



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“Attributes of God part IV: The Spirituality and Infinity of God”

Let's begin our class with a word or prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we Thank thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures again. We thank Thee for the way in which they have been preserved for us and in the twentieth century we are able to listen to Thy voice through the prophets and apostles and others whom the spirit guided as they wrote the things that concern Thee. And we pray tonight, as we study matters that concern Thy being and Thy perfections that he may enlighten us and enable us to know Thee better. May, Lord, the things that we learn also have practical results in our lives. We commit each one present to Thee and the hour.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the first in a two-part series is on: Where is God? or the Spirituality Infinity and Immensity of God.” And I intended, when I first began preparation to do this in one night, but it is such a big subject, especially the last part of it, the immensity and omnipres- -- that was no pun, by the way, intended by that, but the immensity and omnipresence of God that it is necessary that we spend two of the hours on this subject. So tonight we are going to look at the first part of it, the spirituality and

infinity of God, and that will lead us into the consideration two weeks from tonight of the immensity, which is another aspect of the omnipresence of God. Now, we are studying the attributes as you know I hold my mouth.

Well, let’s begin by turning to John chapter 4 and reading a Scripture passage for its message concerning the infinity and especially the spirituality of God. And, of course, you remember John chapter 4. It is the account of our Lord’s meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. And in the midst of his discussion with her, after he has told her that whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, the woman, remember, had said to him “Sir, give me this water that I thirst not neither come hither to draw.” And now we’re going to pick up the reading in verse 16, John chapter 4.

“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

The woman answered and said, I have no husband.

Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. (Now, she of course is a Samaritan. And she is thinking about the place of the Samaritan worship, and she is reckoning him to be a Jew and consequently a believer in the doctrine that men should worship in Jerusalem.)

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit (Now, we could render this also God is spirit, and I rather prefer that. We will say something about it later.) God is spirit. They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiahs cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.” (or simply, I am.)

Where is God or the Spirituality, Infinity and Immensity of God?

Now, we are studying the attributes of God, which we have defined as the perfections of the divine essence set forth in Scriptures or visibly exercised in his of works of creation, providence and redemption. And, remember, we have divided the attributes into two classes: those that are incommunicable; those that are communicable.

Now, these divisions are not too happy, and if we have an opportunity later on, I would like us to say a little more about this but since this is a common division we are using it. And when we say that they are incommunicable attributes, which the essence of God possesses, we are saying that there are attributes that bear little analogy to the properties of human nature.

In other words, they are attributes that belong not entirely, but it seems almost entirely to God. We do not have in human nature anything that bears a great deal of analogy to it. Now, we are thinking about such attributes as the eternity of God, the infinity of God, the spirituality of God, the immensity of God and things such as that.

Now, those attributes that are communicable are those that have considerable analogy to the properties of human nature. And we have spoken about these as the attributes of, say, justice, love, mercy, righteousness, goodness, attributes such as these. For there is in human nature evidence of properties that do bear an analogy to these attributes of God.

Now, we have been developing the former attributes; that is, the incommunicable ones. And we have considered God’s self-existence, his simplicity, and his unity. And we said with reference to self-existence was his independence by which is marked his complete self-sufficiency. God does not need anyone else. His existence comes entirely

from himself. He possesses life of himself. He does not possess life from any other source. He is the first cause of everything, and yet he is uncaused himself. As he has put it in Exodus chapter 3 “I am who I am.” And that is really the only kind of thing that God may say.

Now, we might like to try to define God. In a few moments I’m going to refer to one of the most famous of the definitions of God, but it is really impossible to define God. For the minute that we define God, we, in a sense, take away his infinity. And we cannot define him in reference to things or ideas or concepts because these in themselves would become then bigger than God. And so he is who he is. That’s all we can say. He is God. There is nothing else with which we may compare him. And that, of course, is a Scriptural sentiment, too. Whom among the gods may we compare with Thee? None.

And so he is a person who possesses complete self-existence, complete independence. I preferred that term, and I said I think that is a better term. I think it is a better term, but both of these are very common: His self-existence, his independence, his complete self-sufficiency.

