

Lesson 8

Part One – Introduction to Systematic Theology

- I. Introduction
 - a. What is Systematic Theology?
 - b. What is the relation between Systematic Theology and Hermeneutics?
 - c. Why is it important to study the Bible systematically?

Part Two – Theology Proper - Beginning at the Beginning

- I. Introduction to the One True God
 - a. Arguments for the existence of God
 - b. Why only one God
- II. The Nature of God
 - a. God's incommunicable perfections (attributes)
 - b. God's *communicable* attributes
 - i. Spirituality
 - ii. Intellect (includes knowledge, wisdom, and veracity)
 - iii. Morality (includes goodness, love, grace, mercy and longsuffering)
 - iv. Holiness
 - v. Righteousness
 - vi. Justice
 - c. God as Trinity
 - i. Definition
 - ii. Misinterpretations/Misunderstandings
 - iii. Explanation
 - iv. Difficulties
- III. The Decree of God
 - a. Definition
 - b. Characteristics of God's Decree
 - c. Order of God's Decrees
- IV. The Names of God

Part Three – Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

- I. The Pre-existence and Eternality of Christ
 - a. Direct Proof
 - i. Micah 5:2.
 - ii. John 1:1.
 - iii. John 8:58.
 - iv. Hebrews 1:8.

- v. Colossians 1:17.
- b. Indirect Proof
 - i. Christ's heavenly origin proves His eternal existence.
 - ii. Christ's pre-incarnate work proves His eternal existence.
 - iii. Theophanies prove His eternal existence.
- II. Old Testament Prophecies of Christ
 - a. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Lineage
 - i. Virgin Birth
 - ii. Line of Shem
 - iii. Line of Abraham
 - iv. Line of Isaac
 - v. Line of Jacob
 - vi. Line of Judah
 - vii. Line of David
 - b. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Birth
 - i. The Manner
 - ii. The Place
 - c. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Life
 - i. His Forerunner
 - ii. His Mission
 - iii. His Ministry
 - iv. His Teaching
 - v. His Presentation
 - vi. His Rejection
 - d. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Death
 - i. A Painful Death
 - ii. A Violent Death
 - e. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Victory
 - i. His Resurrection
 - ii. His Ascension
- III. **The Incarnation of Christ**
 - a. Meaning of the Incarnation

The word "incarnation" means "in flesh" and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth. The result is that Christ remains forever unblemished deity, which He has had from eternity past. He also possesses true, sinless humanity in one Person forever (cf. John 1:14; Phil. 2:7-8; 1 Timothy 3:6).

- b. Explanation of the Incarnation
 - i. Genealogies

There are two genealogies that describe the incarnation of Christ: Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38. There is considerable discussion and controversy concerning the relationship of these two genealogies. One thing is noteworthy: both genealogies trace Jesus to David (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:31) and thereby emphasize His rightful claim as heir to the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33). It appears that Matthew describes Joseph's lineage, and because an heir made his claim through the father, Jesus' right to the Davidic throne comes through Joseph, His adoptive father. Luke cites Jesus descent through Mary to Adam, "connecting Christ with the predicted seed of the woman."

- ii. Virgin Birth

As we've already discussed, the virgin birth was the means whereby the incarnation took place and guaranteed the sinlessness of the Son of God. For this reason the virgin birth was essential. Isaiah 7:14 predicted the virgin birth and Matthew 1:23 provides the commentary, indicating its fulfillment in the birth of Christ. Matthew 1:23 also identifies Mary as a "virgin" (Gk. *parthenos*, clearly denoting a virgin). The texts of Matthew and Luke are both clear on the teaching of the virgin birth. Matthew 1:18 emphasizes Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph lived together; moreover, the same verse indicates that her pregnancy was due to the Holy Spirit.

Roman Catholics teach a doctrine known as the Immaculate Conception. Don't confuse this with the doctrine of the virgin birth. The doctrine (or dogma) of the Immaculate Conception teaches that Mary herself was born without sin and THIS, in addition to the Holy Spirit's involvement, is why Christ was sinless. The RC church also teaches that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life, even denying that Christ had brothers (which Scripture clearly teaches (*adelphoi* does not mean "cousins" but "brothers").

