

Chapter Three

THE NATURE OF GOD

AFFIRMATION 3

God is Spirit, an infinite Spirit; but He is also a person you can know (Ps. 94:9, 10; 145:18; Jn. 4:23, 24; Js. 4:8). God is essentially unlimited, and every element of His nature is infinite. God is also a Person although He is Spirit. As a person, God has all the characteristics of a person. He relates, thinks, feels, has the freedom to choose and is in control of what He does – Ps. 94:9, 10; Jn. 4:20-26.

HIS NATURE

God is **Spirit**, an infinite Spirit; but He is also a **Person** you can know (Ps. 94:9, 10; 145:18; Jn. 4:23, 24; Js. 4:8). To say that God is infinite Spirit is to pass completely out of the reach of human experience. Yet, God is the indivisible infinite Spirit who eternally exists as three distinctive Persons in the one Godhead, Trinity (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:14-19; 1 Pet. 1:2, 3; 1 Jn. 2:20-27; 3:23, 24; 4:12-16; 5:6-8; Rev. 1:4-6). We are limited as to space, time and matter, and also as to knowledge and power. God is essentially unlimited, and every element of His nature is infinite. God is also a person although He is a Spirit. As a person, God has all the characteristics of a person. He relates, thinks, feels, has the freedom to choose and is in control of what He does – Ps. 94:9, 10; Jn. 4:20-26.

We must understand that:

- i. A person does not need to have a physical body. Spirit beings such as angels are persons; but being originally created spiritual beings, they don't have permanent physical bodies.
- ii. God who is infinite Spirit and Creator can make and remake His semblance or something He imagines creating.
- iii. God understands all human beings - you and me - because He is a Person. He understands our personal needs.
- iv. God grants eternal life to humankind by the divine redemptive plan in Jesus Christ. *"And this is life eternal...thee the only true God"*(Jn. 17:3). *"For they themselves announce concerning us what kind of entrance we have to you, and how you had turned to God from the idols, to serve the living and true God,"* (1 Thess. 1:9).

We can make these two assertions about the Nature of this Supreme Being (Jn. 4:23, 24):

- a) "God is (a) Spirit" (an infinite Spirit) (Jn. 4:24), and
- b) "God is a Person" (has Personality) (Ps. 94:9, 10)

A. GOD IS (A) SPIRIT (an infinite Spirit) (Jn. 4:24)

"God is a spirit, and the ones worshiping Him must worship in spirit and truth." (Jn. 4:24)
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What is spirit?

Spirit may imply at least the following things from Scripture.

1. Spirit is not flesh and bone. Spirit is not physical and material. Spirit is immaterial, non-physical, or incorporeal. So, spirit is of another dimension of being, another dimension entirely different from the physical and material dimension of being.
2. Spirit is the innermost part of being, the very core and heart of life. Spirit is the very breath of God's life, the very breath of God's existence, the very being of God's life (Gen. 2:7). Thus, spirit is eternal existence and being; something of permanent, unending existence. By implication, a spirit has the breath of life, of existence, of being forever.

God is a Spirit (an infinite Spirit) (Jn. 4:24)

The nature of God is Spirit meaning *Eternal Being, Eternal Life, the Perfect Intelligence, the Perfect Being, the indefinable Supreme Being, and the Perfect Life*. So, to say that God is Spirit means He is the very embodiment of life from eternity to eternity, of permanent, unending existence. As Spirit:

1. *Firstly*, God exists forever and ever. He is life, the very embodiment of life eternal (Jn. 17:3). Whatever life is - in all its perfection - *God is*. God is the perfect Person, perfect Life, perfect Intelligence, and perfect Supreme Being.
2. *Secondly*, God is not flesh and blood plus bone in substance; and not physical. For the physical ages, deteriorates, dies, and decays - it ends (Gen. 3:19; 1 Cor. 15:50); but not so with spirit, hence not God whose substance is spirit not material! God as infinite Spirit is hence everywhere and cannot be localized or limited, like a ghost. He even does not even slumber nor sleep (Ps. 121:3, 4).
3. *Thirdly*, God the Creator of the Universe (the entire physical, metaphysical and spiritual worlds) also created human beings who are bones, flesh and blood (Gen. 2:7, 23; Lev. 17:11; Job 10:11; Lk. 24:39; Acts 17:24-29; 1 Cor. 15:50; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 5:30; Heb. 2:16); yet each possessing an immortal soul or spirit component from God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 18-23; 3:22; 5:1-3; 1 Thess.

