

Theology Proper – Lesson 1

“Theology – The Study of God”

Lesson overview:

- **Introduction**
- **Definition of Theology**
- **Why study Theology**
- **The Aim of Theology**
- **Pre-requisites to the study of Theology**

I. Introduction

- A.** In his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer says, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Do you agree?
1. If someone asked you, “What is God like,” what would you say?
 2. How would you define God? There is probably not a more difficult question to try to answer, but at the same time it is one of the greatest answers a person needs to know.
- B. Why is it important to know what God is like?**
1. If a person thinks wrongly about God, they will think wrongly about reality. A wrong understanding of God will lead to a wrong understanding of what is true and real.
 2. How much can you get right in life if you get it wrong with God?
 3. On the other hand, if a person thinks rightly about God, they will think rightly about reality. A right understanding of God will lead to a right understating of what is true and real. How much can you get wrong in life you get it right with God?
- C. The example from the life of the Apostle _____ - Acts 9**
1. What is Saul’s focus in life according to verse 1-2?
 2. Do you think Saul believed he was serving God when he was going to Damascus to persecution Christians?
 3. What happens to Saul in verses 3-4?
 4. What two statements does Saul make in verses 5-6 in response to being exposed to ultimate reality that if found in knowing God?
 1. V. 5 - _____
 2. V. 6 - _____
 5. Those who are exposed to God’s glory will be defined by a surrendered will that says, “*Lord, what will you have me to do?*”
- D. Conclusion:**
1. Saul’s wrong understanding of God led to a wrong understanding of reality; which led to a wrong way of living; which led to life that was totally out of line with God. When Saul got right _____ it absolutely transformed his life!

2. It was a right knowledge of God that allowed Paul to fulfill the purpose for which he was created as he became the Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary in history, and author of thirteen books of the NT.
 3. There is no greater thing about a person than what they know about God; did Paul believe this according to the following passage?
 † **Philippians 3:8-10** - "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may _____ him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;"
 4. A lack of the knowledge of God in a person's life and in society has devastating effects on them.
 † **Hosea 4:1, 6a** – "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, **nor knowledge of God in the land.** (6a) **My people are destroyed for lack of _____:**"
 5. A lack of knowledge of God will cause people and even a nation to be destroyed.
 † **Isaiah 5:13** — Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no _____: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.
 6. **They had turned religion into external systems and sacrifices, but what did God teach them He desired in the following verse?**
 † **Hosea 6:6** — **6**; For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (Matthew 9:13).
 † **Jeremiah 9:23-24** — **23**; Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: **24**; But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and _____ me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.
 7. **Salvation comes through the _____ of God.**
 † **John 17:3** — **3**; And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.
 † **2 Peter 1:2-3** — **2**; Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God**, and of Jesus our Lord, **3**; According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him that hath called us** to glory and virtue:
 8. **What does Paul say pleases the Lord according to Colossians 1:10?**
 † **Colossians 1:10** - That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- E. Summary:** A wrong understanding of God will result in a people and nation being destroyed and being out of line with reality of truth. On the other hand, a right understanding of God will lead to a right view of reality, it will bring a soul right in line with God and cause them to be pleasing to the Lord. No wonder Tozer said,

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

II. Definition of Theology

A. Made up of two words “Theos” – _____; and “logos” – _____

B. Theology means the _____ or _____ of God.

C. Systematic Theology

1. Definition

- a. The word systematic comes from a compound Greek word (*sunistano*), which is made up of *syn*, “together,” and *histemi*, “to stand”, meaning them to stand together, to systematize, to organize; systematic theology emphasizes the systematization of theology, to bring together Christian doctrine in an organized fashion.
- b. Systematic Theology addresses theological topics one by one (God, Sin, Humanity, etc.) and attempts to summarize all the Biblical teaching on each particular subject. The goal is to present the major doctrines of the Christian faith in an organized and ordered overview.
- c. Chafer defines systematic theology as follows: *Systematic theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works.* (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1947), 1:6)

