

**LECTURES ON INTRODUCTION TO  
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TAUGHT BY  
RAFAEL ALCANTARA IN 2009 DURING  
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AT IGLESIA  
BIBLICA DEL SEÑOR JESUCRISTO**

**Translated by Edwin González to be used for the Adult Sunday School at  
Cornerstone Bible Church of Miami, FL [www.cornerstonebiblechurch.com](http://www.cornerstonebiblechurch.com)  
with permission from the author**

**January 2011**

**INDEX**  
(To the Spanish Version)

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	6
<b>The Scriptures</b>	
a) Revelation	16
b) Inspiration	24
c) Canonocity	29
d) Textual Criticism	39
e) Translation & Interpretation	47
<b>God</b>	
a) His Atributes 1	56
b) His Atributes 2	65
c) His Atributes 3	70
d) His Atributes 4	75
e) The Trinity 1	82
f) La Trinidad 2	87
g) Creation	92
h) Providence	100
i) The Names of God	105
<b>Angels &amp; Demons</b>	
a) Angels	112
b) Demons	122

**Man**

a) Man Created 1	137
b) Man Created 2	145
c) Man Fallen 1	150
d) Man Fallen 2	158
e) Man Redeemed and Glorified	165
f) Common Grace	171

**Christ**

a) His Person 1	175
b) His Person 2	188
c) His Atoning Work 1	192
d) His Atoning Work 2	199
e) His Atoning Work 3	205
f) f) Appendix: Did Christ go to hell?	212
g) g) Resurrection, Ascension & 2nd coming	216
h) The Offices of Christ	223

**Salvation**

a) Unconditional Election	230
b) Effectual Calling and Regeneration	238
c) Conversion: Repentance & Faith	246
d) Justification & Adoption	256
e) Sanctification	264
f) The Perseverance of the Saints	267

**The Doctrine of End Times**

a) Death & Intermediate State	278
b) The Second Coming of Christ:	

General Aspects	287
c) Signs that precede the second coming	295
d) Glorification	308
e) Final Judgment	315
f) The Kingdom of God 1	324
g) The Kingdom of God 2	332
h) The New Heavens and New Earth	341

# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## Systematic Theology General Introduction

In his book “Introduction to Systematic Theology”, Bible Commentator and Theologian José Grau, writes the following: *“Theology is like the backbone of a person. A man does not need to think about his backbone all day long, but he must have one; he needs it. And if possible it better be straight and sturdy otherwise he will not be able to walk, as he will bend over and tumble. A Christian without Theology – and the same applies to a church – will likewise vacillate, stagger and tumble down”* (Introduction to Theology, pg. 20-21)

This is what we will consider by way of General Introduction:

- I- What is Theology?
- II- What are the different ways to classify Theology?
- III- Why is it important for Christians to study Theology?
- IV- How should Christians study Theology?

Let us consider in the first place:

### **I- What is Theology?**

The word theology is a term that comes from the Latin *theologia*, which derives from the Greek *θεολογια* basically meaning a *discourse about God* or about *Divine things*.

That is why when the Person of God is studied we use the term “theology”. **Tomas Aquinas** said that Theology ***“is taught by God, teaches God and points to God.”*** However, the study of the Person of God is only one of the disciplines in Theology and it has been labeled as “Theology Proper”, in order to distinguish it from the general concept of “theology” which covers a much wider subject.

We can therefore define theology as every teaching which is about God and His relationship to the universe, presented in an orderly and coherent way.

**The study of theology presupposes that God has revealed to man.** This revelation for the Christian – as we will consider in detail – is mainly found in the Bible, for which any other form of Revelation (for example, General Revelation) is limited and can only be validated by the corroboration of Scripture, otherwise it is not valid (*as revelation*)\*

- Note of translation -

In this regard, the source for the study of theology for a Christian will differ from other religions who do not regard the Bible as their authority. The differentiation must also be established with the Roman Catholic Church and other cults who do not have the Bible as their ONLY source of authority, and also from those who want to study theology based on their feelings, emotions, imaginations, opinions, etc.

## II- What are the different ways to classify Theology?

**A- Biblical Theology:** it shows in a progressive way, the doctrinal content of the Bible, showing it step by step throughout redemptive history. In other words, BT deals with the particular subjects of a given doctrine, as they gradually appear through every book of the Bible.

