



Student's Guide

# UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGY

An Evangelical Understanding  
of God and His Word



BRUCE WARE

Understanding Theology  
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<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/understanding-theology/bruce-ware>

# Overview

Title: Understanding Theology

Speaker: Dr. Bruce Ware, *Professor of Christian Theology*, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

## GOALS

1. To gain a broad understanding of the theological themes of the Bible
2. To understand how the different teachings fit together
3. To understand why theology is important
4. To learn how to apply theology to life in gracious and God-honoring ways

## REQUIREMENTS

1. 10 sessions
2. Three hours per week (lesson and discussion)

## PREREQUISITES

None

## FORMAT

Video and audio

# BiblicalTraining.org

BiblicalTraining.org is not-for-profit ministry that gives all people access to a world-class Christian education at no cost. Our classes range from new believers to biblical literacy ("Foundations"), deeper Bible study ("Academy"), and seminary-level training ("Institute").

We are a 501(c)3 not-for-profit and rely solely on the donations of our users. All donations are tax deductible according to the current US tax codes.

## DISTINCTIVES

**World class.** All Bible classes are taught by world-class professors from major seminaries.

**Holistic.** We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application.

**Configurable.** Ministries can use BT lectures as well as their own to design their educational program.

**Accessible.** BiblicalTraining is a web-based ministry whose content is provided at no cost.

**Community-based.** We encourage people to learn together, in mentor/apprentice relationships.

**Broadly evangelical.** Our materials are broadly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith, and are not tied to any one church, denomination or tradition.

**Partners.** We provide the content and delivery mechanisms, and our partner organizations provide the community and mentoring.

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9. THE CHURCH . . . . . 116

Dr. Ware talks about the church universal and the local church. He discusses the offices of the local church, including the roles of elders and deacons. Dr. Ware also looks at how the church be organized and what ordinances should be celebrated by a local body of believers.

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In this final lesson, Dr. Ware gives a rationale for studying eschatology or last things. He discusses what happens to people just after they die and before the return of Christ. He also gives an overview of the various beliefs about the timing and events of the last days. He completes the lesson with a discussion of final judgment, heaven, and hell.

# Your Speaker

Dr. Bruce Ware is the T. Rupert and Lucille Coleman Professor of Christian Theology (1998)

Ware is a highly esteemed theologian and author in the evangelical world. He came to Southern Seminary from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School where he served as chairman of the Department of Biblical and Systematic Theology. Prior to this, he taught at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary and Bethel Theological Seminary.

Ware has written numerous journal articles, book chapters, and book reviews and, along with Thomas Schreiner, co-edited *Still Sovereign*. He also has authored *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism*; *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith*; *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*; *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*; and *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*.

## EDUCATION

Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary

M.A., University of Washington

M.Div., Th.M., Western Conservative Baptist Seminary

B.A., Whitworth College

Cert, Capernwray Bible School

A.S., Judson Baptist College

# Student's Guide

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining.org. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this guide.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

**Listen or watch the lesson.** The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts for an hour. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

**Take notes.** This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

**Questions.** Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Other questions are more reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

**Meeting.** Meet together with your group.

## MEETING TOGETHER

While some people may have to study on their own, we

strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group provides encouragement to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

# Mentor's Guide

If you are leading the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

**Your role is to facilitate.** This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

**Preparation.** Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and think carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going. A great question is, "What is the Lord teaching you this week?"

**Creativity.** What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

**Correct error.** This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. So look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

**Focus.** Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

**Lead the discussion.** People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

**Silence.** Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started, and then step out of the way.

**Discipleship.** Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the

people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share some life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

**Men and women.** Be aware that men and women tend to learn differently. Don't ask the men to become women in how they answer.

**Privacy.** All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

**Goal.** The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

**Relationships.** Share everyone's name, email and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack or WhatsApp.

**Finish well.** Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

**Prayer.** Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

# 1

## Introduction to Theology; Revelation and Scripture

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Ware introduces the *what* and the *why* of theology, and discusses the foundational doctrines of Revelation and Scripture.

### WHAT IS EVANGELICAL SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY?

#### 1. Definition

“Evangelical systematic theology is the comprehensive study and coherent organization of what can be known primarily from Scripture, which is theology’s only final and ultimately authoritative source, and

secondarily from any and all other relevant sources, about God and his relation to the created universe in a manner that is understandable and applicable to contemporary audiences, to the end that God's people are strengthened and satisfied in him to the praise and glory of his name."

## **2. Elaboration on the definition**

### **A. The subject matter**

Theology is centrally about God and what God is doing through his purposes in creation.

### **B. The sources**

We accept Scripture as the primary source for theology, but there are secondary sources: history of doctrines, archeology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, etc.

### **C. The structure**

Theology works at presenting things in a coherent, ordered fashion.

### **D. The setting**

Contextualized theology presents theology in a understandable way that is relevant for the particular setting to which it is addressed.

### **E. The satisfaction**

The goal of theology is to be satisfied in God, that we may give him our glory.

# WHY STUDY EVANGELICAL SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY?

## 1. Comprehensive scriptural vantage point

Theology looks across the landscape of all of the Bible's teaching on various subjects, providing broad, comprehensive, whole Bible answers to our questions.

## 2. Interpretive guide

As we interpret Scripture, theology Acts as a guide aiding us so that we will not interpret one passage in a way that contradicts how we interpret another passage.

## 3. Religious pluralism

There is little sympathy toward Christian faith today.

Pressure to compromise on key doctrines.

## **4. Head, heart, hands, habitat**

Theology begins in the head, moving to the heart only when we have great affection for the truth.

Theology moves from the heart to our hands and habitat when it is the thing we value most deeply.

## **REVELATION**

### **1. The concept of revelation**

#### **A. Definition**

"To uncover something that was covered"; "to lay bare something that was hidden."

#### **B. Scriptural examples**

Psalm 19

Matthew 11:25-27

Matthew 16:17

## **2. Forms of revelation**

### **A. General revelation**

General in substance or content and general in scope or to whom it covers.

#### **1) Main avenues**

##### **a) Creation**

Individuals can understand sufficiently that there is a God and what he is like through creation, and they are held accountable for this revelation.

Romans 1:18-20

## **b) Conscience**

Human moral sensibility; the law written on our hearts.

Romans 2:14

## **2) Efficacy**

General revelation is sufficient to condemn but not sufficient to provide saving revelation.

## **B. Special revelation**

God's special revelation is given only to some people at some times as He so chooses, and is special in scope and substance.

### **1) Main avenues**

#### **a) Personal encounter**

When God approaches with specific commandments, warnings, and promises.

Exodus 3

#### **b) Mighty acts**

Miraculous and astonishing actions where God demonstrates his power and purposes.

Exodus 14:21-25

**c) Propositional revelation**

God revealed, and His purposes, promises,  
and commands revealed in human language.

1 Timothy 3:16

**d) Incarnation**

Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God

John 1:14; Hebrews 1:1-3

## **2) Efficacy**

The basis for guilt, if rejected, or the promise of life and hope, if accepted.

# **INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE**

## **1. Definition**

### **A. General meaning**

"The out-breathing of God's breath that results in the writing of the Scriptures as they were originally given by the apostles and prophets."

