



## God

### Script References

#### Introduction

**Jon:** So I've got a question that's always bothered me. The Bible says there's one God.<sup>1</sup> But in other parts of the Bible, God is three: Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>2</sup> How can it be both?

**Tim:** Yeah. This is a question that has mystified people for thousands of years. And while we can't fully explain it, I think we can better understand what it is that we can't fully understand.

**Jon:** What do you mean?

**Tim:** Well, think of it this way. Here's a two-dimensional plane, and then here's an object with three dimensions that's going to pass through the 2-D plane.

**Jon:** Okay. Right. From this perspective, the 3-D object is above and below the plane.

**Tim:** So now it makes sense. But imagine you were a 2-D person stuck on the 2-D plane, what would you see?

**Jon:** I don't know. What would I see?

**Tim:** Well, it would look like this.

**Jon:** Oh yeah. Okay. From this perspective, it looks impossible. It's one object, then two objects, and then three.

**Tim:** But in reality, they're all one, just not in a way you're capable of understanding. Now, let's take this whole thing as a visual analogy for how we experience God. The claim in the Bible is that God is transcendent, a divine being through whom we live and move and have our being. Or as God says, "I am."<sup>3</sup>

**00:00–01:30**

1. Deuteronomy 4:35;  
Psalm 86:10

2. John 17:3; Ephesians  
4:30; 2 Corinthians 13:14

3. Exodus 3:14

**Jon:** Okay, but I live here in this universe. So when God appears, it will make sense in some ways, but in other ways it will break my categories.

**Tim:** Exactly. This happens all the time when people encounter the God of the Bible. So let's first look at how this happens in the Hebrew Scriptures.

### **God's Attributes Personified**

**01:30–02:57**

**Tim:** Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God appears in complicated ways that don't quite fit our categories. One common way this happens is with God's attributes.

**Jon:** So an attribute is a way to describe what something is like. For example, a soccer ball is round.

**Tim:** Right.

**Jon:** Or God is wise.

**Tim:** Yeah. Great. Let's take God's wisdom. So the book of Proverbs says God created the world by his wisdom. But then there are also poems in the book of Proverbs that describe God's wisdom as a person, a co-worker through whom God architected the universe.<sup>4</sup>

4. Proverbs 3:19-20

5. Proverbs 8:22-31

**Jon:** So God's attribute becomes a separate character?

**Tim:** Yeah! This also happens with God's glory, which sometimes appears as a human figure on a throne that's engulfed in fire.<sup>5</sup> Or take God's word, which he can speak to people, but sometimes his word appears like a person.<sup>6</sup>

6. Ezekiel 1:26-27

7. Genesis 18:1-2

**Jon:** Wait, so God's attributes have become new little gods?

**Tim:** No. The biblical authors believe there's only one all-powerful God.<sup>7</sup>

8. Deuteronomy 6:4

**Jon:** But they're comfortable talking about them as different characters?

**Tim:** Yeah. This is part of the way that the biblical authors portray the one God's complex identity. They're God's attributes and also distinct from God.

**Jon:** Distinct from God and also God?

**Tim:** Yes! Once we learn to spot that way of talking about God's identity, you begin to see it all over the Scriptures. In fact, you find it in the first sentences of the Bible that mention the Spirit of God.<sup>8</sup>

9. Genesis 1:1-2

### **The Spirit of God**

**02:58–03:39**

**Tim:** So the opening line of the Bible is pretty familiar.

**Jon:** In the beginning God created...<sup>9</sup>

10. Genesis 1:1

**Tim:** But then keep reading. Who is it that we see within creation hovering over the waters?

**Jon:** The Spirit of God.<sup>10</sup>

11. Genesis 1:2

**Tim:** Yeah. So the Spirit refers to God's personal presence and energy that we can interact with here within creation.

**Jon:** And so the Bible can refer to God's Spirit as distinct from God?

**Tim:** Distinct from God and also God. It's God's Spirit. And while this sounds strange from our point of view, this complexity is what the biblical authors are trying to get us to see. So we've looked at God's attributes and God's Spirit. Now let's make our last stop exploring God's complex identity in the Hebrew Scriptures with a character called the Son of Man.

### **The Son of Man**

**03:39–04:44**

**Tim:** So in the Bible, there's only one God that people are to worship, which makes this story in the book of Daniel really surprising. Daniel has a dream about a human figure called the Son of Man, which means a member of humanity.<sup>11</sup> And Daniel dreams about this human getting elevated on a cloud, up and then higher up.

