

Incomprehensible: Great God of Mystery & Wonder

Text: Job 38.4–15, selected texts

Theme: The incomprehensible God has made Himself known so we might know Him

Introduction — First two of ten commandments quite clear

- You shall have no other gods before Me is first
- second follows: You shall make no images of God
- and we get it, for the most part: God doesn't want any other competition
- but that's not all—why does He not want us to make some image of Him
- I mean, the Hebrews, just having left Egypt, made a golden calf & call it YHWH

Why does God command us to not make any kind of image of Him?

- because we'll get it wrong absolutely every time
- no matter what, it will be off; and not just because God doesn't have physical shape or body
- it is because the finite cannot contain the infinite, as we saw last week
- because we cannot comprehend everything about God & capture it in some image

God cannot and will not be domesticated

- C.S. Lewis reminded us of this in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*
- Aslan, the great lion, who represents Jesus in this allegory, has delivered His people
- Lucy watches Him walk off into the distance, having promised to return one day
- she asks Mr. Beaver, standing right next to her: I know he's Aslan, but is he safe?
- Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king.

We began our look at some of the attributes of God last week

- we consider the marvelous truth that God is infinite
- He has no limits, no boundaries, He cannot be measured or contained
- we saw how this led us to worship Him for the immeasurably great God that He is

Today, I want us to consider God's incomprehensibility

- I'll try to explain it more fully in just a moment
- but remember: He is infinite and we are finite, which means we cannot fully understand Him
- this is what it means that God is incomprehensible
- we can try; indeed, should try, we will never fully know or comprehend all that God is

First off, let's take a look at some who have been...

I. CONFRONTED WITH INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

- turn to book of Exodus, Exodus 33
- God has just instructed Hebrews to leave Mt Sinai
- they will be heading for land God promised them
- but He would not go with them because of their sin
- they had just come out of the Golden Calf debacle
- at this news, Israel is devastated

1. Moses seeks to intercede for them

- v. 11 tells us the Lord would talk with Moses, face-to-face, like good friends

- **“And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?””**

(Exodus 33:15-16 ESV)

- as Moses seeks to make atonement for the people’s sin, he makes a bold request

- **“Moses said, “Please show me your glory.””**

(Exodus 33:18 ESV)

- Moses has been speaking with God as with a dear friend; now, he wishes to see something of Him

- Exodus 33.19–20 gives us God’s response

- **“And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.””**

(Exodus 33:19-20 ESV)

- so the Lord will grant Moses his desire, but how will Moses survive it?

- **“And 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 ESV)

- God puts Moses in a safe place, and it seems Moses is hidden from the fullness of God
- but in reality, it is God who is hidden; it is only the back of God that is seen
- Moses’ finite mind could not fully stand, grasp, comprehend the Infinite God
- He is incomprehensible

2. Job ran into something very similar

- Job’s story is familiar
- he is a very righteous man, but Satan, our Accuser, says it is only because God protects Him
- let him suffer and he will most certainly curse You to Your face
- God grants a measure of permission to the Adversary of the brothers
- Job loses everything but his life and his wife
- following these many disasters, his friends show up to comfort him
- after many a debate, Job demands that God owe him an explanation
- so, God shows up in Job 38

- **“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:**

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.”

(Job 38:1-3 ESV)

- then we hear the word which Jeff read for us earlier in Job 38.4–15
- God doesn’t take a breath, it seems, until the end of ch. 39
- then Job dares speak

- **“Then Job answered the Lord and said:**

“Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.

I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.””

(Job 40:3-5 ESV)

- God continues

- “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

“Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.
Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?

Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?

“Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor.
Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.
Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.
Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.
Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.

(Job 40:6-14 ESV)

- Job has been confronted by an incomprehensible God

- “Then Job answered the Lord and said:

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

(Job 42:1-6 ESV)

3. This is not only an Old Testament phenomenon

- Jesus is described for us in John, chapter 1

• “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

(John 1:1-4 ESV)

- this means that the characteristics ascribed to God are also His
- when they are put on display, even in His fleshly human nature, it is full of awe
- consider when disciples & Jesus crossing sea of Galilee
- storm comes up quickly, disciples are afraid for their lives
- when they awaken Jesus & with a mere word, calms the storm & the sea, we read...
- “And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, ‘Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?’”

