

SESSION 1

PROLEGOMENA

{ › INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE DOCTRINE ‹ }



“Definitions of Theological Disciplines”

Systematic Theology

- “the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and the relations between God and the universe, especially as He has revealed Himself in His word”
(W.R. Cook, *Systematic Theology in Outline Form*, 1:4).
- “the attempt to summarize religious truth or the belief system of a religious group (such as Christianity) through an organized system of thought...” (Grenz, *Pocket Dictionary*, 111).
- “systematic theology is any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic.”
(W. Grudem, *ST*, 21).

Biblical Theology

- “that branch of the theological science which deals
(1) systematically with the (2) historically conditioned
(3) progress of the self-revelation of God (4) as deposited
in the Bible.” (numbers added for emphasis)
(C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 12).

Historical Theology

- “the theology of the Church as it has been expounded (i.e. taught) in the Bible.” (W.R. Cook, *STOF*, 1:4).
- “study of the chronological development of theological thought...”
(Erickson, *CDCT*, 75).

Practical Theology

- the discipline of theology “concerned with the application of truth to the hearts of men.” (L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:5).



I. PROLEGOMENA (Introduction)

A. Definition : Prolegomena

1. Derivation

- Greek : “pro” (before)
“legō” (say, speak)
- Compound meaning (say beforehand,
prologue, introduction)

2. Significance

Prolegomena gives the necessary, foundational elements upon which to consider the various areas/topics of systematic theology.

B. Definition : Theology

1. Derivation

- Greek : “theos” (God)
“logos” (word, teaching)
- Compound meaning (a word or teaching about God)

2. Definition

Theology is the teaching (or doctrine or tenets) about God and His relation to the universe (reality).

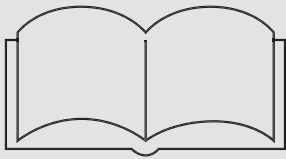
C. Other Related Definitions

- See preceding page 14.

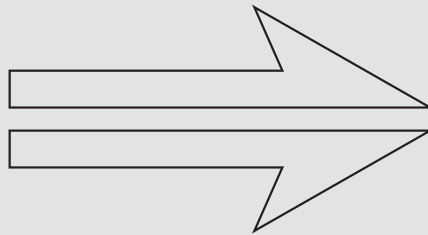
The Preaching Event

Preparation
Illumination
Creativity

Teacher



Text



Teaching



Target

Exegesis

Exposition
Explanation

Congregation
Hearers



D. Relationship to Other Disciplines

1. Exegesis :

The obtaining of the meaning of a Biblical passage by investigating the literal-grammatical-historical setting of the passage in order to ascertain the original meaning (of what the original writer meant by what he said).

2. Exposition :

The careful and organized explanation of the meaning and application of the Scriptures as based upon and found through careful exegesis.

Exposition :

“Interpretation, explanation, and clarification of the biblical passage.”

(Erickson, *CDCT*, 54)

3. Apologetics :

A subsidiary component of systematic theology which confirms and defends the case for theism, supernaturalism (e.g. miracles), authority of the Scriptures, and certain fundamental doctrines.

Apologetics :

"That branch of Christian theology which has as its aim the reasoned advocacy of the Christian faith. It includes both positive arguments for the truth of Christianity and rebuttals of criticism leveled at it."

(Erickson, *CDCT*, 14)

Other “Theologies”

- **Natural Theology :**
that theology which maintains that man can attain knowledge about God through reason and nature apart from special revelation in Scripture.
- **OT Theology :**
that branch of Biblical theology that focuses on the Old Testament teaching.
- **NT Theology :**
that branch of Biblical theology that focuses on the New Testament teaching.
- **Pauline, Johannine, Petrine (and others) Theology :**
that branch of theology that is restricted to the teachings of a particular Biblical writer (or book; e.g. *Theology of Hebrews*).

Quotes :

“The basic reason for studying systematic theology ... is that it enables us to teach ourselves and others what the whole bible says, thus fulfilling the second part of the Great Commission.”

(W. Grudem, *ST*, 22).

“Theology is knowing God ... You grow in knowledge of God as you know Him more and more as Lord, as King. First, he is the one who controls all things ... Second, you come to know God as the one who speaks with such authority that you must obey-in every area of your life: your social life, your moral life, even your intellectual life... Third, you come to know God as you sense more and more his presence in your life.”

(J. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, 73-75).

E. Reasons to Study Theology

1. Six Reasons

- a. Man has an inherent need to systematize or categorize knowledge.
- b. Systematic knowledge produces a better (broader, more integrated) understanding of the will of God (as contained in the Bible).
- c. The will of God (as derived from and contained in the doctrines and teachings of the Bible) produces healthy Christians.
- d. Healthy Christians resist the errors of the teachings of false doctrine.
- e. False doctrines are discerned and avoided when emphasis is given to sound doctrine (or orthodoxy).
- f. Orthodoxy (good teaching) is a necessary prerequisite to orthopraxy (good practice).

"The Great Commission and Theology"

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe **all that I commanded** you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

(Matthew 28:19-20 NASB)

“Requirements for Studying Theology”

A. Spiritual Requirements

1. Faith in God
2. Faith in the Bible
3. Faith in the ministry of the Holy Spirit

John 16:12-15 (MSG)

“I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, He will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to Himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; He will take from me and deliver it to you. Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I've said, 'He takes from me and delivers to you.'”

