

The Attributes of God

Communicable and Incommunicable

“In one of his letters to Erasmus, Luther said, “Your thoughts of God are too human.” Pink

Psalm 50:21

21 “These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes.

Job 11:7–9

7 “Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?

8 “They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?

9 “Its measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea.

“When we turn our thoughts to God’s eternity, His immateriality, His omnipresence, His almightiness, our minds are overwhelmed... But the incomprehensibility of the divine nature is not a reason why we should desist from reverent inquiry and prayerful strivings to apprehend what He has so graciously revealed of Himself in His word” Pink

“Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued, investigation of the great subject of the Deity. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and Him crucified and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity (C.H. Spurgeon). Pink

“Men imagine that the Most High is moved by sentiment, rather than actuated by principle. They suppose that His omnipotence is such an idle fiction that Satan is thwarting His designs on every side. They think that if He has formed any plan or purpose at all, then it must be like theirs, constantly subject to change. They openly declare that whatever power He possesses must be restricted, lest He invade the citadel of man’s ‘free will’ and reduce him to a ‘machine.’ They lower the all-efficacious atonement, which has actually redeemed everyone for whom it was made, to a mere ‘remedy,’ which sin-sick souls may use if they feel disposed to; and they enervate the invincible work of the Holy Spirit to an ‘offer’ of the Gospel which sinners may accept or reject as they please.” Pink

“The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form ‘gods’ out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a ‘god’ out of their own carnal mind. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. A ‘god’ whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits naught but contempt.” Pink

Classification of Attributes

Theologians, both medieval and Reformed, have rather uniformly drawn up their lists of divine attributes and then have classified them under either natural and moral, absolute and relative, original and derived, active and inactive, intransitive and transitive, or—and these are the most common classifications—incommunicable and communicable attributes. Reymond

The *incommunicable* attributes emphasize the absolute distinctness of God, his transcendent greatness and exalted nature. Such attributes have little or no analogy in God's creatures. The *communicable* attributes find some reflection or analogy in human beings created in God's image. They indicate the immanence of God in relation to creatures. Yet all the attributes are God's attributes; the distinction between God and man, between Creator and creature, is always basic. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.

Incommunicable Attributes

Incommunicable Attributes

Incomprehensibility

God's *incomprehensibility* is sometimes included in lists of his attributes. It seems preferable to regard it as a description of human inability to understand God fully. Incomprehensibility is therefore not an attribute, although it is a given in every discussion of God. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.

Psalm 139:6

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

Psalm 145:3

3 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable.

Isaiah 40:28

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

Isaiah 55:8–9

8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.

9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Matthew 11:25–27

25 At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

26 “Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

27 “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

Romans 11:33–36

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Incommunicable Attributes

God's Unity

God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times. Grudem

This attribute stresses both the oneness and the unicity of God, the fact that He is numerically one and that as such He is unique. It implies that there is but one Divine Being, that from the nature of the case there can be but one, and that all other beings exist of and through and unto Him. Berkhof

This attribute of God has also been called *God's simplicity* using *simple* in the less common sense of “not complex” or “not composed of parts.” But since the word *simple* today has the more common sense of “easy to understand” and “unintelligent or foolish,” it is more helpful now to speak of God’s “unity” rather than his “simplicity.” Grudem

God's Unity

1 Kings 8:60

60 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else.

Deuteronomy 6:4

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

Mark 12:29

29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD;

John 17:3

3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Incommunicable Attributes

God's Independence or Self-existence

God's Independence or Self-existence

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. Grudem

This attribute of God is sometimes called his self-existence or his *aseity* (from the Latin words *a se* which mean “from himself “).
Grudem

God's Independence or Self-existence

John 5:26

26 “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

Acts 17:24–25

24 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

Exodus 3:14

14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”

God's Independence or Self-existence

Job 41:11

11 “Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.

Psalms 50:10–12

10 “For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills.

11 “I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine.