We also said that he was simple. Oh, before we say something about that, I did also comment that we may have a relational definition of God. In other words, God may answer the question, “Who are you?” by saying I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

Now, this is a reference of certain aspects of his activities, and he may certainly say this as he said to Israel and said to Moses. He said to Moses, “I am who I am.” An absolute definition of me is impossible. A relational definition is possible. I am the covenant keeping God of Israel. I am more than that, but I am at least that.

Now, we said, secondly, that we have looked at his simplicity. And what we meant by that was God in his essence is free from compositeness; that is, he is not made up of parts. We are not, for example, to think of God as a unity of essence made up of three parts, one of which is father, another of which is son, another of which is Holy

Spirit. Our God is not made up of any parts. If he were made up of parts, if he were a composite being, then there would of existed something before God. And so we cannot have a god who is not simple. And he is simple. He is free from compositeness.

He is also free from distinction; that is, his essence and attributes do not grow as failing man. We may grow in maturity. We may become wiser and wiser as the days go by, more and more knowledgeable as the days go by. God does not become wiser as the days go by. He does not learn one thing. He does not have any teacher who has ever communicated anything to him, for his attributes are infinite in their perfections. And so we cannot in God distinguish his essence from his attributes as you can with a human being. So he is a simple being. He is one.

Now, we said he is possessed of unity. And by that we referred to his oneness and his uniqueness; that is, there is no one like him and there is no one who can be compared to him. And we pointed to Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 4 in which Moses spoke to Israel the words of God “Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord, one in His oneness, one in His uniqueness. And we said that this had tremendous significance, too, because if that is true then there is no idol that is worthy of any worship at all.

In the New Testament, we read the simple statement there is one God, and then John gives us the application. “Little children keep yourselves from idols.” We pointed out that he was so unique that any attempt to represent him was apostasy. And we particularly spoke about those who like to have images and idols of God and pointed out how that that was a denial of the essential character of God. And that when a person says oh, my idols help me to worship God, that in reality they do not help, but they hurt.

Now, Sunday morning after I spoke here for the last time in the regular series I walked right over there and a man came up to me and handed me a little wooden cross. He was very sincere. And he may be in the audience tonight, and I am not in any way impugning his sincerity or what he does. But he handed me a little cross, which he had himself constructed, made. It was made out of wood and made very nicely. And he said

that this had been found very helpful in the lives of many people, and he wanted me to have one. Well, it was a cross, and so I would not think of it necessarily as an idol. But, you know, so often people think if I could just have a little picture of Jesus or a little picture of a cross or a little bit of an idol by which I may remind myself of God, it will help me in my worship. But we -- as we saw last time, that is really blasphemy against God because he is not a person who can be encompassed in wood or stone. And the moment that we make a wooden god or a stone god or a gold god we have said in effect, “God is not an incorruptible being.” So we have misrepresented him. And if that is a help to you, it is because you do not have a proper conception of God.

The knowledge and practice of these ideas that we are talking about and will talk about for the next twelve lessons would go far to correct the complacency and failure of the evangelical church, in my opinion. J.B. Phillips wrote a book which I referred to I think in our first lesson. Our God or Your God was the title that he used. Your God is too small, and I think it is true of most evangelicals. Our God is too small. The God that we worship is a god that we have largely made ourselves. We understand him because we have made him, and therefore he can never surprise us. He can never overwhelm us. He can never astonish us. He can never transcend us. He can never give us any experiences that we are not quite sure that we have already had so far. And therefore in evangelicalism there is a deadness with reference to the person of God.

Now, tonight we want to try to remedy some of it. And after that rather lengthy introduction, we want to look at Roman I, the spirituality of God and the capital A, the biblical instruction on spirituality.

