

TEACHING GOAL

To study the spiritual nature of God.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

S.C. 4; L.C. 7; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 9

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: John 4:1-26, 38-42

Support Passages: I Timothy 1:15-17, 6:13-16; Isaiah 40:12-31,
45:5-25

BIBLE STORY

I Kings 18:21-40; YAHWEH God as opposed to Baal

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24, ESV)

APPLICATION

The true God who has revealed Himself by His works and word; that most Holy and True Spirit, must be worshipped in accord with His revealed will from the heart.

SUMMARY

Since the Bible does not give us a definition as such of God, we must come to our concept of God by an exhaustive study of His attributes of which the Bible has much to say. While the usual Reformed classification of these attributes divides between those that are communicated to mankind (in the sense that they are found to some degree in God's created universe) and those attributes that belong to God alone, nevertheless, the Catechism suggests another classification. It is assumed in the catechism answer that God is a self-existent being and it is affirmed of Him:

- (1) That He is spirit;
- (2) That as such He is infinite, eternal and unchanging and;
- (3) That each of these aspects apply to His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

One observes in John 4:24 (King James Version) that the phrase, "God is a Spirit" contains the italicized word "is" indicating that this word is not found in the original Greek text and was added by the translators for clarity or to provide a proper English clause or sentence. In fact the word "a" should be italicized as well for the same reason. This is the only such statement about God in the Bible and the Lord Jesus does not say that God is merely "a" spirit in the sense that He is one of many spirits, but that He is Spirit meaning that this is His essential nature. There are other spirit beings of course such as the angels, but the angels are not infinite, eternal and unchangeable. God alone is an infinite, eternal and unchanging spiritual being. He has a substantial being all His own and distinct from the world; immaterial, invisible without composition or extension.

It is true that the Bible often speaks of the ears, eyes, hands, mouth, etc. of God, but these are anthropomorphisms or figurative descriptions of the activities of God. God is Spirit or Spiritual. When it is said that a man is spiritual, one refers to that small amount of God-like qualities that true saving faith in Christ produces. However, the Spirituality of God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable whereas human beings are just the opposite; finite, limited to time and space, and variable.

That God is Spirit means that He has an objective existence. He is not just an idea like the "Spirit of Saint Louis" or the "Spirit of 76". Neither is God merely a kindred spirit or a good feeling. God's being Spirit also means that He is rational and conscious; in other words, that He is personal. In this sense God is completely independent and self-sufficient. While human beings are rational and conscious, that is to say they have souls, they are completely dependent on God. God's being Spirit means that He has a will albeit not with sinful human passions but a perfect and holy will. Lastly God's Spirituality means that He is a moral being. There are, therefore, those things that are right in the eyes of the LORD and others that are wrong.

God can and does act as He did on the occasion spoken of in I Kings 18. No matter how fervently the priests called upon him, Baal did not consume their offering with fire. We read that they "called on the name of Baal from morning

until noon saying, 'O Baal, answer us'." They leaped upon the altar and cut themselves with swords and lances to no avail. Baal was merely an idea concocted by sinful human minds. No so with YAHWEH. Elijah flooded his altar with water eliminating the possibility of spontaneous combustion, the whole area being parched from years of drought. He then prayed simply, "O YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done these things at Thy word. Answer me, O YAHWEH, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O YAHWEH, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Had YAHWEH been merely a human idea this too would have failed but the "God who is there" consumed Elijah's sacrifice with fire.