

Systematic Theology

Class #8

Introduction:

Ecclesiology = Study of the Church.

- The eighth topic in the study of systematic theology. In today's culture the Church is a very familiar yet very misunderstood topic. It is one of the few aspects of theology that can be observed.¹ For several people it is the first and perhaps the only point, where Christianity is encountered. Below is a breakdown of where we are going in our class today.

Ecclesiology
Definition and Importance of the Church
Inauguration of the Church
Nature and Purpose of the Church
Spiritual Authority in the Church
Means of Grace Within the Church
Israel and the Church

I. Defining the Church

- We may be tempted to think that defining the church would be easy. The fact is, there is no consensus on what the Church is and how it fits in God's overall plans in history.
- Generic statements like, "The church is the people of God united in Christ through faith," are accurate, but they do not address some important questions such as:
 - 1.) Where did the Church begin?
 - 2.) What is the church's role both now and in the future?
 - 3.) How does the church relate specifically to Israel?
- We will deal with all of these topics today.

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology third edition*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1998) 950.

- **Definition:**
The New Covenant community of God as it exists in this dispensation between the events of Acts 2 (Day of Pentecost) through the rapture of the Church prior to the Day of the Lord.
- **Constituent:**
The believing remnant of Israel and believing Gentiles in this era between Acts 2 and the Rapture.
- The emphasis of this era is on Gentiles coming to faith although a remnant of believing Israel continues to exist.

II. Importance of the Church

- The Doctrine of the Church is of utmost importance. Unlike other doctrines we have looked at, i.e. Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, the Doctrine of the Church has not always been the subject of much study. It has often been left out in various systematic studies.
- We see several reasons in Scripture why the church must be regarded as an important area of study. (we will look at each of these more closely later)

1. Christ founded the Church.

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

2. Christ purchased the Church with His blood.

Acts 20:28

²⁸Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

3. The Church is the body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:23

²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

4. The Church is the chief instrument for glorifying through worship.

John 4:23-24.

²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

5. The Church is the instrument for bringing the Gospel to the nations in this age.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ 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.”

- Today, there are several ideas of what “church “actually is:²

A.) A Physical Building.

- Nowhere in the New Testament does the church mean a building. The Ekklesia of the New Testament is never a structure composed of stone or brick and mortar.

B.) A Denomination.

- Presbyterian Church, the Lutheran Church. Here again believers knew nothing of denominational lines.

C.) A State or National Church.

- This has been common in European countries. One particular church is governed and supported by the state.
- The idea of a state-run church finds no support in Scripture.

D.) A Particular Body of Believers – The Second Baptist Church etc..

- Not the same as a denomination but more specific.

E.) All believers in Jesus Christ.

F.) A local group of believers in a specific geographical area.

- Based on our definition, we can safely say the last two on our list qualify to be identified as the church in some sense. These two can be labeled as the Universal and the Local Church.

1. ***The Universal and Local Church.***

The Universal church includes all genuine Christians throughout the entirety of the church age. So, this is all true believers throughout church history. Both those alive and those already in heaven

The New Testament instructs those who are part of the universal church in every generation, to meet together regularly in local assemblies. This is the local church, and this pattern can be seen in the early church. **Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; 1 Cor. 11:18-20.**

The local church is designed to equip believers by feeding them through the teaching of God’s Word, **Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 4:13**, by leading them in corporate worship, **Eph.**

² Michael Vlach, *Theology IV, Covenants, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology*, (The Master’s Seminary, 2016).

5:18-20, protecting them under the shepherding oversight of godly leaders, Acts 20:28; Heb.13:7, and providing them with opportunities to serve one another.

- So, that is the universal and the local church but there is also the visible and the invisible church. What is this?

2. *The Visible and Invisible Church.*

The visible church is made up of all who outwardly profess faith in Christ. But, as you know, not all who profess faith in Christ are truly born-again.

Matt. 24-30. So, not all who are part of the visible church are part of the invisible church. The invisible church consists of those who are truly born-again.

This distinction appeared as early as Augustine.³ It was first elaborated on by Martin Luther as well as by John Calvin. It was their way of dealing with this apparent discrepancy of the unconverted professing faith but not truly being saved.⁴

They needed to explain that simply being a member of a Church did not justify the individual. Justification was by grace through faith in Christ. Those who are justified by Christ are truly members of the invisible and the visible church.

- Next, we move from looking at the importance of the church to looking at the Nature and Purpose of the Church.
- So, when do the church begin?

III. Inauguration of the Church

- There is much disagreement as to when the church began. Some say it began with Adam, some say it began with Abraham, some say with the earthly ministry of Jesus, some say on the day of Pentecost, and others say it began during the ministry of Paul.
- So, what does the Bible say? Well, the best New Testament evidence clearly points to the day of Pentecost as the beginning of the church.

NT Evidence:

A.) **Jesus words** = Jesus declares in **Matt. 16:18**, “I will build my church.” This indicates that Jesus will create a community that does not exist yet. Thus, the church is still future at this point which was late in Jesus’ ministry.

B.) **The Mystery of the Church** = Paul discusses the mysterious aspect of the church in **Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7, 10**. This signifies something that had been previously hidden but now is revealed.

³ Augustine, on Christian Doctrine 3.31-34.

⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology third edition*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1998) 966.

C.) **The Foundation of the Church** = The church's foundation is the apostles and prophets with Jesus being the cornerstone. This fact, too, affirms that the church is a New Testament organism **Eph. 2:20**.

D.) **Outpouring of the Holy Spirit** = The church is inherently linked to the NT ministry of the Holy Spirit.

E.) **The Spirits Coming at Pentecost** = While the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and was at work in the OT era, His role took on a unique function with the events of Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost.⁵

IV. Nature and Purpose of the Church.

- The NT uses many analogies to depict God's relationship to his people. The Nature of the church is too broad to be exhausted. The NT often uses various descriptions and metaphors to teach us essential truths about the church. Let's look at some.

