

WEEK #1 - PROLEGOMENA / A PINCH OF THEO PROPER / BIBLIOLOGY

PROLEGOMENA:

What is Theology?

- Theology is the study of God - as a general term. But more specifically, when we talk of theology - we speak of Christian theology - essentially all that can be known about the Christian faith. But we're already ahead of ourselves because we need to ask a more fundamental question:

How can we study Theology?

- "Cogito ergo sum" or "I think therefore I am" By René Decartes - We are beings with sentience - we not only have a brain but a mind - a mind that goes beyond our survival instincts. And in the process, man has wrestled with the idea of God or something greater than themselves to describe their existence.
- The Ontological argument for the existence of God - we comprehend something greater than ourselves, something that is greater than our comprehension - therefore the belief in God is reasonable.
- Cosmological Argument - Using logical reasoning - how can something come from nothing? How could existence always exist as it is - everything in the known universe has a beginning. Who began our existence? These questions show that belief in God and the study of God is reasonable. *"Ex nihilo nihil fit" or "nothing comes from nothing" - Titus Lucretius Carus*
- Moral argument - Mankind has a sense of a moral standard - while inconsistent among us, we all sense that there is an Ideal, Beauty, a sense of what is true - all of these arguments show that belief in God and a study of God is reasonable.
- Teleological Argument: Design demands a designer - the intricacies of existence are far too complex to be created by mere chance - this begs the belief in an intelligent designer i.e. God - which means that belief in God and the study of God is reasonable.
- HERES THE PROBLEM: God is incomprehensible: ***"33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." Romans 11:33-36*** God cannot be classified in a way to be completely understandable - he is beyond human comprehension.
- BUT... God is also knowable - - ***"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Romans 1:20*** How does this work? God to the fullest extent is unknowable - but he has made some of his being known to us at the capacity that we can know him as humans.

- God desires to be known! ***“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” John 17:3*** The key to salvation is knowing God - knowing his character, knowing what he has done and what he will do and our response to that knowledge.

What is the optimal requirement for studying Theology?

- Believing there is a God is good for theology - it is better than not believing in God (that makes your theology quite short) But even better than believing there is a god - it is OPTIMAL to believe in him - to have a relationship with him. Why?
- ***1 Corinthians 2:10-16 “10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.***
- This verse shows us the importance of being in Christ in regards to understanding God's truth - he illuminates our minds and hearts as we pour over his Word. This creates optimal conditions for theological study. Otherwise it is purely academic and lacks true, life-changing insight. DOCTRINE OF ILLUMINATION - (we'll talk more about this)

Why is it important to study Theology?

- Remember John 17:3? Knowing God is the building block for the Christian Life - for our salvation, for our discipleship, for our past, present and future! To properly live like a Christian, we have to have the worldview of a Christian - and that requires understanding.
- A comprehensive understanding of theology can equip us for life's challenges and questions.

How do we build our Theology?

- There are 4 main tools people use to build their theology.
- Scripture - This is the penultimate way in which we construct our theology - The Word of God is Truth from God - as we will see soon when we dip in Bibliology.
- Tradition - we gain a lot of our collective understanding of God from people - or at the least, we are informed by people's perspectives of the scripture. Historical and intellectual giants have wrestled with biblical concepts and have made conclusions that we today make judgements on.

- Logic - As I mentioned earlier about the 4 arguments for God - there are ways of using our intellect and common sense to deduce theological truths.
- Experience - our collective experiences can inform and guide our understanding of theological truths - for better or worse.
- Is it possible to ONLY use scripture to build your theology? (Stranded on an island test)
- While Scripture is key, why are the other 3 important? What is problematic with the other three? How do we properly “vet” tradition, logic and experience?

What Frameworks of Theology are there?

