

## **The Nature of God**

### **A. The course content**

- |                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| I. The Almighty Power of God | April 22 & 23 |
| II. The Presence of the LORD | April 29 & 30 |
| III. The Glory of the LORD   | May 6 & 7     |
| IV. The Jealousy of the LORD | May 13 & 14   |

### **B. What we will try to learn**

1. How to gauge the size of God
2. What being almighty means
3. How God can be present in multiple ways
4. The ways in which God is glorious
5. How God can be jealous and not sinful

### **C. How to prepare for each session**

1. Read the material assigned.
2. Answer the study questions.
3. Consider the issues that are being raised by the readings.



## **I. The Almighty Power of God**

1. What is the intrinsic power of God?
2. What four high-level things did God need to create?
3. What is the extent of God's power in nature?
4. What is the degree of God's control of nature? Explain.
5. How do God's miracles differ from the laws of nature?
6. For what does God use His spiritual power?
7. Describe God's judicial power.



## **II. The Presence of the LORD**

1. Describe the heavenly presence of the LORD.
2. Describe the holy presence of the LORD.
3. Describe the majestic presence of the LORD.
4. Describe the sustaining presence of the LORD.
5. Describe the physical presence of the LORD.
6. Describe the ecclesiastical presence of the LORD.
7. Describe the indwelling presence of the LORD.
8. Describe the sacramental presence of the LORD.



### **III. The Glory of the LORD**

1. How did the glory of the LORD appear to Abram?
2. How did the glory of the LORD appear to Jacob?
3. Why did the Israelites quickly lose their awe of the glory of the LORD at Mount Sinai?
4. Where did the glory of the LORD reside in the land of Israel?
5. How did the glory of the LORD appear to Isaiah?
6. How did the glory of the LORD appear to Ezekiel?
7. What were three instances of the appearance of the glory of the LORD in Jesus' life?
8. What three things did the glory of the LORD fill so that no one could enter?





#### **IV. God's Jealousy**

1. What is the relationship between “jealousy” and “envy”?
2. Why is it acceptable for God to be jealous?
3. Why is the LORD jealous of His deity?
4. What does the LORD's jealousy of His name cover?
5. Why is the LORD jealous of His Law even though it cannot save?
6. Why is the LORD's jealousy of His Gospel so strong?
7. What does the LORD's jealousy of His election preclude?
8. Why is the LORD jealous of His “chosen people” even though many of them will not be saved?



## I. The Almighty Power of God

### A. Introduction

1. How strong are we?
  - a. We all have a certain quantity of physical strength. We tend to measure human strength by comparing what one human can do relative to what other humans can do.
  - b. When non-human sources of power were introduced, we needed to establish standards by which they could be compared. We still use units of power such as the “horsepower” and the “watt” today.
  - c. While our machines have become powerful, they often pale in comparison to the power of natural processes like earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and nuclear fusion.
2. How strong is God?
  - a. It is natural to want to put God on our “power scale.” Where should He be placed relative to a bulldozer, a tornado, a hurricane, or nuclear fusion? Many people do place God on such a scale emotionally, even if they do not do so consciously.
  - b. The question “How strong is God?” is an improper question. God is not a physical being, so His power is outside of our ability to measure with physical devices.

### B. The intrinsic power of God

1. The Scriptures claim that the power of God is unchallengeable.
  - a. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3). There are no constraints on Him.
  - b. “For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27).
  - c. “Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?” (Isaiah 43:13).
2. Nothing is beyond what God can do.
  - a. The angel Gabriel said, “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).
  - b. “Ah, LORD God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you” (Jeremiah 32:17).
  - c. God can even raise the dead, a feat that transcends human power. “Now when they [the Athenians] heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, ‘We will hear you again about this’” (Acts 17:32). St. John recorded that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, “Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him” (John 11:45).

### C. The creative power of God

1. When the universe did not exist, there was absolutely nothing. **No** matter, **no** energy because there was no matter to move, and **no** time because the flow of time implies change, and with nothing present to change there can be no time.
2. When the universe did not exist, there was **not** even empty space in which to put it. Empty space is an entity, and all entities must have a form to exist. This would have limited God.
3. This understanding of space and time already existed during the era of the Lutheran Reformation, and it is the same understanding of time and space that physicists have today.

