

TREK 201

CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Lesson 2 – THEOLOGY PROPER (GOD’S NATURE)

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

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THE PERSON AND NATURE OF GOD THE FATHER

Introduction

(Jeremiah 9:23-24)

There is no greater subject one can apply himself to than the study of God. The essence of theology (ΤΗΘΕΟΣ + ΛΟΓΟΣ) is the study of God, of His perfect Nature, His Being, and the characteristics which are self-defining for His Person. You will do well to pay attention to God's nature, because as you learn more about God – your life should change! No really! Don't forget, your very existence is tied to the Creator (Ps. 100:3; Is. 43:7, 21) and you exist solely for God's pleasure and glory (Ps. 8:3-6; 1 Pet. 4:11; Ro. 11:36; Pr. 16:4). What God has created, God creates for His own glory and pleasure (Ps. 19:1; 104:1, 4, 24, 31; 145:3-13; Is. 43:7; Rev. 4:11).

The *Westminster Confession* (1646) asks on behalf of every person "*What is the chief end of man?*" (i.e. why does mankind even exist at all?) The Answer resounds: "**Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.**"

How could one ever understand how to glorify a God he knows nothing about: If our chief aim is to glorify God in all things, with our very being (existence), then we are bound to seek, investigate, study, learn, and apply what it means to "know" about God and His nature. The most important thing about any one of us is what we know about God and that we know God. Knowing God, who He is, what He does, what He is like and what He requires of us, is the foundation for all life and faith, joy, true knowledge (Ps. 119:99), obedience, love and worship.

- Why are you on the earth? What have you learned about God through your Life? Through your mistakes? Through the Church and God's Word?

- Why are you doing this study right now?

- Doesn't God deserve your very best effort in studying and trying to understand more about His nature? Right now you have the opportunity to apply your best intelligence, life experiences, and heart (willing spirit) toward soaking in all of this study as God reveals more of Himself to you. It is for His glory and your benefit that you learn and apply it!

READ: 1 Pet. 4:11 "*That God in all things may be glorified.*"

- The glory of God is a life filter through which we should sift every motive, belief, thought, and action: **READ I Cor. 10:31** "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*"

Everything works to some end in things natural and artificial; now, man being a rational creature, must propose some end to himself, and that should be, that he may lift up God in the world. **He had better lose his life than the end of his living.** The great truth asserted is that the end of every man's living should be to glorify God. Glorifying God has respect to all the persons in the Trinity; it respects God the Father who gave us life; God the Son, who lost his life for us; and God the Holy Ghost, who produces a new life in us; we must bring glory to the whole Trinity!

The Practical Importance of Theology Proper

- **You must know God in order to relate to him.** This is not a sterile, scholastic, abstract body of knowledge. **If we understand who God is, we should be awed by his greatness and goodness, and be motivated to worship Him. Not only should we praise God for what he does, but also for who he is!**

READ (Ex. 33:18) *Then Moses said, "I BEG YOU, show me your glory!"* AND

(Ex. 34:6-8) *"Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; (7) who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." (8) And Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship."*

This passage is in response to Moses' request "show me YOUR glory!" Note that God's glory is revealed not primarily in experiencing his power, but by understanding His character revealed by His word. This is an important realization today when people seek a subjective experience of God's power more than an understanding of his character as revealed through scripture.

WARNING: In theology, bad theology, we tend to humanize God. Too many have tried to understand God by first looking at our human natures and reflecting our attributes back onto God. This is dangerous and unbiblical! Unless we have a biblical view of God and stay focused on him, our Christianity will tend to be humanistic: comprehended only by our power and dependent on human wisdom (Ps. 50:21 " . . . you thought that I was just like you; in this, I will reprove you . . .)