### **B. Verbal, plenary inspiration**

The Bible, in its entirety, is inspired in its very language and all its parts.

## **2. Key passages and their teachings**

### **A. 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Because Scripture is inspired, it is profitable.

### **B. 2 Peter 1:20-21**

The Bible is 100 percent divine and 100 percent human.

### **C. 1 Corinthians 2:13**

The Spirit provides both the concepts and the very words of Scripture, and is in agreement with the author's beliefs.

# **INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE**

## **1. The debate of recent years: What is at issue?**

Is the historicity and the facticity of the Bible, in fact, true?

## **2. Defining inerrancy**

"All that the Scripture teaches or intends to present as truth, is true."

## **3. Authority and inerrancy**

The inspiration of Scripture demands the inerrancy of Scripture, and only an inspired inerrant Bible is fully authoritative for our lives

## QUESTIONS

1. What does systematic theology have to do with your own relationship with God? Do you think that understanding theology helps people have a better relationship with God? Why or why not?
2. Read Psalm 34:8. What does this verse have to do with studying systematic theology? How can it help you appreciate what theology is all about?
3. What does Systematic Theology have to do with what we actually do in church?

4. What are some questions you have about theology that you would like to learn more about as a result of this study? Why are those questions important to you?
5. What are your basic goals for this study? What do you need to do to make sure that you accomplish those goals during this study?
6. Have you ever had an experience where you felt that you had learned something about God from creation? What was that like? What did you learn?

7. How is learning about God through creation different from learning about God from the Bible? Why are both of these important? How can you make sure that you are including both avenues of revelation in your own life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Read and reflect on 2 Timothy 3:16. In what ways have you found the Bible to be “profitable”? Have you ever found the Bible (or parts of the Bible) to be unprofitable? Why do you think that was? What are some things you might be able to do to remedy that?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why is it important to affirm the inerrancy of the Bible? How can understanding increase your confidence in the Bible? How should it affect the way that we approach the Bible?

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 13-23.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 21-138.

# 2

## Doctrine of God (Part 1): The Attributes of God

### LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, Dr. Ware discusses the Doctrine of God proper: why we need to know God, his incommunicable attributes, and those attributes that in some sense are communicable to humans.

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Need to know God

“What comes in to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” (A. W. Tozer)

## **2. Classification of attributes**

Specific terms to describe God's nature

### **A. Incommunicable vs. Communicable**

Attributes that are true of God alone vs. Attributes that are shared with the created order/humans.

### **B. Transcendent vs. Immanent**

Ways in which God is separate from us vs. Ways that God is near us.

## **3. Need for methodological balance in the doctrine of God**

## **INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES**

Attributes that are true of God alone

### **1. Self-existence (Aseity)**

It is the nature of God to exist.

Exodus 3:14

### **2. Self-sufficiency**

God possesses within himself all that is required for His being God.

Isaiah 40:12ff; Acts 17

### **3. Infinity**

God has no boundaries on the qualities that are his.

Job 11:7-9; Psalm 147:5

### **4. Omnipresence**

God is present in all spaces simultaneously.

Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 66:1-2; Jeremiah 23:23-24

### **5. Eternity**

God is present in all time simultaneously.

Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 9:6; 1 Timothy 1:17

## **6. Immutability**

God's attributes do not change.

Psalms 102:25-27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17

**A. In his being**

**B. In his promises**

**C. Responsive in relationship**

# COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

## 1. Intellectual attributes

### A. Omniscience

God is all-knowing.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8; Isaiah 40-48

### B. Omnisapience

God is all wise.

Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-26;  
Daniel 2:20; Jeremiah 10:12

## **2. Moral attributes**

God's nature is to show kindness and to insist that moral standards are upheld.

Romans 2:4; Psalm 119:68

### **A. Goodness**

God shows kindness within the trinity and to those outside the Trinity

#### **1) Love**

Psalm 106:1; Isaiah 43:2; Lamentations 3:22;  
John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10

#### **2) Grace**

Romans 3:24; 5:15; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9

### **3) Mercy**

Ephesians 2:4-5; Titus 3:5

## **B. Holiness**

God is distinct from all [moral] impurity.

Exodus 31:15; Isaiah 6

### **1) Righteousness**

Deuteronomy 32:4; Malachi 3:18; Romans 3:21-26

### **2) Justice**

Leviticus 11:44-45; Ezra 9:15; Psalm 119:137-138;  
Revelation 16:5-7

### **3. Attributes of God's rulership**

God has the ability to do anything consistent with his nature as God, and his plans accomplish his will as He alone knows is best.

#### **A. Omnipotence**

God has the ability to do anything consistent with his nature as God.

Job 42:2; 37:23; Psalm 62:11; Nahum 1:3;  
Matthew 26:64; Ephesians 1:21

#### **B. Sovereignty**

God plans and accomplishes what he knows is best over everything in heaven and earth. He never fails and is never defeated.

Deuteronomy 32:39-43; 1 Samuel 2:6-10;  
Isaiah 45:5-7; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 9:6-29;  
Ephesians 1:11

## QUESTIONS

1. What comes to your mind when you think about God? What does this say about you and your understanding of God? What needs to change?
2. Why do you think Tozer said this is the most important thing about us? How does this affect the way you set priorities today? The way you interact with people?

3. Which of God's incommunicable attributes is the most difficult for you to understand? Why? What can you do this week to grow in your understanding of God in this area?
4. Which of God's incommunicable attributes is most comforting and encouraging to you? Why? Consider the remaining incommunicable attributes of God; how do each of these provide comfort and encouragement to believers?
5. In what ways do we share with God in each of his communicable attributes? Did you find yourself surprised by any of the communicable attributes? Why?



9. What can you do today to develop a continual awareness of the presence of God in all of his glorious attributes? How can you help others do the same?

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 24–36.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 141–225.

# 3

## Doctrine of God (Part 2): The Trinity

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Ware discusses the biblical basis for monotheism and trinitarianism. He also gives a brief overview of the history of the doctrine and the heresies that arose concerning the Trinity.

### SCRIPTURAL MONOTHEISM

Both the faith of the Old Testament Jews and the faith of New Testament Christians was uniform and in full agreement in affirming monotheism.

## **1. Old Testament perspectives on God's oneness**

The Old Testament clearly affirms that Yahweh alone is God.

Deuteronomy 6:4; Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:5-7; 46:9-10

## **2. New Testament perspectives on God's oneness**

The New Testament offers continued affirmation that God is one.

John 8:58,17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5;  
Romans 3:30; James 2:19

# SCRIPTURAL TRINITARIANISM

## 1. Scriptural affirmations of the Triune God

### A. Passages that suggest more than God's oneness

Jesus and God the Father as giver of eternal life;  
Jesus as creator, but who can create but God alone?

John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:3

### B. Passages that support the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit

Both Christ and the Holy Spirit affirmed as God.

John 1:1; Acts 5:1-11

## **C. Triadic passages**

Passages that call forth the notion of the one God being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

## **2. A brief history of the doctrine of the Trinity**

### **A. The Christological background**

The doctrine of the Trinity is born out of the early church's longing and desire to answer the question, who is Jesus?