4. In many places the Bible declares that the universe was created by God.
  - a. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). He created matter and energy, along with the space in which to insert it, thereby triggering the beginning of the flow of time.
  - b. “It is he [God] who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens” (Jeremiah 51:15).
5. God could have created the world in any length of time that He chose, but Genesis 1 and other verses said it happened in 6 days.
  - a. The LORD said, “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11).

D. The detail in God’s power

1. God’s work ranges from the immense to the microscopic and is scattered all over the universe.
  - a. “Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:23–24).
2. God can manage all His numerous projects without anything “falling through the cracks.”
  - a. The LORD said, “For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27).
  - b. “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations” (Psalm 33:10–11).
3. *The Universe* is an immense place and extremely complex.
  - a. King David wrote, “When I look at your heavens, [I see] the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place” (Psalm 8:2).
  - b. “He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name” (Amos 5:8–9).
4. *The Earth* – Man is limited by the amount of power his devices can generate and by the laws of nature. He can cause planet-wide disasters; he cannot control hurricanes or earthquakes. By contrast, God can control all the things on the planet, as was shown by the Flood (Genesis 7).
  - a. “Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided” (Exodus 14:21).
  - b. “And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies” (Joshua 10:13).
5. *The Nations* – The LORD has total control over the nations that exist on the earth.
  - a. St. Paul said, “And he [the LORD] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Acts 17:26).
  - b. The LORD said, “I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites” (Exodus 23:2).
  - c. “And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.... Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed...” (2 Kings 19:35–36).

6. *The People* – The LORD can deal with individuals who need help or challenge His power.
    - a. Jesus said, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:11).
    - b. “But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife” (Genesis 12:17).
  7. *The Things of a Size We Comprehend* – Consider rocks and plants.
    - a. “These [all the creatures of the earth] all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things” (Psalm 104:27–28).
    - b. “The people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat” (Joshua 6:20).
  8. *The Fundamental Things of the Universe* – Particle physics
    - a. One ounce of water has about 25 times  $10^{24}$  sub-atomic particles. The number of sub-atomic particles in the universe is mind-boggling. The Lord God controls the behavior of them all at all times and knows the exact velocity, position, and state of existence of each of them, not only now but for every time point during the whole history of the universe.
    - b. Jesus said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:29–30).
- E. God’s Preservation
1. The world only continues to exist because God continues to command it to exist, and the laws of nature only continue to function because God commands them to.
    - a. King David wrote, “You [the LORD] visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth” (Psalm 65:9–10).
    - b. Jesus said, “For he [the LORD] makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).
  2. God gives special attention to the preservation of the animals and of the people.
    - a. “The eyes of all look to you [the LORD], and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15–16).
    - b. “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, “At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God”’” (Exodus 16:11–12).
- F. Laws of nature versus miracles
1. Many people reject divine miracles because they have not seen them occur or because they violate the laws of nature. This is the fallacy of “argument from ignorance.”
  2. The LORD can publicly perform a supernatural act, as has been discussed above. He can also perform such an act when no one is watching. In the latter case when people find the results of a miracle, they would assume it had occurred through natural processes.
    - a. “And in the fourth watch of the night he [Jesus] came to them, walking on the sea” (Matthew 14:25).

- b. “And he [Jesus] awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39).
3. The second way that God can control nature is to work through the statistical variances of natural phenomena. Members of the “tails” of a statistical distribution may behave quite differently than most members of the distribution and produce startling results.
4. The LORD can control events by affecting people’s thinking.
  - a. “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will” (Proverbs 21:1).
5. The LORD can use these three approaches either singly or in combination.
  - a. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Romans 11:33).

#### G. God’s spiritual power

1. God has the power to change the spiritual orientation of human hearts.
  - a. The LORD said, “And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19–20).
2. The apostle Paul wrote extensively about the new spiritual life that God creates in our hearts.
  - a. “That according to the riches of his glory he [the LORD] may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:16–17).

