

Lesson 7

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
- V.

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

By most scholarly estimates, there were over 300 specific Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah that were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. As I've mentioned before in previous studies, in the 1970s renowned statistician and mathematician Peter Stoner (writing for the publication *Science Speaks*) noted that if one considered only eight of these prophecies, the odds of a single individual coincidentally fulfilling all eight of them would be one in 10 to the 17th power. I believe I've also given you the analogy expressing just how large this number is but, in case you weren't here, let me give it to you again. Let's say you spread silver dollars two feet deep across the entire State of Texas and on one of the silver dollars you take a magic marker and place an "X" in the center. Next, you bury the silver dollar anywhere you choose and drop a blind man out of an airplane at an equally random altitude and location. When the man lands, you give him a shovel and tell him that he has one chance of digging up the marked silver dollar. The odds of his getting the one marked with the "X" on the first attempt would be one in 10 to the 17th power (that's the number 10 followed by 17 zeros)!

i. Virgin Birth

Genesis 3:15 is known as the "*protoevangelium*" because it is the first prophecy (good news) about Christ. There will be enmity between Satan and Messiah, here identified by the phrase, "her seed." The phrase "her seed" concerns Mary alone and points to the virgin birth; Messiah is born of Mary alone. Matthew 1:16 also emphasizes this in the phrase "By whom" (Greek "hes"), a feminine relative pronoun, emphasizing that Jesus was born without Joseph's participation.

You want to know why the virgin birth was so critical? Of course, it goes without saying that it was to preserve the sinlessness of Christ, but there's another very important reason. Turn back with me to Jeremiah 22:30. In this passage, we see that the Lord is greatly displeased with Coniah, also known as Jehoiakin, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Why the displeasure? The year was, by all accounts, somewhere around 597 BC, at or near the time when Nebuchadnezzar's servants were besieging Jerusalem. The Chaldean king arrived in person to oversee the siege and to make it clear to Jehoiachin that resistance would be futile.

As a result, Jehoiachin surrendered to him, with all the royal household and the court. He was carried prisoner to Babylon, and with him ten thousand captives, most of them the aristocracy and artisans and craftsmen who would be of use to Nebuchadnezzar.

Left behind were the poor and destitute who would constitute the now decimated nation under Jehoiachin's successor, Zedekiah. In *one fell swoop*, so to speak, Judah had lost much of its most valuable population as well as the most valuable treasures of the temple and the royal palace. And what was God's response? Look at Jeremiah 22, beginning in verse 24:

"As I live," says the LORD, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off;²⁵ and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear--the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans.²⁶ So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die.²⁷ But to the land to which they desire to return, there they shall not return.²⁸ Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol--A vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, And cast into a land which they do not know?²⁹ O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the LORD! ³⁰Thus says the LORD: "Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah."

God meant business. Jeconiah was indeed the last king in the Davidic line. He was succeeded on the throne of David *not by his son*, but by his uncle Zedekiah. Zedekiah's reign marked the end of Judah as a kingdom. And so Jeremiah's prophecy was literally fulfilled. Not one of Jeconiah's sons or any of their descendants ever again returned to the throne. It was a sad end to the Davidic dynasty. Now, on the surface, Jeremiah's prophecy seems to be a glaring contradiction to the Messianic promise. After all, didn't God promise David, through the prophet Nathan, as we just read a moment ago, ***"I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."*** The Messiah was to be in the royal line of David, yet that line was effectively ended with Jeconiah. How is it that these two equally inspired, infallible prophecies could *both* be fulfilled? How could Jesus ever possibly rule as king without violating the prophecy that no descendant of Jeconiah would ever reign? The fact is, if there had been no virgin birth; if Jesus *had* been the *literal* son of Joseph, born of his seed, He *never* could lay claim to the throne of David. He would be under the curse just like everyone before Him, including his father Joseph.

And yet because He was still the legal son of Joseph, He inherited the right to rule, because He was not under the curse that had been passed down to everyone born in the royal line since the days of Jeconiah. God, in His ultimate wisdom, sovereignly worked through the events of history to bring about His purposes.

So much for the Open Theists who maintain that God doesn't know the future because it hasn't happened yet! Not only does God know the future, He designed it in such a way that, come what may, His purposes will not be thwarted. I think that far too often we give much more credit for the events of history to men rather than to God. What's more, I think that we view ourselves and our actions as far more important in the outcome of things than they actually are.

ii. Line of Shem

In mentioning the specific name "Lord, The God of Shem," Genesis 9:26 indicates that the true religion would be preserved among the descendants of Shem. In other words, the line of Shem would ultimately bring blessing to the lineage of the other two sons of Noah. It's also interesting that the name "Yahweh" is used here which speaks of God's redemptive plan.

iii. Line of Abraham

In Genesis 12:2 God promised Abraham, "I will...make your name great," suggesting that Messiah would come from the posterity of Abraham and that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Matthew 1:1 and Galatians 3:16 interpret this promise as being fulfilled in Christ.

iv. Line of Isaac

It was through the descendants of Isaac that God would establish His covenant and institute His blessings (Genesis 17:19).

v. Line of Jacob

The line of Messianic blessing narrows further in that the blessing would not flow through Ishmael, but rather through Jacob (Genesis 25:23; 28:13). Numbers 24:17 stresses a ruler ("scepter") will come through the descent of Jacob who will crush the enemy and "have dominion" (v. 19; cf. Romans 9:10-13). It's also interesting to note how Esau was sovereignly taken out of the picture as well (as an example of God's electing purposes).

vi. Line of Judah

Genesis 49:10 affirms that Messiah (as king) would come from the tribe of Judah. Messiah, of the tribe of Judah, will possess the "scepter."