- IV. The Humanity of Christ
 - a. Meaning of Christ's Humanity

The doctrine of Christ's humanity is very important as well. Jesus could not have adequately represented fallen humanity as the perfect man had He not Himself been fully human.

The book of 1 John was written, largely, to dispel the doctrinal error that denies the true humanity of Christ (cf. 1 John 4:2). If Jesus was not a real man, then the death on the cross was

an illusion; He had to be a real man to die a real death for His children. The only thing Christ was lacking in His humanity was man's fallen nature.

- b. Characteristics of Christ's Humanity
 - i. He was virgin born

As discussed He was without sin.

- ii. He had a true body of flesh and blood

The body of Jesus was just like the bodies of other men except for those qualities which have resulted from human sin and failure. Luke 1-2 describes Mary's pregnancy and her giving birth to the child Jesus, affirming the Savior's true humanity. Jesus was not a phantom as the Docetists taught. He was not an emanation from God as the Gnostics taught (they believed that anything with material substance was evil and only spiritual things were good). His humanity can be demonstrated very easily by others' recognition of Him as human, his pain and suffering on Calvary, etc.

- iii. He had a normal development

Luke 2:52 describes Jesus' development in four areas: mental, physical, spiritual, and social. He continued to develop in His knowledge of things; He grew in His physical body; He developed in His spiritual awareness (there was no interaction with sin, of course, since He was sinless from birth until death); He developed in His social relationships. His development in these four areas was perfect.

- iv. He had a human soul and spirit

Jesus was a complete human being. He possessed a body, soul, and spirit. Prior to the cross, Jesus was troubled in His soul at the anticipation of what awaited Him (John 12:27). There was a self-consciousness that He was to bear the sins of the world, and Jesus was overwhelmed at the prospect. John 11:33 describes in the strongest terms the emotion that Jesus felt in His human spirit at the death of His friend Lazarus. At the prospect of His impending crucifixion Jesus was troubled in His human spirit (John 13:21); when He ultimately died He gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

- v. He experienced the same things as humans

When Jesus had fasted in the wilderness He became hungry (Matthew 4:2); when He and the disciples walked through Samaria He became tired and stopped at the well to rest (John 4:6); He was thirsty from the day's journey in the heat (John 4:7). Jesus also experienced human emotions: He wept over the death of His friend Lazarus (John 11:34-35); He felt compassion for the people because they were without capable leaders (Matthew 9:36); He experienced grief and wept over the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:41).

V. The Deity of Christ

a. Meaning of Christ's Deity

During the early centuries of the church there were groups that denied the true humanity of Christ. But the reverse is the emphasis today. In the past two hundred years liberal theology has vigorously expressed a denial of Christ's deity. One of the things C.S. Lewis did get right is his assertion that the only options available concerning the Person of Christ are: He was a liar, a lunatic, or Lord.

To affirm that Christ is God is not simply to suggest that He is "God-like." Christ is absolutely equal with the Father and the Spirit in His Person and His work. He is "undiminished deity." In commenting on the phrase "Christ existed in the form of God" in Philippians 2:6, B.B. Warfield said, "He is declared, in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fullness of attributes which make God God."

b. Scriptural Proof for Christ's Deity

i. His names

1. God

Hebrews 1:8ff.

John 20:28 (Thomas confessed, "My Lord and my God.")

Titus 2:13 (Jesus is "our great God and Savior")

John 1:18 (Jesus is "the only begotten God" who has explained the Father)

2. Lord

In Christ's debate with the Pharisees He demonstrated that Messiah was greater than simply a descendant of David. He reminded them that David himself called Messiah "my Lord" (Matthew 22:44).

In Romans 10:9, 13 Paul refers to Jesus as Lord. In verse 9 he emphasizes that it is recognition of Jesus as Lord (deity) that results in salvation. In verse 13, Paul quotes from Joel 2:32, where

the reference concerns the Lord; but Paul applies it to Jesus, affirming Christ's equality with Yahweh of the Old Testament.