12 “If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

God's being is also something totally unique. It is not just that God *does not* need the creation for anything; God *could not* need the creation for anything. The difference between the creature and the Creator is an immensely vast difference, for God exists in a fundamentally different order of being. It is not just that we exist and God has always existed; it is also that God *necessarily* exists in an infinitely better, stronger, more excellent way. The difference between God's being and ours is more than the difference between the sun and a candle, more than the difference between the ocean and a raindrop, more than the difference between the arctic ice cap and a snowflake, more than the difference between the universe and the room we are sitting in: God's being is *qualitatively different*. No limitation or imperfection in creation should be projected onto our thought of God. He is the Creator; all else is creaturely. All else can pass away in an instant; he *necessarily exists* forever. Grudem

Incommunicable Attributes

God's Immutability

God's Immutability

...expresses his changelessness and his faithfulness to himself, to his decrees, promises, and works. He remains forever the same true God who undergoes no change from within or from anything outside himself. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.

It is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises. In virtue of this attribute He is exalted above all becoming, and is free from all accession or diminution and from all growth or decay in His Being or perfections. His knowledge and plans, His moral principles and volitions remain forever the same. Even reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, since a change is either for better or for worse. But in God, as the absolute Perfection, improvement and deterioration are both equally impossible. Berkhof

God's Immutability

Psalm 102:25–27

25 “Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

26 “Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

27 “But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.

James 1:17

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Hebrews 6:17

17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

God's Immutability

1 Samuel 15:29

29 "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

Psalms 33:11

11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

Malachi 3:6

6 "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Hebrews 13:8–9

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

God's Immutability

God's Purposes are Fulfilled

Matthew 25:34

34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Ephesians 3:9

9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

Ephesians 3:11

11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

God's Immutability

God's Purposes are Fulfilled

2 Timothy 2:19

19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

1 Peter 1:20

20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

Revelation 13:8

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

God's Immutability

God is Unchanging in His Promises

Numbers 23:19

19 “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

1 Samuel 15:29

29 “Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.”

Isaiah 46:9–11

9 “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;

11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

God's Immutability Challenged

The divine immutability should not be understood as implying *immobility*, as if there were no movement in God. It is even customary in theology to speak of God as *actus purus*, a God who is always in action. The Bible teaches us that God enters into manifold relations with man and, as it were, lives their life with them. There is change round about Him, change in the relations of men to Him, but there is no change in His Being, His attributes, His purpose, His motives of action, or His promises. The purpose to create was eternal with Him, and there was no change in Him when this purpose was realized by a single eternal act of His will. The incarnation brought no change in the Being or perfections of God, nor in His purpose, for it was His eternal good pleasure to send the Son of His love into the world. And if Scripture speaks of His repenting, changing His intention, and altering His relation to sinners when they repent, we should remember that this is only an anthropopathic way of speaking. In reality the change is not in God, but in man and in man's relations to God. Berkhof

God's Immutability Challenged

Genesis 6:6–7

6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

7 The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”

1 Samuel 15:10–11

10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying,

11 “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.” And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.

Jonah 3:10

10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

God's Immutability Challenged

Exodus 32:9–14

9 The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.

10 “Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 “Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people.

13 “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ”

14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

God's Immutability Challenged

Isaiah 38:1–6

1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’ ”

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,

3 and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying,

5 “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.

6 “I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.” ’

God's Immutability Challenged

First, where, upon a superficial reading, the biblical text seems to suggest that God did *in fact* alter his course of action away from a previously declared course of action, one should understand that his “new course” is only his settled, *immutably certain* response—in keeping with the principles of conduct respecting himself which he himself enunciates in Jeremiah 18:7–10—to a change in the human response to his holy laws: Raymond

Jeremiah 18:7–10

7 “At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it;

8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.

9 “Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it;

10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.

Reymond's Response to the Critics

1. God *always* acts the same way toward moral evil and the same way toward moral good. In his every reaction to men's responses to him, the *immutable* moral fixity of his character is evident. If men and women alter their relations to him, he will always respond in a manner consistent with his immutably holy character. This being true, God does not deem it necessary to attach to every promise he makes or to every prediction of judgment he issues the conditions for human weal or woe. They are always to be understood as in force, though they may be unstated. They are always operative so that whatever men do, God responds accordingly. And if the biblical interpreter does not realize this—that these conditions are operative even though unstated—he may conclude that God has broken a promise or has failed to carry out a predicted judgment.