Now, we are going to review just a little bit under this heading because we did say something last time about spirituality. There are two things that I want to emphasize, and first is the usage of the Hebrew word for spirit and the Greek word for spirit. The Hebrew word for spirit is the word *ruach*. And if you want to write it down it is R-U-A-C-H, *ruach*. And the Greek word is *pneuma*, from which we get pneumatic, like pneumatic

drills P-N-E-U-M-A, *pneuma*. Originally both of these words -- and they correspond to each other -- originally both of these words meant breath. So in the Old Testament when a Hebrew spoke about his breath, he would speak of his *ruach*, or when a Greek spoke of his breath, he would speak of his *pneuma*. Also these words meant wind. So the same word that meant breath meant also wind so that if someone were to say the wind is really blowing tonight, he would say that *ruach* is really blowing tonight or the *pneuma* if he were a Greek is really blowing tonight.

For example, in John chapter 3 in the chapter on the new birth when the Lord Jesus said the wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth so is everyone that is born of the spirit. He used a play on words. He said the *pneuma* bloweth where it listeth thou heareth a sound thereof and canst not tell whether it cometh or whether it goeth so is everyone who is born of a *pneuma*. And so by looking at the wind, and they understood it as wind, and seeing that no one can really tell you from whenst comes the wind. Well, that was an illustration of the new birth for no one can really tell you from whenst comes the new birth, looking at it naturally. We will, of course, say that it comes from God. So whether men speak about our *ruach* or our *pneuma*, and they try to tell us what *pneuma* is going to be tomorrow and the next day, they are not very successful. And I did have once a weatherman admit to me that no one can really tell today the origin of the wind. And I went on to tell him it was very difficult for any weatherman to tell us what was going to happen with regard to any other aspect of the weather, too. I’ve heard it said that you cannot fool all of the people all of the time but weather forecasters come close.

Now, speaking of these the *ruach* and the *pneuma*, now these two terms *ruach* and *pneuma* are equivalents and so they meant breath, they meant wind and they also meant spirit the human spirit so that in the Old Testament when a man spoke about his spirit -- I feel bad in my spirit he would say I feel bad in my *ruach*. In the New Testament Greek -- the Greek would say I feel bad in my *pneuma*.

Now, when the Bible calls God a spirit, and I want you to look now at John chapter 4. John chapter 4, and let’s look at verse 24. Again, John 4:24, and I’m going to read this in the Greek text with the emphasis that is placed upon it. The Greek text says, *pneuma o theos*, spirit is God. And the ones worshipping him must worship him in spirit and truth.

Now, when God is called spirit, then the Lord by that authorizes us to believe that God’s nature is characterized by that which we understand by the term. In other words, the fact that the Lord said that God is spirit is a key to us concerning the essential nature of God. What would they have understood by spirit? We are authorized that if we are able to arrive at that to apply those things to God?

Now looking secondly at this particular text, God is spirit -- now you of course have a text that said God is a spirit.

Now, in Greek a word that does not have an article, a definite article -- Greek does not have an indefinite article, an a it has these. A word that does not have a definite article may be rendered in English with an indefinite article or without an indefinite article depending on the context. In other words, we can render *pneuma o theos* by God is a spirit, or we can render it God is spirit.

Now, I think that we are to render this God is spirit not “a spirit” for he is not one spirit among many. The way in which God is a spirit is different from every other spirit. The indefinite article in no more required here as in some similar statements, God is light. We would not say God is a light. Or God is love. We would not say God is a love. No we say God is love, God is light, God is spirit. In other words, what our Lord means by this is that the essential nature of God is spirit.

Well, now that is a key to the nature of God. He says God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Before we deal further with what this really means, let’s think about that statement the Lord makes. Now, really it is a transfer of the locale of worship. It is also a transfer of the how of worship. In other

words, no longer are men to worship in a physical place. They are to worship spiritually. They are no longer to worship in an outward temple, one at Jerusalem, but they are to worship in the inward temple. They are not to worship in that which is visible as the temple was. They are to worship the invisible God and invisibly. They are not to worship tangibly as they did with their sacrifices. They are to worship intangibly.

This was a tremendous transformation. It is a true development in the unfolding of the plans and purposes of God. We are no longer to worship then in the visible, the tangible, the material, the outward the physical as Israel’s worship was. A certain bishop was once speaking to a believer about the many innovations which had been introduced into the rituals of his denomination. He said this is all part of the development of the church since New Testament times. The believer replied we call it by a different name - departure.

