

Systematic Theology

Session One

Bibliology: The Word of God

OUTCOME BASED OBJECTIVE

The goal of this course is to provide a strong theological foundation to give depth to our preaching, clarity to our counseling, and wisdom for our decision-making.

What is Systematic Theology?

1. Systematic Theology is an intelligent and _____ presentation of the truth about God from the Bible. It uses the tools and methods of biblical research to discover the accurate meaning of Scripture.
2. There are several characteristics of a good Systematic Theology.
 - It seeks to understand the Bible as a _____ rather than seeing verses in isolation.
 - It attempts to relate the various _____ of Scripture to one another and present them as a harmonious and coherent whole.
 - It addresses the questions and _____ that people are currently facing.
3. There are several results of a good Systematic Theology.
 - A good Systematic Theology will help us make right choices based on _____ biblical information.
 - A good Systematic Theology will help us _____ the historic faith against error.
 - A good Systematic Theology will help us _____ God more.

Bibliology

1. Bibliology is the theological study of the Word of God.
2. The doctrine of _____ teaches that God reveals Himself to mankind in such a way that we can know Him and fellowship with Him.¹

“Nobody would know the truth about God, or be able to relate to Him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make Himself known.”²

J.I. Packer

1

¹ Holman's Bible Dictionary

2

J.I. Packer, Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs

- General Revelation is God's communication of _____ to all persons at all times and in all places.³ There are three manifestations of General Revelation: nature, providence, and conscience.

*"To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty . . . a sense of divinity is by nature engraven on human hearts."*⁴

John Calvin

- Nature reveals God's _____.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

- Providence reveals God's _____.

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45

- Conscience reveals God's _____.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law . . . they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Romans 2:14,15

- Special Revelation is God's authoritative Word conveyed _____ and propositionally through the exclusive medium of the Bible. (There are three other manifestations of Special Revelation.)

*"Just as old men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore, is a special gift, where God, to instruct his church, not merely uses mute teachers of nature and conscience but also opens his own most hallowed lips."*⁵

John Calvin

- Miraculous events (God manifesting Himself in history), divine speech (God revealing Himself through human language), and visible manifestations (God showing Himself in visible form).

3

H. Wayne House, Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine, p. 21

4

John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion

5

John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, I.6.1

3. The doctrine of _____ teaches that God's influence upon those who wrote the Scriptures rendered their writings true and accurate.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16

*"The writers were supernaturally guided to express exactly what God intended them to express. Inspiration rendered the writers the organs of God, for the infallible communication in the manner and words in which it was given. The inspiration of the sacred writers did not change their characters. They retained all their individual peculiarities as thinkers or writers."*⁶

M.G. Easton

*"Inspiration is the supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness."*⁷

B. B. Warfield

- The biblical authors were not _____ instruments in the transmission of divine revelation. God used the different personalities and manners of expression of each individual author.

*"Surrender the dogma of verbal inspiration and you are left like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea at the mercy of every wind that blows. Deny that the Bible is, without any qualifications, the very Word of God, and you are left without any ultimate standard of measurement and without any supreme authority."*⁸

Arthur Pink

4. The doctrine of _____ teaches that the Bible, in the original manuscripts, does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. The Bible always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about.

"Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they teach, whether that teaching has to do with doctrine, history, science, geography, geology, or other disciplines or knowledge."

James Montgomery Boice

*"The Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability to mistake, incapable of error. In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth"*⁹

Edward J. Young

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¹ M.G. Easton, Easton's Bible Dictionary

7

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 3, p. 1453

8

Arthur W. Pink, The Divine Inspiration of the Bible, www.ccel.org

9

E.J. Young, Thy Word is Truth, p. 113

- Inerrancy allows for:

- The use of popular _____, approximations, and the language of appearances¹⁰

“The inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth. Truth can and does include approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as those do not contradict.”¹¹

Charles Ryrie

- Variety in _____
 - Variety in _____ in explaining the same event
 - Variation in the _____ of events

- The primary _____ to inerrancy is the idea that the Bible is only authoritative for “faith and practice.”

POSITION: The purpose of Scripture is to teach us concerning “faith and practice” only. There are false statements in Scripture in other areas such as in minor historical details or scientific facts.

RESPONSE: The Bible repeatedly affirms that all of Scripture is profitable for us (2 Timothy 3:16) and “God-breathed.” It is completely pure (Psalms 12:6), perfect (Psalms 119:96), and true (Proverbs 30:5).

5. The doctrine of _____ teaches that the Bible is qualitatively different from all other books and that it requires God-given assistance to understand it.

- Man’s unregenerate mind cannot apprehend spiritual truths without _____ assistance.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14

- Illumination is the _____ of the Holy Spirit enlightening those who are in a right relationship with Him to comprehend the Word of God.

Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

Luke 24:45

6. The doctrine of _____ teaches that man has a role in cooperating with the divine work of Illumination.

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¹ The language of appearances means that the author uses language that describes what his senses are experiencing, not necessarily what is actually happening. For example, when the author of Joshua 10:13 said, “The sun stopped in the middle of the sky,” he was describing what his senses experienced—regardless if it was the sun or earth that actually stopped.

11

Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Inerrancy*, p. 16

Canonicity

Canonicity refers the inspired books of the Bible. This section will cover the factors that led to the development of the Canon and the tests used to determine canonicity.

The Old Testament Canon

1. The Old Testament canon began with the _____.
2. This collection grew as Moses (Deuteronomy 31:24-26; Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:2), Joshua (Joshua 24:26), and other prophets (I Samuel 10:25; I Chronicles 29:29; II Chronicles 26:22; Jeremiah 30:2) added to it.
3. After _____ (appr. 425 BC) there were no further additions to it.

The New Testament Canon

1. The New Testament _____ replaced the Old Testament prophets as the ones with the ability from the Holy Spirit to recall accurately the words and deeds of Jesus and to interpret them for subsequent generations.

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 14:26

2. Those with the office of apostle in the early church claim an authority _____ to that of the Old Testament prophets—an authority to speak and write God’s very words.

I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

2 Peter 3:2

Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:16

3. There were many factors in the first centuries of the Church that led to the final development of the Canon.
 - The first factor was the proliferation of _____ writings claiming to be inspired.
 - The second factor was the _____ on genuine writings by men claiming divine inspiration.
 - The third factor was the need to determine which apostolic writings should be used in _____ worship.
 - The fourth factor was the edict by Diocletian in 303 that demanded all sacred books be _____.

4. The Canon developed slowly over the first centuries of the Church.

- Clement of Rome (95) mentioned at least eight New Testament books in his letter to the Corinthians. Polycarp (108) acknowledged fifteen books. Irenaeus (185) acknowledged twenty-one books. Hippolytus (170-235) recognized twenty-two books. The Muratorian Canon (170) included all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and III John. In 367, Athanasius cited all twenty-seven books. The Synod of Hippo (393) affirmed that only the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches.

“When the Synod of Hippo listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity.”¹²

F.F. Bruce

5. There were at least four tests used to determine Canonicity.

- Test number one was _____: was the author an apostle or did he have a connection with an apostle?
- Test number two was _____: was the book accepted by the Church at large?
- Test number three was _____: did the book reflect consistency of doctrine with what had been accepted as orthodox teaching?
- Test number four was _____. Did the book reflect the quality of inspiration?

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the debate about inerrancy has become such a large issue in the last one hundred years?
2. Should belief in inerrancy be a requirement for church membership? For leading a Victory Group? For holding a church office?