5:23).

4. *Fourthly*, God is Spirit and it means therefore that He has no body (Jn. 4:24). Sometimes, however, the Scriptures use the parts of the human body describe God's activities with respect to humanity, especially His people; He does not have eyes, but He sees; He does not have ears, but He hears our faintest cries; He does not have hands, but He can protect; and so on (Ps. 17:1-15). Besides that, God can assume a body through the manifestation of His Word and He has done that visibly through His Word, who has become His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ (Gen. 1:1-3; Jn. 1:1-5, 14-14-18; 14:1-26; Acts 13:33; Col. 1:16, 17; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-5; Rev. 19:13).[It is necessary to state, however, that Jesus Christ (Jesus of Nazareth) became human (the only Ideal Perfect Man) not by creation or pro-creation but by Incarnation (Matt. 1:1, 16, 18, 21-25; Lk. 1:31-35; Jn. 1:14-18; 6:55, 56; 19:5; Acts 2:22-36; 10:36-43; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Heb. 2:14). He is not the first created being, for He is the Creator and did not create Himself; but only became the first Person to resurrect from the dead (Col. 1:15-18). Note right away that Jesus is inseparable from the Father and the Holy Spirit, except when He tasted death (spiritual, physical and eternal) for all humanity (Heb. 1:1-14; 2:9-18 vv. 9, 14; 1 Jn. 2:20-27; 2 Jn. 1:1-12 vv. 3, 9)].
5. *Fifthly*, God as infinite Spirit is hence everywhere, over and above as ruler of the eternal, unshakeable kingdom of God (including the created Universe) and cannot be localized or limited. He is, thus, far greater than all other spirit beings (Heb. 1:1-14) including Satan and his demons, who chose to be rather rebellious and evil created beings (Ge. 3:1-9; 1Chr. 21:1; 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:1-11; 19:19-20:15). God, however, presently rules over the spiritual kingdom on Earth through the Church, with Christ as its Head (Matt. 9-13 vv. 9, 10; 16:13-19; Eph. 1:3-23; 3:1-12 v. 10; 4:15; 6:10-20 v. 12).

B. GOD IS A PERSON (has Personality) (Ps. 94:9, 10).

From human perspectives, it is obvious to assume that to say that someone or something is a "person" usually means a separate, distinct (finite) individual. This is not a true theological proposition about God by mere extension, for God is infinite! So, to assert that God is a Person does not refer to Individuality but that He has Personality! It could be mind-blowing to visualize God this way; however, we see personality ascribed to God throughout the Scriptures.

God is a Person; He has Personality (Ps. 94:9, 10).

As a person, God has all the characteristics of a person. He relates, thinks, feels, has the freedom to choose and is in control of what He does. *"He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who chastises the nations, shall He*

not punish, He who teaches man knowledge? (Ps. 94:9, 10). To say God is a Person is to assert that:

1. He relates within Himself and uniquely with His creatures, human beings (Gen. 1:1, 26; 3:22; Is. 6:8; Jn. 4:23);
2. He is rational; and thinks with perfect mind (Ps. 40:17; 139:17; 144:3; Rom. 11:34);
3. He is emotional as declared (Gen. 6:6; Deut. 7:38; Jer. 31:3; Acts 5:4; Eph. 4:30);
4. He is volitional and chooses (Deut. 4:37; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor. 1:27; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 4:11).

God who created finite personal human beings in his own image is thus a relational, rational, emotional and volitional Personal Supreme Being. God is hence:

1. A personal being who relates

God relates within Himself as the triune Godhead and chooses to relate to humans who are created as relational beings. The opening verse of the whole Bible in Genesis 1:1 states; 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' The Hebrew word for God in that verse "Elohim" is in fact, a plural word. There is a hint in that opening verse that there is more than one divine person in creative activity.

Again, it implies God sitting in counsel with other members of the Godhead in Genesis 1:26 saying: "Then God said, ... man in our image, in our likeness." Here again, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Of course, the Almighty addresses here the other members of the Godhead or Trinity as we finally come to see through Biblical revelation and practical orthodoxy. The inference is that God relates within Himself as the triune personality, who created human beings as persons. He thus relates to us and seeks worship from us (Jn. 4:23, 24).

