

- I. Session 39: The Simplicity of God 2: Response to some objections
- a. Review: Last week we defined what is Divine Simplicity, discussed how it is controversial today, presented summaries of some arguments in support of Divine Simplicity and also draw out implications for why Divine Simplicity is important.
  - b. Purpose: In this lesson we will look at some objections people have raised against Divine Simplicity.
    - i. Remember this simple definition: "There is nothing in God that is not God."<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. Note that for tonight we won't answer every problems people have suggested about Divine Simplicity.
    - iii. For the purpose of integrity: I'm also still learning about this doctrine and slowly weighing some of the arguments against it.
    - iv. Still, we'll look at a few objections that seems to be quite frequent
  - c. Some Objections Considered
    - i. Objection #1: Doesn't the Trinity go against the idea of Divine Simplicity?
      1. Argument stated: "If there are no distinctions within God, how do we explain the Trinity consisting of the Father, the Son and the Spirit?"
      2. Response:
        - a. Divine Simplicity never said there can't be "distinctions," being made within Him.
        - b. Divine Simplicity states that God is without "parts" with parts being technically defined as components that is something less than, or being something "other" than God.
        - c. Technically, the Trinity is about One God revealed in Three Persons and not three parts.
        - d. Actually the formulation of the Trinity presupposes Divine Simplicity.
          - i. The Father, Son and Spirit are distinct from one another but they are not "parts" of God: That is, we don't talk about the Father as 1/3 God, the Son is another 1/3, etc.
          - ii. Thus Trinity denies Tritheism, the belief that there are three gods, since each person of the Trinity is fully God.
          - iii. The Trinity is actually compatible with the doctrine of Divine Simplicity; but the Trinity also presupposes Divine Simplicity to be true.
    - ii. Objection #2: Doesn't Divine Simplicity makes God impersonal?
      1. Argument stated: According to Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga, "If God is a property, then he isn't a person but a

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<sup>1</sup> James Dolezal, *God Without Parts* (Eugene, OR: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2011), 2.

mere abstract object; he has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life. So taken, the simplicity doctrine seems to be an utter mistake.”<sup>2</sup> He’s also stated before this that “No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or, indeed, know anything at all.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Response:

- a. It does not necessarily follow that just because God is His attributes/property and not just merely have attributes that it must mean God is impersonal.
- b. This objection is rather ironic because the implication of Divine Simplicity is the opposite of what the objection states: Divine Simplicity makes all of God’s attribute personal.

- i. John Frame writes, “It seems to me, therefore, that there is a legitimate biblical motive in the doctrine of simplicity. We may be surprised to find that it is not an abstract, obscure, philosophical motive, but a very practical one...It is a biblical way of reminding us that God’s relationship with us is fully personal.”<sup>4</sup>

- ii. For instance, when we are meditating on God’s goodness, we as Christians are “not devoted to some abstract philosophical goodness, but to the living Lord of heaven and earth.”<sup>5</sup>

iii. Objection #3: Isn’t this too philosophical rather biblical?

1. Argument stated: “There is no verse that explicitly teaches that God is simple.”<sup>6</sup> And “For anyone committed to biblically based notion of God, the lack of biblical evidence for divine simplicity should be disconcerting at the last, and a good argument against it at most.”<sup>7</sup>

2. Response:

- a. Feinberg’s systematic theology has not dealt with the biblical verses given in the last sessions.
- b. Often people who oppose to Divine Simplicity simply dismiss it for being “philosophical.” But I think we must consider the philosophical arguments and also what biblical and theological support that has been attempted.

d. Again why is Divine Simplicity important?

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<sup>2</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1980), 47. Note that throughout James Dolezal’s book he documents others who raises the same objection along Plantinga’s lines.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 230.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 327.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 329.

- i. It is the foundation for a fundamental doctrine of Christianity: The Trinity.
- ii. Recall last session's implications that was discussed. We have more assurance of these impact given our defense against objections against Divine Simplicity. Last week's implications were:
  1. It shows that God is truly sufficient and does not need us. Instead as creatures we need Him.
  2. It shows that God is always personal; that every attribute is personal.
- iii. Even as we consider some objections against Divine Simplicity, we're reminded that does not mean we understand everything there is about God, that there is a level of mystery and wonder. How much more so should this lead us to worship Him as God, rather than a god of our own imagination and fits our preconceived notions.