond us. It's human folly to think we could even begin to think that way. Job writes in Job 9.10, God says, God does great things beyond searching out and marvelous things beyond number.

He also writes in 11.7, Can you find out the deep things of God? Do you ever think that we could ever find out the limit of the Almighty?

[34 : 02] You see, everything about God is beyond us. We cannot get to the bottom of God. We cannot get to the heights of God.

But God did something for us. He lowered himself to us. Jesus Christ came in living form.

He is the Word, the Word of God. He reveals to us what we are to believe, what we are to accept, what we are to embrace.

It's the cross of Jesus Christ that peace and harmony can be had between us and the Almighty that is beyond our complete comprehension and understanding.

This is God, my friends. My prayer for you is that the mystery of God would heighten your sense of worship, your sense of awesomeness, His awe, His mercy, His grace, that there are so much more than words that we can describe.

[35 : 21] I truly believe that we give too much credit to understanding things. There's so many scientists have wasted so much of their time trying to figure out creation.

We can't. We don't know what happened. We just know what God told us in Genesis 1. And He was the only one there.

It was interesting. There was an article that I read. It was a deconversion article about someone who couldn't believe because they looked at all the stars and all the mysteries that abound us in our solar system and that they just couldn't get over the idea that God created that for just us.

All those marvels on display at night. But the point that he missed in his understanding is that when we look at the grandeur of the solar system and everything that we see with our eyes is that we are human beings to give glory to God.

Yes, it's important for us to understand what God has given for us to understand. But God doesn't always explain why.

[36 : 54] He just does what He does and He does not need to answer to anybody. Let me ask you this question. If you could figure God out would you worship Him?

God doesn't want understanding. God wants us in awe of Him. God calls us to be amazed by Him. This amazement is to call us to our knees and to give thanks to a gracious, powerful God.

If we knew God, had Him all figured out would we still desire to deepen our worship of Him? You see, God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter.

He has no dimensions. He is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses and is a more excellence than any kind of existence.

[38 : 16] I'll conclude with the words of A.W. Tozer in his book The Knowledge of God. He simply wrote, Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God.

And the weightiest word in any language is its word for God. May you think on God.

May you be amazed by God. Let me pray. I don't know what words can encapsulate you, O Father.

We are limited by a meager vocabulary, by meager minds. But in the pages of Scripture, you tell us that you are mighty, you see, you are spirit.

Father, my prayer is for these saints that gather at the church, at Squamish Baptist Church, that we would take this time to be moved by you, to think of you, to meditate on you.

[39 : 39] just on your perfect perfection, that you are spirit. you are personable in these ways.

You can be known, even though we cannot see you. Father, I pray that we would not give too much or any praise to our intellect, to our scientific endeavors, to what we think we can prove.

Father, there's a reason that you call us to have a childlike faith. Let us not question your goodness in desiring to be invisible, to be immaterial.

you are great in all these things. Father, we thank you and we love you and we praise you for all the things that you are, that you're in your infiniteness, that we know your hand stretches everywhere and it touches every life.

And may we see ourselves bound to you in the way that you have created us to be, worshipers of you. In your most holy power, full and everlasting name.

[41 : 07] Amen.