#### H. God’s Judicial Power

1. As creator of all, God is also the judge of all.
  - a. David wrote, “But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness” (Psalm 9:7–8).
  - b. The LORD Himself said, “For I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5–6).
2. The LORD’s judgment is just because He can see people’s hearts.
  - a. The LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).
  - b. “And no creature is hidden from his [God’s] sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13).
3. God has the judicial power in His ability to send people to heaven or hell for eternity.
  - a. Jesus said, “He will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left....And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” Matthew 25:31–46).

## II. The Presence of the LORD

### A. Introduction

1. We readily acknowledge that the LORD is at least sometimes present.
  - a. We sing about His presence in our hymns (e.g., “God Himself is present”).
  - b. We assume that the LORD is truly present whenever we worship Him.
  - c. The Bible mentions His appearance to Moses (Exodus 3) and to Jacob (Genesis 28).
2. The ancients were afraid of the presence of their gods.
  - a. The gods were thought to sport with humankind because they were very similar to humans.
  - b. People hoped if they made periodic offerings to the gods, they would ignore them.
  - c. People therefore worshipped their gods out of fear, hoping to buy them off.
3. Old Testament believers also feared the presence of the LORD.
  - a. Adam and Eve tried to hide from the LORD after they had sinned (Genesis 3:8-10).
  - b. The Israelites at Mount Sinai shuddered at the sight of the glory of the LORD (Exodus 20:18-19).
  - c. Most people in Old Testament Israel feared seeing the LORD in any form. “And Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, for we have seen God’” (Judges 13:22).

### B. Heavenly presence

1. Eternity is where the LORD dwells in His full Godliness. He is the only eternal Being, so there is none other who can be in His presence in the eternal sense.
  - a. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3).
  - b. “He [God] who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).
  - c. The LORD has created a realm where those who have been confirmed in their holiness can stand before Him completely separated from the sinful universe (Matthew 18:10).
2. The Bible gives us only a few peeks into the activities in this heavenly realm.
  - a. The LORD taking counsel to lead King Ahab to destruction (1 Kings 22:19-28).
  - b. Satan seeking permission to torment Job (Job 1:6-12 and Job 2:1-10).
3. The LORD has allowed humans to catch glimpses of the gloriousness of His heavenly presence only infrequently and only when it was to accomplish an important purpose.
  - a. Isaiah wrote, “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple...” (Isaiah 6:1-13).
  - b. Daniel recorded, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days” (Daniel 7:13-14).
4. The LORD went even further in the visions He gave the apostle John in Revelation.
  - a. “The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” (Revelation 4:8).
  - b. Revelation 4 is a *sedes doctrinae* for God’s heavenly presence.

### C. Holy presence

1. To dramatize the transcendent importance of His almightiness and holiness, at times the LORD established a special and unique contact with an individual.
  - a. “Then he [the LORD] said, ‘Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’” (Exodus 3:5) [*sedes doctrinae*].
2. The holy presence of the LORD on earth, however, has always been restricted to a very limited number of people, who were symbolically holy at the time.
  - a. “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat’” (Leviticus 16:2).
  - b. When Joshua encountered the commander of the army of the LORD, “He said to Joshua, ‘Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.’ And Joshua did so.” (Joshua 5:13-15).
3. What makes the “holy presence” different from other ways in which the LORD is present is that He carries the holy aura of His heavenly presence into an earthly setting.

### D. Majestic presence

1. The LORD sometimes gave certain people or groups of people a greatly diminished glimpse of His incredible majesty without any specific command that they give Him reverence. These appearances caused fear, but did not always change hearts.
2. While the LORD often showed His majestic power in the Old Testament, the number of His majestic appearances was limited.
  - a. God travelled with the Israelites in a visible sign. “The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night” (Exodus 13:21).
  - b. He showed His majesty at Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:17) in preparation for declaring the terms of the Mosaic Covenant to them.
  - c. The LORD showed His majestic presence by filling the tent of meeting with His glory when it was dedicated (Exodus 40:34-35).
  - d. The LORD likewise showed His majestic presence by filling the temple after Solomon had constructed it (2 Chronicles 7:1-2). Even the hypocrites in Judah assumed that the LORD was present in some form in the temple.
3. Jesus Himself, as the Son of God, participated in three acts where the majestic presence of the LORD was evident.
  - a. The first was Jesus’ baptism. “The heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:16–17).
  - b. “Then a voice came from heaven: ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again’” (John 12:28). The people were bewildered by this display of the majesty of God the Father.
  - c. The transfiguration marks the greatest example of the majestic presence of the LORD in the New Testament, this time of Jesus Himself, because “His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light” (Matthew 17:2).



