

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 2:
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Lecture 5:
**THE ATTRIBUTES
OF GOD, PART 1**



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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Module 2

The Doctrine of God

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Module 2:

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Lecture 5:

The Attributes of God, Part 1

Introduction

Our children may ask, “If God made everything, then who made God?” So we might explain to them, “Well, no one made God. God is. God exists by his own power. And that is only true of God alone. He is the uncreated Creator.” We have learned that there are many things about the Lord that are only true of him, and no one and nothing else. That leaves us with a sense of awe and wonder at his divine glory. He is God. He is unlike us. Our finite, limited minds cannot possibly comprehend all that there is to know about the infinite, unlimited God of glory. We should not resent having our minds stretched when thinking about God. Instead, it should lead us to worship and adore him, and to rejoice that he reveals his beauty for believers to behold.

Theme: *The Attributes of God—his aseity, eternity, immutability, and divine impassibility.*

I. Scriptural Basis

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” (Exodus 3:14)

1. God has life in himself. God does not derive his being from anything outside himself.
2. God is eternal. He exists outside of time, as the one who eternally is all that he is—the “I AM”.
3. God is unchangeable.
4. God is without passions.

Questions:

1. Which attributes of God can we draw from Exodus 3, verse 14? How does this revelation affect Moses and the Israelite people of that day?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 2, paragraph 1:

“There is but one only, living and true God: who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute...”

1. God’s independent self-existence—his aseity.
2. God’s eternity.
3. God alone is unchangeable, immutable.
4. God is without passions—divine impassibility.

Questions:

1. What does the word “aseity” mean? How should we understand John 5:26: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”?

2. Is God limited by time? Why? How does God differ from the creatures in regard to time?

3. Please explain the phrase, “God is unchangeable.” How does this attribute relate to the wellbeing of the church?

4. What is the meaning of the phrase, “God is without passions”? What does this tell us about God? Is God lifeless, or apathetic, or inert?

III. Polemical Exposition

Objection 1: *The incarnation of the Lord Jesus shows that he is not eternal.*

Objection 2: *The Bible seems to speak of God as changing.*

Objection 3: *The Bible speaks of God as having emotions.*

Questions:

1. How does the Lord Jesus speak about his eternal being? Does he cease to be God in the incarnation?

2. Since God is unchangeable, why does the Bible sometimes speak of God repenting?

3. What is God’s divine impassibility? How is that attribute different from that of the mythological Greek gods? Why is it important that we understand this?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. Since God is independent and self-existent, we are dependent upon him for everything that we are, everything that we have, and everything that we do for good.
2. Because God is eternal, the Christian believer has joy that never ends.
3. Amidst all of the surprises, and amidst all of the uncertainties about our life, the Christian is grounded upon the unchanging God.
4. Because of his divine impassibility, God is utterly reliable.

Questions:

1. Do any of us have good cause for boasting in ourselves? Why? What does it mean to be in total dependence on God for everything?

2. What is the true and eternal joy of the Christian? What affections does the psalmist declare towards God in Psalm 16?

3. God says, in Malachi 3:6: “*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*” How is this an encouragement to believers in this unstable and uncertain world?

4. How does God’s divine impassibility give us comfort and consolation in this life?

V. Self-Reflection

Malachi 3:6 shows us a remarkable declaration of God's immutability, along with its gracious implications. God's immutability guarantees the covenant of grace. It is a most encouraging and comforting truth. Set out some private time to be with God, and meditate on God's attributes discussed in this lecture, applying these truths to your own heart. Are you one of the people who has "a strong consolation, who has fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18)?
