

Prolegomena Outline for Study of Systematic Theology

I. Prolegomena

A. What is Theology?

1. Definition of theology

Some brief definitions of theology:

“Christian theology is the study of the divine revelation in the Bible. It has God as its perpetual centerpiece, God’s Word as its source, and godliness as its aim.” (John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*, p. 34)

“Christian theology...means the rational interpretation of the Christian faith. Theology...is the discovery, systematizing, and presentation of the truths of God.” (Charles Ryrie in *Basic Theology*, p. 13)

“Theology commonly refers to the ordered, systematic study or interpretation of the Christian faith and experience of God based on God’s divine self-revelation. Theology also seeks to apply these truths to the full breadth of human experience and thought.” (*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 112)

2. Types of theology

- a. Biblical Theology
- b. Historic Theology
- c. Dogmatic Theology
- d. Practical Theology
- e. Natural Theology
- f. Systematic Theology

B. Why is the Study of Theology Important?

1. It helps you know God
2. It helps to know God’s Word
3. It answers life’s most important questions

The study of theology helps give you the answer to life’s most important questions:

- a. How did we get here?

- b. Why are we here?
- c. How can we know truth?
- d. What is man's problem?
- e. How can man's problem be fixed?
- f. How should we live?
- g. Is there a God?
- h. Can we know God?
- i. What happens when we die?
- j. Is there a definite right and wrong?
- k. What will happen in the future?

C. What is Systematic Theology?

1. The Categories of systematic theology

- a. Bibliology
- b. Theology proper
- c. Christology
- d. Pneumatology
- e. Anthropology
- f. Hamartiology
- g. Soteriology
- h. Angelology
- i. Ecclesiology
- j. Eschatology

2. The benefits of systematic theology

Charles Ryrie said,

“Theology is for everyone. Indeed, everyone needs to be a theologian. In reality, everyone *is* a theologian—of one sort or another. And therein lies the problem. There is nothing wrong with being an amateur theologian or a professional theologian, but there is everything wrong with being an ignorant or a sloppy theologian. Therefore, every Christian should read theology.”

(Charles Ryrie in *Basic Theology*, p. 9, 1986. Emphasis his)

- a. Systematic theology makes some things easier
- b. Systematic theology puts things in the proper perspective
- c. Systematic theology informs our intellect; as it does it determines our beliefs, and directs our actions, and dictates what we love.
- d. Systematic theology equips us to serve God and live in this world.

3. **The limitations of systematic theology**
 - a. Man's inadequacies.
 - b. Man's willful ignorance.
 - c. God's silence.
 - d. Man's spiritual condition.

4. **The impact of studying systematic theology**
 - a. It should improve one's walk with God because it will increase one's knowledge of God.
 - b. It should lead to greater sanctification because it will lead to greater understanding of God's Word.
 - c. It should result in deeper intimacy with God because it will result in a deeper desire to know God.
 - d. It will lead to greater condemnation because it will lead to greater accountability. (Luke 12:48; Rom 14:12; 1 Pet 4:5)

5. **The approach to studying systematic theology**
 - a. With prayer.
 - b. With humility.
 - c. With excitement.
 - d. With expectation.

6. **The presuppositions impacting the study of systematic theology**

We all have presuppositions whether we acknowledge them or not. We unapologetically mention three of them here.

- a. There is a God.
- b. The Bible is God's Word.
- c. There is a superior method of interpreting the Bible.