Now, there is a sense in which our developments, our innovations are often departures from the word of God. Now, there is a true sense of development. Our Lord is speaking of the true sense of development. He’s not thinking about the false sense of development. The trouble with the Christian church, in many cases, has been that they have not recognized our Lord’s sense of development, and they did not recognize that the whole of the Old Testament ritual was done away with and that we now have instituted a spiritual worship. They have carried over things from Israel into the Christian church.

Now, just think for a moment what we have. In the Old Testament, we had a separate priestly cast. That is, Aaron and his sons and the tribe of Levi carried on the worship of God. The high priest came from Aaron’s line. The priests came from a certain line. The tribe of Levi was engaged in the ministry of the tabernacle.

Now, when Jesus came and the veil of the temple was writ in twain from the top to bottom that was the signification that it was all done away with.

Now, there was no longer any divinely instituted clergy to carry on the worship of God, but what have we done? Well, we brought over into the Christian church, manmade

clergy who carry on the worship of God. And in the meetings there are certain men who are ordained falsely, according to Scripture, who alone can carry on worship? It is only they in certain denominations who may act as officiators at the Lord’s Table. It is only they who can give thanks for the bread. It is only they who can give thanks for the wine. It is only they who can supervise the passing out of the elements.

Now, in the Bible there is nothing like that. Any man who has been born again may so far as the Scriptures are concerned, officiate at the table of the Lord, give thanks for the bread, pass out the bread, pass out the wine. What we have done in the Christian church is to carry over from Israel some of the Judaism of the Old Testament worship which was at one time the divinely instituted form of worship, but no longer is.

In the Old Testament, the priests wore certain types of clothes. And so on certain days when certain sacrifices were to be carried out they were dressed accordingly. They wore their priestly garments as they ministered in the tabernacle. On the Day of Atonement, they wore special garments for that, and they wore their flowing robes which signified their office. And we have carried over some of that into the Christian church. So we have certain people who are the reverend Dr. so-and-so. And what does he look like? Well, he wears a black suit, and he has his collar that is different from an ordinary collar, and he has a black shirt, and we know from looking at him that we are to call him Reverend or Father or some such designation as that in spite of the fact that Jesus said call no man your father here on the earth. But we do it nevertheless.

Now, what is that? Well, that is the carrying over into the Christian church of distinctions that were valid in Old Testament times but are no longer valid today. So men wear collars. Someone has called that collar a slipped halo, but it really is not. It is an evidence of the Judaism that we have brought over into the Christian church. But Jesus said we are to worship in spirit and in truth. And then we look about a building like this and we say “Aw, this is the sanctuary, this is the holy place” for that’s what sanctuary means. This is the holy place. And perhaps we think that this is the holy of holies up

here, but this is the holy place. This is the sanctuary. Or we look at this building, and we say, “This is the church.” And, as you know, it is not the church at all. The New Testament speaks of the church as a group of people that meet together in a certain locality regularly, and they worship, listen to the ministry of the word, they observe the ordinances, and they have men who exercise discipline.

Now these are the features that make up the Christian church, whether they meet in a building such as this or in a home or in a barn or out under the trees it is of no significance whatsoever so far as the constitution of a church is concerned. We do not have such expressions in the Bible as the Presbyterian Church. We do not have such expressions as the Anglican Church as if churches were national churches. We have the church of God or the church of the Thessalonians, expressions such as that. But they are designed to stress the fact that the church is a group of people, so this is not a sanctuary. God is no more present here than he is in your toolshed outside of your house. Because it is called a church building.

Donald Gray Barnhouse was once preaching in the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston one of the great historical churches of the United States, and it has a strong evangelical ministry for a number of years now. And one morning he stood up in that church. It’s a very formal church, too, for an evangelical church, and he surveyed the rather wealthy congregation in their expensive clothing, and it’s right down on the Boston Commons. And he said, “Well, you’ve got quite a building here, but let me tell you something. At two o’clock in the morning, God will be no more present here than that nightclub down the street.” And he was absolutely right. But we’ve carried this over into the Christian church.

