

Session 2: Doctrine Proper or the Theology of God, Part 1

Theology Proper Defined

Theology Proper is the study of the Triune God Himself. Theology Proper focuses specifically on the being, attributes and works of God, especially in the purposes of creation.

Knowing God

I. General Revelation Proofs for God's Existence (Philosophical, Observational)

A. The Ontological Argument: If we can imagine an all-powerful, creator, one must exist because I can only imagine with my mind things that actually exist or have some basis in reality

B. The Cosmological Argument or First Cause Argument: the universe exists and the universe is not eternal, therefore someone who is eternal must have created it

C. The Teleological Argument: the universe seems to be ordered and purposeful as though designed and directed by someone greater than the universe

D. The Aesthetical Argument: The universe contains tremendous beauty as if to communicate that the creator behind the universe is even more beautiful

E. The Moral Argument: there is a sense "oughtness" or a sense of right and wrong that transcends cultures, geography and languages.

General revelation provides sufficient information to know that God exists and that God possesses amazing attributes. However, general revelation is not sufficient to know God personally or savingly.

"The value of these proofs, then, lies chiefly in overcoming some of the intellectual objections of unbelievers...for believers, they can provide further intellectual evidence for something they have already been persuaded of from their own inner sense of God and from the testimony of Scripture." (Grudem)

God is a God of revelation. From the beginning, God displays His revelatory nature through the spoken creation. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. Genesis 1:3. God speaks the creation into being because He the purpose of the creation is God's self-disclosure through the creation.

II. Specific Revelation Proofs for God's Existence (Revelatory)

A. The Bible

B. Fulfilled Prophecy in History, especially in the Person of Jesus Christ

C. The Transformed Lives of Believers

D. The Work of the Holy Spirit within Individual Lives

Specific revelation provides sufficient information to know that God exists God personally and savingly.

“If we are to know God at all, it is necessary that he reveal himself to us...we need Scripture if we are to interpret natural revelation rightly.” (Grudem)

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 16:16-17

All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Matthew 11:27

“It is not true to say that God is unable to be understood, but it is true to say that he cannot be understood fully or exhaustively...even though we cannot know God exhaustively, we can know true things about God...even more significantly, it is God himself whom we know, not simply facts about him or actions he does.” (Grudem)

The Attributes of God

Two ways of classifying God’s attributes:

1. The incommunicable attributes of God (that is, those attributes that God does not share or “communicate” to others such as eternity, immutability, omnipresence) and the communicable attributes of God (those God shares or “communicates” with us such as love, knowledge, mercy, justice).

“There are no attribute of God that is completely communicable; and there is no attribute of God that is completely incommunicable.” (Grudem)

“God’s attributes of independence and omnipresence are perhaps those that are least easy to see reflected in our own nature.” (Grudem)

2. The eternally displayed attributes of God (those attributes that are clearly displayed irrespective of the creation such as love, holiness, perfection, triune, knowledge) and the creation, displayed attributes of God that (those attributes that can only be displayed through the created universe such as power, presence, grace, mercy, justice)

I. Incommunicable Attributes of God

A. Independence (non-contingence, self-existence, aseity): “God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him you.” (Grudem)

Parallel idea, the Golden State Warriors are really good a basketball. They would still be good a basketball even if the arena were empty and the cameras. They want to play in front of the crowd and cameras for a wide variety of reasons.

B. Unchangeableness (immutability): “God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.” (Grudem)

Impassability: “The impassability of God, this attribute, if true, would mean that God does not have passions or emotions, but is “impassible,” not subject to passions.” (Grudem)

Process Theology: “Process theology is a theological position that says that process and change are essential aspects of genuine existence, and that therefore God must be changing over time also, just like everything else that exists.” (Grudem)

Infinite and Personal: “Infinite and personal meaning that he is not subject to any of the limitations of humanity, or of creation in general...he is also personal in that he interacts with us as a person, and we can relate to him as persons.” (Grudem)

Unchangeableness: “If it is true that God does not change, then we must say that time does not change God: it has no effect on his being, perfections, purposes, or promises. But that means that time has no effect on God’s knowledge, for instance, God never learns new things or forgets things, for that would mean a change in his perfect knowledge. This implies also that the passing of time does not add to or detract from God’s knowledge: he knows all things past, present and future, and knows them all equally vividly.” (Grudem)

Scanta Media: Scanta media is Latin for “middle knowledge” and describes the knowledge of God that includes not just the past, present and future, but all possible pasts, presents and futures that could be.

C. Eternal: God’s eternal nature means that “God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.” (Grudem)

D. Omnipresence: “God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.” (Grudem)

God is, everywhere and every-when, fully proximate in the universe.

Transcendent and immanent: God is transcendent, in that he is not bound by the universe he created but God is also immanent, in that he is within every point of space in the universe.

E. Unity (simplicity): “God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.” (Grudem)

God’s attributes are not in isolation from one another. From Jonathan Edwards, “Man does not hate God because of his love, but because it is a holy love.”

II. Communicable Attributes of God

A. Attributes Describing God's Being

1. Spirituality: "God's spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence." (Grudem)

"We should not think of God as having size or dimensions, even infinite ones. Nor should we think that God's existence as spirit means that God is infinitely small, for no place in the universe can surround him or contain him." (Grudem)

2. Invisibility: "God's invisibility means that God's total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows himself to us through visible, created things." (Grudem)

B. Mental Attributes

1. Knowledge (Omniscience): "God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act." (Grudem)

2. Wisdom: "God's wisdom means that God always choose the best goals and the best means to those goals. This definition goes beyond the idea of God knowing all things and specifies that God's decisions about what he will do are always wise decisions: that is, they always will bring about the best results (from God's ultimate perspective), and they will bring about those results through the best possible means." (Grudem)

3. Truthfulness (Faithfulness)

C. Moral Attributes

1. Goodness: "The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval." (Grudem)

2. Love: "God's love means that God eternally gives of himself to others." (Grudem)

3. Mercy (Grace, Patience): "God's mercy means God's goodness toward those in misery and distress. God's grace means God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment. God's patience means God's goodness in withholding punishment toward those who sin over a period of time." (Grudem)

Mercy and Grace: withholding judgment from those that deserve it. Giving good to those who have not earn it.

4. Holiness: "God's holiness means that he is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor." (Grudem)

5. Peace (Order): “God’s peace means that in God’s being and in his actions he is separate from all confusion and disorder, yet he is continually active innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions.” (Grudem)

6. Righteousness (Justice): “God’s righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.” (Grudem)

7. Jealousy: “God’s jealousy means that God continually seeks to protect his own honor.” (Grudem)

8. Wrath: “God’s wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.” (Grudem)

God’s wrath is his holy aversion to human rebellion.

D. Attributes of Purpose

1. Will: “God’s will is that attribute of God whereby he approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.” (Grudem)

Distinctions in God’s will. His required will. His desired will. His permissive will.

2. Freedom: “God’s freedom is that attribute of God whereby he does whatever he pleases.” (Grudem)

3. Omnipotence (Power, Sovereignty): “God’s omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.” (Grudem)

The priority of the three omnis, God must be omnipresent in order to be omniscience and God must be omnipresent and omniscience in order to be omnipotent.

E. “Summary” Attributes: Perfection, Blessedness, Beauty, Glory

The Special Case of God’s Glory

God’s glory is a comprehensive term. It describes the coalescence of all of the attributes of God. God’s “glory” describes the summation of all of His attributes. The glory of God describes all that God is and all that He has done.