3. Son of God

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God on a number of occasions (cf. John 5:25). This name for Christ is frequently misunderstood; some suggest it means the Son is inferior to the Father. The Jews, however, understood the claim Christ was making; by saying He was the Son of God, the Jews said He was "making Himself equal with God" (John 5:19).

ii. His attributes

Not surprisingly, we find that Jesus shares the same *incommunicable* attributes characteristic of God the Father:

1. Eternality

John 1:1 affirms the eternity of Christ. The verb "was" suggests His continuous existence in time past. In Hebrews 1:11-12 the writer applies Psalm 102:25-27, expressing the eternity of God, to Christ.

2. Omnipresence

In Matthew 28:20 Christ promised the disciples, "I am with you always." Recognizing that Christ has a human nature as well as a divine nature, it should be stated that in His humanity He is localized in heaven, but in His deity He is omnipresent. Christ's indwelling of every believer demands that He is omnipresent (cf. John 14:23; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; Revelation 3:20).

3. Omniscience

Jesus knew what was in the heart of man and therefore did not entrust Himself to man (John 2:25). He told the Samaritan woman her past history even though He had not met her previously (John 4:18). His disciples recognized His omniscience (John 16:30). His numerous predictions of His death demonstrate His omniscience (cf. Matthew 16:21; 17:22, 20:18-19; 26:1-2).

4. Omnipotence

Jesus has all authority of heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). He had the power to forgive sins – something only God can do (cf. Mark 2:5, 7, 10; Isaiah 43:25; 55:7).

5. Immutability

Christ does not change; He is forever the same (Hebrews 13:8). This is an attribute of deity (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17).

6. Life

All creation – humanity, animals, plants – are alive because they have been infused with life. Christ is different. He has life in Himself; it is not a derived life, but He is life (John 1:4; 14:6).

iii. His works

1. Creator

John states that there is nothing that has come into being apart from Christ's creating it (John 1:3). Colossians 1:16 teaches that Christ created not only the earth but also the heavens and the angelic realm.

2. Sustainer

Colossians 1:17 teaches that Christ is the cohesive force of the universe. Hebrews 1:3 suggests Christ "carries (or "is carrying" all things forward on their appointed course." This is the force of the Greek participle "pheron."

3. Forgiver of sin

Only God can forgive sin; the fact that Jesus forgave sin demonstrates His deity (cf. Mark 2:1-12; Isaiah 43:25).

4. Miracle worker

The miracles of Christ were an attestation of His deity. It is a valuable study to note the miracles of Christ and see the claim of deity underlying each miracle. For example, when Jesus gave sight to the blind man, the people would have been reminded of Psalm 146:8.

iv. He receives worship

It is a fundamental truth of Scripture that only God is to be worshiped (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; Matthew 4:10; Acts 10:25-26). The fact that Jesus receives the worship of people is a strong attestation to His deity. In John 5:23 Jesus said that He was to be accorded honor and reverence just as people honor the Father. If Jesus were not God, this statement would have been utterly blasphemous. In the benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14, the blessing of the triune God is accorded the believer. The manner of the benediction suggests the equality of the persons. At the triumphal entry Jesus applied the chanting of the young people to Himself by quoting Psalm 8:2, “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have prepared praise for Yourself” (Matthew 21:16). Psalm 8 is addressed to Yahweh and describes the worship rendered to Him; Jesus applies that same worship to Himself. When the blind man who had been healed by Jesus met Him and discovered who Jesus was, he worshiped Him (John 9:38). That Jesus did not reject the man’s worship indicates that He is God. In 2 Timothy 4:18, Paul refers to Jesus as Lord and ascribes glory to Him. Glory refers to the Shekinah of God and pertains only to deity. In Philippians 2:10 Paul envisions a future day wherein all in earth and heaven will worship Christ.

Next Time: We’ll look at the hypostatic union and begin our study of Christ’s earthly life.