

Systematic Theology

A systematic study of the major doctrines of Scripture.

What is Theology?

- Theos = God
 - Logia = Word
 - Theologia = a word about God
 - Theologeo = the act of speaking about God
 - Theologos (theologian) = a person who engages in theologeo
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- Christian theology is the study of the Bible, which has God as its centerpiece, God's Word as its Source, and godliness as its aim.

What is Theology?

- David Wells:
- Theology is the sustained effort to know the character, will, and acts of the triune God as He has disclosed and interpreted these for His people in Scripture, in order that we might know Him, learn to think our thoughts after Him, live our lives in His world on His terms, and by thought and action project His truth into our own time and culture.

Why Study Theology?

Scottish pastor and theologian John Dick (1764-1833) was asked “Why study theology?”

1. To ascertain the character of God in its aspect toward us.
2. To contemplate the display of His attributes in His works and dispensations.
3. To discover His designs toward man in his original and his present state.
4. To know this mighty Being, as far as He may be known, which is the noblest aim of the human understanding.
5. To learn our duty to Him, the means of enjoying His favor, the hopes which we are authorized to entertain, and the wonderful expedient by which our fallen race is restored to purity and happiness.
6. To love Him, the most worthy exercise of our affections.
7. To serve Him, the most honorable and delightful purpose to which we can devote our time and talents.

Types of Theology

1. Biblical theology – the organization of Scripture thematically by biblical chronology with respect to progressive revelation of the Bible.
2. Dogmatic theology – the organization of Scripture with an emphasis on selected church creeds.
3. Exegetical theology – the methodical organization of Scripture by dealing exegetically with individual texts.
4. Historical theology – the historical study of doctrinal developments after the apostolic era.

Types of Theology

5. Natural theology – the study of what can be known about God by human reason alone through the empirical study of the natural world.

6. Pastoral or Practical theology – the organization of Scripture with an emphasis on the personal application of doctrinal truth in the lives of the church and individual Christians.

7. Systematic theology – the organization of Scripture by a synthesis of Scriptural teaching, summarized using major categories that encompass the entirety of God's written revelation.

Dealing with Objections to Systematic Theology

Charles Spurgeon's response:

Systematic theology is to the Bible what science is to nature. To suppose that all the other works of God are orderly and systematic, and the greater the work the more perfect the system, and that the greatest of all His works, in which all His perfections are transcendently displayed, should have no plan or system, is altogether absurd.

What is Systematic Theology?

Systematic theology answers the question, “What does the completed canon of Scripture teach about any one theme or topic?”

The ordered exposition of Christian doctrines. - James Leo Garrett

What are the categories of Systematic Theology?

1. The Doctrine of Scripture – the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, canonicity, and sufficiency of the Scripture.
2. The Doctrine of God – theology proper – the existence and being of God including triunity.
3. The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ – Christology.
4. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit – pneumatology.
5. The Doctrine of Man – anthropology.

What are the categories of Systematic Theology?

6. The Doctrine of Sin – hamtiology.
7. The Doctrine of Salvation – soteriology.
8. The Doctrine of Angels – angels, fallen angels, and Satan.
9. The Doctrine of the Church – ecclesiology.
10. The Doctrine of Last Things – eschatology.

What are the benefits of studying systematic theology?

- 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 1. Doctrine: For establishing teaching, or doctrine, that is, God's inspired self-disclosure about Himself, His created world, and His redemptive plan to save and sanctify sinners.
 2. Reproof: For confrontation of sin, whether in the form of false teaching or disobedient living.

What are the benefits of studying systematic theology?

3. Correction: For correcting error in thinking and behavior so that the repentant one can be restored to the place of pleasing God.
4. Instruction in Righteousness: For the training of Christians in order that they might practice righteousness, sinning less and obeying more.

What are the limitations of systematic theology?

1. The silence of Scripture on some topics.
2. A theologian's partial knowledge or understanding of the entirety of the Bible.
3. The inadequacy of human language.
4. The finiteness of the human mind.
5. The lack of spiritual discernment or growth.

Major Motifs of Scripture

1. The Revelation of the Character and Attributes of God.
2. The Revelation of Divine Judgment for Sin and Disobedience.
3. The Revelation of Divine Blessing for Faith and Obedience.
4. The Revelation of the Lord Savior and His Sacrifice for Sin.
5. The Revelation of the Kingdom of God.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament starts at Creation and finishes about 400 years before the birth of Christ. The Old Testament timeline moves along the following lines:

1. Creation
2. Fall
3. Judgment – worldwide flood
4. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – fathers of the chosen nation

The Old Testament

5. The history of Israel

- a. Exile in Egypt
- b. Exodus and Wilderness Wandering
- c. Conquest of Canaan
- d. Judges
- e. United Kingdom
- f. Divided Kingdom
- g. Exile in Babylon
- h. Return and Rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple

The Old Testament

Thirty-nine books in 5 categories:

1. The Law – 5 books – Genesis-Deuteronomy
2. History – 12 books – Joshua-Esther
3. Wisdom – 5 books – Job-Song of Solomon
4. Major Prophets – 5 books – Isaiah-Daniel
5. Minor Prophets – 12 books – Hosea-Malachi

The New Testament

The 27 books of the New Testament focus on the coming of Christ and the culmination of history and the final eternal state.

The New Testament includes:

1. Gospels – 4 books – personal accounts of the life of Christ – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
2. Acts – from the ascension to the birth and spread of the NT Church
3. Epistles – 21 letters to churches and individuals to explain the significance of the person and work of Christ, with its implications for life until He returns.
4. Revelation – the church age and vision of the culmination of history.

Recommended Systematic Theology Books

- Institutes of the Christian Religion – John Calvin
- Biblical Doctrine – John MacArthur
- Systematic Theology – Louis Berkhof
- Reformed Systematic Theology – Joel Beeke
- Systematic Theology – Wayne Grudem
- Systematic Theology – Charles Hodge
- Evangelical Theology – AA Hodge
- ESV Systematic Theology Study Bible

- MacArthur, Grudem, and Berkhof have been used as Source materials for this lesson.

Schedule

1. Introduction to Systematic Theology
2. The Doctrine of Scripture
3. The Doctrine of God (Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology)
4. The Doctrine of Angels – angelology
5. The Doctrine of Man – anthropology
6. The Doctrine of Sin – hamartiology
7. The Doctrine of the Church – ecclesiology
8. The Doctrine of Last Things – eschatology