1. The Nature of the Church:

- When looking at the nature of the church, we ask the question, "What is the church?" The bible describes the church in several ways.

A.) The People of God.

- The concept of the people of God emphasizes God's initiative in choosing them. - **Romans 9:24-26; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10**.
- This concept is rooted in the OT. Israel often referred to as the people of God. **Exodus 15:13;16, Numbers 14:8**, This is not to say that Israel has replaced the church.
- This just shows historical continuity in his redemptive program. The church is referring to God's people in this age, however, Israel will still enjoy this position as a nation.

Romans 11:26-29

²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, The deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins. ²⁸ From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

- What are some of the implications for being the "people of God?" Ownership by God, God cares for and protects His people, Holiness is expected of His people.

B.) The Body of Christ.

⁵ Michael Vlach, *Theology IV, Covenants, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology*, (The Master's Seminary, 2016).

- This is probably the most extended image of the church. This image emphasizes that the church is the locus of Christ's activity now just as was his physical body during his earthly ministry. This image is both of the universal **Eph. 1:22-23**, as well as the local church **1 Cor. 12:27**.
- It stresses the unity of the church with Christ, and the unity of each Christian with each other. Just as one part of our physical body is dependent on the others, so is every member of the body of Christ. Each believer depends on the others, and the others depend on him.⁶
- We should work together just as a fully functioning physical body does. We are one body in Christ. **Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12**. Of this body we are told that Christ is the head distinguishing him from the rest of the body. **Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19**. This encourages us to be subject to him.

C.) A The Temple of the Spirit.

- The church is now indwelt by the spirit both individually and collectively. Paul expresses this in his letters to the Corinthians and the Ephesians. **1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22** (corporately) **1 Cor. 6:19** (individually).
- Since the Holy Spirit dwells within the church and imparts his life to it, those qualities that are his nature and are spoken of as the fruit of the spirit, will be found in the church.⁷

D.) The Branches of the Vine.⁸

- In the same way that the branches depend wholly on the vine for their life, believers depend fully on the savior as the source of their spiritual vitality. A branch that is not connected to the vine cannot bear fruit. **John 15:1-11**
- In the same way, an individual who is not connected to the true vine, Jesus Christ, cannot bear good fruit because they are not true believers.
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- Now let's move to looking at the purpose of the church.

2. The Purpose of the Church.

⁶ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Christian belief*, (Philipsburg NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 1020.

⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology third edition*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1998) 962.

⁸ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 750.

- The purpose of the church can be summed up in this statement: The purpose of the church is to glorify God by actively building its members up in faith, faithfully teaching the Word, regularly observing the ordinances, proactively fostering fellowship among believers, and boldly communicating the truth of the gospel to the lost. This can be broken down into a few categories.

A.) Exalting God.

- This is primarily done through worship and praise. Whenever the church gathers, worship ought to be the ultimate priority.

John 4:23-24.

²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

- Since God is zealous for his glory, **Isaiah 48:9-11**, his people should also be consumed with a desire to glorify and exalt him, **1 Cor. 10:31**.⁹

B.) Edification.

- Paul continually spoke of the edification of the body. In **Ephesians 4:12**, for example, he indicates that God has given various gifts to the church “To equip his people for the work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”¹⁰

Ephesians 4:11-12

¹¹And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the ¹³saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

- This includes fellowship. In the Greek, the word for fellowship literally means, sharing. This takes place in a variety of ways. The early church met together for the fellowship of breaking bread and prayer, **Acts 2:42**.
- For them this consisted of eating a fellowship meal, called the love feast, which was followed by the Lord’s Supper. Fellowship emphasizes the fact that believers belong together.¹¹

C.) Evangelism.

- Evangelism is to always be at the forefront of the church. This takes place through an emphasis on missionaries as well as equipping the saints to go out and evangelize in their local communities.

¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology third edition*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1998) 974.

¹¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1989), 354.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ 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.”

- We need to be sure that in our zeal to engage in evangelism that we do not forget that discipleship is part of this. We are commanded to go into the world and make disciples, not just converts.
- Once an unbeliever repents and trusts fully in Christ and Christ alone for salvation, they are to be initiated into the church through baptism and discipled by the church through sound teaching.
- Okay, so we have looked at the definition and importance of the church, we have examined the inauguration of the church, and we just observed the nature and purpose of the church.
- Now we move on to looking at the Spiritual authority in the church. This will include where that authority comes from and who it is given to.

V. Spiritual Authority in the Church

- As we discuss spiritual authority in the church, we need to begin with the ultimate authority. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and thus is the ultimate authority.
- He is the author and perfecter of our faith **Hebrews 12:2**, he is the cornerstone on which the church is founded **1 Peter 2:4-8**.
- With all of that being said, he is the one who gives authority to godly men to lead his church.
- **Hebrews 13:7** identifies leaders in the local church that care for the spiritual welfare of the people; believers are to be in submission to those in authority over them. Several offices denoting the leaders are mentioned in Scripture.¹²

Hebrews 13:7

⁷ Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

1. Elders

A. Designations ~ When we come to Scripture, we see that there are two basic terms that identify the office of elder.

¹² Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1989), 355.

- (1) **Presbyters** (*Presbuteros*) = This term indicates wisdom or in a literal sense to mean an older man or women **1 Timothy 5:1;2**. Used in a more figurative sense for leaders. We see it being used for the Sanhedrin in **Acts 4:5**.

Based on the use of this word in Scripture, we see several rights and responsibilities of Elders.¹³

- A. Authority to distribute money. **Acts 11:30**
- B. Determine what constitutes orthodox doctrine. **Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 16:2**.
- C. Receive reports about missionary work. **Acts 20:17; 21:18**.
- D. They are to preach and teach. **1 Timothy 5:17**.
- E. They are to be respected. **1 Timothy 5:17**.
- F. They are not to be dictators. **1 Peter 5:1-3**.
- G. They are to visit and pray for the sick. **James 5:14**.