E. Sustaining presence (Omnipresence)

1. Because everything is the LORD's creation and cannot exist without His active support, His providence must be connected to His presence. Were He absent, nothing could exist.
  - a. These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. (Psalm 104:27).
2. Most of the time, God's presence is totally unnoticed, because He wants to remain hidden.
  - a. Solomon says, "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (Proverbs 25:2).
  - b. The LORD is present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-16). Yet, God cannot be "sized" to fit a particular form because He is a spirit. He envelops everything that He created.
3. God does not move through time as we do, but He fills time as He fills space.
  - a. "But you are the same, and your years have no end" (Psalm 102:27).
  - b. "[For the LORD said,] For I the LORD do not change" (Malachi 3:6).
4. The sustaining presence of the LORD is critical to our being able to trust in Him.
  - a. At the same instant that the LORD is promising us something, He is fulfilling it.
  - b. We cannot deceive God because He sees us in the present and the future.

F. Physical presence

1. The physical presence of the LORD refers to His presence among mankind in human form, namely, without the majestic trappings of His divinity. This is called a "theophany."
  - a. Jesus could not be recognized as being anything but a normal human being.
  - b. This differed from the Old Testament in which God sometimes wrapped a human form around Himself to meet with people (Abraham (Genesis 18), Jacob (Genesis 32:22-32)).
2. Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, who assumed a human nature into His person so that He was and is truly God and truly man.
  - a. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).
  - b. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).
  - c. He was initially revealed sparingly – to shepherds (Luke 2:10-11), to Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38) and to magi from Gentile lands (Matthew 2:1-12).
  - d. People were prone to ask, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph...?" (John 6:42).
  - e. They could not imagine Immanuel could literally be fulfilled in such a lowly rabbi.
  - f. Jesus' followers struggled with the idea of His suffering and death (Matthew 20:17).
  - g. After His resurrection, He met with His disciples (Luke 24:36-43) and then ascended to heaven to the right hand of God the Father (Acts 2:32-33).

G. Ecclesiastical presence

1. Christ is always with His church.
  - a. Jesus said, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).
  - b. Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:20).
2. Imagine a master architect supervising the building of a beautiful cathedral.
  - a. He will want to be involved in every phase of design.
  - b. He will want to be involved in every phase of material selection.
  - c. He will want to be involved in every phase of construction.

3. Jesus functions the same way in building His church. “In whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the LORD. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:21-22).
4. Christ’s ecclesiastical presence is at our formal worship, at our informal fellowship, and in our working together in the tasks of the ministry. We should always want to use the talents that He has given us well for the situation in which we find ourselves working together with Him.

#### H. Indwelling presence

1. Christ not only lived and died **for** us but He also dwells **in** us.
  - a. “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).
  - b. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit alone that we are kept in faith. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit alone that we can strive to live a sanctified life. This indwelling presence must be acknowledged and treasured (Romans 10:6–8 and Romans 8:9-11).
2. The work of God within us to enable us to grasp divine truths.
  - a. “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God...because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ‘For who has understood the mind of the LORD so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:14–16).
  - b. When contemplating the truths of God, we must always guard against trying to “over-understand” them by supplying from our reason what the Scriptures do not provide.
3. In our continuing struggles with Satan, we must let Christ’s presence within us shine through our lives to those around us. We must ask the LORD for His assistance.
  - a. Paul prayed “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16–19). Amen.

#### I. Sacramental presence

1. The LORD’s final presence has long been a point of controversy within the church.
  - a. It is because what we physically see and what we believe are at odds.
  - b. Our physical senses or laboratory instruments cannot detect His presence.
  - c. “Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:26–28).
2. The Roman Catholics claim that sacramental presence is the same as physical presence. They say the bread and wine are “transubstantiated” into the body and blood of Christ. For centuries they withheld the cup from the laity.
3. For many Protestants, reason blocks the acceptance that Christ’s body and blood are truly present in the Sacrament. They struggle to explain away the word “is” (ἐστί).
4. The nature of the sacramental presence is one which we probe at the risk of our soul’s salvation. We can be sure that Christ’s body and blood are truly present when we take the bread and the wine into our mouths, but we should not try to define the moment when the body and blood become associated with the visible elements or when they disassociate.