## **B. Monarchian heresies**

Two heresies born out of the desire to uphold the monarchy of the Father while explaining who Jesus and the Holy Spirit are.

### **1) Subordinationism (Dynamistic Monarchianism)**

The very nature of Jesus was subordinate to the nature of the Father; Jesus was able to do all that He did because God's power indwelt him.

Major proponent: Arius

### **2) Modalism (Modalistic Monarchianism)**

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit exist as God successively, not simultaneously.

Major proponent: Sabellius

## **C. The Church's rejection of Monarchianism**

### **1) Rejection of Modalism**

Modalism was rejected by most Christians simply by their thinking carefully about what Scripture taught.

Matthew 3:17, 26:39; Luke 4:18

### **2) Athanasius' opposition to Arianism**

Only one who is himself God can unite us with God.

### **3) The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325)**

Christ as similar in nature to God (*homoiousios*) vs. identical in nature (*homoousios*)

Council adopts the Athanasian position and makes it the standard for the church

#### **4) The Council of Constantinople (A.D. 451)**

Deity of the Holy Spirit is affirmed.

Genesis 2:7; John 15:6; Isaiah 42:8

#### **D. Augustine on the Trinity**

"God's whole and undivided essence belongs equally, simultaneously, and fully to each of the three persons of the Godhead."

### **3. The immanent and economic Trinities**

#### **A. The immanent Trinity**

"The affirmation of the reality of the one God; Father, Son, and Spirit who exists as God apart from creation."

##### **1) The issue**

Who is God apart from creation? What if God had never created? Who is God then?

##### **2) The begetting of the Son and procession of the Spirit**

Not clearly taught in Scripture, therefore we need to look more closely at the relations of the immanent Trinity.

### **3) Social relationships in the Trinity**

Authority and submission relationship in the very Trinity itself.

### **B. The economic Trinity**

The triune persons of the Godhead in relation to the creation

John 4:34; 6:38; 8:28-32,58; 10:30; 12:49

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What difference does the doctrine of the Trinity make for how we live, worship, and do ministry? In other words, do you think it has significance for everyday life?

2. Why do you think the early church reacted so strongly to different ideas about the Trinity (e.g. modalism)? Why did they think the doctrine of the Trinity was so important?

3. How important is the doctrine of the Trinity in your spiritual life? What is one thing that you can do this week to make the doctrine of the Trinity more important to you?

4. Most Christians believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a 'mystery' (that is, we'll never really understand how God can be both one and three). How can thinking about the 'mystery' of God help us worship him more deeply?

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 37-58.

*Systematic Theology: A Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 226-261.

# 4

## Doctrine of God (Part 3): Humanity and Sin

### LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is an overview of the doctrines of humanity and sin, including a discussion of the origin of humanity, what it means to be created in the image of God, the nature and effects of sin, and original sin.

# **HUMANITY'S ORIGIN: GOD THE CREATOR OF HUMAN BEINGS**

## **1. There is a special place for the formation of humanity**

Terms used indicate design, purpose, and intent; a sense of deliberation; full movie version in Genesis 2.

Genesis 1-2

## **2. A brief theology of humanity's creation by God**

### **A. God is ultimate, while all of humanity is dependent upon God**

We owe everything to God who is our Creator.

**B. Humanity owes God obedience, loyalty, and worship**

To create is to own and to own is to have the right to rule; as Creator and Owner, God requires our obedience to Him.

**C. Humanity, as created by God, was entirely (body and soul) good**

Our sexuality, our bodies, as well as our souls are created by God and are good and meant to be used for God's purposes.

**D. Humanity is invested with moral freedom and responsibility**

None of the rest of creation is given a moral commandment, and we may chose to obey, or not.

Genesis 2:15-17

**E. There is clearly an equality between the sexes and yet a differentiation in the creation of the man and the woman**

Common, equal humanity, equal personhood, equal dignity, equal respect for one another.

Male headship, complementarianism, and differing God-given roles.

## **HUMANITY'S CONSTITUTION**

How are we made up as human beings?

### **1. Theories of the structure of human nature**

#### **A. Monism**

We are one thing, a body/soul unity. No legitimacy to distinguishing separable parts of the human being.

## **B. Dichotomy**

We are made up of two things: material and immaterial; body and soul.

Luke 1:46-47, 23:43; Philippians 1:21-24;  
2 Corinthians 5:8; Isaiah 26:9

## **C. Trichotomy**

We are made up of three substances: body, soul, and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12

## **2. Transmission of the soul**

### **A. Creationism**

God creates each soul separately and puts it into, joins it with, a human body some point between conception and birth.

### **B. Traducianism**

The soul as well as the body are carried over or brought forward from the human parents.

Genesis 5:3, 46:26; Hebrews 7:9-10

# THE IMAGE OF GOD

Genesis 1:26-27

## 1. Major understandings of “Image of God”

Image of God is meant to indicate something significant, but it is not clear what the significance is.

### A. Structural understanding

Something about our makeup or our constitution or our structure is what accounts for our being in the Image of God.

Major proponents: Irenaeus (reason and volition); Augustine (memory, intellect, and will); Thomas Aquinas (reason)

## **B. Relational understanding**

The male-female relationship, or in more general terms, it is relationality that constitutes the image of God.

Major proponents: Karl Barth; Emil Brunner

## **C. Functional understanding**

The image of God as doing what God has commanded us to do – putting our structure and relationship to work.

Major proponents: Leonard Verduin; D.J.A. Clines

## **2. The image of God, the Fall, and its renewal**

### **A. Ancient Near Eastern background**

"Image of God" as a picture of a king who has rulership responsibilities that he carries out on behalf of one of the gods.

### **B. Image of God: Structural, relational, and functional**

"The image of God in man as functional holism means that God made human beings, both male and female, to be created and finite representations (images of God) of God's own nature, that in relationship with him and each other, they might be his representatives (imaging God) in carrying out the responsibilities he has given to them. In this sense, we are images of God in order to image God and his purposes in the ordering of our lives and carrying out of our God-given responsibilities."

### **C. Effects of the Fall and our restoration into the Image of Christ**

In the fall we are now structurally and relationally oriented against God; in our restoration God enables us to do what we were called to do.

## **THE NATURE OF SIN**

### **1. The Essence of Sin**

#### **A. The urge for independence from God**

God no longer seen as the source of our good, but as One who is withholding.

Genesis 3:4-6

## **B. Three kinds of urges for independence**

Genesis 3:6

### **1) The hedonist urge**

Fruit of the tree as a means to satisfy Eve's appetite, despite what God has said.

### **2) The covetous urge**

In taking the fruit, Eve desired and took what God said she could not have.

### **3) The prideful urge**

Eve wanted to have her own wisdom, rather than be dependent on God.

## **2. Total depravity**

### **A. Definition**

"Every part of us, our mind, our emotions, our will, our body, every part of us is effected by sin."

### **B. Support**

Romans 8:5-8

Ephesians 4:17-18

Galatians 5:16-17, 24

### **3. Total inability**

#### **A. Definition**

“Because every part of us is effected by sin, we are totally unable to live lives or to make choices or to carry out actions that are pleasing to God.”

