

# Systematic Theology for the rest of us. | Class Notes

## Theology

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Theology is the study of God or of divine things. It comes from the Greek word "Theos" which means God, and "Logia" which means oracles, utterances or discourse (study).

### Systematic Theology:

A discipline of Christian theology that organizes and assembles the doctrines found in the Bible into an orderly and understandable unit.

- **Doctrine** = The specific beliefs or sub-categories within the larger area of Systematic Theology.

### The Ten Doctrines of Systematic Theology:

**Bibliology** – The doctrine of the bible

**Theology proper** – The doctrine of the existence of God

**Christology** – The doctrine of Christ

**Pneumatology** – The doctrine of the Holy Spirit

**Angelology** – The doctrine of angels

**Anthropology** – The doctrine of humanity.

**Hamartiology** – The doctrine of sin

**Soteriology** – The doctrine of salvation

**Ecclesiology** – The doctrine of the church

**Eschatology** – The doctrine of the end times

## Bibliology

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For the purpose of our class, we will first be looking at Bibliology. Bibliology is the study of the Bible, so, let's begin by looking at the origin and meaning of the word, "Bible" as well as the origin and meaning of the word "Scripture."

### Meaning of "Bible."

The English word bible is derived from the Greek word biblos, which means "book." Those who had custody of the manuscripts first used the Greek word to describe the collection, which later became known as "the Book."

# Systematic Theology for the rest of us. | Class Notes

## Meaning of "Scripture."

The word translated "Scripture" comes from the Greek word **γραφῆ** (graphe, graf-ay) which simply means "writing." The "writings" of the Old Testament were eventually collected into four major divisions: (1) the Law - 5 books; (2) History - 12 books; (3) Poetry - 5 books; and, (4) Prophecy - 17 books. Similarly, the New Testament has four major divisions: (1) the Gospels - 4 books; (2) the Acts of the Apostles - 1 book; (3) the Epistles - 21 books; and, (4) the Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ - 1 book.

## Claims of the Bible.

3800 x's the Bible declares "God said" or "thus says the Lord" • 25% of the Bible is prophetic in nature • Paul, Peter & John, Jesus & the Father all made acknowledgement of Scripture's authority.

## Continuity of the Bible.

- Different Occupations of writers.
- Different Locations of writing.
- Different Circumstances of writers

We will now deal with 5 aspects of bibliology. To start with we will look at the theme and purpose of scripture?

## **I. Theme of Scripture:**

The theme of scripture is essentially the Kingdom of God. This theme can be seen beginning in Genesis. The kingdom goes from the kingdom created to the kingdom fallen which then in the New Testament book of Revelation leads to the Kingdom restored. (read, "**He will Reign Forever**" Michael Vlach).

As we discuss bibliology we need to examine the two primary ways in which God has revealed himself to mankind. God has done this through what is called, Revelation.

### Revelation:

- Revelation is God conveying truth about himself to humanity. There are two different kinds of revelation found in the bible. There is:
  1. **General Revelation** which is God's witness of Himself through the creation to his creature. Scripture talks about this in Psalm 19:1-6 "The heavens and the sky..." as well as in Romans 1:20. The second kind of revelation is known as:
  2. **Special Revelation**. God uses this when He reveals himself directly and in greater detail. He has done this through direct acts like parting the red sea or speaking

# Systematic Theology for the rest of us. | Class Notes

directly to Adam in Gen. 2. Through dreams and visions like John's visions on Patmos, through Christ's incarnation in John 1:1-5 and through scripture itself.

How is the bible "*Special Revelation*?" Why is it different than any other book? The bible is special revelation because of:

## **II. Inspiration:**

There are several different theories of how God wrote the scriptures through men. They can be remembered by the initials **D.P.N.B.** Let's look at them for a moment. First of all, we have the:

### **1. Dictation Theory:**

- God gave the human writers a word for word dictation. There are some instances of this in the bible like Moses and the Ten Commandments or John on Patmos. However, the difference in style makes this very unlikely with the entire Bible.

### **2. Partial Theory:**

- God gave them some general ideas and they sat down and wrote the words from these general ideas.

### **3. Natural Theory:**

- The biblical writers gained inspiration not from God but from within themselves.

### **4. Biblical View:**

- Verbal plenary inspiration. Verbal meaning the Words, and Plenary meaning Every word or all parts of the bible not just some parts of it are authoritative. Through his Spirit, God inspired every word penned by the human authors in each of the 66 books of the original autographs.
- In doing so, God used the individual personality, language, style, and historical context of each writer to produce divinely authoritative writings. They are the work of both God and Man. This can be seen in 2 Timothy 3:16 (theopneustos).

There are two aspects of plenary or authoritative inspiration that we need to look at a little closer. These aspects are inerrancy as well as infallibility?

1. **Inerrancy:** literally means, "without error." The bible is without error in the original copies. As I said earlier, the biblical bases for this is 2 Timothy 3:16.
2. **Infallibility:** Means, unable to mislead or fail in accomplishing the divinely intended purpose.

# Systematic Theology for the rest of us. | Class Notes

The last two topics I want to look at under the bibliology section of this lesson are illumination, and canonicity.

What is illumination and what does it look like for the saved individual?

## **III. Illumination:**

- An enablement from the Holy Spirit to discern that the Scriptures are, in fact, the word of God, 1 John 2:20-21.
- When an individual is regenerated they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and with this comes "Illumination."

- **Illumination is not:**

A work of the Spirit by which the Scriptures come alive in some subjective way to each believer.

- **It does not:**

Provide new special revelation to the individual over and above what the text itself says.

- **It does not:**

Guarantee that every word will be immediately understood. This is where the "Perspicuity" (clarity) of Scripture enters the discussion. All scripture is generally easy to understand.

However, this does not mean that some aspects of the Scripture are not difficult to understand. Some aspects are difficult, and one needs to study and ask the Holy Spirit to give them Illumination or understanding.

Finally, we will look at the subject of Canonicity.

## **IV. Canonicity:**

This refers to the church's recognition and acceptance of the book of Scripture as God's Inspired Word. Over the centuries, three widely recognized principles were used to validate the writings that constituted divine, inspired revelation.

1. **Authored:** (External) Must be by a recognized prophet or apostle or someone associated with one.
2. **Continuity:** (Internal) The writing could not contradict or disagree with any previous Scripture.
3. **Agreement:** The Church had to display a consensus that a writing was an inspired book.

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There was no "Official" council or "Vote" to determine which books were in and which books were out. The books were recognized universally after the fact, that it was written by God and belonged in the bible.

## **Notes:**

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