Another term related to the office of elder that we see in Scripture is overseer. This term is sometimes used interchangeably with presbuteros, it is:

- (2) **Overseer** (*Episcopos*) = This term means to watch over like a shepherd. It stresses the work or function of the elder. It is his duty to nurture and feed the flock of God entrusted to him. **Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7**.

These terms are used interchangeably, but there is an important difference. Presbuteros stresses the dignity of the office while Episkopos emphasizes the work of the office. Okay, so now that we have looked at the terms that designate the Elders in Scripture, namely Presbyters and Overseers. Now let's move on to looking at the qualifications for this office.

B. Qualifications ~ The qualifications for the office of Elder are set forth in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.⁴ *He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity*⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),⁶ *and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.*⁷ *And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

- Elders are to be typified by those fifteen characteristics. When it says, Above reproach, it does not mean that he must be perfect. It means that he must be a man that there is nothing in his life that could cause someone to accuse him of. Also, the husband of one wife is not referring to polygamy, rather to a man who has

¹³ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 760.

been divorced and remarried.

○ **What if he was divorced before he was saved?**

This is a case-by-case situation. regardless of the specifics of any one situation, the general principle is this:

- Does he enjoy the complete and full affirmation of the leaders and people of his own congregation, and is he presently living out the qualifications listed in **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1**? If a particular local church scrutinizes his life and ministry and sees nothing in his present character or past conduct that brings a reproach, he may, in God's good providence, serve as an elder in that place. Strauch gives wise words on this account.¹⁴
- What does **1 Timothy** say about sexual and marital sins committed before a person's conversion to Christ? What about people who have legally divorced and remarried (assuming the local church allows for such)? What about the forgiveness and restoration of a fallen spiritual leader?
- These and many other painful and controversial questions are not answered directly here. They must be answered from the whole of Scripture's teaching on divorce and remarriage, forgiveness, grace, and restoration, as well as its teaching on leadership example and the full spectrum of elder qualifications.¹⁵
- So those are the qualifications, now let's look at the duties of the elder.¹⁶

C. Duties ~ The duties of the elder involve shepherding the flock **Acts 20:28**, teaching **1 Timothy 3:2**, ruling or general leadership **1 Timothy 5:17**, and guarding against error **Titus 1:9**.

D.) Number ~ In Scripture we see a plurality of elders mentioned frequently. **Acts 14:23**; **Philippians 1:1**; **Titus 1:5**.

- How do we know that the plurality of Elders is the biblical model when in Revelation each of the letters is written to "The Angel" of the Church at that particular city which is referring to a pastor?
- Well, the best way to understand that text is to first of all, compare what is being said in Revelation to what we know about the pattern for church planting given by Paul.
- If we look at the book of Acts chapter 14, we see that after preaching the

¹⁴ <https://www.gty.org/library/can-a-man-who-is-divorced-andor-remarried-be-an-elder> Lance Quin.

¹⁵ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, (Littleton CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 2006).

¹⁶ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1989), 355.

gospel in the cities of Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, Lyconis, Derbe) Paul and Barnabas appointed "Elders" in those churches 14:23.

- Also, if we look at Revelation Chapter 2, we see John writing to the angel of the Church in Ephesus. If we go back to the book of Acts and look at chapter 20 in verse 17, we see that Paul had appointed "Elders" in the Church of Ephesus.
- With all of that being said, when the letters are addressed to "The Angel" of these churches, in light of the facts we just looked at it is best to understand these pastors as being the representative for the group of elders.
- If we were to bring this into our time, we could say Todd, as the primary teaching Elder, is the representative for the Elders of Maranatha. This makes sense because he is the one in front that everyone sees. We see a similar example in the Apostle Peter.
- There were twelve Apostles, but Peter was often the spokesman or representative for the group. We see that often Jesus would ask the apostles a question and Peter alone would answer, not because he was the only Apostle, but because he was the representative for the group.

2. Deacons

- A. **Designations** ~ In defining the office of deacon, New Testament puts primary weight on a person's moral character. The word deacon is the common word that means "minister" or "servant" and is used many times in the New Testament in a nontechnical sense **Matthew 20:26; Mark 9:35.**
- B. **Office** ~ Whereas it is not clearly stated, it appears that the origin of the office began in **Acts 6:1-6** where seven men were selected to care for the material needs of widows in the congregation. This word developed and became the word used for any service or ministry that might be performed to meet the needs of other people in the congregation.¹⁷
- C. **Qualifications** ~ These qualifications are found in **1 Timothy** as well. They are in **1 Timothy 3:8-13.**
1 Timothy 3:8-13
⁸Deacons likewise *must be* men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, ⁹*but* holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. ¹¹Women *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹²Deacons must be husbands of *only* one wife, *and* good managers of *their* children and their own households. ¹³For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁷ Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1989).

- So, what about verse 11? I know that is what you are all wondering. What is this talking about? There are two primary views on this, and both are held by godly men and women on both sides.
- I will tell you the views on V. 11, then tell you what I believe and answer the question of why Maranatha does not have an office of deaconess.

D. Two Views on 1 Timothy 3:11

(1) It is Referring to a Deacons Wife.

- Those who hold to this view believe that v.11 is most naturally read to understand it as a deacon's wife.
- They point to the fact that immediately before this verse, Paul is referring to men, and immediately after he is also referring to men as deacons.
- If it were referring to a deaconess, verses 8-10 and 12-13 would be referring to deacons with this one verse about deaconesses placed in the middle. This seems quite awkward.¹⁸
- Those holding to this view will point to **1 Timothy 2:12**. If a woman were put in the office of deacon, she would inevitably take on this role.

1 Timothy 2:10-12

¹⁰ but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. ¹¹ A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. ¹² But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.

- This is the view I hold and also the view that Maranatha has espoused in their understanding of this office. As I list the other view, I will give a rebuttal. You may or may not agree and that is okay.