Now, we have not only done this but we have in some of our so-called Christian churches we have altars. Now, in the Old Testament there was an altar or so. There was the brazen altar, remember? And then there was the altar of incense. And so altar is a

feature of Old Testament worship. So what do we have in our Christian churches today often? Altars.

Now, that is thoroughly contrary to the New Testament. The once-for-all sacrifice, which is what takes place at an altar has already taken place a couple of thousands of years ago. We do not have any altars in that physical sense in the Christian church any longer.

Now, also, there was the burning of incense. And so in some of our churches we have the burning of incense. We have candles. We have other things. This is Judaism in the Christian church. And then ritual. Ritual was a feature of the worship of the Old Testament.

On the Day of Atonement there was a definite ritual which was to be carried out, point by point as listed for us in Leviticus chapter 16. In our Christian churches today, we often have rituals in which we have the reading of the prayer books, we have the chanting of various types of songs that are parts of the worship. And for many people, our religious service is not a religious service unless there is the chanting and the saying of the prayers and the reading from the prayer book and things like that. Again, that is a carrying over of Judaism into the Christian church. Jesus said, Ye shall worship in spirit and in truth. God is spirit. They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. No longer do we worship in Jerusalem. That was the only earthly place authorized by God for worship and that was done away with when Jesus died.

I have a good friend Alden Gannett who was on the faculty of the seminary and ministered here in the city of Dallas for some time. And he was president of a Bible college in the city of London for a number of years. And he told me of an incident that happened there. This was London, Ontario. And in London, Ontario, he had come to know a certain man in the city who was a very prominent man in the local city council. And when they had to dedicate a new building, he invited this friend over who was a member of the Church of England. And he had made a profession of being a Christian

before Dr. Gannett. So Dr. Gannett had him on the platform at the dedication of the building. And at a point in the service he called on this man to pray.

Now, he did it impromptu and perhaps that was a little unfair, but the man had said he was a Christian and had talked a great deal about his Christianity. And so Dr. Gannett called on him to pray at a public meeting. And he told Dr. Gannett that he could not pray. And so after the meeting, he apologized to Dr. Gannett, but he went on to say, “You know that was the only time in my whole life that I’ve ever been ashamed that I was an Anglican. He had never actually come to an understanding of how to pray at all. He was so used to just reading prayers and hearing prayers read to him that he couldn’t even pray himself.

Now, I hope I don’t step on any toes, but, you know, you can have ritual in almost every kind of church. On Sunday night we meet here in Believer’s Chapel in the parlor, and we have a service which we think is very much like the early church had. We gather round. There is no stated ministry, no stipulated ministry. We hope to be led by the Holy Spirit, that this is a spirit-led meeting. But I’ve been, myself, a little disappointed that the men who have gifts of ministry -- gifts of ministry I do not mean just sharing some experience that you have had, though that is certainly a permissible thing. But I’ve been very much disappointed that in our meetings we have not had a more serious and vital ministry of the word of God as a regular thing. And often in our meetings we also have fallen into a kind of impromptu ritual. And so we sit around the table and we sing, and often we sing, and we sing, and there are lengthy silences, and then as the hour wears away, we finally realize we are going to be late if we don’t give thanks for the bread and wine, and we do, and then the meeting is concluded. And it is spirit led, but it’s amazing how the spirit leads almost precisely the same week after week.

Now, I’m not trying to be too critical here, but I am trying to be somewhat critical, because I believe that in the meetings of the church there should be strong ministry of the word. And it is unfortunate that meetings such as that which are a New Testament

meetings in the sense that the principals of The New Testament are practiced there are characterized by the ministry of the word.

Mr. Pryor had to stand up in our meeting Sunday night and before the meeting was closed and say it would be bad if we did not have something from the word of God before we closed, and he read a passage from the Bible. There was a Chinese brother who attended one of the meetings like this in England. And when he left the meeting he was asked what his impression was. He said “too much little book, too little big book,” and a reference to the fact that those who attended the meeting carried a little book in which were found the hymns. And his expression was too much little book, too little big book, the Bible. And so I think that we ought to be very careful that we do not fall into the same thing. In the very service in which we are seeking to be free from ritual, we can make it ritualistic by the way in which we carry it out.