BT is more focused on the individual teachings of the Biblical authors or in sections of Scripture, for example: What does the book of Psalms teach regarding prayer? BT takes into account the time in which a declaration appears in a particular way, and what was the understanding that the Biblical writers had of this doctrine, as well as the understanding of their hearers or primary recipients. (Ex: the Messianic promise given to Adam and Eve in Gn 3:15)

Biblical Theology is developed nourished by exegesis, textual criticism and higher criticism.

**B- Systematic Theology:** different from BT, ST looks at God's revelation as a whole and analyzes each doctrine topically and not in a fragmented way

In simple terms and following Wayne Grudem's explanation, "*ST takes on a particular subject, compiles all of the biblical passages dealing with that subject and then it summarizes the teaching of these passages in a concise, comprehensible statement and **carefully formulated statement.***" (Biblical Doctrine, Pg.18)

J. Gresham Machen says that “systematic theology seeks to establish the doctrine, not considering the chronology of how it was revealed (biblical theology) but rather following a logical arrangement”. It also shows the connection and interdependence of a particular doctrine to others.

In this regard, systematic theology relies on Biblical Theology and not vice-versa. As Grau points it out: *“Systematic Theology depends on Biblical Theology from which it derives its nourishment. The fundamental subject of Systematic Theology is the one obtained from exegeting the Biblical text, and its original meaning in the context of Redemptive History and of revelation”*. (Introduction to Theology, pg.28)

C- **Historical or Dogmatic Theology**: this branch of theology studies the process by which doctrines have developed from the end of the apostolic age to our days. Historical Theology is based both on Systematic Theology and Church History, and it serves as an aid to Systematic Theology. For example: the history of the Doctrine of the Trinity

D- **Practical Theology**: this one deals with the application of doctrine in real life and in a simple way. This is Theology in Action (note of translation: “the heat of light”). Practical Theology requires Biblical, Systematic and Historical Theology. A good example of it is Pastoral Theology

Kevan, quoted by Grau, summarizes the relationship between the four types of theology by quoting a third author with this comment: *“...Biblical Theology provides the construction materials, Historical Theology chisels them out... Systematic Theology erects the building and Practical Theology shows us show to live inside the building”* (Ibíd., pg.33)

### III- What are the main branches of Systematic Theology?

- A- Bibliology: the subject of the Scriptures in themselves.
- B- Theology Proper: God, His Being, Attributes and Works.
- C- Angeology: deals with the subject of angels and demons
- D- Anthropology: focuses on the study of man (note of translation: from a Biblical perspective).
- E- Soteriology: deals with the subject of salvation
- F- Christology: the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.
- G- Pneumatology: the Holy Spirit.
- H- Ecclesiology: concerning the Church.
- I- Eschatology: the doctrine of end times and future events



#### IV- Why is it important for Christians to study Theology?

I will answer with aid from Theologians Dr. Robert Reymond, & Dr. Wayne Grudem.

**1-Because this was the pattern that Jesus and the apostles used in their teaching:** this pattern is shown in the Gospels where Jesus taught the OT Scriptures through deductions He made from them in order to demonstrate both to the people and to His disciples that the Scriptures spoke of Him (**Lk 24:27: 24:44-47**) We see the same pattern in the apostles. **Acts 9:20-22; 17:2-3: 17:17 (“Paul reasoned”); 18:28: 19:8.** The letter to the Romans is a theological epistle.

**2- Because it is necessary to fulfill the Great Commission: Mt 28:18-20**  
The church labor is to make disciples from all nations. This implies a certain intellectual demand since it requires the keeping of all of Christ’s commandments. To achieve this, the teaching must be presented in a logical and coherent format so that it may be understood and accepted, at the same time that it counteracts error and the twisting of the truth. **Tit 1:9 & 2 Pe 3:15-ff**

Grudem says: *“This is where Systematic Theology becomes necessary so that it may efficaciously instruct us and others on what the whole of the Bible teaches. It is necessary to compile and organize a summary of all the Biblical texts in a particular subject... systematic theology then, allows us to teach ourselves and others what the entirety of Scripture teaches, thus fulfilling the second part of the Great Commission.”* (Biblical Doctrine, Pg.22)

Of course, that this includes the pulpit and it is the reason why Martín Lloyd-Jones used to say that preaching was *“theology on fire.”* A. Strong also wrote the following: *“In pulpit speech, the simple quote of the so called fervent Biblical texts is not sufficient. Behind the declamation there must be an ordered system of biblical thought. Certainly we must arouse the audience feelings, and move their souls with the saving message, but this is efficaciously and biblically achieved through the knowledge of the truth... the study of theology is absolutely indispensable to successfully fulfill the pulpit work... The preacher needs doctrine so that he may not turn into a distempered organ or a broken record, always sounding the same note...”* (Quoted by Grau, Introduction to Theology, Pgs.17-18)