B. Intellectual Requirements

1. Proper methodology
 - a. Literal-grammatical-historial method
 - b. Inductive Bible Study method
 - c. “Analogy of Faith” method

“The idea that clearer passages of Scripture lend illumination to less clear portions.”
(Erickson, *CDCT*, 11)

2. Proper disciplined mind

- a. 2 Timothy 2:15 (AMP)
“Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.”
- b. Titus 1:9 (NASB)
“holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”



2. Selected Related Passages :

a. Acts 2:42 (NASB)

*“They devoted themselves to the **apostles’ teaching** and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

b. Ephesians 4:14-15 (AMP)

*“So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the prey of] the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead. ¹⁵ Rather, let our lives lovingly **express truth** [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).”*

c. 1 Timothy 1:3-4

“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God’s work—which is by faith.”

d. 1 Timothy 4:6 (AMP)

*“If you lay all these instructions before the brethren, you will be a worthy steward and a good minister of Christ Jesus, ever nourishing your own self on the **truths of the faith** and of the **good** [Christian] **instruction** which you have closely followed.”*

e. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (AMP)

“Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God’s will in thought, purpose, and action), ¹⁷ So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

f. 2 Timothy 4:1-3

*“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ² Preach **the Word**; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when men will not put up with **sound doctrine**. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”*

“Historical Systems of Theology”

Pelagianism

“The theology stemming from the thought of Pelagius, which emphasized human ability and free will rather than depravity and sinfulness. In the view of most Pelagians, it is possible to live without sin. The effect of Adam’s sin upon his descendants was simply that of a bad example.”

(Erickson, *CDCT*, 126).

Augustinianism

“A theological system emphasizing the depravity of human nature, the necessity of divine predestination, and the priority of faith over reason. To a large extent, Augustinianism involved a synthesis of platonic philosophy and Christian theology.”

(Erickson, *CDCT*, 17)

Semi-Pelagianism

“A doctrinal position developed during the fifth and early sixth century by persons who did not wish to adopt the views of either Pelagius or Augustine. The term, semi-Pelagianism, which was coined in the sixteenth century to describe this mediating position, is sometimes applied to Arminianism.”

(Erickson, *CDCT*, 151)

F. Two Major Approaches (Systems to Interpretation of Scriptures)

1. Covenant Theology

- a. Defined :
“the system of theology that centers on God as a covenant-making God and sees in the history of creation two great covenants : the covenant of works and the covenant of grace”
(Grenz, Pocket Dictionary, 32).

Note : some covenant theologians add a third : the covenant of redemption.

- b. Described :

Concepts of Covenant Theology

Comparisons	Covenant of Works	Covenant of Redemption	Covenant of Grace
Persons	With Adam	With Father and Son	With mankind
Promise	Physical/eternal life confirmed	Salvation provided for mankind	Eternal life
Condition	Obedience	---	Faith
Warning	Physical death	---	Eternal death
Time	Eden before Fall	Eternity Past	Eden after Fall

(Enns, *MHT*, 509)

“An Important Feature Of Dispensationalism”

Dispensationalism views the world as a household run by God. In this divine household God gives man certain responsibilities as administrator. If man obeys God within that economy (dispensation), God promises blessing; if man disobeys God, He promises judgment. Thus there are three aspects normally seen in a dispensation: (1) testing; (2) failure; (3) judgment. In each dispensation God has put man under a test, man fails, and there is judgment.

The basic concept of a dispensation is a stewardship. This is particularly seen in Luke 16:1-2. This parable illustrates the distinctive of a dispensation.

There are two parties. One has the authority to delegate duties; the other has the responsibility to carry them out. In this parable, the wealthy man and the steward (manager) are the two parties.

There are specific responsibilities. In the parable, the steward fails in his duties, wasting his master's goods.

There is accountability. The steward is called upon to give an account of his faithfulness as a steward.

There is change. The master has a right to remove the steward from his place of privilege and responsibility (Luke 16:2).

A dispensationalist is simply one who recognizes that God deals differently with people in different ages or economies.

Lewis Sperry Chafer used to say that if one does not bring a lamb to the altar in worshipping God, then he is a dispensationalist. One who worships on Sunday instead of Saturday is also a dispensationalist, because he recognizes the Sabbath was for Israel, not the church (Exod. 20:8-11).

(Enns, MHT, 519-20)



2. Dispensational Theology

a. Defined :

“A system of biblical interpretation and of theology which divides God's working into different periods which he administers on different bases. It involves a literal interpretation of Scripture, a distinction between Israel and the church, and a premillennial, pretribulational eschatology.”
(Erickson, CDCT, 44).

“A dispensation is ‘a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose’” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 29).

b. Described (as an approach to Interpretation) :

- (1) Dispensationalism uses the literal-grammatical-historical interpretative approach to all of scripture (even to prophecy; Covenant Theology often spiritualizes prophecy as fulfilled symbolically or allegorically).
- (2) Dispensationalism distinguishes between God's program for Israel and God's program for the church (Israel ≠ Church).
- (3) Dispensationalism sees the glory of God (not redemption) as the unifying theme of Scripture.