The king would hold the scepter in his hand when speaking in public assemblies; and when he sat upon his throne he rested it between his feet, leaning back toward himself.

vii. Line of David

The Messiah would be a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16). In this promise to David (cf. v. 16), the Lord indicated His descendant would have an everlasting dynasty (“house”); He would rule (“throne”) over people (“kingdom”), and His rule would be “eternal.” Psalm 89 expands this promise.

b. Prophecies Concerning Christ’s Birth

i. The Manner

Isaiah 7:14 promised a sign to the unbelieving King Ahaz. The prophecy was that a virgin would bear a son who would be called Immanuel – God with us.

ii. The Place

Micah 5:2 identifies the birthplace of Christ as Bethlehem, a small town, too insignificant to be listed among the towns of Judah (cf. Joshua 15:60). Matthew 2:5-6 provides a commentary on this verse.

c. Prophecies Concerning Christ’s Life

i. His Forerunner

Isaiah 40:3 identifies John the Baptist, the forerunner, calling the people to repentance and spiritual preparation because the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:3; John 1:23). Malachi 3:1 identifies the forerunner of Messiah as a messenger who will prepare the way for Messiah and actually parallels Isaiah 40:3 in thought.

ii. His Mission

Isaiah 61:1 promises that Christ will be anointed by the Holy Spirit in ministry, empowering Him to preach the gospel to the poor, releasing those in spiritual bondage, and giving sight to the blind (Luke 4:18-19). Isaiah 9:1-2 predicts that Christ will be identified with the despised of society and with the Gentiles. This was fulfilled when Christ settled in Nazareth (where a Roman garrison was stationed) and later in Capernaum (Matthew 4:15-16).

iii. His Ministry

Isaiah 53:4 describes Christ bearing the sicknesses of the people, which Matthew states is fulfilled in the earthly ministry of Christ as He heals those who are ill (Matthew 8:17). Isaiah 35:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1-2 are combined in Jesus' response to John's question, indicating that Christ's earthly ministry of giving sight to the blind, healing the lame, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and preaching the good news to the poor was fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah (Matthew 11:5-6). Isaiah 42:2-4 describes Christ as being unlike the Pharisees. He is not quarrelsome or contentious; He is kind and compassionate; He will not crush the weak and feeble – He will comfort them. For this reason many Gentiles will believe in Him (Matthew 12:19-21).

iv. His Teaching

Psalms 78:2 predicted that Christ would teach in parables, revealing previously hidden truths (Matthew 13:35).

v. His Presentation

Zechariah 9:9 predicts the triumphal entry of Christ, riding as king into Jerusalem on a previously unbroken animal (Matthew 21:5). Psalm 118:26 depicts Christ coming to the nation as the Deliverer with the people crying to Him for help and deliverance (Matthew 21:9). Psalm 110:1 describes Christ as greater than David; He is one whom David recognized as Lord and who would eventually subdue His enemies (Matthew 22:44).

vi. His Rejection

Psalm 118:22 declares that Christ will be rejected. Christ, being likened to the all-important cornerstone that ties a building together, will be rejected by the Jewish people (Matthew 21:42). Isaiah 29:13 says that the people will give Christ lip service but not genuine obedience (Matthew 15:8-9).

d. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Death

i. A Painful Death

Psalm 22 depicts the sufferings of Christ. Here David uses many poetic expressions to vividly portray the intensity of the Lord's agonies.

These figures of speech became literally true when Jesus suffered at His enemies' hands. Compare:

Psalm 22:1 and Mathew 27:46; Mark 15:34

Psalm 22:7 and Matthew 27:39

Psalm 22:16 and John 20:25

Psalm 22:17 and John 19:33-36

Psalm 22:18 and John 19:24

Psalm 22:24 and Matthew 26:39

ii. A Violent Death

Isaiah 52 and 53 also portray the future sufferings of Christ. Isaiah 52:14 describes the disfigurement of Christ as a result of His scourging (John 19:1). Isaiah 53:5 prophesies the scourging and violent death of Christ (John 19:1, 18). Isaiah 53:7 prophesies the Messiah as a lamb – silent and obedient on the way to death (John 1:29).

e. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Victory

i. His Resurrection

Peter applies David's hope of Psalm 16:10 to Christ in Acts 2:27-28, indicating that these verses prophesied that Christ would be resurrected (Acts 2:24ff.). This was not fulfilled by David because David died and was buried (Acts 2:29); instead, this passage spoke of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:31). Psalm 22:22 is applied to Christ typologically in Hebrews 2:12 where, following the resurrection, Christ expresses praise for His resurrection.

ii. His Ascension

Psalm 68:18 anticipates the God-ordained end of our Lord's earthly life (cf. Ephesians 4:8).

f. Prophecies Concerning Christ's Reign

Numerous OT passages refer to Christ's reign on earth. Psalm 2 describes the installation of Christ as king in Jerusalem, ruling over the nations of the world (Psalm 2:6-9). Psalm 24:7-10 depicts the victorious, returning king entering Jerusalem to rule. See also Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 11:1-16, Isaiah 24:23, Isaiah 35:1-10, Daniel 7:13-14, and Zechariah 14:9-21.

Next Time: We'll look at the incarnation, humanity, and deity of Christ.