(2) It is Referring to the Office of Deaconess.

- Those who hold this view will point to three things. First, Paul does not insert the possessive pronoun "their" before the word "women" or "wives."¹⁹

¹⁸ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1989), 356.

¹⁹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 771-775.

Answer = This is true, however, it is not necessarily proof that this is referring to the office of deaconess. The same Greek word is used for “women” as is used for “wives” it is *goo-nay*. So, if it said, “wives” without the possessive pronoun, it would still be understood.

- Second, the apostle does not address the wives of elders in the same context in **3:2-7**. Why would he elaborate on the behavior of a deacon’s wife but not address the wives of elders?

Answer = Because the very nature of the office of deacon lends itself to husband-and-wife ministry. It is in its very name an office of service. For example, serving meals, visiting the sick, providing material needs. All of these are often done by a husband and a wife. So, although the wife is “serving” alongside her husband, she does not hold the office of deaconess in the church.

- Third, the description of Phoebe in **Romans 16:1** provides a likely example as a woman who served as a deaconess.

Answer = Once again, I would say this is indicating that Phoebe is a “servant” in that she serves, but I would not hold that she was holding the office of deaconess.

VI. Means of Grace within the Church

- Historically this has referred to the instruments through which God’s Spirit graciously grows believers in Christlikeness as he fortifies them in faith and conforms them to the image of his Son **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**.
- The means of grace within the Church include: God’s Word, Baptism, The Lord’s Supper, Prayer, Worship, Fellowship, and Church Discipline. Lets take a few moments to look at each.

1. God's Word

- This is the primary means by which the Spirit grows and sanctifies believers. When a believer is saturating their mind with the Word of God, they come under the Spirit's control and they are walking by the Spirit **Galatians 5:16**. They are sowing to the Spirit rather than to the flesh **Galatians 6:8**.
- The Word of God is a key part of the Spirit's armor against sin and temptation. Churches must prioritize the ministry of the Word. This is primarily accomplished through reading, teaching, and preaching the Scriptures **1 Timothy 4:13**.

2. Baptism

- If we look to Scripture, we see that Jesus gave the Church two ordinances that they are to observe: Baptism, **Matthew 3:13-17;28:19**, and the Lord's Supper, **Luke 22:19-20**.
- Much ink has been spilt in an effort to defend various modes of baptism. Many have used great theological argument to defend their stance on sprinkling or pouring. However, if we take the word baptize for what it means, we have a clear understanding of what the mode should be.
- The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo* and it means "to dip under" or "to submerge." This literal rendering of the word should guide the Church in the practice of this ordinance.
- It should be done in a manner that completely submerges the individual. This method also is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- When discussing baptism, we need to talk about the various aspects to this in the Scriptures. To begin with let's look at the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

A. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

- The New Testament teaches that all believers are immersed into Christ Jesus at the moment of conversion, **Romans 6:3**. They are baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit. Through this Spirit baptism (which is entirely a work of God).²⁰ believers are united with Christ, **1 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:27**, and placed into his body, the church.
- Spirit baptism occurs only once, at the moment of salvation, and should not be sought as a secondary, post conversion experience. Many people will point to

²⁰ John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine*, (Wheaton IL: Crossway Publishers), 2021

the book of Acts to defend the idea the believers ought to seek a baptism of the Holy Spirit after conversion.

- Those who hold to this are mission the transitional nature of the book of Acts. It is a book of transition from the old covenant to the new. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurred in some of these accounts in Acts was to demonstrate to the Jews that God's mercy and grace of salvation was also extended to the Gentiles through the Holy Spirit.
- Also, we need to understand that these events are descriptive, not prescriptive. The accounts in Acts that show individuals being baptized in the Holy Spirit sometime after conversion are simply describing what took place. They are not prescribing this be done today.²¹

B. Intent of Baptism

- Baptism is intended to be the internal reality of Salvation. A new believer is to be baptized in water as a public testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ.
- This is the first step of obedience for believers after they have embraced the Lord. Though baptism is not salvific, it is commanded by Christ himself, **Matthew 28:19**.
- Baptism is to be done only by believers. Infants therefore should not be baptized. **Colossians 2:12** states that those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, have been raised with him through faith. An infant is unable to consciously place their faith in Jesus Christ.²²

C. Baptism and Salvation

- It must be understood that water baptism is not a means of salvation, but a symbol of the believer's union with Christ and of Holy Spirit baptism. Evidence of this can be seen in the thief on the cross in **Luke 23:40-43**.
- Holding to the belief that baptism is required for salvation is just another form of a works-based salvation and must be rejected. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

3. The Lord's Table

- This is the second ordinance that must be observed by the church. Unlike baptism, which is observed only once following conversion, the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated repeatedly throughout the Christian life.

²¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 1989), 356.

²² Ibid.

A. Background and Practice

- In reading the gospel accounts, we see that on the night Jesus was betrayed, he celebrated a final Passover meal with his disciples and instituted what came to be known as the Lord's Supper, or Communion **Matthew 26:26-29**.
- Though believers ought to always pursue holiness, **1 Peter 1:15-17**, the celebration of the Lord's supper is an occasion when they ought to carefully examine their hearts, confessing and repenting from any known sin before the Lord.
- Those who participate in Communion without repenting of known sin profane the celebration and invite the chastisement of God.²³

B. Views on the Meaning of Communion

- **Transubstantiation**: This is the Roman Catholic view which believes that the bread and the wine actually become the physical flesh and blood of Jesus. The bread and blood are not seen as symbolic of the flesh and blood of Christ but become them.
- **Consubstantiation**: This is the view of Luther. This view believes that (somehow) the real presence of Christ is in, with and under the elements but stops short of saying the elements become the flesh and blood. This view also does not have biblical support.
- **The Lord's Supper is a memorial**:
A memorial of Jesus giving himself up for us: "This is my body which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me" **Luke 22:19**. It is a memorial of the establishment of the new covenant and the forgiveness it brings. This is the biblical view.²⁴
- **Prerequisites for the Lord's Supper**:
 1. Salvation
 2. Baptism
 3. Heart preparation and self-examination.