Now, it is true that the word "Trinity" does not itself occur in the Bible directly, yet it is Scriptural; and the most important Bible mystery now revealed as central to Christian beliefs (Jn. 14:12-23; Col. 2:1-10). Though the doctrine of the Tri-Unity of the Godhead is a concept clearly taught in the New Testament, the Old Testament is not without indications of it where the plurality of persons in one God is severally stated.

Some Old Testament texts provide meaningful clues to the Trinity:

"And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us'" (Gen. 3:22).

'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.' (Is. 6:3) *'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'* (Is. 6:8).

"For the Israelites this was their watchword: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, He is one'" (Deut. 6:4).

Some New Testament texts provide sufficient meaning to the Trinity:

"Then having gone, disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mat 28:19 LITV).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14).

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named, that He may give you, according to the riches of His glory, by His power to become mighty in the inward man through His Spirit, that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts, having been rooted and founded in love, that you may be given strength to grasp, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the surpassing knowledge and love of Christ, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14 -19).

2. A rational being who thinks

The word thought, or thinking is applied to God repeatedly in the Bible. The book of Psalms is full of these.

"Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me" (Ps. 40:17).

"How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!" (Ps. 139:17).

"O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?" (Ps. 144:3).

It is the clearest way of asserting the Personhood of the God of the Bible as we seek Scientific or empirical meaning to reality in the Universe.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who became His counselor?" (Rom. 11:34; cf. Is. 40:13).

The Bible shows without any shadow of doubt that God is a rational God! Our world does not exist on chance or random effects. A great thinker, planner and designer is the Creator God of the Universe! He concretely and deliberately gives us through nature this uniqueness about the living and true God (since human beings as creatures think) and Scripture (the written Word) is a true rational revelation of His Personhood.

3. An emotional being who feels

Right from Creation, God has always revealed Himself not in an abstract absoluteness but in a personal and intimate relation to the world. Hence, He does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the

world and reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath; and He is so much intertwined to humankind such that man's deeps may move Him, affect Him, grieve Him, or on the other hand, gladden and please Him (Gen. 1:27, 31; 2:7, 15-19; 3:22; 6:5, 6).

Both the Old and New Testaments abound with husband-bride image of God who woos His people and dotes on them like a lover doting on his beloved. When they ignore Him, He feels spurned like a jilted loving husband. Typical is God's husband-bride relationship with Israel by covenant relations (Jer. 3:8; Ezek. 16:1-14; Hos. 11:1-4). Ultimately, the love of God is expressed to the world in the sending of His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16).

Now from changing metaphors, the Bible also tells us that we (believers in His Son) are God's children and given the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14 v. 6; Gal. 4:4-6). The closest in this regard we can may be come to thinking about God and His emotive nature is by thinking about the people who mean most to us, like our own child or lover. Jesus Himself on one occasion said, "If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts [*gifts that are to their advantage*] to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and continue to ask Him!" (Lk. 11:13 AMP).

4. A volitional being who chooses

God is a purposeful being who always moves determinately to design, create and control the Universe including human beings. For Christians though we differ about the mode of creation, but all agree that God created the world, including human beings by an act of His will. The Bible again asserts the fact. We read in Isaiah and further in Revelation the worshipping hosts cry: 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being' (Rev. 4:11). A host of Scriptures could be brought together to show that God is a choosing being. Here are just a few quotes:

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." (1 Cor. 1:27);

"But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13);

"But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend." (Is. 41:8);

"You have not chosen Me, but I chose you out and planted you, that you should go and should bear fruit, and your fruit remain, that whatever you should ask the Father in My name, He may give you" (Jn. 15:16);

“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” (Jn. 15:19);

“And the Lord said to him, Go, for this one is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before nations and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15)

“He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.” (1 Pet. 1:20);

“to whom having drawn near, a living Stone, indeed having been rejected by men, but chosen by God, precious; ... “(1 Pet. 2:4);

Seeing God who is infinite and invisible Sprit and having personality, must be possible only to the eye of faith through Jesus (Jn. 14:6-11; Col. 1:15, 16; Heb. 11:27); otherwise we would often consider Him as intangible and incomprehensible (Rom. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:17).