**AXIOMS: UNDENIABLE & SELF-ATTESTING PRINCIPLES
ABOUT GOD'S GLORY, PURPOSE, & CREATIVE ACTS**

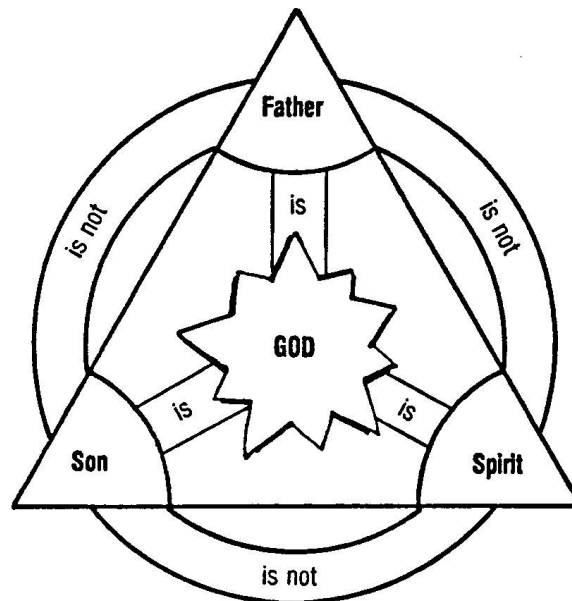
1. All of creation EXISTS for His glory (Rev. 4:11; Psa. 146:1-6; 19:1-2)
2. God created YOU for His glory (Is. 43:6-7; Psa. 8:3-6)
3. You are an image-bearer; created in God's image to reflect His nature (Gen.1:26-27)
4. You were created to be a glory-reflector (Ps. 36:8-9)
5. You were created to be a glory-enjoyer (Ps. 63:1-5)

The Trinity

Within the study of God (THEOLOGY) perhaps there is no more glorious and yet confusing doctrine than the subject of the Trinity. Nowhere does the Bible EXPLAIN the Trinity – That God exists eternally in Three distinct Triune Personages – rather, the Bible assumes the Trinity's existence and nature (Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 8:6; Gen.1:26). The Bible teaches that God is most perfectly expressed through the Triadic Nature of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (each Person perfectly related to the Other in essence and purpose, yet distinct in role and reality). Thus, our God is a Triune God. No one can explain why or how this is possible. The concept of the Trinity is beyond our mind and ability to truly understand or explain (Is. 55:8-9; Ro. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16). God's infinite and perfect nature will never be fully understood by finite, incomplete, and depraved man (1 Cor. 13:12). However, God has called us to search His truth and accept His self-revealed, self-attesting nature as God, just as He has proven Himself to be the only true and wise God in this universe (Ro. 16:27).

- "The Trinity (Latin for *threeness*) speaks of a Triunity (= three in one) and is composed of three united Persons without separate existence – so completely united as to form *one* God.
 - The divine nature subsists in three distinctions – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Triadic Personages form the Unity aspect of the Godhead.
 - "There is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and coequal persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence." –Charles Ryrie.
 - Most of us are not able to explain how a Xerox copier works, but that doesn't mean it is not real, irrational, logically absurd, nor immensely helpful.
 - The reality of the Trinity makes the incarnation and ultimately redemption, possible.
- Bible verses which detail the action of the Trinity: [2 Cor. 13:14; Mt.3:17ff; 1 Jn. 5:7-8; Jn. 17:24]. The Triune nature of the Godhead demonstrated the relational nature of God and hints toward why He created mankind to relationally enjoy Him in divine fellowship. God did not need to create anything, for He was already perfectly related.

ANCIENT DIAGRAM OF THE HOLY TRINITY



THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- What is an “attribute” anyway?

An attribute is a self-evident quality which reflects the essence of a being (object).

Within the study of theology, there are various ways to distinguish, categorize, and explain God's attributes. In principle, God contains natural attributes which can only be found in His nature and which do not exist anywhere else in the universe (i.e. His Aseity, Immensity, Immutability). There are other characteristics of God's nature which He has chosen to share with other beings within His creation, communicable attributes which reflect God's perfect and holy character (i.e. love, justice, holiness).

The following four categories describe ways in which God alone owns a particular attribute (unique to Him) and those which He has graciously shared (imparted) with His creation.

Communicable Vs. incommunicable. Put forth by the reformers, communicable attributes are those attributes in which humans can participate (e.g. love, holiness) while incommunicable are those attributes uniquely belonging to God (e.g. omniscience, omnipotence, etc.)