### III. The Glory of the LORD

#### A. Introduction

1. What is “glory”?
  - a. The LORD’s infinite power is certainly glorious.
  - b. The LORD’s presence can be utterly amazing and glorious.
  - c. An entity’s glory might be defined as its absolute majesty and its dominance.
  - d. Americans have cheapened the word to mean only a little above average.
2. To whom is glory ascribed?
  - a. Rome gave the glory of a triumphal procession to military leaders.
  - b. America gives such processions to sports champions.
3. The glory of the LORD God Almighty differs from this earthly glory in two ways.
  - a. God is vastly superior to everything else. He is utterly magnificent, spectacular, etc.
  - b. God never becomes a “has been.” He is timeless, His greatness does not fade.

#### B. The Patriarchs

1. Abram
  - a. The LORD performed a covenant ceremony with Abram. Abram cut some animals in half, but because Abram could contribute nothing to this covenant with God, only the LORD passed between the halves of the animals in a vision given to Abram.
  - b. “When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram” (Genesis 15:17–18).
2. Jacob
  - a. When Jacob fled from his brother Esau, the LORD renewed His covenant in a vision.
  - b. “And he [Jacob] came to a certain place and stayed there that night....He dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven....The LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring” (Genesis 28:11–13).

#### C. The Exodus

1. On the way to Sinai
  - a. Using miracles, The LORD showed His glory to Pharaoh and said, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD” (Exodus 14:4).
  - b. When the people later grumbled, “And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud” (Exodus 16:10).
2. At Sinai
  - a. “The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire” (Exodus 24:16–17).

- b. Moses could not see God's glory. "The LORD said, 'Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen'" (Exodus 33:21–23).
3. The LORD changed the focus of the glory that He had shown from Mount Sinai to the tent of meeting (i.e., the tabernacle) so that He could travel with the Israelites (Exodus 26).
  - a. "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).
  - b. "Moses said, 'This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you'" (Leviticus 9:6). The LORD responded (Leviticus 9:23–24).
4. More displays of God's glory in the wilderness.
  - a. "Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel" (Numbers 14:10).
  - b. "Then [rebellious] Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation [to show who really was in charge]" (Numbers 16:19).
  - c. "When the congregation had assembled against Moses and against Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting. Behold, the cloud covered it. The glory of the LORD appeared. And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting" (Numbers 16:42–43).
5. The glory of the LORD became associated with the temple in Jerusalem after Solomon had built it. In its Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat.
  - a. The LORD used the temple as the place where His majestic presence dwelt on earth.
  - b. "And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:10–11).

#### D. Glory in the Psalms

1. David - "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens" (Psalm 8:1), "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), "Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!" (Psalm 24:8), and "They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD" (Psalm 138:5).
2. Other psalmists - "Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!" (Psalm 66:1–2). "May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works" (Psalm 104:31).

#### E. The Prophets

1. The LORD had used His glory at the burning bush to give authority to Moses (Exodus 3).
2. When the LORD commissioned Isaiah as a prophet.
  - a. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'" (Isaiah 6:1–3).

- b. Isaiah often referred to the glory of the LORD in His ministry. For example, “They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God” (Isaiah 35:2).
- 3. Like Isaiah, Ezekiel was called to a difficult ministry by the LORD.
  - a. “Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking” (Ezekiel 1:28).
  - b. The most frequently referenced vision of Ezekiel is the valley of bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14).
  - c. “And the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks” (Ezekiel 10:4-5).
  - d. “As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (Ezekiel 43:4-5).
- 4. The LORD showed visions of His glory to other prophets as well.
  - a. Daniel – “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire....I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:9-14).
  - b. Habakkuk – “Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:13-14).