#### **B. Support**

John 15:5

Hebrews 11:6

Romans 8:5ff

## **4. Acts of personal sin**

### **A. Sins of commission and sins of omission**

Commission: Sins we carry out, do, or commit;

Omission: We fail to do that we ought to do.

Exodus 20:13-17; James 4:17; Matthew 25:41-46

### **B. Outward actions and inward attitudes**

Outward Actions: That which we do or fail to do;

Inward Attitudes: Orientation of one's heart.

Matthew 5; Deuteronomy 28:47-48

### **C. Conscious rebellion and ignorance**

Sins committed voluntarily vs. Sins committed  
unknowingly

Numbers 15:27-31; 1 Timothy 1:12-14

#### **D. Greater and lesser sins**

Greater and lesser punishment for sin

Matthew 12:31-32; 23:23; 1 Corinthians 6:17-18

### **5. Systemic or social manifestations of sin**

Sin manifested in social structures

#### **A. Good structures used for evil**

Amos 5:10-15

## **B. Formation of evil structures to do evil**

Psalm 94:20-23; Isaiah 10:1-4

## **ORIGINAL SIN**

### **1. Definition**

"How the stain of sinfulness is passed on to or originates in each individual person."

### **2. Theories of original sin**

#### **A. The federal or representative theory**

Adam was the representative, or the federal head, of the human race and when he sinned he brought sin upon all the human race.

## B. The realist or Augustinian theory

We become sinners because we were in Adam as he sinned (think traducian origin of the soul); sin is passed through reproduction.

### QUESTIONS

1. Read Genesis 1:26-28. How does it make you feel to realize that you are made in the image of God? Who is someone in your life that you have a difficult time seeing this way? How can you begin seeing them as one of God's image-bearers?
2. Can you see any tendencies toward "independence from God" in your own life? What can you do this week to increase your dependence on God in this area? Of the three kinds of sinful independence discussed, which seems most difficult for you?

4. Can you think of any areas in which Christians tend to be less concerned about inward attitudes than they are about external actions? What do you think about that? Do you see any signs of that in your own life?

5. Can you think of any examples of “evil structures” or “social manifestations of sin” in your city? What responsibility do you think that Christians and Christian churches have for addressing these evil social structures? What responsibility do you have?

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 81-102.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 439-525.

# 5

## Doctrine of God (Part 4): Person of Christ

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Ware discusses the doctrine of the Person of Christ, which includes his pre-incarnate existence, his incarnation, his deity and his humanity. He also discusses the important Christological passage of Philippians 2:6-8 and what it means that Christ “emptied” himself. Dr. Ware concludes this lesson with a discussion of the Council of Chalcedon.

## **CHRIST'S PRE-INCARNATE EXISTENCE**

### **1. Jesus as the "LORD" of the Old Testament**

Jesus as the Lord (Yahweh), God with us, Mighty God.

Isaiah 6:3; 7:14; 9:6-7; 40:3

### **2. The testimony of Jesus about his own pre-existence**

Jesus claims to be the "I Am" of Exodus 3; knew that he existed prior to the incarnation in eternity past.

John 8:58; 17:5

# THE INCARNATION

An actual historical event where the eternal Son of God took on human flesh.

## 1. Jesus as Prophet

Christ came to be the final and great Prophet of the Most High.

Deuteronomy 18:15; cf. John 1:18; Acts 3:22

## 2. Jesus as Priest

Jesus in the line of Melchizedek; he is the eternal priest.

Psalms 110:4; cf. Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 6:20

### 3. Jesus as King

King overall to fulfill the Davidic covenant and comes in the line of Judah

Genesis 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; cf. Luke 1:32;  
Hebrews 1:8

## THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Five arguments for the deity of Christ

### 1. The names of God are applied to Christ.

#### A. "God"

Jesus referred to as *theos* and the "true God" (*alethinos*).

John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6;  
Colossians 1:15; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1;  
1 John 5:20

## **B. "Son of God"**

John 5:17ff; 10:33-36; Matthew 26:63-64

## **C. "Son of Man"**

Used eighty-four times in the Gospels, all of Jesus referring to himself; alluding to Daniel 7.

Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30; 26:64

## **2. The attributes of God alone are applied to Christ.**

### **A. Eternity**

To say of Christ that he is eternal is to indicate that he is God.

Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; John 1:3-4

### **B. Immutability**

Christ is spoken of as the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Hebrews 1:10-12; 13:8

### **3. The works that only God does are done by Christ.**

#### **A. Creation**

Christ is not only Creator, he also preserves his creation; he holds all things together.

John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15-16;  
Hebrews 1:2-3

#### **B. Giving eternal life**

God alone gives eternal life, yet Christ gives eternal life.

John 10:28; 17:2; 1 John 2:25

## **C. Forgiving sins**

Only God can forgive sins but Christ is said to be the one who forgives sin.

Mark 2:5-12; Colossians 1:14; 3:13

## **4. The worship belonging to God alone is given to Christ**

It is clear that God knows that only God is to be worshiped and Christ knows that only God is to be worshiped ,and yet Christ is worshiped and by this he is shown to be God.

Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 2:11; 28:9-10; John 5:23; 9:35-39; Philippians 2:10-11; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8-14

**5. Jesus' own claims to deity are evidence that he in fact is God**

Matthew 26:63-64; John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5

**THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST**

He is not only fully God; he is fully man.

**1. The Old Testament teaches that the Messiah who would come would be human**

In the Old Testament there are clear indications that the one who would come to be Messiah would be a man, yes, but he would be God and man together.

Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:3

## **2. Christ's own life also indicates his humanity**

Christ was born as a human being, developed as a human being (physically, emotionally, and mentally), and experienced a range of human emotions.

Mark 13:32; Luke 2:40, 52

## **3. Christ remains human forever**

Acts 1:9; cf. Hebrews 13:8

# **THE EMPTYING (KENOSIS) OF CHRIST: PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8**

## **1. Key Terms**

### **A. "Form" (*morphē*)**

The actual substance or essential nature of something

Jesus is essentially in his nature God, and he takes on essentially the nature of a servant.

### **B. "Equality" (*isos*)**

Jesus is equal with God, but he doesn't hold onto his identity as God in such a way that it forbids him from doing what comes next.

### **C. "He emptied himself" (*ekenosin*)**

Jesus did not pour something out of himself (i.e., did not give up being God), but rather poured all of who he was out.

## **2. The meaning of *kenosis*: emptying by adding**

He poured himself out taking the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man.

### **A. Divine attributes “hidden” under Christ’s humanity**

While being fully God he does not live among us with all the privileges that he has as God, for they are concealed under his humanity.

Mark 13:32

### **B. The significance of the *kenosis***

Jesus’ atoning work is sufficient because he is God, therefore of infinite value, and he is also man, therefore able to take our place.

# **THE SINLESSNESS (IMPECCABILITY) OF CHRIST**

It was impossible for Jesus, the God-man, to sin.

## **1. Meaning of the term impeccability**

"An impeccable will is one that is so mighty in its self-determination to good that it cannot be conquered by any temptation to evil however great."