Now then, John 4:24, capital B, the logical deductions from this: What can we say then from the text. God is spirit. And the fact that Jesus calls God spirit and thus he authorizes us to think of God as they would of understood spirit. Well, this is what I think we can say as a logical deduction. If authorized by the Lord to attribute to God all we understand by the word “spirit,” that would suggest God is a substance, for spirit is substance. An individual subsistence, he is spirit with the power of thought, of feeling, of volition, for spirit has the power of thought, feeling, volition. And further it would suggest self-conscience personality. And most theologians would add with moral agency. So I think if we understand that God is spirit, then it’s fair to say that Jesus intended for us to understand God as a substance, possessing substance, an individual subsistence with the power of thought feeling volition. And further self-conscience personality, spirit. He is not a force; he is spirit. He is not matter; he is spirit. So these things are true.

Now, capital C, the consequences. Thus we are to regard God, since he is spirit, as a person, a self-conscious, intelligent, involuntary, moral agent, simple in his essence.

Now, is this confirmed by Scripture? Well, I think it is. The God of the Bible, as we turn to it, is certainly looked at as a person. For example: He spoke to Adam; he revealed himself to Noah; he entered into covenant with Abraham; and he conversed with Moses as friend with friend. He everywhere uses the personal pronouns. He says “I am who I am.” He says, “This is my name,” “I am the Lord your God,” “I am merciful and gracious,” “Call upon me and I will answer you like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” And so everything in the Bible contributes to the confirmation, the fact that he is a personal spirit, self-conscious, possessed of intellect, emotions, will. It is in this way that we are to understand those statements that we are created in the image of God. We have these things that God has. We have them in a finite way. He has them in an infinite way.

Now, if that is true, if God is really a person, a spirit, if he is a person who is a self-conscious, intelligent, involuntary moral agent, one whom you cannot see for he is spirit and invisible, then what shall we say of Mormonism? Well, we would say, if we know anything about Mormonism, that its very concept of God is wrong. Mormonism teaches that God has a tangible body like the body of a man. Indeed, when Mormons affirm that man is made in the image of God that means that this includes the physical body. Of course God is great, greater than man, but as Joseph Smith declared, “God himself is an exalted man, perfected, enthroned and supreme. And, furthermore, the Mormons believe God is married, and they talk, therefore, not only of a father in heaven but of a mother in heaven.

Now, that, I presume, would appeal very much to the women’s lib movement, but it does not appeal to me. One of their favorite hymns is, “Oh, My Father,” and I’m going to give you a stanza of it, but I’m not going to give you note so that we can sing it. This is the stanza: “When I leave this frail existence, when I lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I meet you in your royal courts on high. Then at length when I’ve completed all you

sent me forth to do with your mutual approbation, let me come and dwell with you.”

Now, if God is spirit, then Mormonism is wrong.

And now let’s, in our remaining moments, think about the infinity of God. Now, when we start talking about infinity, we are talking about a concept that’s rather familiar to us, but it’s one that’s exceedingly difficult to define. I wish I could sit down with each one of you and say, Would you please define for me space? Or would you please define for me time? Philosophers have tried for centuries to define space. They have tried for centuries to define time. Something that’s so common to us, something that we use almost every day, and yet that concept is almost impossible. I think it’s really impossible to define. Infinity, who can define infinity?

One of the students of the attributes has said of all that can be thought or said about God, his infinitude is the most difficult to grasp. Yet we have to try to grasp it because the Bible says that He is that, and we are responsible to wrestle with it. One of our theologians, William G.T. Shedd, has defined the infinity of God as quote, “The divine essence viewed as having no bounds or limits.”

Now, limits would imply imperfection. And so, consequently, God’s infinity implies his perfection in every respect in which he is infinite.

