



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 2.6.4 – The Doctrine of God

### The Attributes of God: Omnipotence

God's Word teaches us that God is omnipotent. This means He can do whatever He wants to do. He has unlimited power. He is almighty. His power is above all human ability and even beyond human comprehension. However, this does not mean that He can sin. If He could sin, He would not be the holy God.

When God told Abraham that his wife Sarah was going to give birth at her advanced age, she laughed at that possibility. But God said to Abraham: **"Why did Sarah laugh? ... Is anything too hard for the LORD?"** (Genesis 18:14). When God demonstrated His power to Job by referring to God's creation of the behemoth and the leviathan (dinosaurs, perhaps), Job replied: **"I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You"** (Job 42:2).

The omnipotence of God is highlighted in many of the Psalms. **"He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast"** (Psalm 33:9). The power of God was displayed by God's creation of the universe and everything in it. We think of the destructive power of floods and tsunamis; such power is only a small fraction of the power God has at His disposal: **"The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea"** (Psalm 93:4) Psalm 115:3: **"But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."** There are no limits. Psalm 135:6: **"Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures."** In the United States people foolishly talk about "the forces of nature" and refer to "Mother Nature", but only rarely do they acknowledge the Lord God as the One controlling all of nature.

Since God is omnipotent, there is no one stronger than He. **"There is no one who can deliver out of My hand,"** He says through His prophet. **"I work, and who will reverse it?"** (Isaiah 43:13). God's prophet Jeremiah agreed in his prayer to God: **"Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You"** (Jeremiah 32:17).

Human wisdom tells us that no human baby can be born without a human father. God's angel messenger Gabriel told Mary of Nazareth that her son would not have a human father. **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."** And then the angel added: **"For with God nothing will be impossible"** (Luke 1:35-37). John the Baptist agreed. He said to the Jews who took pride in the fact that Abraham was their ancestor: **"God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones"** (Luke 3:8).

Jesus said, **"it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,"** but He assured His puzzled disciples: **"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"** (Matthew 19:24-26). On the night before His death, Jesus prayed to His Father in the garden of Gethsemane: **"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me"** (Mark 14:36). God did not take that cup of suffering away from Jesus, for it was His will that Jesus would suffer and die in our place to take away our sin and to give us eternal life.

The only proper response to the almighty power of God is to praise Him: **“Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”** (Revelation 19:6). **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen”** (Ephesians 3:20-21).

God exercises His almighty power in two ways. Usually He uses natural means. For example, He cures people by means of medicine or a physician’s treatment. He keeps people alive by providing food, drink, and shelter in the normal ways, that is through the growing of crops, by supplying rain and sunshine, by allowing people to harvest the crops, by giving good health so that food can be eaten, etc. He protects a nation against its enemies by means of soldiers, weapons of war and wise strategies.

But God can also exercise His almighty power by means of supernatural events that we call miracles. At certain times in world history, God performed many miracles. For example, God did many miracles in the days of Moses, in the days of Elijah and Elisha, and in the days of Jesus and His apostles. At other times God’s miracles were very rare and perhaps even often unnoticed.

After the great world-wide flood recorded in Genesis, God reset the natural forces that rule our world today, and they will not change until Jesus returns again. This is God’s promise: **“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease”** (Genesis 8:22). Because of this promise of God, we do not have to be worry that this order that God has established will be altered by the so-called climate change.

God can suspend the laws of nature at any time. He did when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, **“and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left”** (Exodus 14:22). In the days of the prophet Elisha, a borrowed iron ax head fell into the water. The Bible says: **“He made the iron float”** (2 Kings 6:6). Some years later, King Hezekiah of Judah received a special sign from the Lord. God said to him: **“I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward”** (Isaiah 38:8). Time went backwards! This is impossible for man, but not for God.

Daniel’s three friends were thrown into a furnace so hot that the persons who threw them in were killed. But these three walked out of the furnace unharmed. The watching crowd **“saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them”** (Daniel 3:27).

The greatest miracle is not a physical miracle but a spiritual miracle. This miracle is the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God and the sacraments to change unbelieving enemies of God into His believing children. Jesus taught both a physical resurrection and a spiritual resurrection in these words: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.”** That is the spiritual resurrection. Then He said: **“Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth”** (John 5:25-29). This is the physical or bodily resurrection. God’s almighty power accomplishes both kinds of resurrection. The apostle Peter says that those who have been brought to faith in Jesus Christ have **“been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”** (1 Peter 1:23). Even as God created the entire world by His almighty Word, so He creates a spiritual life of faith by means of His Gospel Word.

## Questions

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1. What do the word "omnipotence" mean?
2. Why did Sarah laugh when she heard she was going to give birth?
3. What was God's response to her laughter?
4. How did God demonstrate His almighty power to Job?
5. What are a few things God cannot do?
6. Why did God answer Jesus' Gethsemane prayer with a "No"?
7. How does God usually use his power in our daily lives?
8. List some Old Testament miracles and some New Testament miracles.
9. What great miracle will take place on the Last Day?
10. Why do we not have to fear any climate change in our world?