

## God is a Spirit

What does God look like? Perhaps all of us at some point or another have raised this question. Sometimes in our minds we might visualize an old revered grandfather figure with a flowing white beard, or we might think of him as a hazy white blur. Maybe some other tangible figure comes to your mind. But what does God look like? I think we are safe in saying God does not look like anything or anybody in this created universe. He is totally unique.

The Apostle Paul declares in Acts 17, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else” (v.24-25 NIV).

Perhaps we should rephrase our question to, *what is the nature of God?* Although the Scriptures do not give a description of God’s being they do declare his name. In fact, the writings are very straightforward about the nature of God. The prophets of God, echoing the theme of the second of the Ten Commandments, announced that God is so wonderful in His essence and being that all human efforts to produce material or mental images of him are a gross insult to his greatness, his majesty, his glory and his power. We read in Exodus 20:1-6 (World English Bible): *God spoke all these words, saying, “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

*“You shall have no other gods before me.*

*“You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of*

*those who hate me, and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

Jesus told a sinful woman of Samaria that God is a Spirit, or God is spirit (John 4:24). This understanding of God as Spirit is most important. God in his essence is spirit not material. God is infinite, transcendent, so great and glorious that we can never fully comprehend him although we can truly know him through and in Messiah Jesus.

As we read the Biblical narratives, we discover that in order to communicate with people, God condescends to shield, to clothe, to encase himself in some visible form to protect his creatures from destruction. Examples of such is his revelation of himself to Moses at the burning bush that was not consumed. Another example is the Shekinah glory cloud in the tabernacle and temple. Jesus said, "God is spirit." **What do we mean when we speak of God as spirit?** We mean that God in his essence, in his very being, is spiritual rather than material. The statement that God is spirit is as close to a definition of God that can be found in the Bible. The French Reformation Confession relates there is only one God, who is one indivisible essence. The Westminster Larger Catechism defines God in this way. God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

In summary we can say God has revealed himself as a being who is pure, infinite, and an eternal spirit. But what does it mean that God's being is of a spiritual nature? There are a number of ideas included in this concept.

**Firstly, it means God is non-material.** He is not composed of physical parts and therefore He is not limited as his creatures are. Jesus said in Luke 24:39 on the evening of his resurrection from the dead: *See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*" God is above his creation and as to his essential nature he is one eternal God who is spirit. This does not mean

God can not appear in a visible form. He can and he did this several times in the days of the Old Testament. These temporary manifestations are called theophanies. However, in a real sense God now has a physical body in the person of the Word. God the Son took a human nature to himself when he became flesh. Messiah Jesus, who is truly God, became truly man and following his resurrection and ascension into heaven he remains forever in a glorified body, the God-Man. As Colossians 1:19 states, *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.*

**Second God as spirit means he is invisible.** In his essence he is not visible. The Scripture says in John 1:18, *No one has seen God at any time.* Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 God is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen. In other words, God is not discernable by our physical senses.

**A third idea in God is spirit is that he alone possesses immortality.** He has life in and of himself. It is absolute, underived, eternal and indestructible life. It is also an inexhaustible life. God alone can say as Jesus did- "I am the life" (John 14:6).

**Fourth, God is spirit stresses that he is essentially one in his being.** God is not composed of parts. There is a "Threeness" to his personality. Thus, God can say, "*Let us*" to himself because he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He exists as a tri-unity.

**Fifth, God is spirit means he is personal.** In fact, he is supreme personality. He is a self-conscious and self-determining Being. God is person not an "it" nor is he an impersonal cosmic force like divine electricity. God thinks, he hears, he speaks, he feels, he acts. He is the divine person and the author of the personality of humans because we were made in his spiritual and moral image. Since God is a personal Spirit you can have fellowship with him in and through his unique Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one has seen God at any time; the one and only, God, the one who is in the bosom of the Father—that one has made *him* known. John 1:18

Whenever we think about the nature of God a sense of awe should fill our hearts.

*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*  
.John 4:24

We must worship Him with our total being. This worship flows from our regenerated spirits and renewed minds.

Here the words of this majestic hymn- *My God How Wonderful You Are:*

My God, how wonderful you are,  
your majesty how bright;  
how beautiful your mercy seat  
in depths of burning light!

2 Creator from eternal years  
and everlasting Lord,  
by holy angels day and night  
unceasingly adored!

3 How wonderful, how beautiful  
the sight of you must be  
your endless wisdom, boundless power,  
and awesome purity!

4 O how I fear you, living God,  
with deepest, tenderest fears,  
and worship you with trembling hope  
and penitential tears!

5 But I may love you too, O Lord,  
though you are all-divine,  
for you have stooped to ask of me  
this feeble love of mine.

6 Father of Jesus, love's reward,  
great king upon your throne,  
what joy to see you as you are  
and know as I am known!

Jubilate Hymns Version of *My God how wonderful thou art* F W Faber

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