

## **THEOLOGY PROPER (The Doctrine of God)**

The ultimate pursuit for any human is a pursuit of the knowledge of God. The prophet Jeremiah said: "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...declares the LORD." (Jer.9:23-24) It is very clear from this statement that the greatest use of a man's mind is the pursuit of the knowledge of God, even as the Apostle Paul wrote: "Set your mind on the things above..." (Col.3:2). One of the key passages of Scripture for Israel, to this very day, is a passage written by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. This passage, plus two others (Deut.11:13-21,Num.15:37-41), is known as the "Shema" and is the fundamental statement of the Jewish faith. In this passage, Moses states: "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deut. 6:5) **To love someone will all your heart means you must know someone will all your mind.** Obviously, we cannot love what we do not know. Therefore, if we are to love God, we must purpose to know God and that is precisely the objective of Theology Proper. **Theology Proper systematizes information about God so that we may know God and love God for whom and what He reveals Himself to be, not for what we want God to be.**

It should not surprise us that Satan will do everything he can to keep people from gaining a true, precise, accurate understanding of God and a doctrine like Theology Proper. Satan's blatant attacks against God have, for the most part, been immediately recognized by God's people. For example, when Charles Darwin declared himself to be an agnostic in 1850 and then went on to say that God did not create man, but that he was the product of his more "scientific" evolutionary process (1857), Christians had no trouble identifying this as a direct attack of Satan. Likewise, when Friedrich Nietzsche philosophically declared "God is dead", in the late 1800's, Christians had no problem in seeing the source as being Satan. God's people have been quick to spot Satan's blatant attacks against God. However, where Satan has made his greatest progress, against God's people and God's church, is in the subtle way he has kept people from understanding truth about God. Concepts of God are fuzzy, not precise. Most have ideas about God that are personal and individual; but not Biblical.

Until the early 1800's, one of the most important areas of Biblical study in the Church was the study of the Doctrine of God. Presently, in the context of the church in general, it is probably **the** most neglected area of study in all of doctrine. One only needs to observe the neglect of this study in Churches, Bible Schools, Colleges and Seminaries to realize Satan is doing a fine job keeping the majority of people from truly knowing God. Dr. Louis Berkhof gives an historical sketch as to how this subtle attack began which is worthy of consideration: "Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the practice was all but general to begin the study(doctrine).. .with the doctrine of God; but a change came about under the influence of Schleiermacher,(a liberal German theologian, 1768-1834), who sought to safeguard the scientific character of theology by the introduction of a new method. Religion gradually took the place of God as the object of theology." (Systematic Theology, pp. 21-22)

Satan does not want people to know God and that is why we must study Theology Proper.

## THEOLOGY PROPER (2)

### QUESTION #1- Why should we study Theology Proper?

Although we have already established a strong case for studying this doctrine, we cite six reasons:

#### (Reason #1)- The Academic Reason.

There is no higher field of study than a study of God. The pure logistics of tackling such a discipline is far above and beyond any other academic pursuit. It is true that there is an important place in our world for studying such things as medical and computer technology, physics, physiology and psychology. However, when we compare any of these fields to the study of the Infinite God who knows everything about everything, these other fields are far inferior. In reality, all true science has God as its source, therefore when the Person of God is studied, the ultimate academic quest is being pursued. We expect the unregenerate world to minimize the study of God, but for the regenerate mind that grasps truth, the study of God is the ultimate study.

#### (Reason #2)- The Biblical Reason.

As we have clearly established in our study of Bibliology, there has never been in all of history another book as unique as the Bible. The major question every human being faces is this- "Why does the Bible exist?" The obvious answer is that God has given us His word so that we might know Him, His ways and His will. This fact immediately serves as impetus for an intense study of Theology Proper. Until we study what God has revealed about Himself, we cannot know God.

#### (Reason #3)- The Systematic Reason.

Without a serious and systematic approach to any field of study, there will never be a proper understanding and grasping of the information. God has designed us in such a way that learning and comprehending requires systematic organization and study. This is true in any field of study. The greatest and most significant systematic study that one can undertake is the study of the Person of God.

#### (Reason #4)- The Judgmental Reason.

There is coming a day when every human will actually face the God of the Bible. This is true for the believer and the non-believer. It certainly behooves the believer to learn as much as possible about the God he will one-day face, since pertaining to this judgment will be based on how we governed our lives in view of our knowledge of God.

#### (Reason #5)- The Apologetic Reason.

We need to be able give concrete answers about God to our searching world. There is a major difference between a searcher and a skeptic, but we should be able to give sound answers to both (I Pet.3:15). We can give a proper defense for God when we know true doctrine about God!

## THEOLOGY PROPER (3)

**(Reason #6)** - The personal reason.

There is nothing that pleases God more than when people search His Word to learn about Him. Any person who undertakes such a study is bound to receive personal blessing. God has promised many, many times that those who seek and search after Him and His wisdom will find great spiritual wealth (I Chron. 16:10-12; Ps. 34:10; 119:2; Prov. 2:1-5). There is no personal objective more important than the one that attempts to know God. This is the precise reason for a study of Theology Proper.

**QUESTION #2** – What does the word “theology” actually mean?

The word “theology” comes from two Greek words:

- 1) Theos (θεός), which means God.
- 2) Logos (λόγος), which means word.

When these two words are brought together to form the word “theo-logy,” the basic meaning is a **word or a study of God**.

In a general sense, the term “theology” covers the entire sphere of doctrinal study, since all doctrinal study is really a study about God.

In the specific sense, the term “Theology Proper” covers the doctrinal study of the person of God and His work.

**QUESTION #3** – What knowledge of God does every human being possess?

Every human being has at least five areas of knowledge about God:

**(Area of Knowledge #1)** - Every human has visible knowledge of the existence of God.

The creative world clearly presents visible evidence of God, His power and existence (Rom. 1:20). Through creation, the evidence is so profound that it leaves every human without excuse. Some of the things that clearly give a visible display of the glory, power and majesty of God are:

- 1) Heavens (Ps. 19:1; 50:6); 2) Day and Night (Ps. 19:2);
- 3) Newborn Babies (Ps. 8:2); 4) Moon and Stars (Ps. 8:3);
- 5) Animal Life (Job 12:7-10); 6) Sea (Jer. 5:22);
- 7) Rain (Jer. 5:22); 8) Seasons (Jer. 5:24); 9) Mountains (Ps. 36:6).

Man may know about God by creation, but man cannot intimately know God without revelation. This is why people who spend more time studying and analyzing creation rather than the written Word will **never** intimately know God.