Reymond's Response to the Critics

2. God being not only the God of infinite holiness but also the God of infinite goodness and compassion, we should not be surprised to read that, in reaction to the evil of those who refuse to obey him, he could be grieved that he had made them. In fact it would be strange if we did not hear him say that their sin and evil were a source of great grief to him. God himself declared, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live" (Ezek. 33:11). Just as, because of his holiness, God cannot look upon man's sin with acceptance (Hab. 1:13), so also, because of his compassion, he cannot look upon the sinner's doom with pleasure (Ezek. 33:11). The creature's obedience *always* brings him joy; the creature's sin *always* grieves him, even to the point that he can declare that he regrets that he made those who disobey him.

Reymond's Response to the Critics

3. With regard to God's threat to destroy Israel and to "begin anew" with Moses, while God's anger against Israel was in no sense feigned, he knew that his threat to destroy Israel and to make Moses into a great nation was in no danger of ever being actualized. His words to Moses, "Leave me alone that ...," indicate that from God's perspective Moses stood before him as Israel's mediator. And God knew, because he had made Moses and had decretally determined to give him his "mediator" character, that Moses would certainly intercede on Israel's behalf and that he himself in response to Moses' mediation would set aside his "threat" toward Israel for Moses' sake. By allowing his response to Israel's sin to turn upon Moses' mediation—as just one instance of biblical mediation (see also, for example, Gen. 18:22–33; 19:29; Exod. 17:9–13; Job 1:4–5; Ezek. 22:30)—God intended to teach that he always relates himself to men salvifically through a mediator. When Moses made his appeal on Israel's behalf to God's own covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Exod. 32:13) and, in order to "make atonement" for Israel's sin, declared that if God did not forgive Israel he wanted God to blot him out of the book which he had written (Exod. 32:30–32), he by his mediation was signifying the central redemptive principle of salvation through mediation, and in so doing Moses' mediation became by divine design an Old Testament type of Christ's mediatorial work. So what many assert is an example of the *mutability* of God's purpose is in actuality a remarkable example of God's *fixed purpose* to relate himself to sinful men on the basis of the intercession of an appointed Mediator.

Reymond's Response to the Critics

4. To those who would respond by asking why God, if he is a God of compassion, made men in the first place if he knew beforehand (not to mention decreed) that some of them would insult him and cause him grief, resulting in his own eternal hostility toward them and in their eternal hurt, I say that before they find fault with God's wisdom and love *vis à vis* the world that actually exists, they must be able to show that another world in which evil could not come to actuality would be richer in moral and spiritual values, would better accomplish his same ends, and would more accord with the entire range of his divine attributes. In light of the ultimate end God has wisely determined to accomplish, namely, the glorification of his beloved Son as the "Firstborn" among many brothers (Rom. 8:29) and thereby to glorify himself, it appears impossible that any such imagined world could meet these criteria and thus justify itself.

Immutability and Impassibility

This attribute, if true, would mean that God does not have passions or emotions, but is “impassible,” not subject to passions. Grudem

Immutability and Impassibility

...whenever divine impassibility is interpreted to mean that God is impervious to human pain or incapable of empathizing with human grief it must be roundly denounced and rejected. When the Confession of Faith declares that God is “without ... passions” it should be understood to mean that God has no *bodily* passions such as hunger or the human drive for sexual fulfillment. As A. A. Hodge writes: “we deny that the properties of matter, such as bodily parts and passions, belong to him.” Raymond

Immutability and Impassibility

Anthropopathy – attributes human feelings or passions to God. If the Bible attributes any human passion or feeling to God, that, strictly understood, conflicts with His absolute perfection, it is speaking anthropopathetically. We should see the use of this figure as a divine condescension that explains God's motives and actions in terms we can understand. *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Alan Cairns, p. 30

Immutability and Impassibility

Isaiah 62:5

5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.

