

## **Class 1 Outline:**

### **Introduction to Systematic Theology - What is Systematic Theology?**

#### **Definition:**

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

#### **We will begin our study with two assumptions or presuppositions:**

- #1 That the Bible is true and that it is, in fact, our only absolute standard of truth:
- #2 That the God who is spoken of in the Bible exists, and that He is who the Bible says he is: the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in them.

#### **Literature:**

The main resource, of course, is the bible in various translations, but the curriculum itself is derived from *Systematic Theology*, by Wayne Grudem

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

**We will be discussing the "hard questions" and really digging in! There WILL be topics or points that will remain "unresolved, unanswerable or unclear"(I.e. Election, Man as Male and Female, etc.) This should not halt our discussion or affect our faith in The Word, but enhance our study and bring us to a fuller dependence on God and His intentions when inspiring these writings.**

#### **Six distinctive features of this study**

1. A clear Biblical basis for Doctrines  
Every step of the way we will be looking at the teachings of Scripture in light of Statement 1 above(that the Bible is true and that it is, in fact, our only absolute standard of truth)
2. Clarity in the Explanation of Doctrines  
We believe that God did not intend the study of theology to result in confusion and frustration. A student who comes out of a course in theology filled only with doctrinal uncertainty is hardly "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it"

Titus 1:9

(See the "Chicago Statement" of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy)

3. Application to Life

We do not believe that God intended for the study of

Theology to be dry and boring. Theology is the study of God and all His works! Theology is meant to be LIVED and PRAYED and SUNG! All of the great doctrinal writings of the Bible are full of praise to God and personal application to life. True theology is "teaching which accords with godliness" 1 Timothy 6:3 and theology when studied rightly will lead to growth in our Christian lives, and to worship.

#### 4. Focus on the Evangelical World

When using sources outside of the Bible we will be relying on the previous studies of a group of writers which fall into the category of "conservative evangelical". This does not mean that those in the liberal tradition have nothing valuable to say; it simply means that differences with them almost always boil down to differences over the nature of the Bible and its authority.

#### 5. Hope for progress in Doctrinal Unity in the Church

We believe that there is still much hope for the church to attain deeper and purer doctrinal understanding, and to overcome old barriers, even those that have persisted for centuries. Jesus is at work perfecting his church "that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" Ephesians 5:27, and he has given gifts to equip the church "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God" Ephesians 4:13. Though the past history of the church may discourage us, these Scriptures remain true, and we should not abandon hope of greater agreement.

#### 6. A sense of the urgent need for greater doctrinal understanding in the whole Church

We are convinced that there is an urgent need in the church today for much greater understanding of Christian doctrine, or systematic theology. One day by God's grace we may have churches full of Christians who can discuss, apply and live the doctrinal teaching of the Bible as readily as they can discuss the details of their own job or hobbies--or the fortunes of their favorite sports team or television program.

### **Comparison/Relationship to other disciplines:**

Historical Theology - A historical study of how Christians in different periods have understood various theological topics.  
 Philosophical Theology - Studying theological topics largely without use of the Bible, but using the tools and methods of philosophical reasoning and what can be known about

God from observing the universe.  
Apologetics - Providing a defense of the truthfulness of the  
Christian faith for the purpose of convincing unbelievers.

We will be interacting directly with the Biblical text in order to understand what the Bible itself says to us about various theological subjects. Even though historical and philosophical studies do contribute to our understanding of theological questions, **only Scripture has the final authority to define what we are to believe, and it is therefore appropriate to spend some time focusing on the process of analyzing the teaching of Scripture itself.**

### **Application to Life:**

Systematic theology focuses on summarizing each doctrine as it should be understood by present day Christians. This will sometimes involve the use of terms and even concepts that were not themselves used by any individual biblical author, but that are the proper result of combining the teachings of two or more biblical authors on a particular subject. The terms trinity, incarnation, and deity of Christ, for example, are not found in the Bible, but they usefully summarize biblical concepts.

Thus, a doctrine under consideration is seen in terms of its practical value for living the Christian life. Nowhere in scripture do we find doctrine studied for its own sake or in isolation from life. The biblical writers consistently apply their teaching to life. Therefore, any Christian studying the Bible this way should find his or her Christian life enriched and deepened during this study.

Because of the large number of topics covered in a study of systematic theology and because of the great detail with which these topics are analyzed, it is inevitable that someone studying in this manner for the first time will have many of his or her own personal beliefs challenged or modified, refined or enriched. It is of utmost importance therefore that each person beginning such a course firmly resolve in his or her own mind to abandon as false any idea which is found to be clearly contradicted by the teaching of Scripture. But it is also very important for each person to resolve not to believe any individual doctrine simply because a study or teacher says it is true, unless the study or teacher can convince the student from the text of Scripture itself. **It is Scripture alone, not "conservative evangelical tradition" or any other human authority, that must function as the normative authority for the definition of what we should believe.**

### **What are doctrines:**

In this study, the word doctrine will be understood in the following way:

A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic. This definition is directly related to our earlier definition of systematic theology, since it shows that a "doctrine" is simply the result of the process of doing systematic theology with regard to one particular topic.

**Over the course of our study we will be studying the following doctrines in great detail:**

*The Doctrine of the Word of God:*

- The Word of God
- The Canon of Scripture
- The Four Characteristics of Scripture:
  - Authority
  - Clarity
  - Necessity
  - Sufficiency

*The Doctrine of God:*

- The Existence of God
- The Know ability of God
- The Character of God
- The Trinity
- God's Providence
- Miracles
- Prayer
- Angels
- Satan and Demons

*The Doctrine of Man*

- The Creation of Man
- Man as Male and Female
- The essential nature of Man
- Sin
- The covenants between God and Man

*The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit*

- The Person of Christ
- The Atonement
- Resurrection and Ascension
- The Offices of Christ
- The Work of the Holy Spirit

*The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption*

- Common Grace
- Election and Reprobation
- The Gospel Call and Effective Calling
- Regeneration
- Conversion (Faith and Repentance)
- Justification(Right Legal Standing before God)
- Adoption(Membership in God's Family)

Sanctification(Growth in Likeness to Christ)  
Baptism in and Filling with the Holy Spirit  
The Perseverance of the Saints  
Death and the Intermediate state  
Glorification(Receiving a Resurrection Body)  
Union with Christ

*The Doctrine of the Church*

The Church: Its Nature, its Marks, and its Purposes  
The purity and Unity of the Church  
The Power of the Church  
Church Government  
Means of grace within the church  
Baptism  
The Lord's Supper  
Worship  
Gifts of the Holy Spirit

*The Doctrine of the Future*

The Return of Christ: When and How?  
The Millennium  
The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment  
The new heavens and new earth