- **Intransitive and Transitive.** Intransitive are those qualities which remain in God's nature (e.g. spirituality) while transitive are those qualities which operate on objects outside of God (e.g. grace).
- **Absolute and Relative.** Absolute are qualities that He has in himself (e.g. infinite); relative are qualities that are manifest in his relationship with others (e.g. eternal and omnipresent, being the relative qualities of his absolute infiniteness).
- **Natural and Moral.** Moral qualities are those related to the concept of rightness (e.g. holiness, love, faithfulness), while natural qualities are not connected to any moral idea (e.g. knowledge and power).

A. The Incommunicable, Absolute, Meta-physical, and Intransitive Attributes of God:

1. God exists and is eternally **self-existent**. God's **Aseity** means He needed nothing by which to exist and exists independent of all aspects of the universe and beyond. (Ex. 3:14; Psa. 102:25-27 [Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1]; Rev. 1:8)
2. God is **simple**, the essence of **Unity**, and yet incomprehensible: Deut. 6:4; Is. 55:8-9; Deut. 29:29
3. God is **self-sufficient** and needs nothing within or from creation. Is. 40:12-17; Ps. 50:10-12; Acts 17:24-25; Rom. 11:33-36
4. God is **Spirit** (Immaterial, yet Pure-Actuality) Jn. 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16
5. God is **transcendent** (Above all things). Is. 6:1-3; 40:21-25; 66:1-2
6. God is **Immense**. (Vast, limitless, exhaustive) 1 Ki. 8:27; Jer. 23:23-24; Ps. 34:18a; 73:24-25; Is. 7:14
7. God is **Eminent** and Pre-eminent among all creation. Ps. 93:1-2; 97:1-2; Is. 57:15; Rev. 4:11; 1 Ti. 6:15-16
8. God is **Eternal** (Exists outside of time and space) Ps. 90:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:17
9. God is **Omnipresent**. Ps. 139:7-12; Prov. 15:3; Is. 66:1-2; Jer. 23:23-24)
10. God is **Omniscient** (All-knowing) Ps. 139:4; 147:4,5; Is. 40:13,14,28; Heb. 4:13; Rev. 2:23. *Concerning God's Omniscience - God has infinite, exhaustive and perfect knowledge.

- Everything that can be said of God's knowledge of the past and the present, can also be said of His knowledge of the future, i.e., His foreknowledge is perfect, vast, limitless and exhaustive.

11. God is **Omnipotent** (All-Powerful) Rev.19:6; Gen. 18:14; Mt. 19:26; Is. 44:26

12. God is **Omnisapient** (All-wise) Is. 40:28; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:6

13. God is **infinite** (Not bound by time, need, or events). Ps. 90:2; 102:12; 1 Ki. 8:27

14. God is **Impassable** (Emotionally unmovable and not subject to passions, or suffering) Dt. 3:14; Job 22:2-3; 35:6-7; Ps. 5:10; Is. 40:13-14,28

15. God is **Immutable** (Unchanging) Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 102:26; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17-18; 13:8; Jas. 1:17

16. God is **Incomparable** (Is. 40:18-26)

17. God is **Necessary** (Everything which exists is caused by God) Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 1:8; 3:14.

18. By definition of these very attributes, these divinely unique characteristics assume that the essence of God is **PERFECT**, being absolutely unique, unconditionally complete, transcendent above all things, morally unflawed, and qualitatively excellent (lit. above all else) Ps. 18:30; Mt. 5:48; Ro. 12:2; Col. 1:28

Though we cannot ever fully comprehend God nor His complete nature, we are hard pressed not to be overwhelmed that such a perfect God created us for His glory and truly loves us – desiring true intimate fellowship with Him. More so, for all Born-again Believers, this perfect and infinite God has placed a part of Himself into each of us as His Spirit both dwells (lives/inhabits) the immaterial portions of our lives (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Ro. 8:9)– that we may Know and love Him in return. Wow!!! What a God we serve!

“Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.” J.I. Packer.

Conclusion: So we engage in theology, in the study of God, for His glory (Ps. 145:5), we do it with delight and joy, drinking deeply at the fountain of His delights (Ps. 36:8-9). In so doing, we are in part doing that which we were created and redeemed to do!