Now, we come to see God’s infinity by studying all the aspects of his character. We discover that he is infinite in his wisdom. He is infinite in his grace. He’s infinite in his holiness. He is infinite in his other attributes, and thus his infinity is a deduction from the several parts. Further, it’s a perfection that pervades the essence and all the communicable attributes. In other words, he is infinite in his being, therefore he is infinite in his wisdom. He’s infinite in his grace. He’s infinite in his justice. He’s infinite in his power. So when we talk about power in connection with God, we don’t talk about limited power we talk about unlimited power. We say omnipotence and so on.

The Westminster Confession, as you know, has been simplified into a little catechism and all of us who are Presbyterians when we were growing up -- if you lived

back in the dark ages as I did when I was growing up, you were taught in Sunday school the shorter catechism. That was a condensation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and there were long series of questions. And in Sunday school you were asked these questions and you were expected to give the answer. For example: What is God? Or who is God? And you were supposed to be able to rattle off the answer.

Now, the Westminster Confession has in question four, the shorter catechism the question, What is God? And the answer, Professor Hodge has said, probably the best definition of God ever pinned by man. But now Professor Hodge was a Presbyterian, and so we might expect him to say that, but it is a good definition. If we wanted a definition, it is about as good as we can get. I’ve never seen a better one myself. But it is not a complete definition of God, but this is what it is. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being. Those are the incommunicable attributes, you see. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, incommunicable attributes.

Then it goes on, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, communicable attributes. But you will notice that these communicable attributes are also modified by infinite, eternal, unchangeable. So that what we say about his incommunicable attributes we say also about his communicable attributes. So if he is infinite in his being, he is infinite in wisdom; he’s infinite in power; he’s infinite in holiness. If he is eternal in his being, he is eternal in his wisdom, eternal in his power, eternal in his holiness, and so on. In other words the perfection that pervades the essence of God also pervades the attributes of God. And so the thing that we say about what he is in himself in his being we say about all of those properties, those perfections of his nature.

Now, what is infinity? Capital A, Infinity is not nearly a negative idea. Now, infinity in English means, of course, not finite. And we’re inclined to think of this only as a negative idea. It surely is a negative idea, but I think it is more than that. It not only suggests that no limitation can be assigned to his essence, but it implies that he is

illimitable; that is, he is a person who possesses the capacity of illimitableness. And so I think it is just as much a positive idea as when we say something is finite. If we say this is finite, it can be bounded, we’re saying something positively about it. And if we say something is infinite, we’re not just saying something negative, we’re saying that it cannot be bounded. It possesses the capacity or character of illimitableness.

Now, we use this term infinite in a human way. Now, this is characteristic of men. They like to take the words that refer to God and refer them to man. Have you ever noticed how people talk today about being creative? Well, they like for a person to be creative. You know, like he’s a creative Bible teacher even. I’ve heard a person say that. He’s a creative Bible teacher. Well, I don’t want to be around any creative Bible teacher myself. They say he’s a great creative thinker or creative in his literary talents.

Actually, creativeness is a quality that belongs only to God, but what we have done is that we have taken this word that refers to God and we have brought it down to man. And so we use it and we know what we mean by it. We mean he’s unique or he’s original or he’s rearranged things in a little different way and it’s fresh and it’s new. And personally if you want to say it’s fresh, if it’s original, or it’s a new arrangement of things, that’s fine. But to call it creative, that just rubs my grain the wrong way.

And there’s another thing that rubs my grain the wrong way, too, and that is when we talk about infinite. An artist -- now, here is an artist. My wife is an artist so someone may describe -- I may describe what she does. She takes infinite pains with what she does. No, she doesn’t take infinite pains. But we use the term. We know that that means she takes a lot -- she’s very careful about what she does, but she doesn’t take infinite pains. I’ve seen her just collapse from fatigue and say I’m going to bed, Lewis. You can stay on up if you want to, but I’m gone. Or we say a teacher, that teacher shows infinite patience with their class. No, not infinite patience, a great deal of patience, much patience, but the time comes when the teacher just gives up and says something that she shouldn’t say or he shouldn’t say or throws an eraser back at the pupil or so on. Infinite.