Psalms 78:40

40 How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness And grieved Him in the desert!

Ephesians 4:30

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Exodus 32:10

10 “Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

The Danger of Process Theology

...a theological position that says that process and change are essential aspects of genuine existence, and that therefore God must be changing over time also, just like everything else that exists. In fact, Charles Hartshorne, the father of process theology, would say that God is continually adding to himself all the experiences that happen anywhere in the universe, and thus God is continually changing. Grudem

Process theologians dislike the doctrine of God's immutability because they think it implies that nothing we do can really matter to God. If God is really unchangeable, process theologians will say, then nothing we do—in fact, nothing that happens in the universe—has any real effect on God, because God can never change. So what difference do we make? How can we have any ultimate meaning? In response to this question process theologians reject the doctrine of God's immutability and tell us that our actions are so significant that they have an influence on the very being of God himself! As we act, and as the universe changes, God is *truly* affected by these actions and the being of God changes—God *becomes* something other than what he was.¹⁰ Grudem

The Importance of God's Immutability

But if we stop for a moment to imagine what it would be like if God *could* change, the importance of this doctrine becomes more clear. For example, if God *could* change (in his being, perfections, purposes, or promises), then any change would be either for the better or for the worse. But if God changed for the better, then he was not the best possible being when we first trusted him. And how could we be sure that he is the best possible being now? But if God could change for the worse (in his very *being*), then what kind of God might he become? Might he become, for instance, a little bit evil rather than wholly good? And if he could become a little bit evil, then how do we know he could not change to become largely evil—or *wholly* evil?

Grudem

God's Eternity

Transcendence Over Time

God's 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. Grudem

He has no beginning or end; he does not undergo growth, development, or maturation. He existed before the creation of the world; he dwells now in eternity; he will continue as the eternal God even when history ends. Tyndale Bible Dictionary

God's Eternity

Genesis 21:33

33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

Deuteronomy 33:27

27 "The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms; And He drove out the enemy from before you, And said, 'Destroy!'

Psalms 29:10

10 The LORD sat as King at the flood; Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.

Psalms 48:14

14 For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.

God's Eternity

Psalm 90:2–4

2 Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

3 You turn man back into dust And say, “Return, O children of men.”

4 For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night.

1 Timothy 1:17

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

John 8:58

58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

God's Eternity

God Sees All Time Equally Vividly

God Sees All Time Equally Vividly

Psalm 90:4

4 For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night.

2 Peter 3:8–9

8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

God's Eternity

God Sees Events in Time and Acts in Time

God Sees Events in Time and Acts in Time

Galatians 4:4–5

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Acts 17:30–31

30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

God's Immensity and Omnipresence

His Transcendence Over Space

God's Immensity and Omnipresence

It may be defined as *that perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole Being*. It has a negative and a positive side, denying all limitations of space to the Divine Being, and asserting that God is above space and fills every part of it *with His whole Being*. Berkho

In a certain sense the terms “immensity” and “omnipresence,” as applied to God, denote the same thing, and can therefore be regarded as synonymous. Yet there is a point of difference that should be carefully noted. “Immensity” points to the fact that God transcends all space and is not subject to its limitations, while “omnipresence” denotes that He nevertheless fills every part of space with His entire Being. The former emphasizes the transcendence, and the latter, the immanence of God. Berkhof

God's Immensity and Omnipresence

1 Kings 8:27

27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

Proverbs 15:3

3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.

Jeremiah 23:23–24

23 "Am I a God who is near," declares the LORD, "And not a God far off?"

24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

God Does not have Spatial Dimensions

We should note also that there is no indication that simply a *part* of God is in one place and a part of him in another. It is *God himself* who is present wherever David might go. We cannot say that some of God or just part of God is present, for that would be to think of his being in spatial terms, as if he were limited somehow by space. It seems more appropriate to say that God is present *with his whole being* in every part of space Grudem

While it seems necessary for us to say that God's whole being is present in every part of space, or at every point in space, it is also necessary to say that *God cannot be contained by any space* no matter how large.
Grudem

God Does not have Spatial Dimensions

We should guard against thinking that God extends infinitely far in all directions so that he himself exists in a sort of infinite, unending space. Nor should we think that God is somehow a “bigger space” or bigger area surrounding the space of the universe as we know it. All of these ideas continue to think of God’s being in spatial terms, as if he were simply an extremely large being. Instead, we should try to avoid thinking of God in terms of size or spatial dimensions. God is a being who exists *without* size or dimensions in space. In fact, before God created the universe, there was no matter or material so there was no space either. Yet God still existed. Where was God? He was not in a place that we could call a “where,” for there was no “where” or space. But God still was! This fact makes us realize that God relates to space in a far different way than we do or than any created thing does. He exists as a kind of being that is far different and far greater than we can imagine. Grudem

