

INTRODUCTION TO THIS SECTION

In moving into the fields of Systematic and Biblical Theology we will discuss topics rather than a specific book. Our approach will be with different, in that rather than study what others have written about these topics, our study group will examine them and discuss them ourselves.

The controversy surrounding these many topics stems from disagreements among scholars and theologians as they seek to understand and define them. The study of topics like the ones we will discuss is often termed "Systematic Theology" or Biblical Theology."

Our goal is neither to be controversial for "controversial" sake, nor to just oppose "church doctrine" but to genuinely seek out the Biblical teaching and intent of God's Word on each topic.

Let's define Systematic theology in a simple way. This would involve various ways of cataloging the Biblical themes as a set of topics usually gathered into subjects like: God, Christ, the nature of Christ, the church, angels, creation, the nature of man and on and on.

This became an important matter very early in church history when the nature of Christ was to be defined. Was He God, man, both, neither, and so on? Due to the controversy over whom or what He was in the early church would determine whether a person could be received into the fellowship. Even today, there are groups who define Him in various ways. The result of all this is church creeds, doctrinal statements, and statements of faith (one will see in church bulletins) and so on. These doctrines were established by councils, denominations and institutes of education as standards of orthodoxy.¹ If one confesses to the creed or statement of faith, they are allowed to participate in the congregation or be ordained or teach there and so on.

I remember one time I was applying for a teaching position at a local Christian college. Immediately I was asked, "Do you believe that the scripture is inerrant in the original manuscripts?" I replied, "No one has ever seen the original

¹ Literally, "straight or accurate viewpoint (literally, "words (or proclamations) of glory)"/"

manuscripts, and the question implies that you may believe there are errors in the copies.” He threw me out of his office. I had the audacity to question his premise.

There is a place for orthodoxy. If someone said, “I would like to teach your children about Jesus” and you said okay, “Who is Jesus to you” and they answered “A wise philosopher whose teaching changed the world, but nothing more,” you might say, “Thank you, but no thank you.”

There is also “Biblical Theology” much the same except it tracks the flow of themes through the Bible taking into consideration historical, cultural and linguistic considerations. I would fit closer to this school, although some of the conclusions drawn are also questionable. All of these theological works are written by people and all have some value.

However, many of the theological conclusions are based not on what the Scripture is actually intending to convey, but on the doctrine and belief of the theologian or the church he may represent. Then, the Scripture become a means to support the doctrine rather than a means to truth itself.

So this section will turn the spot light on the scripture as it actually relates to the doctrines taught by the various churches throughout history. What we will see is that there are numerous distortions and errors in many doctrines Christians have come to believe. Some of them are confusing, contradictory to truth and debilitating to a believers walk in faith. But truth will set us free. I suggest that the most important topics in this collection are: 1. The Old and New Covenants and 2; The Finished work of Christ.