Infinitude can only belong to one person, and it belongs to God. There is no second in infinity.

Now, when we say a person is infinite, we say he knows no bounds and, again, that causes us to use other adjectives which don’t really mean what they should mean. We say a person has unlimited wealth. No, he doesn’t have unlimited wealth. Not even H.L. Hunt. He doesn’t have unlimited wealth. To us it may seem unlimited, but it’s not unlimited, not infinite wealth. And probably no one knows it better than H.L. Hunt himself. Or we say so and so is possessed by boundless energy. No, not boundless energy. Only one person is infinite, God. And only he is infinite.

Now, I’m not trying to eliminate words from your vocabulary tonight. Go ahead and use boundless and infinite and unlimited if you like. But just remember every time you use them, you’re lying really! [Laughter]

Now, so infinity is not merely a negative idea. Second, or B, infinity is not the all. When we say God is infinite, we don’t mean he contains within himself all being. There is being outside of God, which he has created. When we say that God is infinite, we then mean that he is the cause or ground of all that is actual or possible. In that sense, he is responsible for all, but he is not the all and the all is not in him.

In our next lesson, we will talk about pantheism and the error of it in the connection of the immensity in omnipresence of God. So I don’t want to get into that now. And finally, C, infinity is the perfection of the divine being in itself. Absent are all limitations and defects and present is boundless potentiality. That’s what we mean when we say God is an infinite being.

Now, let’s turn, as we close, to two passages of Scripture just to show that the Scriptures do affirm this infinity about or of God. And the first passage is in the book of Job chapter 11, verses 7 through 10. Job 11:7 through 10.

Now, this is in Zophar’s Discourse. And we read in verse 7, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the almighty unto perfection?” Now, that

text, of course, teaches, first of all, that God can only be known by revelation. Then he says “It is as high as heaven. What canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea. If he is cut off and shut up or gathered together then who can hinder him? Canst thou find out the almighty unto perfection?” Some render the next he is as high as heaven. No, the answer is we cannot find out the almighty unto perfection. He is infinite.

Psalm 145, verse 3. Psalm 145, verse 3: the psalmist says “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable. It is infinite. Well, now when we say then God is infinite, we have not really told you precisely what he is because we cannot really know, can we? If we say he is infinite, we, in effect, have said we can never know God completely. So we answer to the question: Who is God? Why the correct answer is: He is God. That’s all we can say. He is God.

I’ve -- as I was preparing this lesson, if God is really infinite you know I began to imagine a few things. This is imagination. And I want to announce it before I say anything about it. But if God is infinite as we have seen the Scriptures infer and teach and as the study of his attributes indicates, then it’s just possible that since he is an infinite being that he has attributes that we do not have any account of in the Bible. If he is infinite, then it is possible we shall learn that he has some other attributes when we get to heaven that we don’t know about down here.

For example, the Seraphim and the Cherubim who do not really know the grace of God for while they know there is such a thing as grace, they don’t understand it, for they have never have been lost and under the guilt and condemnation of sin, and they don’t know what redemption is, and they don’t know the joy of being saved. And if that may be a kind of illustration for us, we can say that there may be things that we shall discover in heaven that belong to the infinite God that we don’t even have any inkling of down here. Isn’t it interesting that we have knowledge now of the moon such as we never had before, but who knows anything much about the dark side of the moon? And

so there may be the dark side of the nature of God. Not dark in the sense of course of sin but in the sense of hidden from our understanding, not revealed to us. And when we get to heaven, part of the activity of the ages and ages and ages of the infinite beyond may be learning more and more about the infinite God.

Think about it. We have a great God. He is spiritual. We are to worship him in spirit. He is infinite, and we are his dust. And the proper attitude that we should have as worshippers is the attitude of a speck of dust before an infinite God. Let’s close in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful truths concerning Thy person, Thy being. Thou art indeed great. Unsearchable is Thy wisdom. Unsearchable is Thy grace and mercy. Thou art the infinite, eternal, immutable, spiritual God. And, Lord, may we worship Thee truly in spirit and in truth.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.