12. Daniel 7:13

**Jon:** Up into God's space?

**Tim:** Yes! And then this human sits at the right hand of God's heavenly throne, and all humanity worships this human alongside God.<sup>12</sup>

13. Daniel 7:13-14

**Jon:** A human where I expect to see God.

**Tim:** Yeah. This human is part of God's identity. This vision is about the climactic hope of the whole biblical story. God and humanity become one, so they can rule the world together as one.<sup>13</sup>

14. Daniel 7:27

**Jon:** So the Son of Man is distinct from God and also God.

**Tim:** Exactly. So think back over everything we've looked at. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God's identity is complex. So when Jesus' followers encountered God as the Father, Son, and the Spirit, they already had categories for how these could all be the one God of the Bible.

**Jon:** Okay. Let's talk about that.

### **The Identity of Jesus**

**04:44–06:03**

**Tim:** Okay. So in the New Testament, we're introduced to Jesus of Nazareth. And he's human but way more. His favorite title to call himself was the Son of Man.<sup>14</sup>

15. Luke 6:22;  
Luke 9:58

**Jon:** The figure in Daniel's vision.<sup>15</sup>

16. Daniel 7:13-14

**Tim:** And the claim is that he is this complex God become human, to unite other humans with God.<sup>16</sup>

17. Matthew 26:63-64

- Jon:** Okay so the Gospels portray Jesus as fully human.<sup>17</sup> 18. John 1:1-4; John 4:6; Mark 11:12
- Tim:** And also as Yahweh the God of Israel. Jesus went around saying and doing things that only Yahweh can do, like forgiving people's sins<sup>18</sup> or calming the chaotic waters.<sup>19</sup> 19. Luke 5:20  
20. Matthew 8:26
- Jon:** So they're saying Jesus is a human, distinct from God and also God?
- Tim:** Yeah. And that might sound crazy, unless you've been reading the Hebrew Scriptures, which prepared you for it. And then check this out. Jesus' first followers, the apostles, talked about his identity using the language of God's attributes. They called Jesus "the glory of God."<sup>20</sup> Or the apostle Paul called Jesus "the wisdom of God."<sup>21</sup> Or John opens his Gospel calling Jesus "the Word of God through whom the world was created." And then he says, "the Word was with God and was God."<sup>22</sup> 21. Hebrews 1:3  
22. 1 Corinthians 1:30  
23. John 1:1-3
- Jon:** Okay. I get what they're doing. And it hurts my brain.
- Tim:** Totally. And if you want to spin your brain even more, consider this. Jesus, who's portrayed as God become human, would talk to God as a distinct person, and when he did, he called him Father.<sup>23</sup> 24. John 17:1

## The Father

**06:03–06:47**

- Tim:** When Jesus talked about God, he wasn't referring to an abstract force or energy. He was talking about a personal being that you can relate to.
- Jon:** There are a lot of personal images of God in the Bible: ruler,<sup>24</sup> creator<sup>25</sup>, judge.<sup>26</sup> 25. Psalm 97:1-2  
26. Psalm 139:13  
27. Daniel 7:9-10
- Tim:** But Jesus consistently referred to God as "my Father."<sup>27</sup> Jesus experienced God as a source of infinite love. He said, "the Father has loved me since before the creation of the world."<sup>28</sup> Apparently, Jesus knew the Father as an eternally others-centered, life-giving being. 28. Luke 23:34  
29. Luke 17:24
- Jon:** Right, like in the story about Jesus' baptism when the Father says from heaven, "This is my Son whom I love."<sup>29</sup> 30. Matthew 3:17; Luke 3:22
- Tim:** And then keep reading in that story. The person who brings that message of love from the Father to the Son is the Spirit of God.<sup>30</sup> 31. Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:22

## The Spirit

**06:47–07:06**

- Jon:** So we've talked about God's Spirit. Here within creation, it's through the Spirit that we interact with the divine.
- Tim:** Yeah, and the same was true for Jesus. Through the Spirit, he experienced the Father's love.<sup>31</sup> But it didn't stop there. Jesus promised that through him, the Spirit would go out and share the Father's love with all humanity and with all creation.<sup>32</sup> 32. Luke 3:22  
33. Luke 4:18; John 14:15-16; Acts 1:8

## **A Community of Love**

**07:06–08:09**

**Jon:** So it can look like these are three distinct gods. But in some way that transcends my view of reality, they're also one.

**Tim:** Right. This is what later followers of Jesus called the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the one God of the Bible.

**Jon:** I can see how they got there.

**Tim:** But this isn't just a philosophy puzzle. To describe God as a tri-unity is to claim that the universe is held together by an eternal community of love.

**Jon:** Which is something that I can't really understand.

**Tim:** But the God of the Bible isn't a being that you understand. The point is to know and be known by this God, so that we can participate in his love.