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The Spirituality of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The concept of spirituality is used to communicate a variety of different ideas. For some, this word indicates a conscious commitment to the things of God. To others, to say that someone is spiritual is to suggest that he or she has a generic interest in religious or supernatural matters. However, to speak of God's spirituality is actually to identify Him as a spirit—an immaterial, invisible, and infinite being that is fundamentally distinct from material, visible, and finite creatures. In this message, Dr. Lawson investigates what it means to affirm that God is a spiritual being and why this aspect of His character is crucial to our understanding of who He is.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

John 1:18; John 4:23–24; 1 Timothy 1:16–17

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explore what it means that God is immaterial, invisible, and infinite
2. To describe the connection between God's spirituality and His presence with His people
3. To commend God's infinite and mysterious nature as an invitation to greater worship

QUOTATIONS

God is a Spirit, and has not a body like men.

—Catechism for Young Children

Everywhere in the Old and in the New Testament, God is represented as a spiritual Being, without form, invisible, whom no man hath seen or can see; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, and full of glory; as not only the creator, and preserver, but as the governor of all things; as everywhere present, and everywhere imparting life, and securing order.

—Charles Hodge

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Immaterial God

- A. God is spirit and therefore does not have a material body (John 4:24).
- B. When Scripture attributes human anatomy to God, it does so figuratively.
 - i. The Bible speaks of God's hands (Jer. 18:6), eyes (2 Chron. 16:9), arms (Isa. 53:1), and ears (Ps. 130:2).
 - ii. God sometimes describes Himself using human qualities in order to reveal Himself to us in ways that we can most easily understand.
- C. Rather than being a limitation, God's absence of a physical body is part of what makes Him the divine Lord of all.
 - i. Since He has no body, God is not subject to spatial constraints.
 - ii. As such, God can be present in all places at all times.
 - iii. It is precisely because God does not have a physical body that He is able to keep His promises to be with His people (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5).
- D. Because God is spirit, we can be assured that wherever we go and no matter how alone we may feel, God is with us still.

II. The Invisible God

- A. Because God does not have a material body, He cannot be seen by human eyes.
 - i. Though people sometimes claim to have seen God, the truth is that He is invisible (1 Tim. 1:17).
 - ii. The only physical manifestation of God in human form is Jesus Christ, the God-man (John 1:18; Col. 1:15).
- B. While we cannot actually see God, we must know Him through His revelation to us.
 - i. We can know about God by examining the world that He has made.
 - ii. We can know about God by reading what the Bible says about Him.
 - iii. We can know about God by entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is God in human form (John 1:14).
- C. Because God is invisible, Christians must live by faith, hoping for the day when we shall be in His physical presence and see Him face to face.

III. The Infinite God

- A. As a spirit being, God has no ontological boundaries or limits.
 - i. The fullness of His being permeates every part of time and space.
 - ii. God's greatness surpasses human understanding.

- B. The mystery of God ought to heighten our sense of worship.
 - i. If it were possible for us to figure out God completely, we would not be drawn to worship Him.
 - ii. Because He is beyond human comprehension, He brings us to our knees in wonder and amazement.
 - iii. Since we can never know God completely, there is always room for us to grow and deepen in our relationship with Him.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To say that God is spirit is to say that _____.
 - a. The physical is ontologically inferior to the spiritual
 - b. God is more of an idea than a concrete reality
 - c. He does not have a material body
 - d. Human beings, as mortal creatures, cannot interact with God
2. Why does Scripture use human anatomy to describe God?
 - a. To show us what God is *not* like
 - b. To depict what God would look like if He appeared in human form
 - c. To convey the idea that God's body is made of spirit, not flesh
 - d. To reveal God's character in a way that we can easily understand
3. Because God does not have a body, He is subject to severe spatial constraints.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. All of the following *except* _____ are reliable ways to learn about God.
 - a. Entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
 - b. Talking with people who attest that God appeared to them
 - c. Reading the Bible
 - d. Studying the physical world
5. The fullness of God's being exists in every part of the universe.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does God have a body? What is true as a result?
2. Though God is immaterial, Scripture affirms the original goodness of our human bodies and reminds us that we will live eternally in a resurrected and embodied state. What are ways that we can delight in and glorify God through our materiality and embodiment?
3. In what way did understanding God's spirituality bring comfort to Dr. Lawson

when he was a college student? How does this divine attribute address a situation in your life?

4. How will a better understanding of God affect your worship?