

## Sunday, March 6, 2022 | The Immutable Characteristics of God

Revelation 22:13 | "The Timeless God"

### Announcements:

- VBS Wednesdays July 20<sup>th</sup>-August 10<sup>th</sup> with a church-wide picnic on August 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - Easter Sunday is April 17<sup>th</sup>. There'll be two services, 9:30am, and 11:00am. There will be no bible fellowship that morning.
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We kicked off a series called The Immutable Characteristics of God two weeks ago. This series is intended to give you a crash course into, exactly, God is. After all, it's pretty difficult to follow someone if you don't know who they are. And during the first week, we spoke about what it means when we say that God is immutable; he does not change. This characteristic is the nail upon which all the other attributes hang and, without its virtue, would render the rest of God's characteristics meaningless. For better and worse, life is defined by change, and nothing is immune to its effects. Given enough time, rivers shift their banks, and even mountains alter their shape. But the Lord does not change. He is the one constant in the universe. What permanence we might perceive in this life is nothing more than some cheap imitation of our changeless God. Our world changes, but our God never does. Thus, **God's immutability means we have everlasting stability.**

Last week we spoke about God's "allness." There is no knowledge my God does not already know. There is no place where my God will not be found. And there is nothing my God cannot do. **God's "allness"—omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence—means that He is all we'll ever need.** The Lord ought to be the first one we turn to, not the last.

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Today we're going to talk about God's eternity, immortality, and endlessness.

### Definition of the "timelessness" of God:

**To say that God is "eternal," we mean that he is without beginning or end. Time itself has no real meaning to him as it does to us because God existed before time was even a thing.**

Honestly, I do not feel that I'm up to this task. Not because I have not studied. I have actually done a great deal of study. I do not feel like up to the job because I have to talk about a thing that I've never experienced: timelessness. In a way, it is similar to how someone might try to

explain to a blind person what the color blue looks like. But, really, it's more like if one blind person were trying to explain to another blind person what sight itself actually is. Unless one of them had been able to see earlier in their life and could speak from personal experience, how would either of them know what they were talking about? This is why we must come with great humility today, because, honestly, we cannot fully comprehend what it means when we say that God is eternal, immortal, and unbound by time.

After all, we are beings of time. At this moment, it is March 6, 2022, and I am 35 years, 3 weeks, 3 days, 11 hours, 15 minutes, and 14 seconds old. And, to a certain extent, I define myself—my actions, schedule, and routine—using some sort of a timetable. As such, concepts like an "eternity," "forever," and "time without end" are hard to grasp. In the same way that a fish cannot understand what it is to be a bird, someone inside the flow of time cannot fathom their existence without being surrounded by the past, present, and future. But God is not like us. The Lord is a being of timelessness.

**READ:** Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Before there was a beginning, there was God. Before the first rays of the sun shined bright in our solar system, there was God. Before the oceans wet the earth and the mountains pierced the sky, there was God. Before the first tree swayed in the wind and before the first flower bloomed, there was God. Before the first bird glided through the sky, before the first deer darted through a field, and before the first fish swam through water, there was God. Before the first man sang the first songs of humanity and before the first woman held her firstborn child, there was God. He was before every beginning. He was before the "befores."

The Psalmist put it this way:

**READ:** Psalm 90:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Even though he interacts with us in real-time, God stands outside the confines of time itself. God's edges are "everlasting" in every direction. That's what the Psalmist meant that God is

“from everlasting to everlasting,” he was saying that the width, height, and depth of God’s existence was “from this vanishing point to that vanishing point.”<sup>1</sup>

**EXAMPLE:** A single line on a sheet of white paper.

The biggest proof we got of God’s timelessness comes in the story of Moses.

**READ:** Exodus 3:1-6 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” <sup>4</sup> When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup> Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” <sup>6</sup> And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

**READ:** Exodus 3:13-15 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

The name, I AM, is confusing. And in fact, there are several ways we can understand that name, but the easiest (and this is not to say it is easy) of them all is to use grammar. In the English language, there are three verb tenses: “I was,” “I am,” and “I will be.” For instance, I could say, “I was sleeping last night. I am no longer sleeping. But I will be sleeping again this afternoon.” I can speak of myself in three ways: past, present, and future. However, the consequence of this is that, whichever tense I use, I will be referring to different Ben. The “Ben of yesterday” is distinctive from the “Ben of today,” which will also be dissimilar from the “Ben

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<sup>1</sup> Tozer, A.W., *The Attributes of God: Deeper into The Father’s Heart*, Volume 2, (Chicago, IL; Moody Publishers, 2001), p. 59.

of tomorrow.” We are dynamic creatures who change relative to the flow of time. But to harken back to the first week of our study and regarding the flow of time, God is not dynamic but static; he does not change; he is immutable. And so, the only proper way to refer to God is in the **present** tense. In fact, his very name—I AM (Ex. 3:14)—means that verb tenses like “past” and “future” do not have any bearing on him because, practicality speaking, he has no real beginning or end.