- Biblical Theology - coincides with scripture - simply put, as someone reads their Bible, theological truths come out - when someone does inductive bible study (see Pastor Jon for details on this) you notice things like genre, context, language, audience, etc. - these inform theological truths to the reader about God.
- Systematic Theology - Not a Biblically Linear way, but a systematized way - Choosing categories and finding scattered texts that talk about the subject -
- Historical Theology - What are Luther's views of theology? Augustine? Whitfield? Athanasius? Essentially looking through the lens of what historical figures and the church throughout history believed about theological points - this is useful and insightful but can be dangerous if held too highly over basic Biblical Theology.
- Practical Theology - Also known as applied theology - It is theology in everyday life scenarios - When you meet people in all sorts of situations with different levels of understanding about God - you will meet them where they are at in the situation they're in. This should be the final step of ALL the theologies, without it, theology is a mere academic pursuit.

Why is Systematic Theology important? - it is good to “check the boat for holes before rowing out to sea” Going through each category of theology will show the holes in your theology. It is also very important to have a systematic way of going through scripture especially when witnessing, teaching or doing apologetics.

What are some suspected holes in your boat? What are areas you need to repatch?

BIBLIOLOGY

What is Bibliology? The Study of the Bible - Why is this important for theology? It is the basis for our understanding of the character and will of God. It is the loudest way in which God has spoken to us. God reveals himself in general ways - through nature, through history, through humanity's abilities of reason, conscience and moral awareness. But with all of these general ways - it is vague - hard to nail down exactly who God is and what he wants us to know. This is why we need the Bible as a collection of the modes of Special Revelation:

Avenues of Special Revelation Recorded in the Bible:

- The Lot (Prov 16:33)
- Urim and Thummim - two precious stones used like the lot (Ex 28:30)
- Dreams, both OT and NT (Gen 20:3, Matthew 2:13)
- Visions (Is 1, 6)
- Theophanies (Gen 16:7, Exodus 3:2)
- Angels (Daniel 9:20-21)
- Christ (John 1:14)
- Scripture (John 17:17, Heb 1:1-2, 2 Timothy 3:15-17)

The Bible is the record of all of these avenues of special revelation - so our view of what the Bible is will INFORM what we believe about Theology.

MAPLEVIEW'S DOCTRINAL STATEMENT ON BIBLIOLOGY:

Concerning the Scriptures:

We believe that the Bible is God's infallible, inerrant word. It was written by men who were divinely and uniquely inspired, and that it is our supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and practice. We affirm our belief in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scripture in their original manuscripts. (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21; Matt. 5:17,18)

We need to define some words:

- Infallible - It is incapable of error
- Inerrant - it has no errors - **What is the difference between these two words? It cannot error and it does not have errors - In other words the NATURE of the Bible is that which it could not have errors (infallibility) and in practice it does not after analysis (inerrant)**
- Inspiration: "All Scripture is breathed out by God" 2 Tim 3:16 - Because it is spoken from God - it HAS to be Inerrant/infallible (by the very nature that God is perfect.) How does it work that scripture is "God breathed" and that men were the authors? 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that men were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit to write the words of God. They were merely vehicles. The Holy Spirit was the writer. (Holy Spirit is God BTW (Acts 5:3)) the word carried along implies a helplessness - they couldn't help but write what God was inspiring them to do. Some writings are directly from God (10 commandments, Deut 9:10) Some are researched (Luke's writings) ¼ of the Bible is prophecy. Much of it is Historical. Qualification - there are "untrue" statements said in the bible within context. Satan Lies, but the text shows us the lie and how it was used to deceive, inevitably teaching us about the character of Satan - it's descriptive, not prescriptive. This is why it says in Psalm 119:160 "The sum of your word is Truth"

- Verbal - the words themselves are true - not just ideas or concepts - This is very important because corrupting words can corrupt ideas.
- Plenary - “absolute or complete” it has to be completely inspired.

