

Cornerstone Bible Church

Systematic Theology

Acknowledgment & Credits:

LECTURES ON INTRODUCTION TO
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TAUGHT BY
RAFAEL ALCANTARA IN 2009 DURING THE
SUNDAY SCHOOL AT IGLESIA BIBLICA DEL
SEÑOR JESUCRISTO

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March 27, 2011

The portion related to
“Can God be known” of is
lesson has been added and
it does not appear in the
original material

General Contents:

1. The Existence of God
2. The Attributes of God
3. The Trinity
4. Creation
5. Providence

Note: Grudem includes Miracles, Prayer, and Angels and Demons in his arrangement of the Doctrine of God

Robert Raymond includes the Biblical View of Man and The Eternal Decree of God under this subject

The Existence of God

1. Can God's Existence be proven?

A Brief and Superficial Overview of the Classical versus Clarkian Views of Presuppositionalism

2. Traditional “proofs” about the Existence of God

- a) Ontological Argument the indispensability of the being of God
- b) Cosmological Argument cause-effect argument
- c) Teleological Argument purpose & design argument
- d) Anthropological Argument inner sense of right & wrong

The Being of God

The Being of God

1. Can God be known?
 - a) God is incomprehensible
 - b) God is infinite
 - c) God is knowable
 - d) God desires to be known

2. The Attributes of God

1. Can God be known?

This was the rhetorical question that Zofar asked Job 11:7-9 "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? 8 " *They are* high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know? 9 "Its measure is longer than the earth, And broader than the sea.

Paul asked a similar question in I Co 2:11

For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

1. Can God be known?

The definite answer to this question is a resounding “no”

Rom 11:33-36

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?

ἀνεξεραύνητα Impossible to fathom or probe
(anedzeraunta)

ἀνεξιχνίαστοι Impossible to track or detect
(anedzichniastoi) Infinite, beyond one’s ability to imagine

1. Can God be known?

When we approach the study of God, we must realize that we cannot and will not ever, be able to know all of what can be known about God.

The reason of this impossibility is that God is infinite and consequently, incomprehensible

Is 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

חֵקֶר without number / impossible to search

1. Can God be known?

“Paul assumes this incomprehensibility when in I Co 2:10-12 he states that no one understands the things of God except the Spirit of God”
Grudem – Syst Theol, p. 130

This not only means that we cannot understand everything about God, but that we cannot fully understand any one single thing about God.

"He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters, At the boundary of light and darkness. 11 "The pillars of heaven tremble, And are amazed at His rebuke. 12 "He quieted the sea with His power, And by His understanding He shattered Rahab. 13 "By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent. 14 "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?"
Job 26:10-14

1. Can God be known?

“Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.” Psalm 145:3

חֵקֶר without number / impossible to search

2. Who is God?

I have yet to see a better definition than that of the Westminster Confession, which is the definition of our 1689 London Baptist Confession

“There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.”

3. ... and yet, God is knowable

“No man has seen God at any time; the **only** begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained *Him***.
Jn 1:18

Philip *said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus *said to him, "**Have I been so long with you, and *yet* you have not come to know Me, Philip?** He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? Jn 14:8

“This is eternal life, **that may know you**, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” Jn 17:3

3. ... and yet, God is knowable

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Christ.

2 Co 4:6

Of course, this "know-ability" of God has limitations:

- Only that which God has revealed of Himself is knowable
- Only that which Jesus reveals of God is knowable
- Only that which the Spirit illumines in the Word of God about God is knowable I Co 2:10-12

"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*." Mt 11:17

4. God desires to be known

Thus says **the** LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not **the** mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, **that he understands and knows Me**, that I am **the** LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, "declares **the** LORD. **Jeremiah 9:23-24**

4. God desires to be known

"**The** God who made **the** world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, **as** though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all **the** face of **the** earth, having determined *their* appointed times, and **the** boundaries of their habitation, 27 **that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us**"

Acts 17:24-27

5. God is incomprehensible yet knowable...

1. We will have an entire eternity to learn from Him, and we will still have not exhausted knowing Him Col 1:10
2. We must remember then that we know very little
3. We will never know God exhaustively, but in Christ we can know Him truly

*And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, **in order that we might know Him who is true**, and we are in Him who is true, **in His Son Jesus Christ**. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols. 1 Jn 5:20-21*

The Attributes of God

The Attributes of God

The subject of the Doctrine of God is very vast, and we could spend a long time speaking about it; because this is a course on Introduction to Systematic Theology this will not be dealt with in depth, but each person will have to pursue more in depth studies individually

Recommended reading: (classics on this subject)

Thomas Watson – A Body of Divinity –

Stephen Charnock – The Attributes and Existence of God –

J.I. Packer – Knowing God -

The Attributes of God

- 1 - What are the attributes of God?**
- 2 - Classification of the Attributes of God?**
- 3 – Description of the Attributes of God**

I - What are the Attributes of God?

We can define them as those perfections which belong to God, and which differentiate Him from any other being

That definition has a limitation. What do you think it is?

God has shared some of those attributes partially with some of his creatures. Man has been made in God's image but man is a creature

This definition points to, the origin and boundless existence, in which those attributes, differentiate God from any other being

When we study God, we do not stand over our subject, as a biologist analyzing the parts of a cell or a micro-organism. We rather stand under our subject, as an astronomer who probes the wonders of deep space

II - How do we classify the Attributes of God?

This has been the subject of discussion and debate. There are diverse ways to approach the classification of God's Attributes, and there are some who reject any type classifying them.

Incommunicable & communicable

This distinction seeks to classify them based on whether or not those attributes are reflected in man, who was created in the image of God, or whether or not they are shared with the redeemed, when in regeneration they are made "partakers of the divine nature"

Example:

- a) Incommunicable: omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience
- b) Communicable: righteousness, holiness, wisdom, knowledge

II - How do we classify the Attributes of God?

Incommunicable & communicable

Wayne Grudem says regarding this classification

“Incommunicable attributes are those that God shares with us and communicable attributes are the ones He shares even more with us.” (Biblical Doctrine, Pg. 71)

Some have concluded that there is no happy classification of God’s attributes, and the best approach is to study them without classification while we seek to emulate, whatever might be imitable of them.

III - What are God's Attributes

Without being exhaustive, we will use the following terms which do designate the Divine Perfections or the Attributes of God:

Aseity (Independence), Eternity, Immutability, Omniscience, Unity, Spirituality, Invisibility, Omnipresence, Wisdom, Sovereignty, Faithfulness, Goodness, Mercy, Grace, Love, Holiness, Justice and Wrath.

We will consider briefly each one of these attributes from the Word of God starting next week.

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