

Knowing God Better: Discovering the Beauty of Who God Is

Week 1: The Word of God, Theology Proper (Part 1)

*What is Theology?

- A. "The Study of God" / "Theology Proper"
- B. We all have a "theology"
 - 1. A belief about God: an understanding of who God is (or isn't) & what He's like
 - 2. All of us ultimately have an imperfect view of God (not only incomplete, but partially mistaken)
 - 3. And so, we need to continually strive to know God better and to have our understanding of God constantly reformed and improved upon
- C. Who we really think God is and how we understand Him is ultimately reflected in what we think, feel, and do

I. God Revealed

- A. The Knowability of God (*"Can we really know God?"*)
 - 1. If He is an infinite being, and we are finite, and will never be infinite, and thus, God is completely beyond us, can we really know Him?
 - 2. But if God is truly all power, all knowing, all wise (as we will see next week), then surely, *He can make Himself known to lesser beings that He Himself created*
- B. The Word of God
 - 1. Which brings us to the Word of God – the Bible
 - 2. If God created everything, then obviously we see something of who God is in creation itself
 - 3. But beyond that, is there a way God has revealed Himself more explicitly?
 - The Bible is the Word of God, God's own message to His creatures, written to make Himself known to them
 - Most of this class will be focused on what the Bible says – what **God** says about Himself
 - 4. The importance of creeds and confessions
- C. Describing God
 - 1. How are we finite beings to know an infinite Being?
 - Well, on some level, we are **always** going to be bound by our context (our experience and our understanding)
 - We know everything in light of other things we know

- Our understanding of love depends on descriptions that fit our experience – like all knowledge, descriptions have to fit into our context

- So in the Bible, we find God described using “Anthropomorphisms”
 - Descriptions of God using features of mankind

“Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” – Exodus 33:11

- God doesn’t have a face...
- But to understand what a close relationship with God is like, we have to picture a similar kind of close relationship (i.e. a close human-to-human relationships), which is helpfully pictured by God having human attributes (but it’s just a picture)

- God is often best described by what He is *not*
 - “Via negationis”

The Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret – 1 Samuel 15:29

- God is immutable...

For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. – Malachi 3:6

- God can be described as *the ultimate* of something
 - “via eminentiae”
 - God is all-powerful (omnipotent)

*I know that You can do all things,
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.
- Job 42:2*

- God can be described using specific statements to describe what He’s like
 - “via affirmationis”
 - “God is holy,” “God is sovereign,” etc.

2. It is important to say true things about God, and to know true things about God, without domesticating Him

- God truly is incomprehensible, and we will never fully know Him
- Which is one of the reasons living forever will be so thrilling!!!
- But thinking about the truth of who God is must always be filtered through Scripture

II. The Nature of God

A. The Existence of God

1. What does it mean for God to exist?

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.- Genesis 1:1

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. – Acts 17:24-25

*For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the hills,
and all that moves in the field is mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and its fullness are mine.
- Psalm 50:10-12*

2. How is God's existence different from the world's existence?

- Dependence vs. independence
- God is ultimate reality, whereas creation is a derivative reality (Gen 1:1)
- Transcendence and immanence (Is 55:8-9, Eph 4:6; Prov 18:24, Ps 139:1-12)

3. How does our existence relate to God's?

- Dependence – our existence is in total reliance of Him
- Faith – the only correct way to relate to our own existence is to trust the One who created us in the first place
- Humility – we can only properly relate to God by knowing our place as created, and His place as Creator

B. The Purpose of Creation

1. What does this question have to do with the nature of God?
2. Creation exists for the glory of God (Ps 86:9, Is 43:6-7, 60:21, Rom 11:36)

Q. What is the chief end of man?

*A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.
- Westminster Shorter Catechism*

Q. How and Why Did God Create Us?

*A. God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.
- New City Catechism*

C. One God

1. Ultimately, there is only one true God

*They sacrificed to demons that were no gods,
to gods they had never known,
to new gods that had come recently,
whom your fathers had never dreaded.
- Deuteronomy 32:7*

*For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
- Psalm 96:5*

*Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."
- 1 Corinthians 8:4*

2. But there are other "gods" in a sense

Definition of a 'god':

1. A being or object that is worshipped as having more than natural attributes and powers; specifically, one controlling a particular aspect or part of reality (Merriam-Webster)
i.e. supernatural beings (angels, demons, cherubim, etc.)

2. A person or thing of supreme value (Merriam-Webster)

- Examples: Genesis 35:2-4, Joshua 24:2, etc.

*For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.
- Exodus 12:12*

3. God is be regarded as one's only God
 - Acknowledging that there is only one true God
 - Offering full and ultimate allegiance only to God and nothing else

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

- Deuteronomy 6:4

And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

- Zechariah 14:9

D. God is One in Essence, and God is Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

1. Three statements
 - God is three persons
 - Each person is fully God
 - There is one God

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one Eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three gods, but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet not three lords, but one Lord.

- Athanasian Creed

2. Complexities in the Old Testament

- Plural references to God (Gen 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, Is 6:8)
- Human persons referred to as “God” (Ps 45:6-7, 110:1, Is 9:6-7)
- The term “God” is often in the plural
- 3. Fuller revelation comes in the New Testament
 - The Father is God (no dispute there)
 - The Son is God (Mk 2:1-12, Jn 1:1-4, 5:19-29, 20:28, etc.)
 - The Holy Spirit is God (Mt 28:19, 1 Cor 12:4-6, 1 Pet 1:2, etc.)
- 4. The relationships within the Trinity
 - The Father and the Son in relationship (Jn 5:19-29)
 - The Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and the Son (Jn 15:26, 16:7)
- E. Errors that come from denial of one of the 3 statements
 1. Denial of Jesus’s (and the Holy Spirit’s) Full Deity
 - Adoptionism
 - Arianism
 - Subordinationism
 2. Denial of Jesus’s Full Humanity
 - Docetism
 - Modalism
 3. Nestorianism

III. The Names of God

- A. Yahweh – “I AM”
 1. Yahweh Rapha – “The LORD Heals”
 2. Yahweh Yireh – “The Lord Will Provide”
- B. Adonai – “Lord”
- C. Elohim – “God”
 1. El Shaddai – “God Almighty”
 2. El Elyon – “God Most High”
 3. El Olam – “The Everlasting God”

Week 2: Theology Proper (Part 2)

IV. The Attributes of God

- A. Incommunicable Attributes
 1. Infinitude
 2. Independence
 3. Immutability

4. Eternality

5. Omnipresence

6. Unity

B. Communicable Attributes

1. Spirituality

2. Invisibility

3. Omniscience

4. Wisdom

5. Truthfulness

6. Goodness

7. Love

8. Mercy (Grace, Patience)

9. Holiness

10. Peace

11. Righteousness (Justice)

12. Jealousy

13. Wrath

14. Will

15. Freedom

16. Omnipotence (Power, Sovereignty)

17. Perfection

18. Blessedness

19. Beauty

20. Glory

V. The Will of God / Providence