

SEEING GOD AS HE IS

LESSON 3: The Immutability of God

I. God is *immutable*

A. Definition: “***ametathétos***” - unalterable, unchangeable, not transposed, not to be transferred; fixed (example: Heb. 6:18)

B. Thus, God is unchanging in His character, will, and covenant promises – this is a claim no other can make, and it is true because He can bear evidence of its truth

C. Scripture is filled with this claim:

1. Exodus 3:14 – “I Am who I Am.”

2. Malachi 3:6 – “For I, the Lord, do not change.”

3. Psalm 102:25-27 – “...they will perish, but you remain...”

4. Psalm 89:34 – “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips.”

5. Heb. 13:8 – “...the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

6. John 8:59 – “...before Abraham was born, I Am.”

D. How does this reflect in God’s character and nature?

1. God does not *change His mind* – I Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19; James 1:17 (“...no variation or shifting shadow.”)

2. It confirms that God is eternally *consistent* with His Holy nature – His love, mercy, forgiveness, grace, compassion, patience, wisdom, knowledge, and perseverance always remain perfect and do not vary

3. It shows the *power* of God – it is impossible for Him to fail; no one can prevent Him from carrying out His purposes

4. It shows the *reliability* of God – He cannot fail and is thus completely *trustworthy*

5. Given God’s reliability, His word is thus a beacon for setting our spiritual direction (Psalm 71:3)

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II. What are the implications of God's unchanging nature for mankind?

A. False beliefs about God's immutability

1. It is illogical and impractical

a. Since the universe is constantly changing, it is inevitable that this must be the nature of its creator; an immutable God would never create a universe in chaos

b. An immutable God would never create such a fragile and unpredictable creature as man and dare to leave him in charge of His precious creation

c. An immutable God would never endow man with free will and risk chaos and failure by planning for a relationship with him

d. Some feel that the concept of an immutable God is *unhealthy* – as society changes, God and truth must also adapt to our changing needs

2. It is impossible.

a. Most ancient Greek philosophers, several early church fathers, and even many today believe that God could not have any emotions/ feelings since that would allow Him to change and be unpredictable – being subject to change could allow God to be manipulated or even fallible

b. Some feel although fully human, the divine side of Jesus could never have allowed for suffering; some feel that when Jesus was crucified, only His human side suffered (leaving His divine portion free and unstained by suffering and anguish)

c. Many believe God cannot be truly providential for mankind unless he is completely and permanently inflexible, unaffected by the actions of mankind; there is no room for a loving relationship with His children

d. Others call God a hypocrite - doesn't the fact that

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God can 'repent' or 'regret' prove that He sometimes regrets His actions and indeed is not immutable?

1). Several scriptures have wording that suggests that God has made decisions of which he regrets or relents

a). Gen. 6:6 – “And the Lord **regretted** that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

b). Jonah 3:9 – “Who knows? God may turn and **relent**; He may turn from His fierce anger...”

c). Multiple other OT scriptures make similar comments about God's 'regret' – Sam. 15:11 & 35; 2 Sam. 24:16; I Chr. 21:15; Psalm 106:45; Jer. 15:6

2) In each case, the same word is used, “**nacham**”, Hebrew – it is usually specifically used about emotions, as a feeling of pain, sadness, or unhappiness (yin-nachem in Gen. 6:6); basically, it is saying that God became very sorrowful/grieved by what had happened; God is not regretting the creation of man, as if a mistake was made, but rather that man has taken a regretful direction; other uses of this versatile word: to be sorry (6), be moved to pity (1), have compassion (2), suffer grief for action, repent (3), regret (1) or relent (5), to or comfort oneself (48), change one's mind (6)

B. The reality of God's immutability - only an unchanging God is dependable and capable enough to provide providential care for His creation

1. Although the universe is constantly changing, it is perfectly ordered and designed to do exactly what the

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Creator wishes (Gen. 1:31; Eph. 1:11)

2. A perfectly ordered universe that is also designed to change and progress physically must be designed on unchanging foundational principles

3. Having a transcendent power and knowledge and physical/ spiritual presence *does not* prevent God from interacting in history (Heb. 4:14-16) and having a relationship with mankind

4. Because He is always consistent with His qualities, mankind can always depend on the providence of God (Matt. 5:45; Psalm 62:1-12; Heb. 13:8)

5. As we have already seen and discussed, God's love is shown to all mankind, even those who do not acknowledge Him (John 3:16; Matt. 5:45)

III. What does an immutable God mean for His children?

A. He always has the power to help us

1. God will always be willing and available to help His children (Psalm 46:1-3; Isa. 41:10; I Peter 5:7)

2. He will always answer our prayers (James 1:5-6; John 15:7; Phil. 4:6; Matt. 7:7)

3. He will always provide for our spiritual welfare (Rom. 8:28)

4. He will never abandon us, even when we fall or start to abandon Him (Deut. 31:6; I Cor. 10:13)

5. He will always protect us (Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 6:13))

B. He is always trustworthy and reliable

1. God will always uphold His promises (Num. 23:19; Heb. 10:23; 2 Peter 3:9)

2. Even when we are shaken by life's circumstances, God will always remain faithful to us (Psalm 46:5; Psalm 16:8; 2 Cor. 4:8,9,16-18)

3. He will be faithful to lead us to heaven (John 10:27-30)