## **2. Support for impeccability**

### **A. Christ did not sin**

2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 9:14; 1 Peter 2:22;  
1 John 3:5

### **B. Christ could not sin**

There is no possible way for Christ to have sinned without his divine nature being implicated in this.

## **C. The Reality of Christ's temptations**

### **1) Christ was fully and truly tempted**

Real temptations which he truly bore

Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15

### **2) By never sinning, he endured the full weight of temptation**

We give in to be released from the force of the temptation, but Jesus never gave in and never felt release.

### **3) Key distinction and solution**

Why is it he could not have sinned? He was God.  
Why is it he did not sin? As a man he kept on obeying. We, then, walk in obedience as men.

## **HYPOSTATIC UNION AND THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (A.D. 451)**

### **1. Erroneous views of Christ prior to Chalcedon**

#### **A. The Apollinarian view**

Also known as docetism; Christ seemed to be human but he was not really human, rather a divine nature and person in a human body.

#### **B. The Nestorian view**

Christ is not just two natures of divine and human together but two persons (two minds, two wills, and two sets of emotions).

## 2. Orthodox decision

Christ's two natures are conjoined but not confused.

## QUESTIONS

1. Reflect for a while on Christ's three roles of Prophet, Priest, and King. What does each reveal about who Jesus was and what he came to do? How can each be a source of comfort and an encouragement to worship?
2. Why did the early church think it was so important to emphasize both the full deity and fully humanity of Jesus? Why is it important for us to continue to emphasize both of these truths today?

3. Read Philippians 2:1-11. What “attitude” did Paul want us to see in Jesus and model in our own lives? Are there any areas of your life in which you are not modeling this attitude? What needs to change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why is it important to recognize both that Jesus never sinned and that he was tempted just like we are? How can this encourage us to greater faithfulness?

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 103-124.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 529-567.

# 6

## Doctrine of God (Part 5): The Work of Christ

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Ware discusses the past (Atoning Savior), present (Mediator and Lord) and future (Coming Judge and Reigning King) work of Christ.

### PAST WORK: CHRIST, THE ATONING SAVIOR

#### 1. Aspects of the atonement

Six aspects that form different facets of one diamond.

## **A. Sacrifice**

John 1:29; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; and 1 John 3:5

### **1) The necessity of sacrifice**

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.

Hebrews 9:22, 26; 10:4

### **2) Animal sacrifices**

God could forgive people through the Old Testament animal sacrifices because of the real sacrifice, the real payment, that would be forthcoming in Christ.

Romans 3:24ff.

## **B. Substitution**

Jesus died for sin as a substitute for our sin, thereby paying the penalty that we deserve to pay and dying in our place, thus becoming the curse for us.

### **1) Old Testament testimony**

An animal dies instead of the sinful Israelites; the coming Messiah bears our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions.

Leviticus 4-7; Isaiah 53:4-6

### **2) New Testament testimony**

"For" (*hyper*) as not merely doing something *for* the benefit of another, but doing something *in the place of* the other person doing it.

John 10:11–15; Romans 5:6, 8; 8:32; 2  
Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; 3:13;  
Ephesians 5:2, 25; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14;  
Hebrews 2:9; 7:26–27; 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18;  
1 John 2:2

## **C. Redemption**

The giving of Christ's life as the payment of the price needed to secure our release from the bondage and guilt of sin

### **1) The centrality of redemption**

It is through redemption that Christ's sacrifice is effective and that all other aspects of atonement flow.

## **2) Key passages**

**a) 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23**

**b) Galatians 3:13**

**c) 2 Peter 2:1**

**d) Revelation 5:9-10**

## **3) The “ransom” metaphor**

Payment is made from God, by God, and to God to satisfy the just demands of his holiness and his justice.

Luke 24:21; Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6;  
Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12-15; 1 Peter 1:18-19

## **D. Propitiation**

The appeasement or the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin that occurs by virtue of Christ's payment for our sin and guilt

### **1) Understanding propitiation**

He is just and merciful to forgive, for in Christ he satisfies the demands of his righteousness against our sin.

Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10

### **2) God's wrath against sin**

The biggest problem we have before God is the fact that as sinners God's wrath stands against us.

Romans 1:16-18; Ephesians 2:1-3

## **E. Expiation**

Our liability or responsibility to suffer sin's penalty is removed because of the death of Christ.

### **1) Understanding expiation**

"Paid In Full, Debt Canceled"; we no longer must bear the penalty of sin

2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:14

### **2) Why did it have to be Jesus?**

The only way we can be saved is if the one who pays for our sin offers a sacrifice of sufficient value to pay an infinite penalty with an infinite sacrifice.

## **F. Reconciliation**

"The change of relationship between God and human beings whereby alienation and enmity are replaced by peace and acceptance."

### **1) Three aspects of reconciliation**

#### **a) Relationship of estrangement**

We stand before God as rebels.

#### **b) Intervention**

Removal of the basis of estrangement, our sinfulness.

#### **c) Peace and acceptance**

Not just a truce, but mutual fellowship and joyous union.

## **2) Key New Testament passages**

**a) Romans 5:10-11**

**b) 2 Corinthians 5:21**

**c) Ephesians 2:16**

**d) Colossians 1:19-20, 22**

## **2. The atonement and the resurrection**

The resurrection is necessary for two reasons.

### **A. The resurrection declares that the penalty has been paid in full**

If Jesus remains in the grave, then he is still paying the penalty of sin. Therefore, to raise is to declare the penalty paid in full.

## **B. The resurrection defeats the power of sin**

For Christ to demonstrate that he has conquered sin, it is required that he conquer its greatest power, death, by rising from the dead.

## **PRESENT WORK: CHRIST AS MEDIATOR AND LORD**

### **1. Mediator**

Christ pleads our case before the Father, brings our prayer requests to the Father, and represents us to the Father when we are challenged by Satan.

Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25

## 2. Lord

Christ stands today as head of the body of the church and as Lord over us.

Matthew 16:18; John 6:37-39; Ephesians 1:19-23

## **FUTURE WORK: CHRIST AS COMING JUDGE AND REIGNING KING**

### 1. Coming Judge

In his first coming he did not come to judge, but in his second coming he will judge; all will stand before Christ in judgment

Matthew 26:64; John 3:16-17; 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10

## 2. Reigning King

After the judgement he will reign as King over all, and establish the fullness of his kingdom over all that he has created.

2 Samuel 7:13; Isaiah 9:7; Jeremiah 23:5; Daniel 2:44;  
7:14; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 19:16

## QUESTIONS

1. Read and reflect on Isaiah 53. What does this reveal to you about the nature of Christ's work on the cross? Meditate and pray over portions of this chapter every day this week.
2. Why is "redemption" such an important aspect of the atonement? Reflect for a while on your own life. What has Christ redeemed you from? What has he redeemed you for? How can you share your story of redemption with someone this week?

3. Why might people in our society struggle to understand propitiation as an aspect of the atonement? Why is it important? How can you help them understand and appreciate it more?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Read Hebrews 7:23–28. How does this passage help you appreciate Christ’s continual role as our mediator? Why is this important to understand?