God lives—exists—in what theologians like to call the “eternal now.” And while I know that sounds like something too hard to grasp, we already know this. For instance, the past is easy to measure. We simply look to our history books, and we will be “in the past,” so to speak. Likewise, while not as knowable as the past, the future can be determined by looking ahead in our calendars. I may not know precisely what will happen on Thursday, but I can pinpoint when it begins and ends with a fair degree of certainty. And, in the same way, we can know our present. Not because we can look to some history book or date on the calendar, but because we can look up and see the present in real-time. We cannot, in the traditional sense of the word, measure the present. How would one mark a time and call it the present when, in fact, the time you’ve just scored is now in the past? Or how could one pinpoint a time in the future and call it the present, when in fact, that time has yet come? Technically speaking, it is impossible to measure precisely when the present is, yet all of us know, instinctively, when it is happening. It is happening right now.<sup>2</sup> And this, my dear friends, is how God experiences time, in the eternal now. We may say “he was” or may say “he will be,” and, from our perspective, that is true enough, but from God’s perspective, he just always is. He is in the everlasting present.

This is why, in John 8:58, Jesus says of himself,

**READ:** John 8:58 (ESV)

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I am**.”

And later, John will also hear Jesus say something very similar in Revelation 22:13,

**READ:** Revelation 22:13 (ESV)

“**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**”

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<sup>2</sup>

Bray, Gerald, *The Attributes of God: An Introduction*, A Short Studies in Systematic Theology, Edited by Graham A. Cole & Oren R. Martin, (Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 2021), p. 54, “Our sense of the present is a reminder that we have been created in the image and likeness of God— we think according to a pattern that is not contained within the created order. The present points us to the eternal because although it moves through time our perception of it never changes.”

Like some grand cartographer, God draws the borderlines. He has set down the edges of countries, continents, and galaxies; this is true. But God has also defined the fringes of time. God lays down the borderlines of time; he draws its limit. Reality is like an ant scurrying across the trunk of some massive redwood, and God is not only the sky above, giving that tree space enough to grow, but he is also the ground below, anchoring it fast. He begins beginnings. He ends endings. He sets the last stone as easily as he did the first. There never was a time when God wasn't, nor will there ever be. He just always is. This is what we mean when we say we know who holds tomorrow. As vast as existence may seem, it is but a speck in the palm of our timeless God.

### SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

God's timelessness means we should not waste the time we have been given to us.

### READ: Psalm 90:3-6, 12 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup>You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" <sup>4</sup>For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup>You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: <sup>6</sup>in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.... <sup>12</sup>So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

If time's days are numbered, so, too, are the days of our life numbered. This is not to say we will not live forever. We will. All men and women will live forever somewhere. For those who've put their faith in Jesus Christ, they will live forever in heaven. But for those who reject Christ, they will live forever in hell. All of us will, eventually, live forever somewhere. But this life—our preset—is not without limit. Just as we have all had a beginning, we will, all of us, also have an ending. No one lives forever in this life. And so, we ought to take what time is given to us to serve the Timeless God. In doing so, we will engage in a work that will long outlive us.

### READ: Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup>"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

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## Video Description

### The Immutable Characteristics of God | Week 3 | "The Timeless God"

TEXT: Revelation 22:13

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But God is not like us. The Lord is a being of timelessness. Before there was a beginning, there was God (cf. Gen. 1:1). Before the first rays of the sun shined bright in our solar system, there was God. Before the first man sang the first songs of humanity and before the first woman held her firstborn child, there was God. He was before every beginning. He was before the "befores" (cf. Psa. 90:1-2).

Likewise, God will also be after the "afters" (cf. Rev. 22:13). Like some grand cartographer, God draws the borderlines. He has set down the edges of countries, continents, and galaxies; this is true. But God has also defined the fringes of time. Reality is like an ant scurrying across the trunk of some massive redwood, and God is not only the sky above, giving that tree space enough to grow, but he is also the ground below, anchoring it fast. He begins beginnings. He ends endings. He sets the last stone as easily as he did the first. There never was a time when God wasn't, nor will there ever be. He just always is (cf. Ex. 3:14; Jhn. 8:58). This is what we mean when we say we know who holds tomorrow. As vast as existence may seem, it is but a speck in the palm of our timeless God. Time's beginning and ending are well-defined and unmoving from God's point of view.

And since time's days are numbered, so, too, are the days of this life numbered. **God's timelessness** means we should not **waste** the **time** we have been given to us (cf. Psa. 90:12). We ought to take up what time we've been given and serve the Timeless God. In doing so, we will engage in a work that will long outlive us (cf. Mat. 6:19-21).

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: