

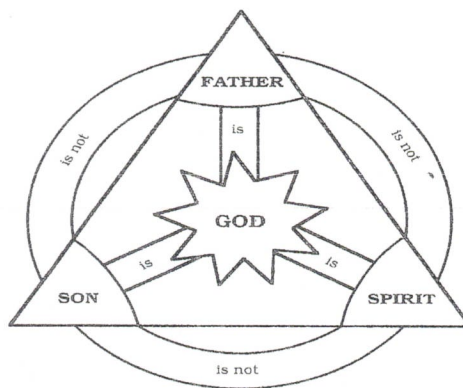
## “THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD” – PART I

*Preface: This lesson deals with what may be termed the Nature of God. Our objective is not to comprehend God exhaustively but to establish clear propositional (biblical) parameters or markers to our conception of God. There are five key propositions regarding the nature of God. They are:*

- I. God is three Persons yet one God or the doctrine of the Trinity.*
- II. God is sovereign over all His creatures and creation.*
- III. God can be known personally.*
- IV. God is infinite in all respects.*
- V. God is a Spirit.*

### I. God Is a Trinity

While the doctrine of the Trinity (God is three Persons yet one God — (literally a Tri-Unity or three in one) is found throughout Scripture, the word Trinity is not. So we recognize that we have a Bible that teaches the doctrine of the Trinity in numerous places, though no single passage states the doctrine as clearly and as concisely as we might like. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* states: “There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” It is important to affirm what Scripture teaches, as the *Westminster Catechism* does, while recognizing that we will never exhaustively understand the inherent mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity. The following diagram accurately depicts the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit while recognizing that the three Persons of the Godhead remain separate and distinct Persons.



- A. Read the following sampling of verses and identify which Person(s) of the Godhead is identified.
1. Matthew 28:19
  2. Matthew 3:16, 17
  3. II Corinthians 13:14

4. 1 Peter 1:2
5. Psalm 139:7
6. Genesis 1:2
7. Genesis 1:1
8. Deuteronomy 6:4
9. Psalm 51:11
10. John 10:30
11. Ephesians 1:3

- B. Throughout the history of the Church, the common denominator of virtually all heretical groups and cults has been the implicit or explicit denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is often manifest in a cult's view regarding the deity of Christ, since the denial of the deity of Christ is necessarily a denial of the Trinity.

For our purposes, a cult is a sect or group that claims to be Christian but which rejects one or more fundamentals of the faith — in the context of this lesson, the deity of Christ. The late Walter Martin wrote of this in his classic book *The Kingdom of the Cults*:

“The Deity of Jesus Christ is one of the cornerstones of Christianity, and as such has been attacked more vigorously throughout the ages than any other single doctrine of the Christian faith. Adhering to the old Arian heresy, which Athanasius the great Church Father refuted in his famous essay “On the Incarnation of the Word,” many individuals and all cults steadfastly deny the equality of Jesus Christ with God the Father, and hence the Triune Deity.”

List two prominent cults that deny the deity of Christ and, hence, the doctrine of the Trinity.

1.

2.

## II. God Is Sovereign

R.C. Sproul writes in *Chosen by God*:

“When we speak of divine sovereignty, we are speaking about God’s authority and about God’s power. As sovereign, God is the superior authority of heaven and earth. All other authority is lesser authority. Any other authority that exists in the universe is derived from and dependent upon God’s authority. All other forms of authority exist either by God’s command or by God’s permission. The word authority contains within itself the word author. God is the author of all things over which he has authority. He creates the universe. He owns the universe. His ownership gives him certain rights.”

The sovereignty of God is often listed as an *attribute* of God. However, God’s sovereignty more correctly reflects his position as Creator, while His attributes are practical and awe-inspiring manifestations of His unique nature.

- A. Read the following Scriptures and comment on what they reveal regarding God’s sovereignty.
  1. Revelation 4:11
  2. Psalm 11:4
  3. Matthew 5:34
  4. Romans 9:20-21
- B. Since the truth of the sovereignty of God is clearly affirmed and stated in the bible, why do you suppose otherwise bible-believing Christians sometimes have difficulty with it?

### III. God Is *Personal*

It is essential to understand that God is a *personal* God. When we refer to God as three persons, we are pointing to certain aspects of God's nature. If God is not *personal* then the proposition that we can know Him and have a *personal* relationship with Him loses its meaning. Theologian Robert Reymond writes that to understand God is *personal* is to recognize that He is a "conscious self or ego or that He possesses a center of self-consciousness." Archibald Alexander wrote that any being with an intellect and a will may be described as a person. A person is a "distinct, intelligent, voluntary agent, yet in regard to God these three distinctions, called persons, retain one divine essence."

*The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* explains that, in our day, "theologians emphasize the relational nature of personhood"...with the three persons of the Trinity relating, loving, and enjoying one another. In terms of applying the personal nature of God, the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit establishes a basis for the hope that man can relate intimately to His Creator.

A. With the above comments as background, what does it mean to say that you have a *personal relationship with Jesus Christ*?

B. Read John 14:6 and comment on what it tells us about coming to know God personally.

### IV. God is *Infinite*

Infinite means *without limits*. In seeking to understand God, our struggle to comprehend Him exhaustively is the insurmountable challenge of the finite seeking to comprehend the infinite. Many of the more difficult questions one must address regarding the nature of God will never be resolved to our complete satisfaction. Nevertheless, God has revealed sufficient information regarding Himself so that we can know Him in a substantial way.

A. Read the following scriptures and comment on what they say regarding God.

1. Psalm 147:5

2. 1 Kings 8:27

3. Psalm 145:3

4. Acts 17:24

#### **V. God is a Spirit**

God does not have a body as man does. God is a Spirit. Instances in which God is described as having body parts (apart from Christ in His earthly incarnation) are simply means of communicating truths regarding God. So important is this truth that God explicitly prohibited men fashioning physical representations of Him in their efforts to worship Him. (See Exodus 20:4.)

What does John 4:24 tell us about God?