



SURVEY OF THEOLOGY PROPER

What is God Like?

Grace Bible Institute - Pastor Jim C. Davis

Lecture One: Prolegomena/Definition of Terms

The heaviest obligation lying upon the Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him -- and of her. --A. W. Tozer

Before the Christian Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, "What is God like?" and goes from there.

-- A. W. Tozer

Introduction:

Course Description: This course is an introduction into some of the major theological themes in Theology Proper. Theology Proper is the investigation into what may be known of the existence, Persons, nature and characteristics of the triune God.

Course Objectives: This course is designed to:

A. stir our hearts to worship the incomprehensible yet knowable God.

Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not a mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23-24

No worthy astronomer limits his attention to the findings of other men, but is himself ever gazing into the heavens both to verify and to discover; and no worthy theologian will be satisfied alone with the result of the research of other theologians, but will himself be ever searching the Scriptures.

-- L.S. Chafer, Systematic Theology

B. train the student to think theologically and critically

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

C. survey the major biblical teachings in Theology Proper, identifying the key passages and proper terminology for major doctrines.

D. defend from Scripture the traditional, evangelical interpretation of these doctrines.

E. expose and refute the errors of traditional and contemporary denials of these historic doctrines

Healthy doctrine or healthy theology is always expected to result in holy living. When Paul prayed for churches, he prayed for an increase in knowledge, for he realized that this would produce holy living not only in creed but in fruitful living and holy living must be based on healthy theology.

How theology affects my life or your life is our personal and individual responsibility. But to conform our lives to the image of Christ is the ultimate goal in studying theology. Yet in the final analysis no book can do that. Only God and you can. --Ryrie pg 10

Definition of Terms:

Prolegomena is the preliminary or introductory materials to a field of study.

It includes...

- presentation of definitions of terms,
- affirmation of basic assumptions
- identification of methods of study
- statement of resources for study
- listing of special requirements
- delineation of parameters of study --Witmer

Theology is the study or science of God including His works and relationship with His creation. The word theology is taken from two Greek words compounded

Θεος = God + λογος = speech or rational expression

Christian Theology is the rational interpretation of God and His works as they relate to the Christian faith.

Types of Christian Theologies can be cataloged by:

- 1) era: (patristic theology, medieval theology, reformation theology & modern theology)
- 2) viewpoint: (Arminian theology, Calvinistic theology, Catholic theology, Barthian theology, liberation theology, etc.)
- 3) focus: (historical theology, biblical theology, systematic theology, apologetic theology, exegetical theology, etc) – Ryrie, Basic Theology, p. 13

Systematic theology is the collecting, scientifically arranging comparing exhibiting and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works

–Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology 1:x,6

Biblical Theology is the theology taken from a study of the various books of the Bible A study of Biblical theology should in its purest form seek to rationally discover integrate and declare only what the Bible says about God as each book is interpreted in its historical and cultural setting. It traces progressive revelation about God

Dogmatic Theology is the theological truth held with certainty.

It comes from the Greek work dokein moi (δοκειν μοι) which means I have come to the conclusion; I am certain; it is my conviction – Louis Berhof, Systematic Theology. p 18

Dogma (δογμα) – in Greek is a decree, ordinance, decision or command

The unchanging emphasis in the Scriptures upon doctrine, which subject is referred to in the New Testament more than forty times and is that to which a Christian is to “take heed”, stands as a silent rebuke, whether heeded or not, to all modern notions which



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belittle the importance of Dogmatic Theology, and also stands as a corrective to those who neglect any portion of it. *Lewis Sperry Chafer*

Dogma is built on doctrine: (I Tim. 1:3; I Tim. 4:6; I Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:10; 2 Timothy. 4:2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:3)

Historical theology is theology that traces the development of doctrine through history of the church including special councils & creeds held & determined by the church

Cataloged by...:

- 1) chronological periods: medieval theology, modern theology, reformation theology
- 2) individuals or groups: Calvinistic theology, Wesleyan theology Protestant theology
- 3) special emphasis: Covenant Theology , Dispensational Theology, Charismatic Theology)—Witmer, DTS notes, Prolegomena & Bibliology, p. 2

Practical theology is the application of theological truth to the actions of men (witnessing, preaching, counseling)

Natural theology is the discovery, systematization, and presentation of theology as it is revealed in nature. Sometimes called general or prelapsarian (before the fall) revelation.

Revealed theology is that theology which is discovered in the Scriptures. Also referred to as special revelation or postlapsarianism (after the fall)

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the theory of knowledge, that is, the nature and source of knowledge, bounds of knowledge and justification for knowledge

How can we Know? How can we Know Truth?

How it all works together:

- Theology is the discovery, systematizing and presentation of the truths about God.
- Historical theology accomplishes this by focusing on what others throughout history have said about these truths.
- Biblical theology does this by surveying the progressive revelation of God's truth.
- Systematic theology presents the total structure. – Ryrie, Basic Theology, p. 15

Theology Proper—our course focus

Theology Proper does not investigate what God does but who He is and what may be known of the existence, Persons, nature and characteristics of the triune God.