ALTERNATIVE DANGEROUS VIEWS:

- Partial inspiration - means only parts are inspired, but what parts? How could you trust any of it? What is the measure by which we say something is inspired? This inconsistency is dangerous - would lead to theological drift and eventual apostasy.
- Dynamic or Mystical Inspiration - essentially opens the door to many possibilities to divine inspiration - Problem, open canon - it questions God’s infallibility - While people can state true things, we cannot and should not hold it to the same standard as scripture. Scripture is the measuring stick for life
- Degree Inspiration - some passages are more “inspired” than others - aka theres a movement in Christendom that is saying that the OT is less inspired than the NT. This leads to biblical favoritism.

ALL DEVIATIONS from FULL INSPIRATION questions the character of God and his promises.

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Why is Inerrancy and Infallibility important? John 17:17 “your word is truth” If the Bible has any form of error in it, how can one be sure that his understanding of Christ is correct? **If the Bible is inconsistent, it means Christ was inconsistent which means our faith is inconsistent.**

Admittedly, there are things that on the surface seem inconsistent.

- **Approximations, Free quotations, language, of appearances, different accounts for the same occurrences.**

What do we do with these apparent contradictions?

- 1.) **These “contradictions” are on irrelevant details that are explaining the same truth.**
 - **Did Jesus heal 10 lepers or one?**
 - **Was Jesus wearing a scarlet or purple robe?**
 - **Did Judas hang himself or fall headlong?**
- 2.) **There are reasonable explanations given for each.**
 - **The one leper was the leper that came back, others were not notable to Matthew.**
 - **Scarlet would look purple in different lighting (take it from a painter)**
 - **Judas hung himself, yet decomposition made his body fall and burst in the middle**
- 3.) **Having slightly different accounts emphasizes a truthful witness.**

- **Separate witness accounts avoids collusion.**

How to find out if the Bible is True -

Deductive reasoning - major premise, minor premise, conclusion = God is true, God breathed out the Bible, therefore the bible is true. **2 Tim 3:16, Titus 1:1**

Inductive reasoning - as you work through the details of the Bible - inductive Bible Study - the parts add up to the whole. EXAMPLES:

A good way to do this is through Jesus's own words!

Matt 4:4 - Jesus quotes Deut 8:3 - Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" - Every word. If scripture is breathed out by God (2 Tim 3:16) then it must be concluded that what sustains man is scripture, not just parts but the whole, every word.

Jesus acknowledges a real, created adam and eve (Matt 19:3-5) a flood that swept them all away (Matt 24:38-39) historicity of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:15) the accuracy of the story of Jonah (Matt 12:40)

"Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished" Matt 5:17-18. Jot is tiny, tittle is even smaller - he's saying its all relevant, perfect the way it is, and it will not pass away until all is accomplished aka - the end of all things - eschaton. Jesus said "scripture cannot be broken" John 10:35

Matthew 23:32 He used this passage as a proof text of the resurrection. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... not God of the dead but of the living" Old testament.

Canon?

What is canonization? Why is it important - there are 66 books in our Old and New Testament that we believe are authoritatively scripture - Canon means: rule of action or measurement. How do we know which books we can trust to be scripture?

Measurements:

- Considers itself scriptural
- Authenticated by Prophet or Apostle
- Consistency between the books
- Jesus/Others claim and quote the 39 books of the OT
- Early church fathers claim and quote the 27 new testament books
- The 66 books we have today are widely accepted by the body of Christ at large
- Evidence of high moral and spiritual value system reflecting the Holy Spirit

Other contenders do not match these measurements in some regard: It doesn't claim to be scripture, They aren't authenticated by a Prophet or Apostle, they have an inconsistency to the other canonized books, they aren't quoted or claimed by Jesus, apostles, prophets nor even the

early church, they are not widely accepted in the church at large, they do not have evidence of a high moral and spiritual value system reflecting the work of the Holy Spirit.

At the Council of Carthage 397ad - the bishops at the time - closed the canon - at 66 books and considered all other contenders as non-authoritative.

