

Men of the Word: **Systematic Theology**

Three introductory questions...

Why should we study systematic theology?

To know, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ more.

John 8:32 And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

John 14:6 I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

What does the Bible say about systematic theology?

A whole lot, because systematic theology is the systematic study of God. And we get all of it from the Bible.

Ps. 145:17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his deeds

How should systematic theology benefit us?

It should increase our love for God and deepen our love for His Word.

As **Deut. 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27** tell us...**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.**

Ps. 119:97 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

**Now, if you would, please set these little baby note sheets to the side, and let's get into some real man sized teaching notes shall we? :-)*

Did you really think we we're going to start a series as monumental as systematic theology with microscopic notes? :-)

Systematic Theology

First Things / Prolegomena

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Prolegomena = **pro/before + legomena/things being said**

Things said before. Say in advance. Introduces and defines the primary content of what follows. First Things. Definitions, methods, purposes, gives context for understanding what comes next.

What is Theology?

Theology = **Discourse about God, words about God.**

Theos/God + logia/word. Speaking about God. Noun, theologos, is a person who engages in theologieo, a theologian. The adjective describes something theological, and the noun means a word about God. Literally, theology.

*Christian theology is **the study of God's revelation of His Word.** God is the epicenter and God's Word is the source.*

Augustine, in The City of God said "Theology is rational discussion respecting the deity."

John Warwick Montgomery, in The Suicide of Christian Theology (1970), said "Theology involves a 'speaking-of-God'".

What is Doctrine?

Doctrine = What the Bible authoritatively teaches us about a particular topic.

Doctrines are logically appropriate conclusions from the facts of Scripture.

What is Systematic Theology?

*"Everything that the Bible teaches **on a certain subject** presented in an **organized** way."*

"The work seemed particularly important to me, in view of the widespread doctrinal indifference of the present day, of the resulting superficiality and confusion in the minds of many professing Christians, of the insidious errors that are zealously propagated even from the pulpit, and of the alarming increase of all kinds of sects. If there ever was a time when the church ought to guard her precious heritage, the deposit of the truth it was entrusted to her care, that time is now." (Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Eerdmans, 1939, 1941.)

"Systematic Theology is the science of God and his works by which doctrines are inductively derived from biblical evidence and organized into a comprehensive, coherent and defensible system." (Dr. H.W. Holloman, Theology I, class syllabus, 1985)

It is organized discourse about God.

“Systematic theology is a discipline of Christian theology that formulates an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the doctrines of the Christian faith. It addresses issues such as what the Bible teaches about certain topics or what is true about God and his universe.” (Ligonier Ministries)

“Systematic Theology is any study that answers the question, what does the whole Bible teach us today? About any given topic?” (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1994, P. 21, quoting John Frame.)

“The organization of Scripture by a synthesis of scriptural teaching, summarized using major categories that encompass the entirety of God’s written revelation (developed from exegetical and biblical theology).” (John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine, Crossways, 2017, p. 36)

This involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and summarizing their teachings clearly so we know what to believe about each of the topics.

Systematic theology has also been called “the greatest of the sciences” and “the queen of the sciences.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “Systematic theology is to the Bible what science is to nature. To suppose that all the other works of God are orderly and systematic, and the greater the work the more perfect the system: and that the greatest of all his works, in which all his perfections are transcendently display, should have no plan or system, is altogether absurd.”

God is the most important topic to talk about.

Systematic Theology can be differentiated from other types of theology

Old Testament and New Testament *Theology*, which organize their topics historically in the order the topics are seen in the Bible.

Biblical *Theology*, which includes Old Testament and New Testament theology, gives special attention to individual authors and sections of scriptures, and how each fits in the historical development of Scripture. Organizes Scripture by themes, either chronologically or by author.

Exegetical *Theology*, dealing with individual texts of the Bible, and examining every word, sentence, and paragraph in detail.

Historical *Theology*, what Christians in different periods of time understood about various theological topics.

Natural/Philosophical *Theology*, studying theological topics without using the Bible, using tools and methods of philosophical reasoning and what can be known about God from observation of the universe.

Pastoral/Practical *Theology*, organizing the Bible with the goal of practically applying doctrinal truths.

Apologetics, giving a defense of the truthfulness of the Christian faith for the purpose of convincing unbelievers.

Think of Systematic Theology as a particular approach to theological study and including all of the other categories of Biblical theology.

What is the significance of Systematic Theology?

1. It is about **God**, who He is and what He is like.

The doctrine of God is not just the first doctrine in systematic theology, it inspires and informs every topic within systematic theology.

2. It gives us the **fullest picture** of his activities and relations to his creation, especially us.

3. It gives us the **fullest scope and sweep** of God's Christ-centered redemptive plan.

4. Reminds us that the Bible is the only **inspired, inerrant, infallible** source. *We don't create facts, we discover them.*

Why study theology systematically?

1. It is the study of God and we should **want to study God**. *Know him, learn him, understand his ways, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2. It is **assumed** in Scripture. Titus 2:1 Teach the things that fit for sound doctrine. 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17.

3. It is necessary to **understand** Biblical truth, doctrine, and the Gospel.

4. It gives us **baseline knowledge** with which to navigate life and to understand the unity of scripture.

5. It helps us know how to **relate to one another** in the church.

6. It is necessary now, in real time, to **understand and keep understanding our faith**.

7. We leak, so therefore we must **continue to study the same truths** we have studied before. *Sometimes it is new, sometimes it is review, sometimes it is re-learning what we have forgotten.*

8. It is necessary as we **lead in the church, our families, and society** at large.

The church submits to the Bible's teaching by submitting to the entire scope of the Bible's teaching. Failure to submit to the whole counsel of God "leads to one-sidedness and error in theology and pathology in the religious life" (Herman Bavinck).

9. It helps us **yearn for Heaven** as we span the Bible and search the Scriptures.

10. Helps us **glorify God and love Him with our mind**, as we live this life, and prepares us to **glorify God and enjoy him forever**.

What, me a theologian?

Many people react negatively to the word theology, thinking it involves dry, fruitless arguments about microscopic points of doctrine. Dr. R.C. Sproul asserted, everyone is a theologian. Any time we think about a teaching of the Bible and strive to understand it, we are engaging in theology. Therefore, it is important that we put the Bible's varied teachings together in a systematic way, using time-tested methods of interpretation, to arrive at a theology that is anchored on truth.

We will be studying the doctrines of the Bible, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, sin, salvation, angels (holy, Satan, fallen), the Church universal and local, and the last things (scope of predictive prophecy, end times events, and the eternal destiny of the saved in heaven and the unsaved in hell).

Every problem is ultimately theological.

Everything relates to God in one way or another.

All of the Bible contains God's truth, but it does not contain all truth; yet ours is a singular source theory, our source is the Bible.

Truth comes from God.

God has spoken and His Word has been recorded.

Our eternal authority, our benchmark, is God's word.

Remember that the Gospel is **the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**. The better we understand God, the better we will understand how to live, the better equipped we will be to live for Jesus.

SOLI DEO GLORIA