4. Prayer

- Corporate prayer when the church is gathered and prayer for one another in the

²³ John MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrine*, (Wheaton IL: Crossway Publishers), 2021

²⁴ Todd Dykstra Notes from His Theology Class on Ecclesiology.

body of Christ are powerful means by which the Lord bring blessings upon Christians within the church.

- Lloyd Jones reminds us of the sanctifying power of prayer: “Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God. It is the highest activity of the human soul, and therefore it is at the same time the ultimate test of a man’s true spiritual condition.”²⁵
- There is nothing that tells the truth about us as Christian people so much as our prayer life...Ultimately, therefore, a man discovers the real condition of his spiritual life when he examines himself in private, when he is alone with God.”²⁶
Prayer is the means by which we harness ourselves to God’s mighty power; therefore, great blessings come to those who pray.

Acts 4:31 ~ And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Ephesians 6:18-19 ~ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

Philippians 4:6-7 ~ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 4:16 ~ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

James 5:16 ~ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

5. Worship

- Since worship is what we were created for, it becomes one of the primary means by which God sanctifies us and makes us holy. Worshipping the Lord corporately has a humbling effect on us and causes us to respond rightly to God. It is through genuine congregational worship that God brings His people great blessings.

Chronicles 5:13-14 ~ when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD saying, “He

²⁵ Todd Dykstra Notes from His Theology Class on The Means of Grace in the Church..

²⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2:45

indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,” then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God

John 4:24 ~ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

James 4:8 ~ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

6. Church Discipline

- Practicing church discipline has a sanctifying effect on the entire body
Not only does it keep the bride of Christ pure, it also has a way of demonstrating God’s heart toward sin and His earnest desire that we live holy lives

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ~ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Timothy 5:20 ~ Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

7. Fellowship

- Believers need each other to grow in holiness. The numerous “one-anothers” in the New Testament testify to the great blessing which comes from being part of the body
The fact that Paul refers to the church as a “body” (1 Cor 12) demonstrates that blessing that comes to fellow believers when they engage in mutually sanctifying relationships within the body of Christ

Acts 2:42 ~ They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:44-45 ~ And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

Acts 4:32-34 ~ And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales.

Hebrews 10:24-25 ~ consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together.

Systematic Theology

Class #9

Introduction:

Eschatology = Study of the Church.

- As we move to the final division of systematic theology, it is appropriate that it be eschatology. The first thing I would like to do is look at the covenants in scripture. It is essential that one have a good understanding of the covenants when looking at Eschatology.

Eschatology
Biblical Covenants
Covenant Theology
Dispensational Theology
Millennial Kingdom

I. Biblical Covenants

• Covenants

- Noahic Covenant.
- Abrahamic Covenant.
- Mosaic Covenant.
- Davidic Covenant.
- New Covenant.

1. The Noahic Covenant. (Genesis 8:20-9:17).

- The covenant God made with Noah after Noah left the Ark.

(a) Provisions of the Noahic Covenant.

- God will not destroy the earth by water again.
- God will provide stability for nature.
- Noah is to multiply and fill the earth.
- God causes animals, birds, and fish to fear man.
- Animals are given to man as food, just like plants were at creation.
- Man's life is sacred. Neither man nor animal is to kill a human being.
- Capital punishment is to occur for those who murder human being.

(b) Parties of the covenant.

- Covenant is between God and Noah and his family.
- Covenant is also with all creation.

(c) Sign of the covenant.

- The rainbow.

(d) This is a perpetual Covenant.

- No indication in scripture that it has been suspended or canceled in any way.

2. The Abrahamic Covenant. (Genesis 12; 13; 15; 17;18; 22)

- This must be considered as the basis of the entire covenant program. The record of making of the covenant and the provisions of the covenant with Abraham are found in a number of places in the book of Genesis. (Gen. 12; 13; 15; 17;18; 22). There were three basic aspects of this covenant:

(a) Seed (descendants) Genesis 12:7.

- The seed begins to take form through the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

- The New Testament discloses that this great “seed” ultimately includes all those who follow Abraham’s pattern of faith that justifies, whether Jew or Gentile.

(b) Land. (Genesis 12:7)

- Because the concept of “nation” carries a territorial aspect, the land must be viewed as a necessary corollary to the promised seed that would constitute the “great nation”. Thus, the people and the land belong together.

(c) Blessing. (Genesis 12:2-3)

- The construction of the Hebrew text of Genesis 12:2-3 reveals that the ultimate purpose was to bless all the people of the earth. Therefore, Abraham and the people of Israel were intended from the beginning to be the channel in which blessings would be brought to the peoples of the world.

There are 3 areas of blessings made in the Abrahamic Covenant.

1. Personal blessings for Abraham. 12:1-3
 2. Blessings for Abrahams descendants or national blessings.
 3. Universal blessings which would include all people.
- Some believe that the Abrahamic Covenant is conditional because some of the wording seems to lend itself to a conditional covenant.
 - Others state that it is unconditional. Those who see it as conditional state that Israel has forfeited their claim to the promises of God because of their disobedience.
 - Along with other various passages, **Genesis 15:17-21**, “The ratification of the covenant” demonstrates the unconditional nature of this covenant.

3. **The Mosaic Covenant. (Exodus 19).**

- This covenant was given to Israel on the heels of her exodus from Egypt.

(a) **The Nature/Purpose of Mosaic Covenant.**

- Gracious.
- Conditional.
- Temporary.
- Specifically given to Israel.
- Allows Israel to stay connected to Abrahamic Covenant.
- Allows Israel to be witness to nations.
- Moral/Civil/Ceremonial commands.
- Law is a unit that cannot be divided.
- Way for Israel to be separate and holy.
- Preserve seed line of Messiah.