God Does not have Spatial Dimensions

...the fact of God's omnipresence precludes taking the biblical depictions of God's "ascending" and "descending" and "comings" and "goings" literally. God, being everywhere present, does not literally "come" or "go" to or from specific places. Where such language is employed (for example, Gen. 11:5; Isa. 64:1–2), it must be recognized for what it is—metaphorical language indicating or invoking a *special manifestation* of God's working either in grace or judgment. Furthermore, since all that we say about God's nature *per se* is equally true of each of the persons of the Godhead, this conclusion has major implications with regard to the meaning of both the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit's "coming" into the world at Pentecost. Being omnipresent himself, God the Son did not literally "come" into the world in the sense that he came to a place where he was not before. The event of the Incarnation should not be interpreted to mean that God the Son literally "left heaven" and "came into the world" and "confined" himself to the earthly body of Jesus. This would mean that he in some way divested himself of his omnipresence. It intends rather to convey the fact that the Son of God uniquely manifested himself to the world and to men in and by human flesh. It intends to affirm that God the Son, through the instrumentality of the virginal conception, took into union with himself our human nature in such a real and vital sense that we properly declare that Jesus of Nazareth was God manifest in the flesh. But we do not for a moment intend to suggest that the Son of God somehow divested himself of his omnipresence when he became a man. Raymond

Communicable Attributes

God's Spirituality

God's spirituality means that 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 senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence. Grudem

John 4:24

24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Exodus 20:4

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

God's Invisibility

God's invisibility means that 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. Grudem

God's Invisibility

John 1:18

18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 6:46

46 "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

1 Timothy 1:17

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

God's Invisibility

Exodus 33:11

11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Exodus 33:20

20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

God's Invisibility

Anthropomorphisms

The figure of speech by which Scripture attributes human parts, actions, affections, and emotions to God. When the Bible attributes human characteristics to God, it speaks metaphorically to enable us to understand an otherwise abstract truth. Cairns

God's Invisibility

Theophanies

A manifestation of God; frequently employed to denote a pre-incarnation appearance of Christ and therefore often called a *Christophany*. Cairns

Genesis 32:28–30

28 He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”

29 Then Jacob asked him and said, “Please tell me your name.”

But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.”

Intellectual or Mental Attributes

God's Knowledge - Omniscience

God's Wisdom

God's Truthfulness and Faithfulness

God's Mental Attributes

Knowledge

...indicates that in a unique way God knows himself and all things possible and actual. Tyndale Bible Dictionary

The knowledge of God may be defined as *that perfection of God whereby He, in an entirely unique manner, knows Himself and all things possible and actual in one eternal and most simple act.*
Berkhof

God knows all things and all true propositions (omniscience), always has and always will know all things, and cannot learn more or forget anything he knows. Reymond

Knowledge

He necessarily knows himself exhaustively, and he necessarily knows his creation exhaustively—and both instantaneously, simultaneously, and everlastingly. His knowledge of himself and of all other things is absolutely comprehensive and eternally “intuited,” that is, he has never learned anything because he has always known everything. He “never receives from some other source or from his own inventive genius an idea he never previously had” (Clark). God’s knowledge is coextensive with all that is. All created things fall within the compass of God’s knowledge, indeed, are what they are by virtue of God’s prior knowledge (his prescience) and determinate counsel (his eternal plan). Reymond

Knowledge

1 John 3:20

20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

Job 37:16

16 “Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, The wonders of one perfect in knowledge,

Psalm 94:11

11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are a mere breath.