Spurgeon adds: *“We will not have great preachers unless we have great theologians. You do not grow great preachers out of mediocre students; the preacher who will truly move souls will not be the one who is shallow in his studies.”* (Ibíd., Pag.19)

**3- Because of the example of the NT church:** Romans 6:17 tells us about the “form of sound doctrine” that the brethren had embraced from the heart. Jude 3 calls us to “strive earnestly for the faith which was once and for all given to the saints”. In Scripture, we have specific truths that had been coined and accepted by the early church. **1Tim 1:15; 2Tim 2:11-13; Tit 3:4-8; Rom 1:3-5; 1Cor 15:3-4; 1 Tim 3:16**

**4-Because of the practical benefits to our lives:**

a) **It will help us to make better decisions:** *“The Bible gives us principles to be applied to every aspect of our lives, and those who have learned theological truths from the Bible will be able to make much better, and God-pleasing, ethical and practical decisions.”* (Biblical Doctrine, pg.23)

b) **It will help us to grow as believers:** *“The more we know about God, His Word and His relationships to the world and mankind, the more we will trust Him, the more fully we will praise Him and the more promptly we will obey Him. The study of Systematic Theology will make us become into more mature believers. .”* (Ibíd., Pg.23) Example missions, the ministry, marriage, domestic life, etc.

#### **IV- How should Christians study Theology?**

##### **1- Looking for help from the gifts Christ has given to the church**

It is possible that we will learn new things and realize our own errors as we expose ourselves to the study of Systematic Theology

Grudem aptly states the following: *“...it is inevitable that someone who studies ...systematic theology will notice that his own beliefs will be challenged, modified, refined or enriched ...It is therefore of utmost importance ...that each person resolves not to embrace any particular doctrine simply because this textbook or any other affirms its veracity, unless this textbook or the instructor may persuade the student from a Biblical text.”* (Ibíd., Pg. 20)

## **2- In prayerful obedience to the Word of God.**

*“No matter how intelligent, if the student does not continue to pray for God to give him or her an understanding mind and a believing and humble heart, and the student does not maintain a personal walk with the Lord, then the teaching of Scripture will be misunderstood and disbelieved, doctrinal error will result and the mind and the heart of the student will not be changed for the better but for the worse. Students of Systematic Theology should resolve at the beginning to keep their lives free from any disobedience to God or any known sin that would disrupt their relationship with him. They should resolve to maintain with great regularity their own personal devotional lives. They should continually pray for wisdom and understanding of Scripture. Syst. Theol, Pag 33*

## **3- In Joyful praise to God.**

The study of theology is the study of God, and of the things which the apostle Paul describes as, *things that eye has not seen, nor ear has heard nor have been conceived by the heart of men. I Co 2:9*

The theologian is a person who is striving to understand the truth and in the measure that it is understood, the heart is inflamed with joy at the contemplation of God’s wonders. This is what Peter and the other apostles felt when the Holy Spirit came upon them in Pentecost. Those who heard them speak testified in Acts 2:11: *We hear them speak in our tongues the wonders of God.*

Paul felt the same after 11 chapters of a theological treatise, and not being swift in his conclusions to speak about practical things, he rather exclaimed in wonder: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen (Rom 11:33-36)

That is how they felt, and so I trust that we will all feel as well, as we progress in our studies of Systematic Theology.

## **Conclusion**

I hope that from this first lecture you may have a grasp and a general idea of what is Theology and of its importance to us as Christians. In a real sense, each one of us, whenever we speak of our faith and our Bible become theologians. The problem about “doing theology” without knowledge is that it becomes bad theology.

A. Strong writes: *“If all theological systems were destroyed today, tomorrow they will be replaced by others. The reason of this is that the systematization of theology is a rationale necessity. This principle is so unavoidable, that we can easily corroborate, that those who most vehemently despise theology, have constituted a theology for their own sake; it is a theology that is generally scanty and confusing.”* (Quoted by Grau, Introduction to Theology, Pg.18)

Theological meditation should produce and promote a relentlessly renewing fellowship with God and may this be so in each and every one of us. (Ibid., pag.15)