(Luke 8:25 ESV)

- these men knew Jesus, had traveled with Him, eaten with Him, lived on the road with Him
- and yet, when His Godhood peeks out for a moment, they cannot grasp it
- He become incomprehensible to them
- when He appears finite just like them, well that all right with them
- but let the glory of the Lord shine round, and they, like the shepherds, or Peter, James & John; or, Roman soldiers come to arrest Him
- as God, Jesus is also that which nothing greater can be thought
- as such, He, too, is incomprehensible

We've barely scratched the surface of those who have face this incomprehensible God; now let us consider Him who is...

II. KNOWN & BEING KNOWN

- when we say that God is incomprehensible, this is not saying that He cannot be known
- it means that He can never be fully known, understood, comprehended
- but the Bible is unequivocal in this: God has made Himself known & wants to be known
- **(John 17:3 ESV) — “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”**
- so, God must be known if we are ever to be saved from sin and death

1. God must make Himself known for us to know Him

- Paul says, in **Romans 1.19 — “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.”**
- but note what it says at the last: we only know this “because God has shown it to [us]”
- God chose to make Himself known in His creation
- but that knowledge of God is insufficient for salvation, as the rest of Romans 1 tells us
- this is why God must also make Himself known thru Jesus Christ for us to be saved
- **(Matthew 11:27 ESV) “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”**
- this knowing of God must come from God; we cannot come up with this on our own
- **(1 Corinthians 1:21 ESV) “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.”**
- **(1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV) “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”**

2. God has made Himself known

- **(2 Timothy 3:16 ESV) “All Scripture is breathed out by God...”**
- **(2 Peter 1:21 ESV) “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**
- **(John 1:14 ESV) “And 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.”**
- **(Hebrews 1:1-3 ESV) “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...”**
- this very same Jesus reveals God to us, makes Him known
- **(1 Peter 1:20 ESV) “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you”**

3. And yet, even in our knowing so much of God, He cannot be comprehended

- Scripture is clear: we can know God
- but still, we'll never fully understand Him; even in eternity future

- our minds will be perfected, glorified, unstained with sin
- but we will still be finite creatures, not our own Creator
- so consider the wonder of an incomprehensible God
- **(Isaiah 46:5 ESV)—“To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?”**
- this is why trying to have other gods and images is so wrong!
- **(Isaiah 46:7 ESV)—“They lift [the image] to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble.”**
- our God, the God of Scripture, is unique
- **(Isaiah 46:9 ESV)—“remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me...”**
- God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is something other than which nothing greater could be though
- **“Is. 40:12–15 — Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.**
- Is. 40:17–18—All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?**
- idols? Images? An attempted reproduction of God or Jesus?
- Is. 40:19 An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move.**
- our God—none like Him, without compare—
- Is. 40:22–23 — It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.**
- this is why we say and sing and praise His great name
- Is. 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.”**
- God is not just different in degree from us; He is different from us in every way conceivable
- He is incomparable, incomprehensible
- His power, knowledge, presence, wisdom: all inexhaustible, unfathomable
- **(Isaiah 55:9 ESV) — “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**

Theology is always meant to lead to doxology; so...

III. WHAT DO WE DO WITH A GOD LIKE THIS?

- Bible absolutely certain
- God is declared, exists, is not silent, has spoken, has made Himself known to us
- His will is clear throughout His Word

- the atheist is spoken of in Psalm 14.1
- **(Psalm 14:1 ESV) — “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.”**
- but agnostic, one who is skeptical, thinking this God cannot be really known; what about him?
- they’re just lazy for God has made Himself known, in nature, in His Word, thru Jesus Christ
- so what are we to do, we who believe and know this God
- J.I. Packer put it this way:
 - what were we made for? To know God
 - what aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God
 - what is eternal life? To know God and Jesus Christ
 - what is the best thing in life?
- **(Jeremiah 9:23-24 ESV) — “Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.’”**
- we are made to know God, so we must be at this pursuit all our lives

Conclusion – Knowing an incomprehensible God is not like knowing a good friend

- the more complex the object, the more complex the knowing
- and God is infinitely complex so can never be completely or fully known
- yet God opens His heart to you
- He has done all that is necessary to draw you to Himself, to forgive sin, remove guilt
- He gives hope and all you’ll ever need in life for godly living
- He has done this thru His Son Jesus Christ
- so this means you must come to know Jesus Christ His Son
- **(John 14:9 ESV) — “Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”**
- **(John 14:6 ESV) — “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**