#### F. The New Testament

- 1. The New Testament abounds in references to the glory of the LORD, both in the words of Jesus and in the writings of the apostles.
  - a. It is natural to start with the glory of God’s kingdom that was displayed at Jesus’ birth. “An angel of the LORD appeared to them, and the glory of the LORD shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the LORD’” Luke 2:9-11).
  - b. St. John commented on the significance of the incarnation. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus told how His ministry will end in a glorious judgment. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne” (Matthew 25:31).
  - c. The glory of the LORD accompanies us even into death. “But he [Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

2. St. Paul denoted the results of Jesus' most glorious work of salvation for mankind.
  - a. "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9–11).
  - b. "Not only that, but he [Titus] has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the LORD himself and to show our good will" (2 Corinthians 8:19). That work was difficult and dangerous because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not always well received.

#### G. Revelation

1. The book of Revelation is effectively all about the glory and majesty of the LORD. We shall look at those passages which most clearly tell of the greatness and extent of the LORD's glory.
  - a. This is St. John's introduction to the incredible visions he saw: "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5–6).
2. There were great displays of honor given to the LORD.
  - a. "And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created' (Revelation 4:9–11).
  - b. All creatures joined in the praise. "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" (Revelation 5:13).
3. Various incidents are recorded which show the glory of the LORD.
  - a. "The sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished" (Revelation 15:8).
  - b. "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just" (Revelation 19:1–2). "He [the angel] carried me [John] away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Revelation 21:10–11).
  - c. "The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Revelation 21:23).

#### H. Concluding Remarks

1. How glorious is the LORD? We should be awestruck. From its beginning with the creation to the end in heaven, the glory of the LORD dominates everything on earth. How can we show our faces and claim, "We are something!" We are nothing compared to the LORD.
  - a. We should respond to His glory as Isaiah did, "Here am I. Send me" (Isaiah 6:8) to do whatever work the LORD has available for us to do.

## IV. The Jealousy of the LORD

### A. Introduction

1. Defining jealousy
  - a. The underlying nature of jealousy is twofold: it is the desire to maintain what one has, and it is the fear that what one has could be lost to another.
  - b. In some ways “jealousy” is the opposite of “envy.” A person who is jealous has and wants to keep. A person who is envious does not have but desires what someone else has.
2. Jealousy can be a good human characteristic.
  - a. Let’s suppose someone entrusts an object to us. We should be jealous that the object is not stolen or damaged. We should take precautions to make sure it will be safe and not used inappropriately. It is good stewardship and how we should treat possessions that God has given to us. “It is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).
3. Harmful Human jealousy
  - a. We sin when we become so determined to hang on to what God has given us that we are not willing to share with those in need. All our possession come from God. We are only managers of “our” things while we live in this world. Jesus said, “Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you” (Matthew 5:42).
  - b. We sin when we work to prevent others from obtaining the same things that we have. We are jealous of our status and do not want others to have it too. John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us” (Mark 9:38).
  - c. We sin when we try to control people who have a relationship with us that we would like to keep. We desire to retain them in our sphere of control for our own interests.

### B. God Is Jealous for His Divinity.

1. God created everything, and so it all belongs to Him. No one has a right to possess any of the things that are God’s without His permission. They are His and only His.
  - a. “For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:10).
2. The LORD is jealous of His divinity. He is the only God.
  - a. “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god’” (Isaiah 44:6). (**sedes doctrinae**)
  - b. “For you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14).
  - c. “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy’” (Numbers 25:10–11).
3. Ancient peoples believed there were multiple gods. They did not understand that there could be only one God or that that God would be upset if they tried to construct alternatives to Him.
  - a. “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24).
  - b. “They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger” (Deuteronomy 32:16).
  - c. Paul wrote, “You cannot partake of the table of the LORD and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the LORD to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?” (1 Corinthians 10:21–22).

C. God Is Jealous for His Creation.

1. The LORD God Almighty had created the world. He had a right to treat it as He pleased. People do not like that the LORD asserted the sole right to decide how the things on the earth should play out.
  - a. “It is he [the LORD] who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens” (Jeremiah 51:15).
  - b. The LORD said, “I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host” Isaiah 45:12.
  - c. The LORD said, “My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together” Isaiah 48:13.
2. When people objected to His management of the world, He put them in their place.
  - a. The LORD said to Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4–7).

