

Session 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Systematic Theology Defined

Systematic Theology is any study that answers the question, “What does the whole Bible teach us?” about any given topic.

This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all of the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings so that we know what to believe about each topic.

Biblical Theology gives special attention to the teachings of individual authors and sections of Scripture, and to the place of each teaching in the historical development of Scripture. It also focuses on the understanding of each doctrine that the biblical authors and their original hearers possessed.

Doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us about some particular topic. Doctrine is simply the result of the process of doing systematic theology with regard to one particular topic.

Seven Major Doctrines of this book:

1. The Word of God
2. God
3. Humanity
4. Christ and the Holy Spirit (Really two topics by he combines them)
5. Redemption
6. The Church
7. The Future

The benefits to the study of systematic theology.

1. Overcoming wrong thinking about the various doctrines presented in the Bible.
2. Helps us to be able to make better decisions on questions that arise in the area of doctrine.
3. Helps us to grow as Christians. The more we know about God, about His Word, about His relationship to the world and humanity, the better we will trust Him, the more we will praise Him, and the more we will obey Him.

Approach to the study of systematic theology (or any study in the Scripture).

1. Prayer
2. Humility
3. Reason (logic)
4. Use good sources for help

5. Use all of the relevant passages
6. With joy and praise

“The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.” Psalm 19:8

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” Psalm 119:103

“I rejoice at your word like one who finds great treasure.” Psalm 119:162

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:33-36

The Doctrine of the Word of God

- I. “The Word of God” means (See II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:21)
 - A. The person of Jesus Christ (See John 1, I John 1, Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 19:13)
 - B. Speech by God
 1. God’s Decrees: Powerful, creative words from God that cause something to happen. (Genesis 1:3)
 2. God’s Words of Personal Address: God speaking directly to people. (Genesis 2:16-17)
 3. God’s Words through Prophetic Voice: God speaking to us through selected people. (Deut. 18:18-20, Jeremiah 1:7)
 4. God’s Words in Written Form: God speaking to us through the Bible. (Exodus 31:18, Isaiah 30:8)

II. Canon of Scripture

The Word Canon means rule, measure or standard. The Canon of the Bible is the collection of all the books that belong to the category of the Word of God.

- A. The debate over the Old Testament books
 1. The Jewish debate
 2. The church debate

- B. The debate over the New Testament books
1. Paul's quote from the book of Luke as Scripture, I Timothy 5:18 and Peter's verse concerning Paul, II Peter 3:15-16
 2. The apostolic authority associated with the books of the New Testament
 3. The internal witness of the books of the New Testament (I Thessalonians 2:13, II Thessalonians 3:6)
 4. The lack of internal witness of books excluded from the canon
 5. The lack of apostolic authority for books excluded from the canon

- C. The debate over the Apocrypha (helpful and useful to believers but "were not books of the canon")
1. Council at Trent in 1546 declared the Apocrypha to be part of the canon because it included teachings that supported Catholic doctrines such as prayers for the dead and justification by faith plus works.
 2. Rejected by Protestants who used both the historical claims of the Jewish theologians and the early church concerning these writings and the actual content of the writings themselves.

III. Inerrancy: The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.

- A. The Bible always tells the truth
1. The Bible is inerrant and still speaks in ordinary language that can be understood
 2. The Bible is inerrant and still include loose or free quotations (and rounding of numbers and poetic language)
 3. The Bible is inerrant and still include unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions

B. Inerrant versus infallible versus _____

C. From the short statement from the Chicago Statement of Inerrancy...

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through

Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

(See the complete Chicago Statement of Inerrancy for additional affirmations and denials.)

IV. The Four Characteristics of Scripture:

- A. Authority: The authority of Scripture means that all the words in the Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of the Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.
- B. Clarity: The Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.
 1. The Bible affirms its own clarity
 2. The Bible assumes clarity for moral and spiritual truths
 3. The Bible does have some difficult passages that require much study to understand (See II Peter 3:15-16)

Hermeneutics: the study of the correct methods of interpretation

Exegesis: the process of interpreting a text of Scripture

- C. Necessity: The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws
 - 1. The distinction between general revelation and specific revelation
 - 2. Specific revelation, namely content from the Bible, is necessary for knowledge of the Gospel and for salvation (see II Timothy 3:14-15)
 - 3. Specific revelation, namely content from the Bible, is necessary for maintaining spiritual health
 - 4. Specific revelation, namely content from the Bible, is necessary to know aspects of God's will
 - 5. Specific revelation, namely content from the Bible, is not necessary to know that God exists and that God has moral standards that are obligatory on humans (see Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:18-23, Romans 2:14-15)
- D. Sufficiency: Scripture contains all the words of God that he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly and for obeying him perfectly.