While some writings are good to read "shepherd of Hermas" we have to understand that, truth is truth, but to measure our truth we need ot stick to the 66 books as our measurement.

On manuscripts:

Can we trust that the Bible we have today is the same as the one written 2000 years ago?
Emphatically Yes.

Because of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran) we have over 200 manuscripts that validate the OT (these date back as fare as 250 BC) We have over 17,000 manuscripts from the OT.

New Testament:

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	# of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

NOTES:

- There are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing.
- The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure.
- In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

The 0.5 inaccuracy has to do with spelling differences - in Greek this is common because you can say the same thing in multiple ways. None of these "errors" touch on any major theological truths.

Matthew 24:35 states, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away,"

How do we interpret the Bible?

INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE:

Hermeneutics - study of the principles of interpretation. **Exegesis** - actual interpretation "bringing out"

Very few people have a pure hermeneutic, but there are various types of hermeneutic systems.

- **Allegorical hermeneutics:** text is filled with various allegory / symbolic representation. Can be dangerous and inconsistent - it can make scripture say something the original authors did not intend.
- **Literal interpretation:** plain or normal reading - reading with historical, grammatical, genre, etc.
- **Semiallegorical or semiliteral:** a combination of both: sometimes people prefer "spiritual" to "allegorical"
- **Theological interpretation:** when systems of theology inform the exegesis.

Rationale for Literal Hermeneutics:

The purpose of language itself seems to require literal interpretation. God gave man language for the purpose of being able to communicate with him. The scriptures do not call for some special "deeper" level unknown to the avenues of plain communication. Switching between literal and allegorical or something in-between is inconsistent, especially when the text does not require us to do so. **More than 300 prophecies of Jesus concerning the coming of Christ were literally fulfilled, not allegorically.**

Principles of Literal Hermeneutics:

Interpreted grammatically - words matter - study of the words therein and their relationship to sentences - good starting point

Interpreted contextually - to avoid the dangers of "proof texting", what does a scripture say in relation to everything around it or even the context of the letter.

Understand Genre - each book falls into a genre category, aka - poetry, prophecy, history, teaching, etc. and it is appropriate to read a text within the rules of the genre. Aka poetry uses figures of speech, which may not convey a literal meaning, while that still reads as the plain (literal) hermeneutic. Prophecy uses symbolism - but symbols describe literal things. (back to the Jesus prophecies as example!)

Compare scripture to scripture - because it is one inspired book (the bible) each individual book within can be compared and contrasted to the others, to develop a well-rounded view of the context.

Recognize the progressiveness of revelation - As God/Jesus reveals truth to his people through OT/NT, there is a progressiveness to it - see Matt 10:5-7 compared to Matt 28:18-20, What was known about God early may not be consistent to how he is known later. This is why the teaching of dispensationalism is helpful in this case, as seen in scripture, that God works in different ways throughout human history at different times, while not being inconsistent with his character. Grace, judgement, remnant, etc - there's a ton of consistency.

Doctrine of ILLUMINATION:

Photizo - enlightenment. What Christ gives to all people, especially through the Gospel, and through the Holy Spirit. The spirit is the teacher, his presence in the believer guarantees the availability of this ministry to all believers. Not applicable to unbelievers. The spirit teaching encompasses all the truth (John 14, 16) while we can quench the spirit by living a worldly life. The purpose of the spirit's ministry is to glorify Christ. The spirit will use those who have the gift of teaching to carry out His ministry (Romans 12:7)

Illumination is not direct revelation - Jesus said he "reminds" (John 14) clarifies, etc. divine revelation is completed, now is the ministry to apply it to our lives, which is how the Holy Spirit's illumination helps us along.

Back to the churches statement: "It is our supreme and final authority of all matters of faith"

How do we know that - because it tells us **"and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work."** 2 timothy 3:15-17

The man of God to be complete - we are whole when we use God's inspired word to measure and guide our life. This is why we desperately need to be diving regularly into its pages gleaning truth to live by.