2. Divisions of Systematic Theology

- The teachings of Scripture have been historically divided into the following ten major doctrinal heads.
 - a. **Bibliology** – The doctrine/study of the _____
 - b. **Theology Proper** – The doctrine/study of _____
 - c. **Christology** – The doctrine/study of _____
 - d. **Pneumatology** – The doctrine/study of the _____
 - e. **Ecclesiology** – The doctrine/study of the _____
 - f. **Anthropology** – The doctrine/study of _____
 - g. **Hamartiology** – The doctrine/study of _____
 - h. **Soteriology** – The doctrine/study of _____
 - i. **Angelology** – The doctrine/study of _____
 - j. **Eschatology** – The doctrine/study of _____

II. Why study theology?

- **Charles Ryrie** – “Everyone should be a theologian of one sort or another. There is nothing wrong with being an amateur theologian or a professional theologian, but there is everything wrong about being an ignorant and sloppy theologian. Therefore, every Christian should read theology.” (Basic Theology, pg.9).

- The question is not, “Who is a theologian?” but “What kind of theologian am I going to be?” Are you going to be a good theologian or a bad theologian?” This is a more accurate question because, as one writer put it, “not all theologies are equal.” _Source unknown

A. To get a correct view of _____ – The Bible teaches us to conform our lives to the image of Christ, but how can we do that if the Christ in our minds is not the Christ of the Bible? Idolatry can be creating a false “god” in our mind that is not the true God (Ezek.14:3). Our love for God should draw us to Him to want to know more about Him.

† **Ezekiel 14:3 — 3**; *Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?*

B. To get a correct view of _____ – If God is “truth” and the only source of absolute unchanging inerrant truth is from God, then we must learn about the “God” of truth (Psalm 31:5, 1 John 1:14,17, 14:6).

† **Psalm 31:5 — 5**; *Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.*

C. To get a correct view of _____ - Only when we get a correct view of God can we get a correct view of ourselves and our purpose for existing. When we see God for who He is, it helps us to better view who we are (Saul-Acts 9).

D. To be prepared to meet _____ – One day we will have to give an account of our lives to God, and we need to know what He expects of us.

† **2 Corinthians 5:10 —** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (Rom.14:10).*

† **Romans 2:16 —** *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

† **Matthew 12:36 —** *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

E. Basic consideration:

1. God is ultimately incomprehensible.

† **Job 11:7 —** *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

† **Isaiah 55:8-9 -** *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

† **Romans 11:33-36 -** *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*

2. Although we cannot completely comprehend God, it is vitally important that we think rightly about God. We cannot comprehend eternity, but we

comprehend that there “is” an eternity. Even so, we cannot fully comprehend God, but we can understand that He exists and truths concerning Him.

3. Man cannot discover the person, nature, will, and purposes of God on his own (Isaiah 55:8-9; Job 23:8-9), but God has graciously and carefully revealed Himself to man both through Scripture and the enabling of the Spirit.

† **I John 5:20** – *“And we know that the Son of God is come, **and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true**, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”* (John 17:3)

† **Luke 24:45** — *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,*

4. Man, intuitively knows that God exists, and that He deserves to be worshipped (Rom. 1:20-21), but all particular knowledge of a personal God must come through special revelation.

III. The Aim of Theology

- A. It is the work of theology to discover facts and not _____.
- B. Systematic theology seeks to arrange the doctrines of Scripture in a systematic way by a careful exegesis of the Scriptures, to demonstrate the relations between these truths, and to unite them into a comprehensive, rightly proportioned, organic whole.

IV. Pre-requisites to the study of Theology

A. _____

1. **God is a spirit and** exists apart from the material world, therefore God cannot be perceived by the physical senses. It is not possible that man, on his own, could ever “_____” God.

† **John 4:24** — *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

2. **To understand spiritual truths we must have a spiritual life.**

† **1 Corinthians 2:14** - *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

- a. Here spiritual is in opposition to the natural, and here it speaks of the spiritual capacity of the believer to grasp (discern) spiritual truths. The natural man cannot discern the spiritual truths because he is spiritually dead.

† **1 Corinthians 1:21** — *For after that in the wisdom of God **the world by wisdom knew not God...***

† **2 Timothy 3:7** — *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

- b. If our eyes were “dead” or did not work, we could not see; if our ears were “dead” we could not hear. The Bible says the unbeliever’s “spirit” is dead (Eph. 2:1-5) and therefore he cannot see or hear the spiritual truths.