Knowledge

The definition of God's knowledge given above also specifies that God knows "all things *possible*. Grudem

"Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, I beseech you, tell your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." Then said David, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you." Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition. (1 Sam. 23:11–13)

God's Knowledge and Human Free Will

Now all of this is very troublesome for some people, chiefly because of the implications God's knowledge of the future has for the "freedom of indifference" (freedom from all necessity) that they desire to ascribe to men. They quite correctly observe that if God knows all things, then it would seem that he must infallibly know the future. If he infallibly knows the future, then he must infallibly know all of the future acts of men. If he infallibly knows all of the future acts of men, then these acts must be certain of occurrence. But if their acts are certain of occurrence, then men are not free to choose and to act as they want. Accordingly, they conclude that divine omniscience is incompatible with human freedom. Reymond

God's Knowledge and Human Free Will

In sum, created forces cannot be independent forces and independent forces cannot be created forces. ... if there were one square inch of this entire universe not under his sovereign governance, God is neither absolutely sovereign nor omniscient since that one square inch would have equal claim to its own sovereignty to do as it willed, with the authority even to set up a sign saying to God, "Keep out!" This theological construction allows billions upon billions of these sovereign human "inches" to exist throughout God's universe, all denying by their own sovereign right his sovereignty over them. This construction cannot be squared with the biblical passages that teach that God did in fact foreordain whatever comes to pass, knows all things infallibly, and providentially governs all his creatures and all their actions to bring about his own holy ends (see, e.g., Acts 2:23; Rom. 9:16; Eph. 1:11; Phil. 2:13). Raymond

God's Mental Attributes

Wisdom

God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals. Grudem

God's wisdom is His intelligence as manifested in the adaptation of means to ends. It points to the fact that He always strives for the best possible ends, and chooses the best means for the realization of His purposes. H. B. Smith defines the divine wisdom as "that attribute of God whereby He produces the best possible results with the best possible means." We may be a little more specific and call it *that perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most.* Berkhof

God's Wisdom

Romans 16:27

27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever.
Amen.

Job 9:4

4 "Wise in heart and mighty in strength, Who has defied Him without harm?

Job 12:13

13 "With Him are wisdom and might; To Him belong counsel and understanding.

Psalms 104:24

24 O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions.

God's Veracity or Truthfulness

God's truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.
Grudem

1. He is the truth first of all in a metaphysical sense, that is, in Him the idea of the Godhead is perfectly realized; He is all that He as God should be, and as such is distinguished from all so-called gods, which are called vanity and lies, Ps. 96:5; 97:7; 115:4–8; Isa. 44:9, 10.

2. He is also the truth in an *ethical* sense, and as such reveals Himself as He really is, so that His revelation is absolutely reliable, Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:4; Heb. 6:18.

3. Finally, He is also the truth in a *logical* sense, and in virtue of this He knows things as they really are, and has so constituted the mind of man that the latter can know, not merely the appearance, but also the reality, of things.

Berkhof

God's Veracity or Truthfulness

... he is ethically *reliable*, that is, there always has been, is now, and always will be a precise equivalency between *what he thinks and what he says*—what he says inerrantly reflects what he thinks and what he thinks is infallibly reflected in what he says: his Word is truth and therefore it is reliable. Consequently, he declares things and relationships to be as they actually are; he cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:4; Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2). He will not go back on his declared purpose. Reymond

God's Veracity or Truthfulness

1 John 5:20

20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

2 Timothy 2:13

13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

1 John 1:5

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Moral Attributes

Goodness

Love

Mercy, Grace, Patience

Holiness

Peace (Order)

Righteousness, Justice

Jealousy

Wrath

Goodness

The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval. Grudem

God has always been and always will be infinitely good ..., the Catechism teaches, ascribing thereby to him that perfection of the divine nature which prompts him to deal bountifully and kindly with all his creatures. If it is God's attribute of majestic holiness that emphasizes his *transcendence over* his creation, it is God's attribute of goodness that underscores his *condescendence toward* his creation. Berkhof

Goodness

Psalm 145:9

9 The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.

Mark 10:18

18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

1 Chronicles 16:34

34 O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psalm 34:8

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Love

God's love means that God eternally gives of himself to others. Grudem

The love between the Father and the Son also presumably characterizes their relationship with the Holy Spirit, even though it is not explicitly mentioned. This eternal love of the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father, and of both for the Holy Spirit makes heaven a world of love and joy because each person of the Trinity seeks to bring joy and happiness to the other two. Grudem

Love

John 3:35

35 “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.