4. **Davidic Covenant. (2 Samuel 7:12-16)**

(a) **Provisions of the Davidic Covenant:**

- David's name will be made great.
- Israel will be provided a house or place of their own.
- Israel will receive undisturbed rest from enemies.
- A Dynasty for David.
- A coming Son will establish a kingdom.
- Solomon to rebuild the temple.
- Solomon's kingdom established forever.
- It involves blessing mankind.

(b) **Character of the Davidic Covenant:**

- Unconditional.
- Eternal. **2 Sam. 7:13**

5. **New Covenant. (Deuteronomy 30:1-6)**

(a) **Character of the New Covenant:**

- Unconditional. **Jeremiah 31:31-34.**
- Eternal. **Jeremiah 31:36, 40; 32:40.**

(b) **Provisions of the New Covenant:**

- Circumcision of the heart; God's law on the heart.
- Rebuilding of Jerusalem; Return to the land of Israel.
- Spiritual cleansing from sin; A new heart; indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Empowerment to obey; permanent possession of land; be the people of God.
- Material prosperity for Israel; united Israel; Davidic King reigns.
- People multiply; God's sanctuary present; God dwells with his people.
- Justice and righteousness; people living securely.
- Coming of redeemer; Holy Spirit poured out upon all.

- Teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

II. Covenant Theology

- A framework by which individuals view the flow of Scripture through lens of three covenants that are not directly stated to be covenants.
 1. Covenant of Works
 2. Covenant of Grace
 3. Covenant of Redemption

(a) The Covenant Theology Hermeneutics: (Interprative principles).

- New Testament priority or New Testament as lense for interpreting/ re-interpreting the Old Testament.
- Typological interpretation (OT is primarily types and shadows).
- Specifics of many OT promises and predictions are fulfilled/absorbed into Christ.

i. Heavy sense of “already” eschatology.

- Davidic reign of messiah taking place today.
- Millennium taking place today.
- The genealogical principle. Comes from the Abrahamic Cov. “To you and your children.” This is generally infant baptism. They say Circumcision applied to all males and now infant baptism replaces circumcision and it extends to the children.

ii. Federal headship = Representatives of humanity.

- Adam represents lost man.
- Christ represents redeemed man.
- Continuity with the Mosaic law for today.
- Moral elements of the Mosaic law are in effect today.

- Covenant theology was developed as a system in the seventeenth Century while dispensationalism began in the mid-nineteenth Century.
- The next major system in the realm of eschatology is known as,

III. Dispensational Theology

- Dispensationalism is a system of theology primarily concerned with the doctrines of ecclesiology and eschatology that emphasizes the historical grammatical meaning of Old Testament prophetic passages and covenants, also emphasizes a distinction between Israel and the Church and a future salvation and restoration of the nation Israel in a future earthly kingdom.
- Dispensationalism was first proposed by John Nelson Darby in the mid 1800’s. According to Darby, God’s plan for the ages unfolds in 7 dispensations.

1. **Innocence** (From creation to the fall)
2. **Conscience** (From fall to landing of the Ark)
3. **Human Government** (From landing of the Ark to the call of Abraham)
4. **Promise** (From call of Abraham to the giving of the law)
5. **Law** (Giving of the law to the ministry of Christ)
6. **Church** (Ministry of Christ to the rapture and return of Christ)
7. **Kingdom** (Return of Christ to the New Heaven and New Earth.)

(a) Progressive Dispensationalism?

- Progressive Dispensationalism is a form of dispensationalism that came about in the late 1980's. It offered further modifications to dispensational theology. The term, "Progressive" refers to the
 - progressive relationship of the successive dispensations to one another. Basically, progressive dispensationalism believes that the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants are being progressively fulfilled today.
- Now, that is a very basic look at these two theological systems. We will now move on to look at Millennial issues.

IV. The Millennial Kingdom

- There are three basic beliefs on the millennial kingdom.
 - It is important to point out that which of these views you hold to will be greatly impacted by how you view the chronology of **Revelation 19-20**. The premillennial view holds to a **Sequential** view of these chapters. In other words, they believe that, in time, chapter 20 comes chronologically after chapter 19.
 - The other two views hold to a **Recapitulatory** view which believes that chapter 20 takes place before chapter 19 chronologically in time.
 - Let's look at each. The first we will look at is premillennialism.
1. **Premillennialism** = This is the view that Christ will return before the millennium.
 - The present age will climax with a period of great tribulation and Christ's return.
 - When He returns He will set up His kingdom and reign on earth for 1000 years.
 - When he returns, believers will be resurrected to reign with him and Satan will be bound in the abyss where he will remain for 1000 years.
 - During the 1000 years, Christ will reign in righteousness and there will be peace and justice on the earth.
 - At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released from the abyss and will gather the remaining unbelievers for battle against Christ, but they will be defeated.

After the defeat, all the unbelievers will be raised from the dead and judged according to their deeds.

After final judgement, believers and unbelievers will enter the eternal state.

2. **Postmillennialism** = This is the view that Christ will return after the millennium. The present age will progressively get “better” and transform slowly into the kingdom of God. Due to this “progressive” change, it is difficult to discern the exact starting point of the millennium. At the end of the millennium there will be a short time of apostasy at which time Christ will return judge mankind then enter into the eternal state.
 3. **Amillennialism** = This is the view that there will be no future millennium in the sense that the pre- or postmillennialists teach. In other words, the present age is the Millennium. The term “Millennium” just means a long period of time not actually 1000 years.
- Now, within the realm of Eschatology, there is another issue that comes up besides the issue of the millennium. That issue is that of the “Rapture.” There are essentially four different views of the Rapture. Let’s take them one at a time.

