

INTRODUCTION

1. We are looking again tonight at Prolegomena.
2. We said that prolegomena means to say before or to say in advance.
3. And what were saying before we actually get in to the study of “Biblical Doctrine” are answers to questions as they relate to systematic theology.
4. These questions and answers are meant to prepare us for what follows in our study

¹ MacArthur, John; Mayhue, Richard. Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Kindle Locations 1203-1215). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

of biblical doctrine.

5. We have already asked and answered:
6. What is theology?
7. What are the various major kinds of theology?
8. What is systematic theology?
9. What are the categories of systematic theology?
10. What is the relationship between exegetical, biblical, and systematic theology?
11. Tonight we are only looking at one question...

LESSON

I. What Are the Benefits and Limitations of Systematic Theology?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB) All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

All Scripture, whether examined exegetically in particular texts or categorically within the full scope of the Bible, is spiritually profitable to accomplish at least four divine purposes (2 Tim.3:16):

- For establishing “teaching” or doctrine, that is, God’s inspired self-disclosure about Himself, His created world, and His redemptive plan to save and sanctify sinners
- For confrontation or “reproof” of sin, whether in the form of false teaching or disobedient living
- For “correction” of error in thinking and behaving so that the repentant one can be restored to the place of pleasing God
- For “instruction” so that believers can be habitually trained to practice the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ— sinning less and obeying more Scripture provides the only complete, wholly accurate, and trustworthy teaching about God, and it will

sufficiently accomplish these four things for equipping “the man of God” (2 Tim. 3: 17).

A. Benefits

Systematic theology can provide several benefits:

1. An unabridged (not cut or shortened) collection of biblical truth
2. An orderly synthesis (reasoning) and summation of biblical doctrine
3. An imperative to take the gospel to the ends of the earth
4. A repository (storehouse) of truth for expositional preaching and teaching

5. A scriptural basis for Christian behavior in the church, the home, and the world
6. A defense of biblical doctrine against false teaching
7. A biblical response to ethical and social malpractice in the world

As James Leo Garrett Jr. puts it, Systematic theology is beneficial as an extension of the teaching function of the churches, for the orderly and integrated formulation of biblical truths, for the undergirding of the preaching of preachers and lay Christians, for the defense of gospel truth against error that has invaded the church, for the legitimation of the gospel before philosophy and culture, as the

foundation for Christian personal and social ethics, and for more effective universal propagation of the gospel and interaction with adherents of non-Christian religions.

B. Limitations

Systematic theology can be limited by the following factors:

1. The silence of the Bible on a particular topic
 - a) Deuteronomy 29:29 (NASB) The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

b) John 20:30 (NASB) Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.

c) John 21:25 (NASB) And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they *were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself *would not contain the books that *would be written.

2. A theologian's partial knowledge/
understanding of the entire Bible

a) Luke 24:25-27 (NASB) And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that

the prophets have spoken! 26
Was it not necessary for the
Christ to suffer these things and
to enter into His glory?” 27 Then
beginning with Moses and with all
the prophets, He explained to
them the things concerning
Himself in all the Scriptures.

- b) Luke 24:32 (NASB) They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”
- c) 2 Peter 3:15-16 (NASB) and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according

to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

3. The inadequacy of human language

a) 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (NASB)

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining

spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

b) 2 Corinthians 12:3-4 (NASB) And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

4. The finiteness of the human mind

Romans 11:33-35 (NASB) 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?

5. The lack of spiritual discernment/
growth

a) 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NASB) And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed,

even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

b) Hebrews 5:11-14 (NASB)

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of

righteousness, for he is an infant.
14 But solid food is for the
mature, who because of practice
have their senses trained to
discern good and evil.

CONCLUSION

1. There are both benefits and limitations to systematic theology.
2. Remember as we talk about systematic theology, we are talking about the organization of Scripture by a reasoning of scriptural teaching, summarized by major categories that encompass the entirety of God's written revelation.
3. Let's pray.