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 125–146.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 569–633.

# 7

## Doctrine of God (Part 6): The Holy Spirit

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Ware discusses the person of the Holy Spirit, both his personhood and his deity. He also covers the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, in the life of Jesus, and in the church.

### THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### 1. The personhood of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit ought to be thought of as a person, as the third person of the Godhead.

## **A. The Holy Spirit has the attributes of a person**

The Holy Spirit has intellect, can be grieved, is an emotional being, is a volitional being, and has moral characteristics.

1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 12:11; Galatians 5:22-23;  
Ephesians 4:30

## **B. The Holy Spirit performs the actions of a person**

He teaches, bears witness, leads and guides, intercedes, and directs human activities.

John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 13:14; Romans 8:14, 26

## **C. The Holy Spirit is treated as a person**

He is lied to, is resisted, blasphemed, and insulted.

Matthew 12:31; Acts 5:3; 7:51; Hebrews 10:29

#### **D. Personal pronouns are used of the Spirit**

Spirit (*pneuma*) is a neuter word, normally having a neuter pronoun, but a demonstrative pronoun is used of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:26; 16:13-14

### **2. The deity of the Holy Spirit**

#### **A. The Holy Spirit is declared to be God**

Words of God attributed to the Spirit; lying to the Spirit is lying to God; Spirit is called Lord; resisting the Spirit is resisting God.

Acts 5:3-4, 9; 7:51; 1 Corinthians 3:16;  
2 Corinthians 3:16-18

**B. There are attributes that are true of God alone  
that are predicated of the Holy Spirit**

Eternity; omniscience; omnipotence; omnipresence.

Zechariah 4:6; Psalm 139:7-10; Luke 1:35; Acts 10:38;  
1 Corinthians 2:10; Hebrews 9:14

**C. Works of God alone are done by the Holy Spirit**

Creation; regeneration; sanctification; raising the  
dead.

Genesis 1:2; Psalm 33:6; 104:30; John 3:5-6;  
Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Titus 3:5; 1  
Peter 2:1

## **D. The Holy Spirit has the prerogatives of deity**

Directs Phillip where to bear witness; sends out missionaries; forbids Paul where to go; distributes gifts to believers; is to be honored.

Matthew 12:31; Acts 8:29; 13:4; 16:6-7;  
1 Corinthians 12:4-11

## **E. Triadic passages**

2 Corinthians 13:14; Isaiah 48:16

## **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We can only rightly understand the present work of the Spirit by looking at what has taken place previously.

## 1. The work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

### A. Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit

Old Testament word for Spirit, *ruach*, used 388 times, with one hundred referring specifically to the Holy Spirit.

Compare this to New Testament usage of *pneuma* 378 times, 261 of which refer to the Holy Spirit.

### B. The Spirit's empowerment in the Old Testament

Selective, temporary, and task oriented.

#### 1) Empowering judges

A supernatural empowerment and courage to stand up and fight against the enemies of Israel and bring victory to God's people.

Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 14:19

## **2) Empowering prophets**

So that the prophet will boldly, courageously,  
and accurately speak the Word of the Lord to the  
people.

2 Chronicles 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 20:14-17

## **3) Empowering civil leaders**

Empowerment to lead; not permanent in nature.

Numbers 11:10-30; 1 Samuel 16:13-14;  
Psalm 51:11

## **C. Prophetic visions about the future role of the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit will come upon the people of God,  
possess their lives, dwell within them, and be the  
permanent resident of their lives.

Isaiah 32:15-20; 44:3; Ezek. 36:22ff; Joel 2:28-29

## **2. The Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus**

### **A. Old Testament expectation of the coming Spirit-empowered Messiah**

Jesus sees himself fulfilling this expectation.

Isaiah 11:1-9; 42:1-9; 61:1-3

### **B. The Spirit in Jesus' life and ministry**

Jesus lives his life as a man anointed by the Spirit and empowered by him to fulfill the will of the Father.

Matthew 12:22-32; Acts 10:38

### **C. Jesus and the future coming of the Holy Spirit**

The Spirit that empowered Jesus will be poured out on the disciples, and all believers, empowering them to live lives of obedience.

John 7:39; 16:7; Acts 2:33

## **3. The Holy Spirit and the Church**

### **A. Pentecost: The age to come arrives**

The culmination of the work of Christ, having died for sin and paid the penalty the Spirit, now empowers believers to grow in Christlikeness and bear witness about Christ.

### **B. Empowerment for witness in the world**

God enables us, with supernatural power, to go forward and proclaim the name and gospel of Christ; quantitative growth.

Acts 1:8; 2:38

### **C. Empowerment for service in the Church**

Gifts of the Spirit given and to be used so that other people benefit and are grown up through the ministry of those gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; 5:18

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think that it is important for Christians to understand that the Holy Spirit is a "person"? Why or why not? What difference might it make for how you relate to the Spirit?

2. Do you think it is important for Christians to understand that the Holy Spirit is fully divine? Why or why not? What difference might it make for Christian life and ministry?
3. Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize that the Spirit empowers God's people to accomplish the tasks that God has given them. How can this be a source of encouragement to you in your own Christian life? Has God given you any tasks that seem beyond your ability? How can this be a source of encouragement to you with regard to those tasks?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 12. How has the Spirit gifted you to be a blessing to those around you? What can you do this week to use your gifts more effectively to serve others? God has also placed gifted people in your life to bless you. What can you do this week to allow yourself to be blessed by these people?

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 147–168.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 634–653.

# 8

## Doctrine of God (Part 7): Salvation

### LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is an overview of the doctrine and process of salvation, beginning with election and then discussing calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and, finally, the glorification of the believer.

### ELECTION

"The determination of God before his creation of the world of those who would be saved from their sins through faith in him."

## **1. Scriptural teaching**

### **A. Election in the Old Testament**

Israel as God's chosen people out of God's own volition.

Deuteronomy 7:7; Isaiah 44:1-2

### **B. Election in the New Testament**

Apart from this choosing there would be no salvation, so we owe everything to the fact that God planned and devised the salvation of sinners and chose sinners to be saved.

Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29-33; 9:6-29; 11:5-7;  
Ephesians 1:3-5, 11; Colossians 3:12; 1  
Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13;  
2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2

## **2. The Arminian approach: conditional election**

On the basis of foreseen faith God elects people.

Reasoning: Accounting for the freedom of men, the love of God, and the justice of God.

## **3. The Calvinist approach: unconditional election**

God elects people from the foundation of the world unconditionally, that is not conditioned upon anything about us.

Reasoning: Fits with the biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God; the effectual call of God; the justice and love of God are complex in Scripture.

## **CALLING**

"The work of God through his Spirit to bring the message of salvation to people."

### **1. The general call**

God's proclamation of the gospel through a gospel message to all who will believe that is extended throughout the world.

Isaiah 45:22; 55:1; Matthew 11:28; 28:19-20; John 7:37; Acts 1:8; Revelation 22:17

### **2. The special or effectual call**

The special call of God of an individual in a way that effects salvation.

