

1. Theology's Purpose, Nature, and Methods

Biblical and Systematic Theology, Harpeth Christian Church

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Introduction

- Class syllabus (minus certification and ordination) and schedule
- Names of the people in the class and what do you want out of this class?

Body

- Who does theology?
 - *Theos + Logos*: Study of God
 - We all do theology, so let's engage and inform and be transformed.
- Why do theology?
 - 2 Tim 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. 17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.
 - 1 Tim 4:11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. 1 Tim 4:15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.
 - Results: The reason we do theology is because ideas, thoughts, and beliefs shape our very lives. So let's shape them.
 - Results: We also do theology for the next generation.
 - Command: We're told to do theology.
 - Virtue: And we do it for joy and delight in God.
- What is theology? Biblical and Systematic Theology
 - Which theology?

- Christian or Muslim?, Roman Catholic or Protestant?, Evangelical or Mainline?, Calvinist or Arminian?, Charismatic or Cessationist?
- Biblical, exegetical, systematic, historical, practical, polemical?
- We're doing a biblical and systematic theology approach in the stream of Classic Christianity (Orthodox), Protestant, Anabaptist, Restoration Movement, Evangelical, Arminian.
- What is biblical theology?
 - **Geerhardus Vos**: "Biblical Theology is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible."
 - **Don Carson**: "Biblical theology . . . seeks to uncover and articulate the unity of all the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves."
 - Andreas J. Kostenberger, **writes** that Biblical Theology is historical, inductive, and descriptive.
 - Historical in that it is what the Bible's text originally meant in historical context.
 - Inductive meaning, authorial intent is the aim, not imposing views onto the author's text.
 - Descriptive, meaning the theologian describes the tenancies in the terms of the biblical writer themselves as much as possible.
 - My working definition: Using the Bible as the primary source and language of theology.
- What is systematic theology?
 - Systematic theology, according to R.C. Sproul, is comprised of three disciplines: biblical theology, historical theology, and systematic theology.
 1. Biblical theology uses the Bible as source data.
 2. Historical theology looks at how doctrine has developed over the centuries through different people, creeds and confessions, and conflicts and counsels throughout history.
 3. And a systematic theologian takes the thoughts of the great thinkers throughout history and organizes them in a systematic way.
- What we're doing in this class is biblical and systematic theology.
 - I'm not a systematic theologian by training; my training is in biblical studies—the texts themselves; so I'm a Bible student who uses theological terms and systems as they're helpful.
- Where does theology come from?
 - Revelation:
 - General Revelation
 - Genesis 1

- Romans 1:18–20: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”
 - Special Revelation:
 - Prophets: Hebrews 1:1–3: “1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. “
 - Christ
 - Scripture
 - Scriptural Authority: Our highest, clearest, and codified form of revelation
 - Infallibility: It cannot fall
 - Inerrancy: It cannot err
 - Inspired and Authoritative
- How does one do theology?
 - Knowledge of God (*Epistemology proper, in the Apologetics class): different types of knowing.
 - Pre-modern: Knowledge comes from up there.
 - Modern: Knowledge is out there.
 - Post-modern: Knowledge is within.
 - Methodologies:
 - The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience
 - Scripture
 - Reason: logic, systems, and rational thought
 - Tradition: Creeds, History, “tradition” in the best sense
 - Experience: the subjective experience of taking on the knowledge of God
 - Categorizing your beliefs into levels of importance: Three Elements (Chad Ragsdale, *Christian Convictions*)
 - *Exercise*: Blank sheet: In a short paragraph, write out what your most important beliefs about God are. You get 1 minute, and you can only write three sentences.
 - *Exercise*: Draw a bullseye. Where would you place certain beliefs? - Dinosaurs, Jonah, Alcohol?

- Essential: Determine salvation; Necessary for salvation. The Nicene and Apostles creeds. Jesus is Lord, Jesus was incarnate, Jesus resurrected; we must be born again,
- Important: Determine congregation; Important for following Jesus together. For example: How one is converted precisely; how communion is taken; one's view of the sovereignty of God; your view of inspiration of Scripture.
- Personal: Determine leadership; Personal perspectives and convictions. For example: Evangelism methods; worship song preferences; ministry philosophy.

Conclusion

- Questions?
- Resources
- Memory verses
- Test
- Certification and ordination
- Videos