† **Jeremiah 5:21** — *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:*

- 1) Jeremiah likened the rebellious people of his day as having eyes and ears, but they did not use them.
- 2) The people in the Lord's Day had also closed their eyes and ears to the truth and Jesus constantly challenged them to be those who hear and see.
 † **Matthew 15:14** — *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

c. Only those with spiritual life can understand spiritual truths.

B. _____ that the Bible is the Word of God

1. What you believe about the Bible will determine how you live your life.
 † **1 Thessalonians 2:13** - *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, **when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*
 † **2 Timothy 3:16** — *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (John 17:17, Matthew 5:18).*
2. Not accepting the Word of God is to reject the God of the Word.
 † **John 12:48** — *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

C. Simple _____ - like faith that accepts the Word.

- † **Hebrews 11:1** - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
- † **Hebrews 11:6** - "But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

D. _____ and perseverance in study

1. God's Word is not cheap, meaning you will not learn correct theology by a "microwavable, quick and easy" mentality. The truths of Scripture are given to those who mine out those truths with patience, diligence, love for the Scripture, and a love for the God of Scripture.
 † **2 Timothy 2:15** - "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 † **Mark 4:23-24** — *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. **24**; And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.*
 - Jesus is teaching in this passage that the amount of attention you give to the Word of God will be measured back to you in understanding, and for those who really hear shall more be given. So come to the Word expecting and desiring to receive and you shall receive. But if you come without "ears to hear" don't expect to receive anything.
- † **Colossians 3:16** – *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*

2. The difference between reading and studying is this one key, those who study ask questions as they read.

3. Meditate upon the Word of God.

† **Joshua 1:8** – *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

† **Psalm 119:97** - *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

† **Psalm 1:1-2** — *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2; But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

4. Memorize the Word of God.

- Memorize by using 3” x 5” note cards. Write the verse reference on one side and the passage on the other.

5. Good tools for study

- KJV – Thomas Nelson Study Bible
- Free online tools – Logos, Biblehub.com; Blueletterbible; Got questions
- Buy a commentary – Warren Wiersbe, John MacArthur, Matthew Henry

E. _____ by the Holy Spirit

1. Definition of Illumination: *God’s Spirit enabling the minds of men to understand and accept the divine truth of God’s Word.*

2. Martin Luther – *“The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent; you must count only on the influence of the Holy Spirit.”*

3. Examples of Illumination

a. Matthew 16:16-17 - *And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17; And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***

1) Who did Jesus say did not reveal this truth to Peter? _____

2) Who did Jesus say did reveal it to Peter? _____

b. Luke 24:44-45 — *44; And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45; Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,*

1) What did Jesus do to the disciples understanding? _____

2) What was the result? _____

3) JFB Commentary - *“a statement of unspeakable value; expressing Christ's immediate access to the human spirit and absolute power over it, to the adjustment of its vision”*

c. Lydia - Acts 16:14 — *14; And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: **whose heart the Lord opened**, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

1) What happened to the heart of Lydia? God opened her _____

2) What did she do as a result? _____

d. Paul's Prayer for the Ephesian believers

- † **Ephesians 1:17-18** – *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation **in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened** (enlightened means to give light); **that ye may know** what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,”*

e. The Psalmists prayer

- † **Psalm 119:18-19** - *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*
- † **Psalm 119:33-34** - *Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

f. Truth's concerning illumination

- 1) The Spirit does not illuminate the Scriptures, but rather the minds of men.
- 2) Illumination does not have to do with the giving of revelation, but the _____ of revelation.

F. _____ for the Word of God and a willingness to submit to it.

1. **1 Peter 2:2** - *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*
2. **Acts 17:10-11** - *And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*
3. **Job 23:12** — *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*
4. **Psalm 19:10** — *More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*

⇒ Weekly Assignments

- Read: Basic Theology (Charles Ryrie) pages 9-30
- Read “Biblical Doctrine” (MacArthur/Mayhue) pages 33-50
- Study for test over lesson 1