D. God Is Jealous for His Name.

1. The LORD is jealous for His name.
  - a. “I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols” (Isaiah 42:8).
  - b. “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:12).
  - c. God is known by various names, such as Yahweh, Elohim, El, Adoni, and Yah. All of them are to be treated with respect.
  - d. Jews always say “Adoni” instead of “Yahweh” whenever they encounter the latter in the Bible.
2. The LORD is deadly serious about the commandment to respect His name.
  - a. The LORD said, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).
  - b. The LORD said, “Call upon me (i.e., on my name) in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” (Psalm 50:15).
  - c. “At the name [i.e., person] of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10–11).

E. God Is Jealous for His Law.

1. God’s Name is tied directly to God’s Being, so is God’s Law.
  - a. “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).
  - b. God knew His Law was the only code of behavior by which man could live and not die.
  - c. Jesus said, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).
2. In His second giving of His Law, the LORD warned His jealousy would burn against sinners.
  - a. There was a promised blessing connected to keeping God’s covenant – long life and prosperity in the promised land (Deuteronomy 6:1–2).
  - b. There was a promised curse connected to not keeping God’s covenant – misery and expulsion from the promised land (Deuteronomy 29:20).



3. The blessings and curses given with the Mosaic covenant were a foreshadowing of the promised blessings and curses associated with the new covenant in Christ.
  - a. “Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins’” (Joshua 24:19).
  - b. “Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done” (1 Kings 14:22).
  - c. “The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful” (Nahum 1:2).
  - d. The failing of anyone to recognize the strength of God’s jealousy over His Law will have dire consequences for that sinner.

F. God Is Jealous for His Gospel.

1. God’s plan for the redemption of fallen mankind was one of His decrees from eternity. The plan was His and His alone. He therefore has no reason to share credit for it with anyone.
  - a. John the Baptizer said, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36).
  - b. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).
2. The apostles emphasized that only the Gospel of Jesus Christ would save people.
  - a. St. Peter said, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
  - b. The Gospel is free. St. Paul wrote, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Romans 3:23–25).
  - c. Paul wrote, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).
  - d. Paul also wrote, “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16).

G. God is Jealous for His Election.

1. In God’s decree of predestination, for reasons that are known only within the Godhead, He chose some to be saved to eternal life. He developed a plan in complete detail to save each of His elect.
  - a. Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (John 15:16).
  - b. “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you” (Isaiah 42:6).
2. The Bible indicates God’s election happened long ago.
  - a. St. Paul emphasized that the choice was completely out of human hands when he wrote, “When Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’” (Romans 9:10–13).
  - b. St Paul wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Ephesians 1:3–4).

3. Satan loves to tempt us to sin for the purpose of accusing us before God. Election means that Satan's charges against us are groundless; they are irrelevant to the elect.
  - a. St. Paul wrote, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33).

#### H. God Is Jealous for His People.

1. God's protection extends not only over His elect, but also over all the people whom He has chosen or called to be His people in a visible sense.
  - a. The LORD said, "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them" (Numbers 6:27).
  - b. The LORD said, "And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people'" (Isaiah 51:16).
  - c. "Therefore, thus says the LORD God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name" (Ezekiel 39:25).
  - d. Paul gave us a reason for God's behavior when he wrote, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).
2. God has been jealous over the people whom He called to be His church.
  - a. St. Paul wrote to the "saints" in his letters even though not all the people to whom he was writing were indeed faithful.
  - b. In Revelation 2 & 3 Jesus directed letters to seven churches which were having various degrees of problems. He called them back, but he consoled the faithful in the struggle for their faith.
  - c. St. James commended, "Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'?" (James 4:5).

#### I. God Is Jealous for His Land.

1. God was jealous for His land, that is, the land of Canaan where He first moved Abram.
  - a. "Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people" (Joel 2:18).
  - b. "When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey..." (Exodus 13:5).
  - c. The LORD said, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23).
2. The Israelites did indeed fail to keep the LORD's covenant, and He drove some of them into exile.
  - a. Zachariah dramatized this decision as a conversation between God and an angel. "Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?' ....Therefore, thus says the LORD, 'I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.'" (Zechariah 1:12–16) The LORD justified His decision because of His jealousy for the city of Jerusalem where He had placed His name at His temple that Solomon had built for Him.
  - b. The LORD of hosts said, "I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain" (Zechariah 8:2–3).