Romans 8:29-30

# REGENERATION

Rebirth or being born again

## 1. The nature of regeneration

"The giving of life toward God by the work of Christ and his renewing work within us by the Spirit."

John 1:13; 3:3-8; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18

## 2. The timing of regeneration

Calvinist view: Regeneration precedes conversion, as it is necessary for a person to believe.

Arminian view: Regeneration happens only after one has believed, having received prevenient grace in order to believe.

## **CONVERSION**

"A turning toward Christ in faith and it is a turning away from sin in repentance."

### **1. Faith**

A convicted belief, a passionate embrace of that Truth that we hold onto, involving the mind, the emotions or affections, and the will in a holistic way.

Romans 4:20

### **2. Repentance**

Turning from the sin because of sorrow for the sin, not just because of consequences, but the sin itself is seen to be objectionable.

2 Corinthians 7:8-9

## **JUSTIFICATION**

"The declaration of God that a sinner who has believed in Christ is now declared righteous."

### **1. The method of justification**

We are declared justified at the very point of saving faith.

Genesis 15:6; Acts 13:19; Romans 3:23-24; 4:3-9, 22; 5:1, 18; Galatians 2:16

### **2. The results of justification**

More than simply not being guilty, it is peace with God and right standing before him so that we are favored and accepted before him.

## **ADOPTION**

"A legal act whereby believers are made legally adopted children of their creator God."

### **1. The nature of adoption**

As children, believers have the privileges and responsibilities that go with this position.

### **2. Key verses**

**A. Romans 8:15-16, 23**

**B. Galatians 3:26; 4:6**

**C. Ephesians 1:5; 2:6-7**

# **SANCTIFICATION**

“The work of God to make us progressively righteous.”

## **1. Believers as already holy: positional sanctification**

The setting apart that takes place definitively, decisively at the very moment of our saving faith.

Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Ephesians 5:26;  
Colossians 1:13

## **2. Believers as continually made holy: progressive sanctification**

God’s making us more like Christ, where we are transformed in mind, in affections, in will, and all of who we are.

1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Timothy 2:21

## **PERSEVERANCE**

### **1. An Arminian view of perseverance**

While we must persevere to be saved, it is possible that we might lose, or forfeit, our salvation.

### **2. A Calvinist view of perseverance**

While we must persevere to be saved, perseverance is fundamentally the work of God, therefore perseverance will be a reality for all true believers.

John 6:37-40, 10:26-29; Romans 8:28-30;  
1 Corinthians 1:8-9; Ephesians 1:13-14; Philippians 1:6;  
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Peter 1:3-5

# **GLORIFICATION**

## **1. Definition**

"The complete and final perfection in holiness of the whole person, that is body, soul, spirit, every aspect of us, mind, heart, will; every aspect conformed to the image of Christ."

## **2. Key verses**

**A. Romans 8:23, 29-30**

**B. 1 Corinthians 15:35-58**

**C. Philippians 3:20-21**

**D. 1 Thessalonians 5:23**

**E. 1 John 3:2**

## QUESTIONS

1. Read Ephesians 1:3–14. What are some of the tremendous benefits that flow from being among God’s people? Spend some time this week meditating on each of these truths and being encouraged by what it means to be a part of God’s elect people.
2. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, all believers become a “new creature” at salvation (i.e., regeneration). What does this mean? Where do you see this regeneration in your own life? How should this be a source of encouragement to you?

3. What is “justification” and what is the relationship between justification and faith? Why is this important? How would you explain this to someone who does not know anything about the Bible?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Read Romans 8:15–16. Spend some time thinking about what it means to be adopted into the family of God. When you pray this week, pray “Abba, Father” and remind yourself of what this means.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What things in your life might be hindering your ongoing sanctification (i.e., being made holy for God)? What can you do this week to remove some of those obstacles?

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 169-190.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 657-850.

# 9

## Doctrine of God (Part 8): The Church

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Ware talks about the church universal and the local church. He discusses the offices of the local church, including the roles of elders and deacons. Dr. Ware also looks at how the church should be organized and what ordinances should be celebrated by a local body of believers.

### THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

“All Christian people, all true followers of Christ, regardless of their membership in any particular local church.”

## **1. The nature of the Church**

Six defining elements

### **A. Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church**

Christ is the central figure, the heart, and the one who provides for and moves and directs and governs, leads and rules over his church.

Matthew 16:18

### **B. The Church is formed by the Spirit**

The church is a community of those who have received and are living in the power of and are witnessing by the enablement of the Spirit.

Jeremiah 31:31-33; John 16:14; Acts 2

### **C. The Church unites Jew and Gentile**

A new community of people that is not ethnic; rather, all are brought together as one in Christ without prerequisite or qualification.

Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 2:2; Ephesians 2:11-22

### **D. The Church is the community of the New Covenant**

No longer under the covenant of Moses, but now in a New Covenant, which cannot fail, and as such called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a holy people on display.

Luke 22:20; Romans 7:4-6; 8:3-4; 1  
Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 6-8

## **E. The Church is a testifying community**

The church testifies through sharing the gospel, preaching the gospel, instruction of the saints, the ordinances, and church disciplines.

Acts 1:8

## **F. The Church is a worshiping community**

We worship individually and corporately through prayer, the preaching of God's word, and singing.

Hebrews 10:25

## **2. New Testament metaphors for the Church**

### **A. The Church is the body of Christ**

The body of Christ imagery indicates both our connection to the head, our following the lead of the head, and our dependence upon the head but also the interdependence of the body on one another.

Ephesians 1:20; 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-30

### **B. The Church is the bride of Christ**

As the bride of Christ we are committed, loyal, and submissive to him alone as we are readied for the wedding day to come.

2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-33;  
Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9

### **C. The Church is Christ's building**

The church as living stones being built into a spiritual house upon the cornerstone, Christ, the single most important stone of the whole structure, who is providing direction for the church.

Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:5; 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4-7

### **D. The Church is Christ's flock**

The church listens and obeys and Christ as Shepherd protects and provides.

John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4

## **LOCAL CONGREGATIONS OR CHURCHES**

### **1. Offices in the local church**

#### **A. Elders**

Main function is that of authority, or rulership, and teaching.

Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17;  
Hebrews 13:17

#### **B. Deacons**

Servants responsible for the everyday physical needs of Christian people.

Acts 6:1-6; cf. 1 Timothy 3:8-13

## **C. The role of men and women in ministry**

The capacities of the teaching and preaching and rulership ministries in the church are reserved for qualified men, while gifted women serve in many other important roles.

1 Timothy 2:12

## **2. Organization of the local church**

### **A. Episcopalianism**

Local churches ruled by a bishop who has governance over a number of local churches.

### **B. Presbyterianism**

Ruled by a group of representatives who act as a governing body over a group of churches.

## **C. Congregationalism**

Governance of the church by its own local members having autonomy from other local churches.

Acts 6, 13; Matthew 18:15-17

## **3. Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Two ordinances, both are demonstrations in physical, visible ways of the reality of the saving work of Christ on our behalf.

### **A. Baptism**

A beautiful display of the cleansing and the renewal of life that takes place.

## **1) Infant baptism (Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic)**

Children should be baptized to be separated as members of the believing community.