Pre-Tribulational = This is the idea that Christ will remove the Church from the world prior to Daniel’s seventieth week. Scriptural support for this view can be seen in **Revelation 3:10**. Also **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

Mid-Tribulational = This is the idea that the Church will go through half of the tribulation and then be raptured by Christ.

Pre-Wrath = This view holds that Christians will be raptured at the end of the great tribulation (mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel), but before the **Day of the Lord** (God’s wrath). According to this perspective, the great tribulation begins three and a half years after the anti-Christ makes a covenant with many (Daniel 9:27) in the middle of **Daniels 70th week**. The 70th week is a reference to Daniel 9:24 where each day of the week corresponds to a year for a total of 7 years.

Post-Tribulational = In this view, the Church will go through the great tribulation and then will be caught up to meet Christ.

Now, I would like to look at a couple different topics within the area of the tribulation. Let’s talk about,

The Day of the Lord = Whenever this term is used in scripture it is used as a term that indicates God’s Future Wrath. The Day of the lord involves judgement only not blessing. The Day of the Lord occurs at the end of the tribulation period and again at the end of the millennium. Next, I want us to consider “Jacob’s” Trouble.

Jacob’s Trouble = This term comes from **Jeremiah 30:7**. It refers to the great tribulation. It speaks of a day of great persecution; however, Jacob will be saved out of it. This points to a pre-tribulation rapture. So, what is the purpose of the tribulation?

Purpose = The purpose of the Great Tribulation can clearly be seen in Daniel 9:24, Here it tells us the purpose,

- The purpose of the great tribulation is to introduce a worldwide revival when, under the preaching of the 144,000 servants of God, a multitude will be gathered that no one can number.
 - Also, to destroy the wicked followers of Antichrist who are committed to his way.
 - To break the stubborn will of the nation of Israel.
 - Finally, to shake the earth and all things in it so that one's normal sense of security will be disordered.
- Now, contrary to popular belief, the rapture DOES NOT!!! Start the great tribulation. No, Daniel 9:27 makes it clear that the great tribulation begins when a covenant is signed between Israel and the Antichrist. The rapture could take place hours, days, or even years before the great tribulation takes place. Let's take a moment and consider the 70 weeks of Daniel.

"What are the seventy weeks of Daniel?"

Answer: The "seventy weeks" prophecy is one of the most significant and detailed Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. It is found in Daniel 9. The chapter begins with Daniel praying for Israel, acknowledging the nation's sins against God and asking for God's mercy. As Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and gave him a vision of Israel's future.

The Divisions of the 70 Weeks

In verse 24, Gabriel says, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city." Almost all commentators agree that the seventy "sevens" should be understood as seventy "weeks" of years, in other words, a period of 490 years. These verses provide a sort of "clock" that gives an idea of when the Messiah would come and some of the events that would accompany His appearance.

The prophecy goes on to divide the 490 years into three smaller units: one of 49 years, one of 434 years, and one 7 years. The final "week" of 7 years is further divided in half. Verse 25 says, "From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'" Seven "sevens" is 49 years, and sixty-two "sevens" is another 434 years:

49 years + 434 years = 483 years

The Purpose of the 70 Weeks

The prophecy contains a statement concerning God's six-fold purpose in bringing these events to pass. Verse 24 says this purpose is 1) "to finish transgression," 2) "to put an end to sin," 3) "to atone for wickedness," 4) "to bring in everlasting righteousness," 5) "to seal up vision and prophecy," and 6) "to anoint the most holy." Notice that these results concern the total

eradication of sin and the establishing of righteousness. The prophecy of the 70 weeks summarizes what happens before Jesus sets up His millennial kingdom. Of special note is the third in the list of results: “to atone for wickedness.” Jesus accomplished the atonement for sin by His death on the cross (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17).

The Fulfillment of the 70 Weeks

Gabriel said the prophetic clock would start at the time that a decree was issued to rebuild Jerusalem. From the date of that decree to the time of the Messiah would be 483 years. We know from history that the command to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was given by King Artaxerxes of Persia c. 445 B.C. (see Nehemiah 2:1-8).

The first unit of 49 years (seven “sevens”) covers the time that it took to rebuild Jerusalem, “with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble” (Daniel 9:25). This rebuilding is chronicled in the book of Nehemiah.

Using the Jewish custom of a 360-day year, 483 years after 445 B.C. places us at A.D. 30, which would coincide with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-9). The prophecy in Daniel 9 specifies that after the completion of the 483 years, “the Anointed One will be cut off” (verse 26). This was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified.

Daniel 9:26 continues with a prediction that, after the Messiah is killed, “the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The “ruler who will come” is a reference to the Antichrist, who, it seems, will have some connection with Rome, since it was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem.

The Final Week of the 70 Weeks

Of the 70 “sevens,” 69 have been fulfilled in history. This leaves one more “seven” yet to be fulfilled. Most scholars believe that we are now living in a huge gap between the 69th week and the 70th week. The prophetic clock has been paused, as it were. The final “seven” of Daniel is what we usually call the tribulation period.

Daniel’s prophecy reveals some of the actions of the Antichrist, the “ruler who will come.” Verse 27 says, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’” However, “in the middle of the ‘seven,’ . . . he will set up an abomination that causes desolation” in the temple. Jesus warned of this event in Matthew 24:15. After the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel, a time of “great tribulation” begins (Matthew 24:21, NKJV).

Daniel also predicts that the Antichrist will face judgment. He only rules “until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” (Daniel 9:27). God will only allow evil to go so far, and the judgment the Antichrist will face has already been planned out.

Conclusion

The prophecy of the 70 weeks is complex and amazingly detailed, and much has been written about it. Of course, there are various interpretations, but what we have presented here is

the dispensational, premillennial view. One thing is certain: God has a time table, and He is keeping things on schedule. He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), and we should always be looking for the triumphant return of our Lord (Revelation 22:7).

We will now move to looking at the “Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, and Seven Bowls.”

The Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, and Seven Bowls.