John 14:31

31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

John 17:24

24 “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Love

Exodus 34:6–7

6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Love

1 John 4:8–10

8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Romans 5:8

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Mercy

“...there is a general mercy of God, which is extended not only to all men, believers and unbelievers alike, but also to the entire creation: ‘His tender mercies are over all His works’ (Psa 145:9). God has pity on the brute creation in their need, and supplies them with suitable provision.”
Pink, *The Attributes of God*, p. 78

If the grace of God contemplates man as guilty before God, and therefore in need of forgiveness, the mercy of God contemplates him as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, who is in a pitiable condition, and who therefore needs divine help. Berkhof

Mercy

Matthew 5:45

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Titus 3:5

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

1 Peter 1:3

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Grace

God's *grace* means God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment. Grudem

The Bible generally uses the word to denote *the unmerited goodness or love of God to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under a sentence of condemnation*. Berkhof

Grace

Ephesians 1:6–8

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

Ephesians 2:7–9

7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Patience

God's *patience* means God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time. Grudem

Personally, we would define the divine patience as the power of control which God exercises over Himself, causing Him to bear with the wicked and forbear so long in punishing them. Pink

Patience

Exodus 34:6

6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

Psalms 86:15

15 But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.

Romans 2:4

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Holiness

... depicts the moral purity and excellence of God. Tyndale

In its original sense it denotes that He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty. So understood, the holiness of God is one of His transcendental attributes, and is sometimes spoken of as His central and supreme perfection. It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another; but if this were permissible, the Scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection. Berkhof

This ethical holiness of God may be defined as *that perfection of God, in virtue of which He eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellence, abhors sin, and demands purity in his moral creatures.* Berkhof

Holiness

Exodus 15:11

11 “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?”

1 Samuel 2:2

2 “There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.

Isaiah 8:13

13 “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread.

Isaiah 57:15

15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, “I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

Peace

God's peace means that 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. Grudem

1 Corinthians 14:33

³³ for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Righteousness - Justice

There is first of all a *rectoral justice* of God. This justice, as the very name implies, is the rectitude which God manifests as the Ruler of both the good and the evil. In virtue of it He has instituted a moral government in the world, and imposed a just law upon man, with promises of reward for the obedient, and threats of punishment for the transgressor. Berkhof

Righteousness - Justice

Closely connected with the rectoral is the *distributive justice* of God. This term usually serves to designate God's rectitude in the execution of the law, and relates to the distribution of rewards and punishments, Isa. 3:10, 11; Rom. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17. It is of two kinds: (1) *Remunerative justice*, which manifests itself in the distribution of rewards to both men and angels, Deut. 7:9, 12, 13; 2 Chron. 6:15; Ps. 58:11; Micah 7:20; Matt. 25:21, 34; Rom. 2:7; Heb. 11:26. It is really an expression of the divine love, dealing out its bounties, not on the basis of strict merit, for the creature can establish no absolute merit before the Creator, but according to promise and agreement, Luke 17:10; 1 Cor. 4:7. God's rewards are gracious and spring from a covenant relation which He has established. (2) *Retributive justice*, which relates to the infliction of penalties. It is an expression of the divine wrath. While in a sinless world there would be no place for its exercise, it necessarily holds a very prominent place in a world full of sin. Berkhof

Righteousness - Justice

Genesis 18:25

25 “Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

Deuteronomy 10:17

17 “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

Deuteronomy 32:4

4 “The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

Jealousy

God's jealousy means that God continually seeks to protect his own honor. Grudem

2 Corinthians 11:2

² For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

Exodus 20:5

⁵ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Wrath

Exodus 32:9–10

⁹ The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.

¹⁰ “Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

Romans 1:18

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

1 Thessalonians 1:10

¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

God's Glory

...it is important to underscore the truth that when we speak of God's "infinite, eternal, unchangeable" being, etc., we are speaking of those attributes that comprise what the Scriptures intend when they speak of God's *glory*. That is to say, *God's glory is the sum total of all of his attributes as well as any one of his attributes*. For the creature to deny to him any one of his attributes is to attack the very glory of God and to deny him that without which he would no longer be God. Or to ascribe to him any attribute which he himself does not expressly claim to have, which ascription can only cancel out some attribute which he does claim to have, is again to represent him as something less than he is and thus is to attack his glory. For this reason it is imperative to listen carefully to God's description of himself in Scripture. Raymond

God's Glory

Acts 7:2

2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

Psalms 19:1

1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

1 Corinthians 10:31

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.