Reformed tradition understands that a day is needed in the future for them to place their own saving faith in Christ, while Catholic tradition sees baptism as salvific.

## **2) Believer's baptism (Anabaptist, Baptist)**

Only believers should be baptized, and that by immersion, signifying outwardly an inner reality.

## **B. The Lord's Supper**

### **1) The transubstantiation view (Catholic)**

The substance of the bread and wine is replaced with the substance of the body and the blood of Christ.

## **2) The consubstantiation view (Lutheran)**

In, with, and under the actual substance of the bread and wine, is the substance of the body and blood of Christ.

## **3) The spiritual view (Reformed)**

Christ is present spiritually and thereby is actually partaken of as the bread and wine are consumed.

## **4) The memorial view (Zwinglian)**

Believers are to reflect deeply upon the reality represented in the supper.

## QUESTIONS

1. According to Hebrews 10:25, believers should meet together regularly. Why do you think that the author thought this was so important? Do you ever think of going to church as less important, or even optional, for believers? What do you think might contribute to that? What can you do to begin changing that attitude?
2. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. According to this passage, what establishes our unity as believers? Why is this important? How should this affect the way that we view other churches?
- 3.

4. Read and reflect on Ephesians 5:25-33. What does it mean to say that the church is the Bride of Christ? How does this affect your understanding of the church? How does it make you feel to know that you are a part of that "bride"?
5. Read and reflect on the qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and 5:17-22. How can this help you appreciate and encourage the leaders in your own church? Take some time this week to pray for the leaders in your church and do something to let them know you appreciate them and their ministry.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 191-212.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 851-1088.

# 10

## Doctrine of God (Part 9): Last Things

### LESSON OVERVIEW

In this final lesson, Dr. Ware gives a rationale for studying eschatology or last things. He discusses what happens to people just after they die and before the return of Christ. He also gives an overview of the various beliefs about the timing and events of the last days. He completes the lesson with a discussion of final judgment, heaven, and hell.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. The meaning of “eschatology”

Term is composed of two Greek terms, *eschatos* and *logos*, meaning the study of what is last.

Hebrews 6:4-5

### 2. Value of studying eschatology

#### A. It helps us understand God’s cosmic purposes

God’s plan and purpose has been set and he is accomplishing those purposes.

#### B. It gives us hope

These purposes mean God will be victor in the end, so there is hope when we cling to him.

### **C. It gives us endurance**

We can live this short life with endurance and faithfulness knowing the certainty of what is coming in the end.

### **D. It encourages us to reassess our values**

What matters is what will last for eternity.

2 Peter 3:10

### **E. It motivates us for holiness**

We seek to live lives that are holy as we recognize the transient nature of this life.

## **F. It motivates us for witness**

This is the day of salvation, now is the time when people can believe and repent, so we witness knowing judgment is coming.

## **G. It motivates us for worship**

We are moved to worship as we see the glory of God who created history and will triumphantly consummate it as he has planned and purposed.

Revelation 5

## **INTERMEDIATE STATE**

The state of people's existence after physical death.

## **1. Unbelievers**

Upon their physical death, there will be torment and punishment as they await the final judgment of Christ.

Luke 16:19-31; 2 Peter 2:9

## **2. Believers**

At the point of physical death we are with the Lord and enjoying the pleasures of his presence and company.

Luke 23:42-43; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23

# VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM

## 1. Postmillennialism

The millennium is in this church age, and the coming of Christ happens after the millennium.

The tribulation occurs during the church age; When the millennium dawns, and Satan is bound, many will come to faith and cultures and civilizations Christianized, then Jesus will come again.

## 2. Amillennialism

The millennium happens but it happens not as a literal time after Christ returns, but it happens as the time period for the entirety of church history.

Tribulation and millennium are happening simultaneously; the thousand year reign of Christ as defeat of Satan on the cross and Christ reigning in our hearts.

### **3. Historic premillennialism**

The return of Christ is before the millennium.

#### **A. Revelation teaches a literal millennial reign of Christ**

Revelation 19-20 are understood chronologically; following the marriage supper of the Lamb, Christ comes, binds Satan and reigns for a thousand years.

Revelation 20

#### **B. Satan is not “bound” in this age**

The binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 is of such an extent, or to such a serious degree, that it is not a binding that is true of Satan now.

2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:1-3

### **C. The two resurrections indicate a millennial reign**

First, the physical coming to life of those believers who were beheaded during the tribulation.

Second, unbelievers physically come to life and then are judged by Christ at the end of the thousand years.

Revelation 20:4-5

## **4. Dispensational premillennialism**

Similar to historic premillennialism, with more emphasis on the millennium serving the purpose of accomplishing the fulfillment of Old Testament promises to the nation of Israel.

## **VIEWS OF THE TRIBULATION**

Three premillennialist views of the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period.

### **1. Mid-tribulation rapture**

The church endures the first half of the tribulation, but then escapes the second half of the tribulation, by the rapture, as the outpouring of God's wrath is experienced by unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4

### **2. Post-tribulation rapture**

The rapture of the church will happen at the end of the tribulation, thus we ought to anticipate to live through the entirety of the tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 2

### **3. Pre-tribulation rapture**

The church is raptured prior to the very onset of the tribulation period, is in Christ's presence during the seven year tribulation, returns with Christ when he descends and brings judgment upon the nations.

Reasoning: wrath of God not something the church will endure; Imminence of Christ's return; people die in the millennium; rebellion against Christ at the end of the millennium.

Revelation 3:10

## **FINAL JUDGMENT AND THE ETERNAL STATE**

### **1. Final judgment**

## **A. There is a final judgment for all people**

All people will stand before God in judgment, culminating in the final destinies of people being decided by God, either eternal conscious torment or eternal joyous bliss.

Psalm 96:13; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 13:39-42; 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 12:47-48; Romans 2:5-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Hebrews 10:26-27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:7; Revelation 20:11-15

## **B. There is judgment for believers**

Believers will stand before God in judgment finding their righteousness in Christ.

Romans 14:11-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10

## **2. Hell**

Hell is a real place that is eternal, is permanent, and is conscious torment forever.

Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:8-9; 25:41, 46; 13:41-42;  
2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 14:9-11

## **3. Heaven**

An eternal place of joy, pleasure, no more sinning, no more crying, no more pain, and nothing but endless delight in the presence of the Lord.

Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22-23; Daniel 12:3; John 14:1-3;  
2 Corinthians 4:16-5:4; 2 Peter 3:13

## QUESTIONS

1. Eschatology is often viewed as pointless speculation about the future. This study pointed out seven values we get from studying eschatology. Which of these stands out as most significant for you to appreciate this week? Spend some time meditating on that truth.
2. More important than the timing of the rapture is the importance of being prepared so that we can endure faithfully in the midst of persecution. Read Hebrews 10:32–39. What does this passage have to say about enduring in the face of persecution? How can you be motivated and encouraged by this passage?

4. Spend a little time this week reading through the passages listed in the study about Heaven. Meditate and pray on these passages, allowing yourself to be encouraged by the hope they express.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*, by Bruce A. Ware, pp. 213-242.

*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, by Wayne Grudem, pp. 1099-1167.