

Systematic Theology: Session Two

Theology Proper

Theology Proper is the study of the nature and attributes of God. This session will cover the attributes of God's greatness, the attributes of God's goodness, the Trinity, Creation, and Providence.

"The doctrine of God is the central point of theology. A person's view of God supplies the whole framework within which his theology is constructed and his life is lived."¹

Millard Erickson

The Attributes of God's Nature

1. God is _____. He is above and beyond His creation and exists independent of it.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8, 9

2. God is _____. He is within His creation.

For in Him we live and move and have our being.

Acts 17:28

3. God is _____. He does not have a physical nature.

"God is spirit..."

John 4:24

4. God is _____. He is everywhere at the same time.

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there."

Psalms 139:7, 8

5. God is _____. He has all power.

"Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You."

Jeremiah 32:17

6. God is _____. He never changes.

"I the Lord do not change."

Malachi 3:6

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, p. 75

The Attributes of God's Character

1. God is _____. He is absolutely pure and untouched by evil.

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Isaiah 6:3

2. God is _____. He always does what is right.

He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.

Deuteronomy 32:4

3. God is _____. He cannot lie.

...God cannot lie...

Titus 1:2

4. God is _____. He manifests His love in acts of kindness.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...

John 3:16

5. God is _____. He expresses compassion toward the guilty.

Just as a father has mercy on his children, so the Lord has mercy on those who fear Him.

Psalms 103:13

The Trinity

1. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that each person is fully God, and that there is one God.
2. The Trinity is one of the most difficult Bible doctrines to understand because it is a doctrine of revelation that transcends reason. However, the following three summary statements will help us begin to understand the Bible's teaching concerning the Trinity.

- God is _____ persons.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

II Corinthians 13:14

- Each person is _____ God.
- There is _____ God.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Deuteronomy 6:4

"We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance [Essence]. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal."

Athanasian Creed

*"In God there are not three individuals alongside of and separate from one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence."*²

Louis Berkhof

3. All simplistic and erroneous solutions deny one strand of the Bible's teaching.
 - _____ denies the first statement (God is three persons) and teaches that there is only one God with three modes of existence or three manifestations.
 - _____ denies the second statement (Each person is fully God) and teaches that only the Father is fully God, and that He created Jesus.
 - _____ denies the third statement (There is one God) and teaches that there are three Gods related in a loose association.
4. The Persons of the Trinity have different primary _____.
 - In Creation, God the Father spoke the creative words to bring the universe into being (Genesis 1:1), God the Son carried out these creative decrees (John 1:3) and the Holy Spirit manifested God's immediate presence in His creation (Genesis 1:2).
 - In Redemption, God the Father planned redemption and sent his Son into the world (John 3:16), the Son accomplished redemption for us (Ephesians 1:7), and the Holy Spirit applied redemption to us (Titus 3:5).
5. The revelation of the Trinity teaches us three things: Community, Diversity, and Mystery.
 - God is a _____. The doctrine of the trinity teaches us that loving relationships are the ultimate meaning in life.
 - God is unity with _____. The doctrine of the trinity teaches us to exult in diversity and to seek to represent it in our life and ministry.
 - God is a mystery. The doctrine of the trinity teaches us that we will forever _____ God for His beauty and awesome splendor.

Creation

1. The creation of the universe is one of the most significance facts in the Bible. The first statement of Scripture is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)
2. The creation of the universe ex _____ ("out of nothing" Hebrews 11:3) is a foundational Bible doctrine that upholds many other important doctrines.
 - The _____ of Jesus. Because God made the world, He is Lord of everything in it.
 - Eternal _____. Because we are God's property, He alone has the final say in how we live.
 - A proper view of _____. Because God created man in His image, he is not a biochemical machine or a little god.

² Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 87

- An accurate understanding of the _____ world. Because God was responsible for creating everything, no segment of creation lacks spiritual significance.
- Proper _____ relationships. Because every family in heaven and earth derives its name from the Father, there is a real basis for the brotherhood of man.

Providence

1. The doctrine of providence contains the following three ideas: Continual Involvement, Ultimate Destination, and Absolute Control.
2. Continual Involvement: God is _____ related to and involved in the creation at every moment. He upholds all creation.

“And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Colossians 1:17

3. Ultimate Destination: God directs all things to accomplish His _____. Everything is leading toward the conclusion He planned long ago.

“The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

Westminster Shorter Confession

4. Absolute Control: God is in complete _____ of the universe. Everything that happens, happens for His purpose.

“His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, ‘What are you doing?’”

Daniel 4:35

Challenges to this Doctrine

1. If God controls all things, how can our actions have _____ meaning?
 - The Bible teaches that although God controls all events, we are accountable for our actions. But how can this be?

“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.”

Acts 2:23
2. If God controls all things, does He cause _____?
 - “What is the relationship between God and evil in the world?” This is one of the most difficult questions in Scripture.

Conclusion

I. There are at least four proper responses to the doctrine of providence.

- _____: we stand in awe of His ineffable greatness. (Rom 11:33-36)
- _____: we yield our entire life to his control. (Ephesians 1:4)
- _____: we rest in the knowledge that God is in control of all things. (Ephesians 1:11)
- _____: we obey in holy fear knowing that our actions have real consequences.

We are never in the grip of chance or fate. God is in charge of His universe, and nothing can thwart His plans. Each event in our life comes as a new summons to trust, obey, and rejoice, knowing that God works all things after the counsel of His will.