

Lesson 1 Overview of Theology

Theology means “the study of God”

Two foundational truths we can rely on:

1. Saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. (Rom 3, Eph 2)
2. Live (walk) by the Spirit, God’s presence in our life. (Gal 5)

Why study theology? It enables us to teach ourselves and others what the whole Bible says.

Matthew 28:19 ^{1a}Go therefore and ^bmake disciples of ^call the nations, ^dbaptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, ^{a1}I am with you ¹always, even to ^bthe end of the age.”

Presuppositions in Theology:

1. The Triune God of the Bible exists
2. God has revealed Himself – we will look at in detail in a few weeks
3. Humans are created by God to know and glorify God
4. *** We also bring our personal presuppositions – be careful

Types of Theology:

Exegetical – meaning “of the biblical text” (hermeneutics)

Biblical theology – deals only with issues in the bible, not questions we bring

Historical theology – history of Christian theology in different eras

Systematic theology – organizes doctrines, answers the questions: “What does the whole bible teach us today about a given topic?”

Pastoral/Practical theology – How best to apply theological truths to personal life

Integrative theology – integrates all of the above.

Theological Method:

Deductive (deduce a specific from a general) – go to a trusted person

Inductive (generalized conclusion from many specifics) – only source is the bible

Abductive/Retroductive– use the bible and trusted sources (current and historic)

Example #1: John 4:17-18 from Tenant

Example #2: Shame/Guilt based culture

Luke 14:7-11 shame vs. honor at the banquet table and humility

Matt 21:28-32 Westerners don’t see the tension. For a shame based culture refusing to work is a huge deal. The public shaming of the father is a greater sin than not performing the task. Sin = shame and guilt. Forgiveness = innocence and honor

Levels of Essentiality:

1. Die for: Deity of Christ; Inspiration of the Bible
2. Divide for: Gifts of the Spirit, Baptism
3. Debate for: Doctrine of Election, date of Creation,
4. Decide for: How often to take communion, what age to have kids in worship

On the Bible:

The Bible doesn't answer every question.
What the Bible does teach we must obey.
What the Bible describes – follow as closely as possible.
What the Bible does not address – apply wisdom.

World Views:

Atheism – no God

Polytheism – many Gods

Dualism – two opposing factors or principles (Gnosticism is a type;

Ying/Yang)

Pantheism (Buddhism, Oprah, Star Wars, Avatar) = All is God; equates God with the forces and laws of the universe

Deism – reduces God's function in creation to that of first cause only. God sets the world in motion than leaves it alone. Analogy = clockmaker

Semi-Deistic – Christians that don't involve God in their every day life.

Moral Therapeutic Deism – from UNC:

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Monotheism – Christianity, Judaism, Islam

Major World Religions:

Christianity

Judaism

Hinduism

No single founder

Reincarnation of the soul in accordance with karma; caste system

3 ways to attain "liberation" from rebirths; right action; knowledge;

devotion

Brahman is accepted as the supreme being, but there is disagreement over the nature of Brahman

Buddhism

Founder is Siddhartha Gautama (563BC to 483BC), “the Buddha”
“Buddha” means “awakened one”

Four Noble Truths: *all existence suffers, *the root cause of suffering is desires, *when desires cease – suffering ceases, *moral self-discipline meditation and wisdom provide the way to eliminate desire and suffering

Only Nirvana, which is not heaven, is ultimately real. It is a state that is realized when desire is eliminated – so there is an absence of suffering = utter bliss.

Islam

In 610, Muhammad began to receive revelations from Gabriel for 20yrs.

This is what became the Quran

Claims to restore the original revelation of God that the Jews/Christians corrupted

Five Pillars: * the Shahada = “there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah *prayer *fasting *almsgiving *pilgrimage to Meca

The Quran denies Jesus’ deity (5:109-119)

Salvation is by works

85% of Moslems are “Sunni” and 15% are “Shi’a” – direct descendants of Muhammed

Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad? *From Timothy Tennent, “Theology in the Context of World Christianity”*

“The word “Allah” as used by Muslims has altered its connotation such that, for Muslims, it has become a name for the Islamic God, not just the Arabic equivalent of the English word “God” as used by Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews.” Tennant pg 48.

When Muslims say Allah – they mean the god of the Quran

When Arabic Christians say Allah – they mean the God of the Bible

The Arabic language does not have a capitalization to distinguish between god & God.

The government of Malaysia is Islamic, and they banned the use of the word Allah in Christian literature to “not confuse Muslims”. Public outcry led to a reversal. Tennant pg 45.

Are there other gods (little g)? YES!

Exodus 20:3

1 Kings 11:4-8

Dan 10:20
1 Cor. 8:4-6

Central theme in the Bible

Central theme is the **Promise-Plan of God** (capital 'G', the one true God)
The **Promise of God** prevalent in the Old Testament and repeated in the New Testament is that He will be our God, we shall be His people, and He will dwell among us (see 2 Cor. 6:16, Rev. 21:1-3). This is God's promise-plan.

[Source: *Walter Kaiser*]

The **Plan of God** is redemption through faith in the Messiah (Jesus Christ)

Kingdom of God = rule and authority of God

The Kingdom is "now and not yet" (inaugurated eschatology; at Jesus' 1st coming He is anointed King and at His 2nd coming He will reign as King).

The Kingdom of God is "now" in the sense that Jesus has come.

The Kingdom of God is "not yet" in the sense that Jesus is coming again, his "second coming", or the "Day of the Lord";

"This age" is the time from Genesis to the "Day of the Lord".

"The age to come" commences at the Day of the Lord.

For believers the age to come is resurrection and eternal life in the Kingdom of God on the new earth. This is His Promise-Plan (Rev 21:1-3).

George Ladd says "The Kingdom of God is not a realm, or people but God's reign. Kingdom is the authority to rule, the sovereignty of the King.

Mark 10:15: "...must *receive* the Kingdom". We must receive God's rule/authority.

Greg Boyd says "The Kingdom of God refers to nothing other than His ministry and the ministry He gave to His disciples, of setting up God's rule where Satan's rule previously had been".

The church is not the kingdom. The church is the people of the kingdom (the people of God's rule and authority).

Note: "Kingdom of Heaven" is only used in the Gospel of Matthew and is equivalent to the "Kingdom of God"