1. Of the seven seals, the first six take place during the first 3 ½ years into the tribulation. The seventh seal is broken around the midpoint of the tribulation and it releases the Seven Trumpets.
2. The Seven Trumpets judgements are actually the content of the Seventh seal and they take place progressively throughout the second half of the tribulation.
3. With the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet judgement, the Seven Bowl judgements are brought forth.

The seven seals ([Revelation 6:1-17](#), [8:1-5](#)), seven trumpets ([Revelation 8:6-9:21](#); [11:15-19](#)), and seven bowls/vials ([Revelation 16:1-21](#)) are three succeeding series of end-times judgments from God. The judgments get progressively worse and more devastating as the end times progress. The seven seals, trumpets, and bowls are connected to one another. The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets ([Revelation 8:1-5](#)), and the seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls ([Revelation 11:15-19](#), [15:1-8](#)). The first four of the seven seals are known as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The **first seal** introduces the **Antichrist** ([Revelation 6:1-2](#)). The **second seal** causes **great warfare** ([Revelation 6:3-4](#)). The **third seal** causes **famine** ([Revelation 6:5-6](#)). The fourth seal brings about plague, further famine, and further warfare ([Revelation 6:7-8](#)). The fifth seal tells us of those who will be martyred for their faith in Christ during the end times ([Revelation 6:9-11](#)). God hears their cries for justice and will deliver it in His timing—in the form of the sixth seal, along with the trumpet and bowl judgments.

When the sixth of the seven seals is broken, a devastating earthquake occurs, causing massive upheaval and terrible devastation—along with unusual astronomical phenomena ([Revelation 6:12-14](#)). Those who survive are right to cry out, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” ([Revelation 6:16-17](#)). The seven trumpets are described in [Revelation 8:6-13](#). The seven trumpets are the “contents” of the seventh seal ([Revelation 8:1-5](#)). The first trumpet causes hail and fire that destroys much of the plant life in the world ([Revelation 8:7](#)). The second trumpet brings about what seems to be a meteor hitting the oceans and causing the death of much of the world’s sea life ([Revelation 8:8-9](#)). The third trumpet is similar to the second, except it affects the world’s lakes and rivers instead of the oceans ([Revelation 8:10-11](#)).

The fourth of the seven trumpets causes the sun and moon to be darkened ([Revelation 8:12](#)). The fifth trumpet results in a plague of “demonic locusts” that attack and torture humanity ([Revelation 9:1-11](#)). The sixth trumpet releases a demonic army that kills a third of humanity ([Revelation 9:12-21](#)). The seventh trumpet calls forth the seven angels with the seven bowls of God’s wrath ([Revelation 11:15-19](#), [15:1-8](#)). The seven bowl/vial judgments are described in [Revelation 16:1-21](#). The seven bowl judgments are called forth by the seventh trumpet. The first bowl causes painful sores to break out on humanity ([Revelation 16:2](#)). The second bowl results in the death of every living thing in the sea ([Revelation 16:3](#)). The third bowl causes the [rivers to turn into blood](#) ([Revelation 16:4-7](#)).

The fourth of the seven bowls results in the sun’s heat being intensified and causing great pain ([Revelation 16:8-9](#)). The fifth bowl causes great darkness and an intensification of the sores from the first bowl ([Revelation 16:10-11](#)). The sixth bowl results in the Euphrates River being dried up and the armies of the Antichrist being gathered together to wage the battle of Armageddon ([Revelation 16:12-14](#)). The seventh bowl results in a devastating earthquake followed by giant hailstones ([Revelation 16:15-21](#)). [Revelation 16:5-7](#) declares of God, “You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve. ... Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

The Universal Kingdom of God.

- This universal kingdom is something which has always existed. This kingdom is universal in the most complete sense of that term. Nothing lies outside its reach and scope. It includes all things in space and time, in earth, in heaven and in hell. Jehovah is the “King of the nations” (Jer 10:7). The rule of this kingdom operates generally through second causes; that is, what theologians have sometimes called the rule of ordinary providence. Upon special occasions and under certain circumstances the rule of God in this universal kingdom may operate directly through divine miracles.
- The kingdom of God in this universal sense exists regardless of the attitude of those under its rule. This universal kingdom could not have been precisely that kingdom of God for which our Lord taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” For in the universal and providential sense, the kingdom of God has already come and the will of God is being done on earth. This rule of God, in fact, has always existed and has never been abrogated or interrupted.

Mediatorial Kingdom.

- The rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God; a rule which has especial reference to the human race (although it finally embraces the universe); and its mediatorial ruler is always a member of the human race. The mediatorial kingdom began in historical form with Moses and continued under the early great leaders who followed.

- The constitution and laws of the kingdom were given at Sinai. The mediatorial kingdom in history reached the pinnacle of its glory under the first three kings. The decline of the mediatorial kingdom in Old Testament history.
- With the death of Solomon catastrophe struck the chosen nation. Israel was ruptured by a secession of the northern tribes which established their own government. But this did not mean the end of the kingdom in history. The close of the mediatorial kingdom in history is dramatically recorded in the book of Ezekiel. The Glory of Jehovah, often referred to in the Old Testament, and called the Shekinah in non-Biblical Jewish writings, was more than a mere symbol of God's presence.
- It should be observed that the independence and success of the Jewish state is inseparably bound up with the divine re-establishment of the mediatorial kingdom. The Maccabees made one of the most desperate and heroic attempts recorded in all human history to re-establish the Jewish state and failed.
- All other attempts, through political and military means alone, will also fail. It must wait for a supernatural intervention on the part of God, just as it began in history with such an intervention at Sinai. "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king" (Hos 3:4).

This study has been a VERY basic walk through the topic of systematic theology. There are many things that were not covered or not covered in an exhaustive manner. It is my hope that this study will ignite a desire in the student to dig ever deeper in to the topic of systematic theology. Recommended resources to do this include: