

# Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem

## Chapter Summaries

From the *Instructors Manual*, Created By Daniel Julian

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## Suggested Websites

**Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals:** A group of evangelical Christians from many denominational backgrounds, as well as their online journal

<http://www.alliancenet.org/>

<http://www.reformation21.org/>

**Bible Researcher:** An online directory of articles related to textual studies, theological issues, and the canon of Scripture

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/>

**The Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon:** A biographical encyclopedia covering historical church figures

<http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/>

**The Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics:** A collection of many online resources, organized according to areas of doctrine, and specifically Reformed in their theological commitments

<http://www.reformed.org/>

**The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Biblical Hermeneutics**

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>

**The Christian Classics Ethereal Library:** An online collection of early church documents, including Calvin's Institutes, the works of the early church fathers, and many others

<http://www.ccel.org>

**Christian Essentials at Scottsdale Bible Church:** An online collection of Wayne Grudem's lectures through *Systematic Theology*

<http://christianessentialsbc.com/messages/>

**The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood:** Covers issues of marriage, church leadership, and biblical manhood and womanhood from a Complementarian perspective

<http://www.cbmw.org/>

**The Evangelical Theological Society:** A professional and academic society of evangelical scholars, pastors, students, and others as well as their quarterly journal

<http://www.etsjets.org/>

<http://www.etsjets.org/JETS>

**Monergism Directory of Theology:** Perhaps the most comprehensive online collection of theological resources, providing many online articles and sites divided by category and doctrine

<http://www.monergism.com/directory/>

**The New Testament Gateway:** A collection of many online resources for New Testament studies

<http://www.ntgateway.com/>

**Threshold:** Many online works by various theologians including Wayne Grudem, J. Gresham Machen, Augustine, R. C. Sproul, and many others

<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/books/onlinebooks.html>

# Chapter Summaries

## *Chapter 1 – Introduction to Systematic Theology*

### Key Terms

apologetics, biblical theology, Christian ethics, contradiction, doctrine, dogmatic theology, historical theology, major doctrine, minor doctrine, New Testament theology, Old Testament theology, paradox, philosophical theology, presupposition, systematic theology

### Key Points

- Systematic theology looks at the whole witness of Scripture and applies it directly to the lives of Christians.
- The study of systematic theology enables Christians to fulfill the Great Commission.

### Chapter Summary

We can define systematic theology as “any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic.”<sup>1</sup> This book focuses specifically on this field of inquiry rather than addressing philosophical, historical, or biblical theology. When appropriate, these other approaches will come to bear on the discussion, but each takes a back seat to the larger task of systematizing and applying the whole witness of Scripture on various topics. Rather than looking exclusively, for instance, at Paul’s views on the people of God, this text will look at what the whole Bible says about the people of God (including what Paul says about them) and how that doctrine should be understood by believers today. The church needs this type of study today because so many Christians regularly “do” systematic theology, albeit in a disorganized manner. The following chapters will attempt to treat seven major areas of doctrine (the Word of God, God, man, Christ and the Holy Spirit, Redemption, the church, and the future) in a carefully organized, detailed, accurate and Bible-centered manner. In addressing these doctrines, this text begins with two assumptions: (1) The Bible is true, and (2) the God of the Bible exists and is who the Bible says he is.

The study of systematic theology enables Christians to fulfill the Great Commission—this is the most basic reason for doing systematic theology—and it will result in many benefits in our lives. It will help us put away wrong ideas, will enable us to come to better conclusions whenever doctrinal issues and controversies arise, and will help us become mature Christians.

Some object to systematic theology as suspicious because the conclusions strike them as “too neat” or “too clear cut.” Others object to delineating a specific choice or arrangement of topics; they believe that such choices will predetermine the outcome of the study. To the first objection, we can respond that if God is consistent, and if we accurately understand God’s teachings, then they should fit neatly together. It is highly unlikely that the omniscient, omnipotent, wholly truthful God of the universe would provide us with an inconsistent, jumbled set of propositions. To the second objection, we can respond that we might study *any* topic or

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 21.

doctrinal question in *any* sequence, and if we are correctly interpreting Scripture, the conclusions we reach will be much the same.

As Christians, we must study systematic theology prayerfully and humbly. We must also study it with reason. The student of God's word is never to leave his or her mind at the door. In studying systematic theology, we are taking part in a practice that demands community involvement; we learn much from our discussions with other Christians.

Our study of systematic theology must also be comprehensive. We pursue a doctrine by collecting all of the relevant passages in Scripture; by reading, studying, and summarizing the claims of these passages individually; and finally by attempting to summarize all of the results of our study into one or more points.

Finally, we must study systematic theology with hearts that are full of praise and delight in the God who has revealed himself to us in Scripture.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing."<sup>2</sup>
- Initiate discussion by asking students to offer a definition of God or to explain the Trinity in three sentences. Promote further discussion by asking whether God predestines certain individuals to salvation, or whether we have the ability to take those first steps toward God on our own. Use the results of this discussion to transition into an explanation of the definition of, and our need for, systematic theology.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What role does reason play in the study of systematic theology?
- Explain one of the two objections to the study of systematic theology that were mentioned in the text, then address this objection.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (John Calvin)  
<http://www.vor.org/rbdisk/html/institutes/index.html>.
- *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (Louis Berkhof)  
[http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/berkhof\\_summary.html](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/berkhof_summary.html)
- "Who Needs Systematic Theology" (Michael Horton)  
<http://wscal.edu/resource-center/resource/who-needs-systematic-theology>

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<sup>2</sup> This hymn can be found in *ibid.*, 42–43. A contemporary version of this hymn, sung by David Crowder and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igvtsUfD5xM&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

# Part 1 – The Doctrine of the Word of God

## Chapter 2 – The Word of God

### Key Terms

decree, personal address, Word of God

### Key Points

- The Word of God has come to us in many different forms.
- The focus of systematic theology is the written Word of God, the Bible.

### Chapter Summary

The phrase “the Word of God” has a number of meanings. At various points, it can refer to Jesus Christ (e.g., Jn 1:1, 14), to God’s specific decrees (e.g., Gen 1:3ff.), to God’s words of personal address (e.g., Ex 20:1–3; Mk 1:11), to God’s words spoken through prophets (e.g., Deut 18:18–20), or to God’s words as written in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor 14:37). In every case, God’s words are fully authoritative; “to disbelieve or disobey any part of them is to disbelieve or disobey God himself.”<sup>3</sup> The words of God in written Scripture benefit us greatly because they provide us with opportunities to study them repeatedly and to make them available to many more people. In systematic theology, the focus of study is on the Bible rather than on the other forms of the Word of God.

### Pedagogical Suggestions

- Open class by asking one student to read Psalm 1, another to read Psalm 119:9–16, and a third to read John 1:1–14.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “The spoken words of Jesus in the Gospels are more authoritative for us as people of God than the book of Lamentations for us as people of God.”

### Suggested Essay Question

- Explain the value of having God’s words transmitted in written form.

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- “How Is the Bible the Word of God?” (George Eldon Ladd)  
[http://gospelpedlar.com/articles/Bible/word\\_of\\_God.html](http://gospelpedlar.com/articles/Bible/word_of_God.html)
- “Perspectives on the Word of God” (John Frame; in 3 parts)  
[http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.Perspectives\\_on\\_the\\_Word.pt1.html](http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.Perspectives_on_the_Word.pt1.html)

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<sup>3</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 48.

[http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.Perspectives\\_on\\_the\\_Word.pt2.html](http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.Perspectives_on_the_Word.pt2.html)

[http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.Perspectives\\_on\\_the\\_Word.pt3.html](http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.Perspectives_on_the_Word.pt3.html)

- “What Is the Word of God?” (Louis Berkhof)  
[http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/lou\\_berkhof/lou\\_berkhof.WordofGod.html](http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/lou_berkhof/lou_berkhof.WordofGod.html)
- “The Word of God: Timeless and Timely” (John Frame)  
[http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame\\_articles/WordofGod.htm](http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/WordofGod.htm)
- “The Word of the Lord” (Harold John Ockenga)  
[http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article\\_word\\_ockenga.html](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_word_ockenga.html)

## ***Chapter 3 – The Canon of Scripture***

### **Key Terms**

Apocrypha, apostle, canon, canonical, covenant, God-breathed, history of redemption, self-attesting

### **Key Points**

- We must determine the canon of Scripture to properly study, trust, and obey God.
- The Old Testament (OT) prophets and the New Testament (NT) apostles both played a similar role in recording the words of God during their respective time periods.
- The Apocrypha is not divinely authoritative and should not be included in the canon of Scripture.
- The canon as we have it today (the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is reliable, complete, and closed: no further books remain to be added, no existing books should be removed.

### **Chapter Summary**

To study the written words of God, we must know which writings comprise the written words of God. If we study, trust, and obey words that are not God's words, or if we fail to study, trust, and obey words that are God's words, we will be unable to know and obey God. This leads us to the question of canonicity: Which books belong in the canon of Scripture and which carry no divine authority?

The focus on an accurate canon appeared early in the history of the people of God. In fact, the Ten Commandments, given by God to Moses, established the beginnings of the authoritative collection of God's words. This collection of God's words grew as he spoke to his people through Moses, through Joshua, and later through other prophets (Isaiah, Amos, Samuel, etc.).

The OT canon was completed around 435 BC, approximately the same time that Malachi concluded his prophetic ministry. Extrabiblical literature affirms this conclusion (1 Maccabees, Josephus), as do rabbinic writings (e.g., the *Babylonian Talmud*), which state that the ministry of the OT prophets had ceased. In fact, even though the NT quotes the canonical OT over 295 times, neither Christ, nor those he interacted with in the Gospels, nor the apostles ever cite any extrabiblical literature as divinely authoritative.

The Roman Catholic Church affirmed the Apocrypha at the Council of Trent in 1546, in spite of the numerous doctrinal and historical inconsistencies found in these books, and in spite of the fact that the leaders of the early church did not generally accept these books as canonical. Therefore, we should not accept the Apocrypha as the authoritative words of God.

The NT canon is primarily the writings of the apostles (the NT equivalent of the OT prophets). We find justification for trusting the writings of the apostles in Christ's promise to them: "The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the apostles claim for themselves an authority like that of the OT prophets,<sup>5</sup> and they state that their words are the words of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> We find the two clearest

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<sup>4</sup> Jn 14:26; cf. Jn 16:13–14.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Pet 3:2.

claims that NT authors are writing Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16 (where Peter identifies Paul's writings as *graphē*) and 1 Timothy 5:17–18 (where Paul quotes Luke 10:7 as *graphē*).

The early church affirmed as canonical for various reasons those books of the NT not written by the apostles. For instance, they accepted Mark and Luke-Acts because of the close connection between their authors and the apostles (e.g., Mark writing on behalf of Peter, Luke writing on behalf of Paul). The church also recognized Jude as canonical because of Jude's close connection with James and Jesus, and the qualities of Hebrews convinced the early church that it was divinely inspired. After the apostles died, the early church began the work of evaluating which books should be included within the authoritative Word of God. They looked at a number of factors (apostolic endorsement, consistency with the rest of Scripture, the internal witness of the Spirit among believers as they read the work), and by AD 397, the NT canon was settled and affirmed by the Council of Carthage.

As we read Scripture today, the Holy Spirit assures us of the divine inspiration of what we read. An awareness of the historical development of the canon helps persuade us of the completeness of the canon, as does the fact that there are no strong candidates for addition to the canon, nor any strong arguments for removal of the existing canonical books. If, hypothetically, we were to discover another letter by Paul or another manuscript by John, and believers were to recognize it as God-inspired, then it would be consistent with the rest of Scripture. However, this is an extremely unlikely, hypothetical situation, and it presents no difficulty to the acceptance of the current canon as reliable and complete.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking students to discuss the question, “Would our understanding of the Gospel change if we were to discover another letter by Paul or Peter?”
- Read the quote from the *Gospel of Thomas* found on page 67 of *Systematic Theology*, then ask the class to discuss which portions of Scripture would make them unlikely to include this book in the canon of Scripture. Prompt them to consider the entire canon, including Genesis 1–2, as well as the recorded behavior of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why is it important to have an agreed-upon, recognized canon of Scripture?
- What does it mean to say that God preserved Scripture?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Canon of the New Testament” (Roger Nicole)  
[http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article\\_canon\\_nicole.html](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_canon_nicole.html)
- “The Dating of the New Testament” (Norman Geisler)  
<http://www.bethinking.org/resource.php?ID=233>
- “The Formation of the Canon of the New Testament” (B. B. Warfield)  
<http://www.bible-researcher.com/warfield2.html>
- “tota Scriptura” (R. C. Sproul)  
<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tota-scriptura/>

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor 14:37.

## Chapter 4 – The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (1) Authority

### Key Terms

absolute authority, authority of Scripture, circular argument, dictation, God-breathed, inspiration, plenary inspiration, Scripture, self-attesting

### Key Points

- All the words of Scripture are God’s words and are completely truthful.
- To disbelieve or disobey the words of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God; Scripture is our authority.

### Chapter Summary

In speaking of the authority of Scripture, we affirm: “All the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”<sup>7</sup>

We can claim that all of the words of Scripture are God’s words because this is what the Bible claims for itself in its repeated use of the phrases “Thus says the LORD” and “The word of the LORD came to [a prophet].” In fact, Scripture states that if any prophet claims to speak the words of the Lord, every word must come from God, or that prophet is a false prophet.<sup>8</sup> The consistent, repeated claim of the writers of the OT is that they are writing the very words of God.

The authors of the NT also recognize that the words of Scripture are God’s words—Paul calls them “God-breathed,”<sup>9</sup> and Peter states that “men [who] spoke from God”<sup>10</sup> wrote them. At two points<sup>11</sup> they refer to NT writings as Scripture (*graphē*) along with the OT.

In addition to its claim to be authoritative, we also receive internal affirmation of the truth and authority of Scripture from the Holy Spirit as we read and consider the Bible. And while other evidences—the consistency of the text, the historical accuracy of its claims, the depth of its teachings, the fulfillment of its prophecies—might prompt us toward further trust in the words of Scripture, ultimately its words are self-attesting. They are their own highest authority. This is not an invalid circular argument but rather recognition of the fact that any argument for highest authority must ultimately appeal to that authority.

In any case, while all of the words of Scripture are God’s words, this does not mean that God dictated all of these words to the authors in a strictly mechanical, word-for-word manner. While some passages are the result of dictation, God inspired many other sections of Scripture using a variety of means (e.g., dreams, visions, memories of the apostles). For instance, God inspired Luke to write an entirely authoritative and accurate account of Christ and the early church through a protojournalistic process of interviewing eyewitnesses and recording available historical data. Regardless of the means by which God inspired Scripture, all of the words of Scripture are authoritative. If we disbelieve or disobey these words, we directly disobey or disbelieve God himself.

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<sup>7</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73.

<sup>8</sup> Deut 18:18–20.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Tim 3:16 NIV.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Pet 1:21 NIV.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Pet 3:16; 1 Tim 5:18.

We can also claim that all the words of Scripture are truthful, because God is unable to lie or speak falsely. In fact, Jesus identifies God's words as "truth" itself in John 17:17. Because of this, we know that no new fact will ever be discovered that contradicts the Bible. We can be confident that any facts arising from the study of science (or history or archaeology or any other field) will confirm the accuracy of Scripture.

Because the words of Scripture are God's words and are true, Scripture is our final standard of authority. As we approach the Bible, we approach an authority that no one can improve, disprove, or override.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn "Standing on the Promises."<sup>12</sup>
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: "We can know that the Bible is true because the Bible says that it is true."
- Ask students to discuss what most nonbelievers might consider their "final authority," then prompt further discussion by asking in what ways these other sources of final authority might fall short.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why is it not an inappropriate circular argument for us to appeal to Scripture to prove that Scripture is God's words?
- In what ways does the Bible claim to be the words of God?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- "Authority: God Governs His People through Scripture" (J. I. Packer)  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/packer/06authority.html>
- "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" (N. T. Wright)  
[http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue\\_files/How%20can%20the%20Bible%20be%20Auth%20oritative.pdf](http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue_files/How%20can%20the%20Bible%20be%20Auth%20oritative.pdf)

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<sup>12</sup> This hymn can be found in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 89. Traditional accompaniment music and on-screen lyrics can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziXjNKrmdKw> (accessed July 8, 2011).

## Chapter 5 – The Inerrancy of Scripture

### Key Terms

autograph, faith and practice, ICBI, inerrant, infallible, textual variants

### Key Points

- The original manuscripts of the Bible are inerrant: they do not affirm anything contrary to fact.
- Inerrancy does not mean scientific precision; it means truthfulness.
- The objections raised to the doctrine of inerrancy suffer in a number of ways. Some fail to account for the claims of the text, some fail to account for the omnipotent power of God, and some simply allege error where none exists.
- The doctrine of inerrancy is critical to studying Scripture in an attempt to understand its claims and to trust in God.

### Chapter Summary

In part of our discussion on the authority of Scripture, we focused on the claim that all the words of Scripture are truthful. This leads to a discussion of the inerrancy of Scripture, which is the doctrine that Scripture—in the original autographs—“does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.”<sup>13</sup>

The doctrine of inerrancy is important for us to define clearly. To begin with, the inerrancy of Scripture does not preclude the use of ordinary language. For instance, it is ordinary and truthful to use phrases such as “the sun rose” to refer to the phenomenon from the standpoint of the speaker. It is also appropriate for the Bible to give accurate accounts of distances or the number of casualties in a war with the degree of precision expected by the original audience. In fact, imprecise statements can be entirely true. For example, it is truthful (though not perfectly precise) to say that Phoenix is 1,450 miles from Chicago (when traveling in a straight line), when the exact distance might be 1,453.22 miles. This is not affirming anything contrary to fact. At the same time, the doctrine of inerrancy does not restrict the authors’ ability to use loose or indirect quotations. Matthew and Luke can each quote Jesus using different words yet accurately convey the content of what Jesus said. They might even do so using uncommon or inelegant grammatical constructions and still be writing completely true words.

Some have objected that the Bible seeks to teach only on issues of “faith and practice.” This objection fails because the authors of Scripture never claim to speak truthfully about only certain subjects. Instead, they claim that *all* of Scripture is “God-breathed.”<sup>14</sup> Repeatedly, the authors of the NT refer to various major and minor historical details or narrative events as true, actual events. Those who hold this position mistake a major purpose of Scripture for the whole purpose of Scripture.

Others have argued that *inerrancy* is an unfortunate or misleading term; we do not find the term in Scripture, and it implies a scientific precision that the Bible does not have. In response, the terms *Trinity* and *incarnation* also do not appear in the text of Scripture but are sufficient for communicating the concept of their respective biblical doctrines. Those who affirm

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<sup>13</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 91.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Tim 3:16 NIV.

the doctrine of inerrancy are using a term that has been used and defined for well over a century, and they have not used it to connote absolute scientific precision. They have used *inerrancy* to communicate truthfulness.

Still others have said that the issue of inerrancy is a nonstarter because we simply do not have any inerrant manuscripts. We do know, however, what the original manuscripts said for over 99 percent of the words of the Bible. The study of textual variants has enabled us to know with a high degree of accuracy the actual content of the original manuscripts, and for most purposes, our current manuscripts are the same as the original manuscripts.

Another claim is that the biblical writers intentionally affirmed falsehoods because the original audience already believed those falsehoods. This claim assumes that God is unable to communicate truthfully in human language to people with false beliefs, and this assumption simply has no merit. God is the omnipotent Lord of human language and can communicate exactly what he wants to communicate. In addition, the affirmation of falsehood by God would run contrary to his claims to be entirely honest, or the God “who never lies.”<sup>15</sup>

Some claim that the doctrine of inerrancy fails to account for the human aspect of Scripture; they assume that for something to be truly “human,” it must contain some error. This objection is subject to the same problems as the previous objection; it fails to account for the existence of truthful, error-free human speech. Finally, some object to the doctrine of inerrancy because they believe there are clear errors in the text of Scripture. In most cases, a careful examination of the text enables us to determine that no error exists. In those cases where a close, careful reading of the English text does not address the alleged error, we find that other commentators have taken the time to suggest solutions to these “problem texts.” The fact that so many alleged errors are not actual errors should encourage us when dealing with the more difficult passages under investigation.

We must recognize that the denial of inerrancy leaves us with several problems. To begin with, Scripture calls us to imitate God. If God intentionally lies in small matters, we might conclude that we also can lie in small matters if it simply helps us communicate more easily with our audience, or if the false claims are not directly relevant to the central message of our communication. In denying the doctrine of inerrancy, we also face the question of whether we can trust any of the claims of Scripture. If God is lying about some small matters, how can we know that he tells us the truth about very significant issues, such as how to be reconciled to him through Christ or whether he is who he says he is? In denying inerrancy, we set ourselves up as a higher standard of authority than God’s Word.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by putting Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 on the board side by side. Ask the students to discuss possible resolutions to this apparent contradiction.
- Ask students to discuss what effect it would have on their growth in the faith if they believed the Bible was not entirely truthful.

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<sup>15</sup> Num 23:19; Titus 1:2.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Describe the difference between the doctrine of inerrancy and scientific precision, then name two ways in which the Bible speaks truthfully without speaking in a highly precise manner.
- Identify two of the problems with denying inerrancy mentioned in the text.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Is the Bible Inerrant?” (John Frame)  
<http://reformedperspectives.org/files/reformedperspectives/theology/TH.Frame.inerrancy.html>
- “Roger Nicole on Biblical Inerrancy” (interview)  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/BiblicalInerrancy.html>
- “Why Fast Company and Sam Harris Need to Do Their Homework” (Justin Holcomb)  
<http://theresurgence.com/2010/11/12/why-fast-company-sam-harris-need-to-do-their-homework>

## ***Chapter 6 – The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity***

### **Key Terms**

clarity of Scripture, exegesis, hermeneutics, perspicuity

### **Key Points**

- The Bible can be understood by those who read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.
- A failure to understand the text of Scripture lies in the reader, not in Scripture itself.

### **Chapter Summary**

“The Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.”<sup>16</sup>

The Bible repeatedly tells its readers that it is clear, that it can be understood, and that it can be explained. Early in the OT, God commands the Israelites to teach the Scriptures diligently to their children.<sup>17</sup> The writer of Psalm 119 claims that Scripture gives understanding to the “simple.”<sup>18</sup> In the Gospels, Jesus routinely assumes that his listeners, his disciples, and even his opponents are all able to read and understand the OT. The apostles address most of their letters, not to scholars or church leaders, but to entire congregations—even to Gentile congregations with little familiarity with the OT.

The continual assumption throughout Scripture is that believers (and unbelievers who are seeking salvation) can read and understand the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the authors of Scripture also state that without a willingness to hear and obey the words of God, a person cannot understand them.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the clarity of Scripture, people still fail to understand it. At times, this results from faithlessness or hard-heartedness; at other times, this is due to a need for improved hermeneutical practices. Many misunderstandings arise from our failure to submit to the authority or truth of Scripture. In any case, Scripture is not failing to be understood; we are failing to understand.

This doctrine should give us much encouragement. We can be confident that our study of Scripture will be fruitful even if we do not have specialized training in biblical languages or cultures. Doctrinal disagreements may arise because of mistakes in our interpretation or because we are trying to make the Bible speak on an issue about which it is silent. However, the clarity of Scripture has led the church to much agreement on the major doctrines of Scriptures.

Scholars continue to play a useful role in the church. They teach Scripture clearly, they unpack and synthesize new areas of biblical understanding, they successfully defend Scripture against the attacks of other scholars, and they provide additional knowledge of history, language, or genre that can enhance our study of the Bible.

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<sup>16</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 108.

<sup>17</sup> Deut 6:6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Ps 119:130.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 3:14–16; Jn 7:17; 8:43.

## Pedagogical Suggestions

- Open class with a clip from the 2003 film *Luther*, which shows Martin Luther's famous response at the Diet of Worms.<sup>20</sup>
- Question 6 in the "Questions for Personal Application" (p. 112 in *Systematic Theology*) points out that church leaders during the time of Martin Luther wanted to keep the Bible in Latin so that the common people would not be able, upon reading it, to misinterpret it. Open discussion by asking the students if they agree or disagree with this line of reasoning and why.

## Suggested Essay Questions

- Discuss two roles that biblical scholars can play in the church today.
- Identify two points of encouragement that we can derive from the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture.

## Other Media Sources/Websites

- "The Perspicuity of Scripture" (Wayne Grudem)  
<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/publications/34-3/the-perspicuity-of-scripture>

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<sup>20</sup> This 4½-minute clip is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5P7QkHCfaI> (accessed July 8, 2011). Alternatively, a 3-minute clip from the 1953 film *Martin Luther* is available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xOsCtpcj\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xOsCtpcj_E) (accessed July 8, 2011).

## ***Chapter 7 – The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (3) Necessity***

### **Key Terms**

general revelation, natural revelation, necessity of Scripture, special revelation

### **Key Points**

- “The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will...”<sup>21</sup>

### **Chapter Summary**

“The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but it is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.”<sup>22</sup>

Paul makes it clear in Romans 10:13–17 that a person cannot come to saving faith in Christ without calling on the name of the Lord, and they cannot call on the name of the Lord unless they believe in him, and they cannot believe in him unless they have heard of him, and they cannot hear of him unless someone tells them about him. Unless someone hears and responds with faith to the message of the gospel of Christ, they cannot be saved. People who are saved are those who look back to Christ in faith now and those who looked forward to Christ in faith before his incarnation. Because of this, the Bible is necessary for salvation. Without the words of God to man, promising the coming Savior, Enoch, Noah, and Sarah could not have looked forward in faith; they would have had no one to anticipate! Without the words of God to us today—the Gospels, Paul’s letters, the entire Old and New Testaments—we would have no one to look back to in faith.

The Bible is also necessary for maintaining and growing in spiritual life and health. Jesus, quoting Moses, states clearly that we do not live only on bread (physical food) but also on every word of God.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, we need the Bible not only for spiritual growth but also for certain knowledge of the will of God. Throughout Scripture, God tells us what his will is, and without this divine, specific revelation, we would be unable to know that he desires mercy rather than sacrifice<sup>24</sup> or that he wills that we be thankful in all circumstances.<sup>25</sup> In the Bible, we have direct, truthful revelation from the omniscient God, and we can be more confident about the truth we discover in Scripture than about any other knowledge we might have. Moreover, the Scriptures affirm much of the knowledge we receive from our five senses, which gives us additional confidence in the knowledge that comes to us through general revelation.

Because of this general revelation, we can affirm that no one needs the Bible to know that God exists or to know something about his character and moral expectations. Paul tells us in Romans 1:19–21 that “what can be known about God is plain” and that we can perceive his

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<sup>21</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 116.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>23</sup> Matt 4:4; cf. Deut 8:3.

<sup>24</sup> Hos 6:6.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Thess 5:18.

“invisible nature” and his “eternal power and deity” in creation. There is no excuse for failing to recognize his existence when we observe what he has made.

Paul states a little later that all people are aware of God’s moral decrees against envy or murder or strife (Rom 1:32; 2:14–15). Even those who have no special revelation from God yet have God’s moral requirements “written on their hearts.” Even so, without special revelation, no one can know the gospel, no one can know Christ or the way of salvation, and no one can know God’s will with any certainty.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup>
- Have the students form groups of three with those sitting nearest them, then have one member of the group attempt to explain the gospel without referring to any portion or person of Scripture (including Christ!). They will need to use only general revelation—what we can see in nature and in our own experiences—to explain to their listeners that God is holy and good, that mankind is sinful and under God’s judgment, and that God has provided a path to salvation.
- After this exercise, ask the class to discuss what portions of the gospel message simply cannot be understood without the Bible.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What does Paul say in Romans 1–2 that we can know about God simply through general revelation?
- How is Scripture necessary for fulfilling the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Guilt: The Effect of General Revelation” (J. I. Packer)  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/packer/04guilt.html>
- “The Holy Bible Teaches the Way of Salvation” (A. W. Pink)  
[http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Revelation/rev\\_10.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Revelation/rev_10.htm)

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<sup>26</sup> This contemporary hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMQOp9w8k> (accessed July 8, 2011).

## ***Chapter 8 – The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency***

### **Key Terms**

blameless, sufficiency of Scripture

### **Key Points**

- The Bible contains everything we need to know for salvation and for trusting and obeying God perfectly.
- Scripture must be our sole source of authority as we seek God's will and moral expectations.

### **Chapter Summary**

By “sufficiency of Scripture,” we mean that at every point of redemptive history, God ensured that Scripture contained everything that he intended for his people to have, to study, and to obey. We also mean that today, the Bible contains everything that we need to know for salvation and for perfectly trusting and obeying God.<sup>27</sup> Paul emphasizes this truth in his second letter to Timothy, stating that Scripture is able to make us “wise for salvation” and “equipped for every good work.”<sup>28</sup> We can be blameless in God's sight through obeying what we find in the Bible; there are no secret expectations!

Even though we will never perfectly obey all of Scripture in this life, the sufficiency of Scripture means that we can focus on Scripture—rather than tradition or the writings of other Christian leaders—to find what God expects. We can gather all of the passages that relate directly to marriage, or money, or sanctification, and we can have confidence that “we *will be able to find* what God requires us to think or do in these areas.”<sup>29</sup> This distinguishes evangelical Christians from Roman Catholic theologians, who insist that we must also listen to official church tradition and teaching to discover God's commands. While we can certainly take advantage of these sources for understanding God's Word, we will never need to resort to an extrabiblical source to know some additional command of God. The belief in the sufficiency of Scripture also distinguishes evangelical from nonevangelical theologians; the latter remain unconvinced that Scripture is authoritative—it contains, they might say, an explanation of early Christian experience but not any clear command from God. In other words, they believe Scripture is not simply insufficient for determining what God expects but also unreliable for determining truth.

Scripture's sufficiency means that while God can add more words to those already spoken, man cannot. There are no missing words; we have all that God expects us to believe and follow in the Bible. Hence, God can declare his Word sufficient for blamelessness in Psalm 119:1 and yet add to it in later periods of history. Additionally, God could instruct us not to add to his words in Deuteronomy 4:2 (and later in Proverbs 30:5–6) and yet still inspire Scripture at different points in redemptive history.

There are at least seven practical applications of this doctrine for our daily Christian walk.

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<sup>27</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Tim 3:15, 17 NIV.

<sup>29</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 129.

1. We should be encouraged that everything God wants to tell us about any particular doctrine or topic is available to us in the Bible. Scripture will not answer every question we might ever have, but continued study of Scripture will result in an increased ability to understand all that God would have us understand on an issue.
2. We should add nothing to Scripture, nor consider any other writings (such as the Book of Mormon or *Dianetics*) to be on par with Scripture in value or authority.
3. We do not need to believe anything about God or redemption that is not found in Scripture.
4. We should not give the same level of authority to modern revelations from God, such as comments made by those with the modern-day spiritual gift of prophecy. Whenever people place other documents on the same level of authority with Scripture, the result has been to undermine the claims of Scripture and to introduce teachings that are contrary to Scripture.
5. When Scripture does not forbid something either explicitly or implicitly, we can know that it is not a sin. We should not begin the process of adding “unwritten rules” to Scripture, such as blanket prohibitions against drinking coffee or reading newspapers on Sunday or using “artificial” methods of birth control. When we insist on obedience to rules not found in Scripture, we may cause Christians to feel a deep but unnecessary sense of guilt over “sin” and alienation from God.
6. We can also trust that God’s will is available for us in Scripture; “nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication.”<sup>30</sup> We do not need to devote ourselves to seeking God’s will through some extrabiblical route, and we can be encouraged that what he wants is plain for us to find and to read.
7. We must imitate Scripture in emphasizing those commands and doctrines that Scripture emphasizes. We should not emphasize a doctrine on which Scripture remains nearly silent (e.g., “baptism in the Holy Spirit”); doing so has led to long-standing denominational splits.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by having a student read 2 Timothy 3:14–17.
- Ask students to offer suggestions for “The Top 10 Unwritten Church Rules.” Write these on the board, then ask students to discuss whether these come from Scripture or from some other source of authority. Ask students to discuss what will happen if the church seeks to enforce rules that are not found in Scripture.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Describe two practical applications of the sufficiency of Scripture.
- How does this chapter distinguish between evangelical and nonevangelical theologians on the nature of Scripture? How could the nonevangelical viewpoint hinder growth in a person’s relationship with God?

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 133.

## Other Media Sources/Websites

- “The Word Our Only Rule” (John Calvin)  
[http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=calvin\\_varsermon25.html](http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=calvin_varsermon25.html)
- “‘God Told Me’ and the Sufficiency of Scripture” (Mark Dever)  
<http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/god-told-me-and-sufficiency-scripture>
- “Do We Act as if We Really Believe that ‘The Bible Alone, and the Bible in Its Entirety, Is the Word of God Written’?” (Wayne Grudem)  
[http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-1/43-1-pp005-026\\_JETS.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/43/43-1/43-1-pp005-026_JETS.pdf)
- “The Sufficiency of Scripture in Apologetics” (Michael J. Kruger)  
<http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/tmsj12m.pdf>
- “The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling” (Wayne A. Mack)  
<http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/tmsj9d.pdf>
- “Sola Scriptura and the Early Church” (William Webster)  
[http://www.the-highway.com/Sola\\_Scriptura\\_Webster.html](http://www.the-highway.com/Sola_Scriptura_Webster.html)

## Part 2 – The Doctrine of God

### Chapter 9 – The Existence of God

#### Key Terms

cosmological argument, inner sense of God, moral argument, ontological argument, teleological argument

#### Key Points

- We can know that God exists through nature, through Scripture, and through an inner sense of his existence.
- While there are many valid arguments for God’s existence, ultimately only God can enable us to be persuaded.

#### Chapter Summary

We can know that God exists. In fact, every person—being a created being—has “a deep, inner sense that God exists, that they are his creatures, and that he is their Creator.”<sup>31</sup> This deep, inner sense transcends belief. For instance, Paul, in Romans 1:18–32, explains that even unbelievers know God and know something about his character; he states that sin is what causes an unbeliever to deny their knowledge of God and that there is no excuse for this denial. The Psalms also charge atheists with foolishness and sinful irrationality.<sup>32</sup> The Christian, however, grows in their awareness of God through the witness of the Holy Spirit and through a relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup>

We can also know that God exists through the evidence in Scripture and in creation (i.e., *special revelation* and *general revelation*). The Bible begins with the assumption of God’s existence, stating simply, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” These heavens and this earth also provide much evidence for God’s existence. Paul states that God’s nature and deity are “clearly perceived in the things that have been made.”<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere Paul states that the rain and the seasons are evidence for God’s existence,<sup>35</sup> and David describes the heavens as telling “the glory of God.”<sup>36</sup> In essence, every created thing provides proof of God’s existence, from clouds to cows to neural synapses. Scripture and nature provide us with an “overwhelming amount of reliable evidence from God’s words and God’s works.”<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the above, there are many traditional “proofs” or arguments for the existence of God. Most fall into one of the following four categories.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>32</sup> Pss 10:3–4; 14:1; 53:1.

<sup>33</sup> Jn 14:23; Rom 8:15–16; Eph 3:14–19.

<sup>34</sup> Rom 1:20.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 14:17.

<sup>36</sup> Ps 19:1.

<sup>37</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 143.

1. The *cosmological argument* rests on the cause-and-effect nature of the universe. Given that every known thing in the universe has a cause, the universe itself must have a cause, and this cause can only be God.
2. The *teleological argument* argues that the evident design of the universe provides evidence of an intelligent Designer.
3. The *ontological argument* argues that God—a being “greater than which no being can be imagined”—exists *necessarily*<sup>38</sup> because a being that exists in reality is greater than a being that exists only as an idea. If God were to exist only as an idea, then greater beings could certainly be imagined, but since God is the one “greater than which no being can be imagined,” he must exist in reality.
4. The *moral argument* identifies the practically universal nature of humanity’s sense of right and wrong and the need for justice and argues that there must be a God who is the source of morality and who will bring about justice.

All of the above arguments are based on true facts, and as such, all are valid proofs of God’s existence. However, none of the above arguments is able to compel agreement from everyone who considers them, because many will deny the truth of the propositions or the validity of the pattern of reasoning found in them. These arguments are primarily helpful for addressing some intellectual objections by some unbelievers and for providing some further intellectual affirmation for believers, but they cannot create or bring about saving faith apart from Scripture. In fact, only God can overcome the irrationality of unbelief and enable us to be persuaded of his existence.

### Pedagogical Suggestions

- Open class with the hymn “I Sing the Mighty Power of God.”<sup>39</sup>
- Ask students to share what first convinced them of God’s existence, whether an inner sense, the evidence in nature, or some other argument. Depending on their background, many students may never have questioned his existence. In this case, ask them which of the four arguments in this chapter they found most convincing, which they found least convincing, and why.
- Ask students to respond to the following argument: “Every society has different morals, so there are no final moral standards. Since this is the case, there is no standard giver, and certainly no God.”

### Suggested Essay Questions

- What is the ontological argument for God’s existence? Do you find this argument convincing?
- In what ways can the arguments (cosmological, teleological, ontological, and moral) for God’s existence assist in evangelism? What can we not expect these arguments to bring about?

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<sup>38</sup> For the purposes of the ontological argument, *necessity* stands in contrast to *contingency*. A necessary being cannot fail to exist; a contingent being can fail to exist.

<sup>39</sup> A traditional rendition of this hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iJ9nqpGhBE> (accessed July 8, 2011).

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- “The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle” (William Lane Craig)  
<http://www.lewissociety.org/anthropic.php>
- “Ontological Argument,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Kenneth Einar Himma)  
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/ont-arg/>
- “The Law of Human Nature,” excerpts from *Mere Christianity* (C. S. Lewis)  
<http://www.afterall.net/papers/491366>
- “Cosmological Argument,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Bruce Reichenbach)  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmological-argument/>

## ***Chapter 10 – The Knowability of God***

### **Key Terms**

incomprehensible, knowable

### **Key Points**

- We can know God, not fully but truly.

### **Chapter Summary**

In the same way that we can be persuaded of God's existence only insofar as he enables this persuasion, we can know God only insofar as he reveals himself to us. Paul affirms as much in Romans 1:19, stating that what can be known about God is plain to people "because God has shown it to them." Christ states the matter in Matthew 11:27: "No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." These verses indicate that we can know God, but we need Scripture to know him and to understand natural revelation rightly.

Even though we can know God, we can never fully comprehend God; our finitude leaves us unable to completely understand an infinite God. The Psalms state, "His greatness is unsearchable" and "his understanding is beyond measure,"<sup>40</sup> and Paul cries out, "How unsearchable are [God's] judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"<sup>41</sup> We can never fully comprehend God, nor can we fully comprehend his greatness, his understanding, his judgments, or any other thing about him. This means that in this age, and in the age to come, we will never exhaust the study of God; for eternity, we will have much to delight in discovering about his mercy or his greatness. Because of this, it is right for us to be continually "increasing in the knowledge of God"<sup>42</sup> right now. The idea that God will never be fully known could be discouraging to us if we desire only intellectual achievement, but if we delight to know God as our God and Creator, such an idea will encourage us to continual, joyful study.

It is impossible to know God fully, but it is possible to know God truly. We have the inerrant record of Scripture, which provides us with much truth about God. For instance, John tells us that God is love, light, and spirit.<sup>43</sup> David tells us that God forgives confessed sins.<sup>44</sup> Scripture also tells us that we can know God personally rather than as a series of propositions (Jer 9:23–24; Jn 17:3; Heb 8:11). This personal relationship with God, which is edified by knowledge about him, is "the greatest of all the blessings of the Christian life."<sup>45</sup>

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by having the students read Psalm 145:1–7 aloud as a group.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: "It is impossible for people to know God without the Bible."

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<sup>40</sup> Pss 145:3; 147:5.

<sup>41</sup> Rom 11:33.

<sup>42</sup> Col 1:10.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Jn 4:8; 1:5; 4:24.

<sup>44</sup> Psalm 32.

<sup>45</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 152.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What kind of knowledge can we have about God?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Knowing God in the Bible” (John Loftness; MP3 and outline)  
<http://www.sovereigngracestore.com/ProductInfo.aspx?productid=A1205-02-51>  
<http://www.sovereigngracestore.com/ProductInfo.aspx?productid=A1205-02-59>

## Chapter 11 – The Character of God: “Incommunicable” Attributes

### Key Terms

anthropomorphic language, aseity, communicable attributes, eternity, immutability, incommunicable attributes, independence, infinite, infinity with respect to space, infinity with respect to time, names of God, omnipresence, self-existence, simplicity, unchangeableness, unity

### Key Points

- God’s attributes can be classified as communicable or incommunicable.
- God’s incommunicable attributes include independence, immutability, eternality, omnipresence, and unity.

### Chapter Summary

This text classifies God’s attributes as either communicable or incommunicable. The former are those that God shares, or “communicates,” with people made in his image; the latter are those that he does not share with us. Of course, this distinction is not perfect. No attribute of God is perfectly communicable, and no attribute of God is perfectly incommunicable. God’s peace is a communicable attribute, but we can possess only a portion of the peace that God possesses; God’s immutability is an incommunicable attribute, but some portions of our being remain unchanged as well.

Scripture aids us in identifying God’s attributes. For example, Scripture compares God to a lion (Isa 31:4), a rock (Deut 32:4), a tower (Prov 18:10), and so forth. Scripture describes God as knowing (Gen 18:21), feeling love (Jn 3:16), feeling hatred (Deut 16:22), and so forth. Scripture speaks metaphorically of God’s face (Ex 33:20; Ps 16:11), finger (Ex 8:19), and so forth. Scripture continually assumes that we can know something of God’s attributes through the general revelation of creation, particularly through man, whom God made in his image. Also, in speaking of God’s attributes, Scripture uses anthropomorphic language (God “sees,” God “turns his face”) in a way that reveals God accurately and truly, if not exhaustively.

God is independent, which means that he “does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy.”<sup>46</sup> Paul states in Acts 17:24–25 that God is not served by human hands and needs nothing from us. God does not need our fellowship or praise. However, our praise and fellowship do glorify God and bring him joy (Isa 43:7; 62:3–5).

God is immutable; he is “unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.”<sup>47</sup> Malachi 3:6 says simply, “I the Lord do not change.” Those times in Scripture when God threatens and then withholds his judgment (Ex 32:9–14; Jonah 3:4, 10) or when he indicates sorrow for some decision he has made (Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 15:10) do not express a change in God but a change in his present attitude toward a present situation. While God remains unchanging in his nature, purposes, and promises, he is not without emotion. Scripture often details God’s emotional response to us and our deeds (e.g., Pss 78:40; 103:17). Process

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 163.

theologians seek to affirm that God changes in his character, purposes, or promises because they believe that this retains the reality of our choices and the significance of our actions. They incorrectly assume that we must be able to influence and change God in order to be significant. The difference between process theology and biblical Christianity highlights an important aspect of the Bible's teaching: God is neither exclusively personal (with many weaknesses and limitations), nor exclusively infinite (removed and disconnected from his creation), but both infinite *and* personal. His immutability bears immediate significance for us today, as it enables us to trust God.

God is also eternal, with “no beginning, end, or succession of moments in his being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.”<sup>48</sup> He is timeless in his own being, and he sees all time with equal clarity, so 2 Peter 3:8 can state, “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Though God stands above time, able to see all of it as present before him, he still sees events in their temporal context and he acts within time. For example, the prophets received God's promises at one point in history, and then God fulfilled those promises at a later moment in time. This attribute is “incommunicable”: we will never experience timelessness. Even after many millennia in the new heavens and earth, we will still experience time's passage.

“God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.”<sup>49</sup> David, in Psalm 139, declares that there is no place in the universe—whether heaven or hell, land or sea—where God will not be present. At the same time, Solomon states in 1 Kings 8:27 that even “heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain” God. God is everywhere and cannot be limited to any one place. He is present in some places to punish (e.g., hell), in others to bless (e.g., heaven), and in others to sustain (e.g., the universe.)<sup>50</sup>

God also has the attribute of unity, which means that he “is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.”<sup>51</sup> He is not merely a collection of attributes, nor are his attributes simply added on to his “real being.” Instead, God's entire person, his whole being, includes all of his attributes. He is entirely holy, entirely wrathful against sin, and entirely free. He may manifest his grace more emphatically in the atonement, or his wrath more emphatically at the day of judgment, but he remains unified in his person. His grace in the atonement, for instance, also demonstrates his wrath against sin; his wrath on the day of judgment also demonstrates his grace in removing sin from the new heavens and new earth. Rather than simply seeking God for his love or for his holiness, Scripture calls us to pursue “God himself in his whole being.”<sup>52</sup>

## Pedagogical Suggestions

- Open class by asking the students to list some scriptural descriptions of God, then ask them to identify what these metaphors and anthropomorphisms tell us about God's character. Ask them which of these is most important for them devotionally this week.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>50</sup> See Amos 9:1–4; Rev 21:3; Heb 1:3.

<sup>51</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 181.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why do process theologians insist that God can change in his nature, plans, and promises?
- In what ways does God need mankind?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “God and Change” (Millard Erickson)  
[http://www.sbts.edu/resources/files/2010/02/sbjt\\_012\\_sum97\\_erickson.pdf](http://www.sbts.edu/resources/files/2010/02/sbjt_012_sum97_erickson.pdf)
- “The Living God of the Bible” (Carl F. H. Henry)  
[http://www.sbts.edu/resources/files/2010/02/sbjt\\_011\\_spr97\\_henry.pdf](http://www.sbts.edu/resources/files/2010/02/sbjt_011_spr97_henry.pdf)

## ***Chapter 12 – The Character of God: “Communicable” Attributes (Part 1)***

### **Key Terms**

attributes of being, beatific vision, communicable attributes, faithfulness, good, goodness, grace, holiness, impassible, invisibility, jealousy, justice, knowledge, love, mental attributes, mercy, moral attributes, omniscience, one simple and eternal act, order, patience, peace, reasonable self-determination, righteousness, spirituality, theophany, truthfulness, veracity, wisdom, wrath

### **Key Points**

- God’s communicable attributes, which we are to imitate, include attributes of being, mental attributes, moral attributes, attributes of purpose, and “summary” attributes.<sup>53</sup>
- God defines all that is good, holy, true, and right.

### **Chapter Summary**

Among the attributes that describe God’s being, Scripture states that God is spirit (Jn 4:24). He does not have flesh or blood, location or shape. He “exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, God is spirit because this mode of existence is more excellent than existence as flesh. Related to this is God’s attribute of invisibility. We will never be able to see God’s total essence, even though he still shows himself to us in visible ways. Because of this, God reveals himself to us in various analogies, or in the OT theophanies, and most clearly in the person of Jesus Christ. Though we will never be able to see God in entirety, we will see him truly.

We affirm that among God’s mental attributes, he is omniscient: he “fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.”<sup>55</sup> He knows everything that exists and everything that happens; he also knows everything that is possible because he knows everything he can do. He knows all of these things in one, eternal, perfect act of knowing; they are always present in his awareness, and he knows the end from the beginning. Additionally, God has the attribute of wisdom. “God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.”<sup>56</sup> His wisdom is evident in what he has created, in the plan of redemption through Christ, and in our individual lives. We can share in God’s wisdom to some degree simply by asking for such wisdom. Another attribute of God is truthfulness. “God’s truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.”<sup>57</sup> This is sometimes called God’s “faithfulness” or veracity. Because of this, we should seek to be absolutely truthful in our speech, and we should imitate God in our response to truth and falsehood—loving what is true and hating what is false.

God’s moral attributes include his goodness. We affirm that God is “the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.”<sup>58</sup> God does not merely approve

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<sup>53</sup> See the list in *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

what is good; God defines what is good, and anything that God approves *is* good because God defines goodness.<sup>59</sup>

God's love means that "God eternally gives of himself to others."<sup>60</sup> Even before creation, the persons of the Trinity loved and gave of themselves to one another (Jn 17:24). We imitate this attribute by loving God with "all [our] heart, and with all [our] soul, and with all [our] mind" and by loving our neighbor "as [ourselves]."<sup>61</sup> God's mercy, grace, and patience are aspects of his goodness, insofar as God shows goodness toward people in misery (his mercy), toward people who deserve condemnation (his grace), and toward people who deserve punishment (his patience). We are to imitate these attributes in our own lives; we help those who suffer, we freely forgive as we have been forgiven, and we remain patient in suffering and slow to anger. God is also holy; "he is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor."<sup>62</sup> God cannot countenance sin, and he commands his people to pursue this same holiness (Lev 19:2; Heb 12:10–14). God is also a God of peace (1 Cor 14:33) or order. In other words, God is removed from chaos in his person and deeds. In fact, he arranges and orders every aspect of those events that may appear to us to be chaotic.

This text speaks of God's righteousness and justice simultaneously because both derive from the same root words in Greek and Hebrew. By these terms, we mean that "God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right."<sup>63</sup> Because of this, God must punish sin, either by punishing the sinner or through Christ's death on the cross in place of those whom God has forgiven. We may be tempted to find fault with God's justice, but Scripture repeatedly declares that we have no right to pass judgment on God's righteousness (e.g., Rom 9:20–21; Job 38–40). In connection with God's holiness, we also say that God is jealous, by which we mean that "God continually seeks to protect his own honor."<sup>64</sup> He will not share his honor with an idol or with any other being. As God, he alone is worthy of worship and glory. Finally, directly related to God's holiness and justice, we say that God is wrathful; he hates all sin with an intense hatred. God's wrath should cause us to be thankful for his patience, and it should motivate us to proclaim the gospel to all people everywhere.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Ask students to debate the following question: "Does God command certain deeds because they are morally right, or are God's commands morally right because he commands them?"

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- How does God's wrath against sin encourage thankfulness in his people?

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<sup>59</sup> This affirmation is against those who would affirm that God is subject to some higher law of right and wrong. In fact, if God approves some deed or statement, that deed or statement is good and true.

<sup>60</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 199.

<sup>61</sup> Matt 22:37–39.

<sup>62</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 202.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

## Other Media Sources/Websites

- “Does God So Love the World?” (John MacArthur)  
<http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/grace-to-you/read/articles/does-god-so-love-the-world-9312.html>
- “The Present Effects of Trembling at the Wrath of God” (John Piper)  
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/the-present-effects-of-trembling-at-the-wrath-of-god>
- “Is a God without Wrath a Good God?” (Sam Storms)  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/is-a-god-without-wrath-a-good-god-36/>

## Chapter 13 – The Character of God: “Communicable” Attributes (Part 2)

### Key Terms

attributes of purpose, beauty, blessedness, free will, freedom, glory, necessary will, omnipotence, perfection, power, reasonable self-determination, revealed will, secret will, sovereignty, summary attributes, will

### Key Points

- God is able to bring about everything he desires.
- God perfectly manifests all of his attributes.
- God is happy with himself and all that reflects his glorious character.

### Chapter Summary

Among God’s attributes of purpose, we include God’s will, which is “that attribute of God whereby he approves and determines to bring about every action for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.”<sup>65</sup> Scripture repeatedly refers to God’s will as the reason for everything that takes place. For instance, in Ephesians 1:11, Paul states that God “works *all things* according to the counsel of his will” (ESV, italics added), and in Revelation 4:11, John writes that all things “existed and were created” by the will of God. Two distinctions help in discussing God’s will. First, we must distinguish between God’s free will and his necessary will. God’s necessary will is his willing of those things that he must will because of who he is. For instance, God necessarily wills his own existence and character. God’s free will includes all of those things that God had no need to will but that he freely wills for his own good pleasure and glory, such as his choice to create the universe and to redeem the elect. Second, we distinguish between God’s secret will and his revealed will. Deuteronomy 29:29 reads, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” In other words, God has willed some things that he has not revealed to us (e.g., his decrees for the governance of the universe or the unfolding of events in time) and some things that he has revealed (e.g., his moral expectations and his character).

Additionally, God manifests the attribute of freedom: “he does whatever he pleases.”<sup>66</sup> Psalm 115:3 states, “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (ESV). No outside force can compel God to do some deed, nor can it constrain God from doing something. God acts as he freely wills to act and in a manner completely consistent with his own character.

We also affirm that God is omnipotent. He *is able* to do whatever he pleases. God’s freedom means that nothing outside of God is able to stop him from bringing about his holy will; God’s omnipotence means that God has no limits within himself on his ability to do his holy will. Jesus says, “With God all things are possible.”<sup>67</sup> There are some things, though, that God cannot will or do. For instance, God is unable to lie or to behave in any manner that would be

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>67</sup> Matt 19:26.

contrary to his character. God cannot sin or tempt with sin (Jas 1:13). God cannot blink out of existence or give up his deity.

We imitate these attributes of purpose in our own lives, through the process of making willing decisions and then bringing them to fruition or through the exercise of political and economic freedom. We share these attributes only in part and only as God has enabled us to do so.

Among God's "summary" attributes, Scripture tells us that God is perfect. In essence, "God completely possesses all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him."<sup>68</sup> Jesus states this directly in Matthew 5:48: "You ... must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (NIV). God's perfection applies to his person and to all of his attributes: God possesses each of his attributes perfectly.

"God's blessedness means that God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character."<sup>69</sup> This means that God is a happy, joyful God; he is entirely happy in his own person and joyful in who he is. He is happy with his work, and with everything, that reflects his own glory. He rejoices in his people, not in our failings but in the ways in which we reflect his excellence. We imitate God's blessedness by rejoicing in everything that God finds delightful, be it the good deeds of others, the gifts that he has given us, creation as it reflects his character, or God himself.

God is also beautiful; he is "the sum of all desirable qualities."<sup>70</sup> To affirm God's beauty is simply another way of affirming God's perfection; God has every desirable quality and lacks nothing desirable. We affirm God's beauty because it remains a reminder to us that all of our desires will find their perfect fulfillment in God alone. We imitate this attribute as we exhibit the beauty of God's character in our lives. When we reflect God's character, he finds us beautiful.

And finally, God perfectly possesses the attribute of glory, which is "the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of himself."<sup>71</sup> For example, the psalmist writes, "O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment."<sup>72</sup> Later in the Gospels, we read of God's glory surrounding the shepherds at the annunciation (Lk 2:9) and of God's glory clothing Christ at the transfiguration (Matt 17:2). We also read that God's glory will serve as the source of light in the heavenly city to come (Rev 21:23). Paul tells us that this attribute is communicable insofar as we are transformed into Christlikeness (2 Cor 3:18).

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn "Crown Him with Many Crowns."<sup>73</sup>
- Ask one student to read 1 Timothy 2:3–4 and another to read Ephesians 1:11, then ask the class to discuss the following: "Paul states that God desires all people to be saved and that God works all things according to the counsel of his will, yet some do perish. Does God's will remain unaccomplished?"

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<sup>68</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 218.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>72</sup> Ps 104:1–2 ESV.

<sup>73</sup> A traditional rendition of this hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhj\\_H1DRru4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhj_H1DRru4&feature=related) (accessed July 8, 2011).

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- In what ways can we imitate God's attribute of blessedness?
- How does the text distinguish between God's freedom and God's omnipotence?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- "The Weight of Glory" (C. S. Lewis)  
<http://www.verber.com/mark/xian/weight-of-glory.pdf>
- "Are There Two Wills in God?" (John Piper)  
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/are-there-two-wills-in-god>

## ***Chapter 14 – God in Three Persons: The Trinity***

### **Key Terms**

adoptionism, Arianism, economic subordination, eternal begetting of the Son, eternal generation of the Son, filioque, homoiousios, homoousios, modalism, modalistic monarchianism, only begotten, ontological equality, Sabellianism, subordinationism, Trinity, tritheism

### **Key Points**

- God is three persons, each person is fully God, and there is one God.
- The persons of the Trinity enjoy ontological equality but economic subordination.

### **Chapter Summary**

Scripture gradually reveals the doctrine of the Trinity, beginning with partial revelation in the OT (Gen 1:26; Isa 63:10; Ps 110:1). We have revelation that is more explicit in the NT. For instance, at Jesus' baptism, all three persons of the Trinity are present (Mk 1:9–11), and Christ again refers to each in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). Paul, Peter, and Jude each clearly refer to the three persons of the Trinity (2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20–21), though 1 John 5:7 is likely a spurious addition to the original text. The following three statements summarize the doctrine of the Trinity.

1. *God is three persons.* Many passages distinguish between the members of the Trinity (e.g., Jn 1:1–2; 14:26; 16:7; 17:24), and the Scriptures treat each as a person rather than as a “force” or “power.” The Holy Spirit, for example, is spoken of as teaching (Jn 14:26) and having a will (1 Cor 12:11).
2. *Each person is fully God.* The Father's full deity is evident throughout Scripture. The full deity of the Son is made clear in John 1:1–18, and Paul states in Colossians 2:9, “In [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” The Holy Spirit's full deity is evident in Peter's charge against Ananias: he accuses him of lying to God and then specifies that he has lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3–4).
3. *There is one God.* Scripture continually bears witness to this truth. Deuteronomy 6:4 states, “The Lord is one” (NIV). Isaiah 45:5 reads, “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.” The NT authors reaffirm the truth of God's unity (Rom 3:3; Jas 2:19).

Any attempt to teach the Trinity without one of the above statements will fall short. In denying the first, we find ourselves with one God who identifies himself by three different names, though Scripture describes each person of the Trinity as a distinct individual with a distinct role. In denying the second, we find ourselves denying the deity of the Son or the Holy Spirit, which Scripture clearly affirms. In denying the third, we find ourselves affirming tritheism, which Scripture clearly rejects.

It seems that every analogy we might use to describe the Trinity will fall short. For instance, the analogy of an egg with three parts (yolk, white, and shell) fails because it cannot account for the full deity of each member of the Trinity. The yolk is only part of the egg, but Christ is fully God. In fact, Scripture avoids analogy entirely in discussing the Trinity.

God has always existed in three persons and cannot exist otherwise. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always been and will always be.

Doctrinal errors have come about through denying one of the above statements. For instance, modalism denies the first statement and affirms that there is simply one person who appears in three different modes. Modalism seeks to emphasize the “oneness” of God, but it fails to account for the personal interactions between the members of the Trinity (Mk 1:9–11; Jn 16:7; 17:24; Acts 10:38).

Arianism denies the second statement and refuses to affirm the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Arianism relies on descriptions of Christ as “only begotten” (Jn 3:16 NASB) or as the “first-born of all creation” (Col 1:15). In the case of the former, we can affirm that Christ is eternally begotten, though not created.<sup>74</sup> In the case of the latter, “first-born” need not imply anything other than Christ’s privileges of primogeniture: he was not born, but he has authority in the family. The Son has always been the Son. The church has also rejected subordinationism, which holds that the Son is fully divine but somehow subordinate in being. As with subordinationism, some false teachers affirmed adoptionism. This view holds that the Father adopted Jesus at his baptism; proponents of this view have been rare.

During the development of the Nicene Creed, the insertion of the *filioque* clause led to a split between Western and Eastern Christianity. With this clause, the Nicene Creed states that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father “and the Son.” It is likely that this is true; John 15:26 and 16:7 speak only of Pentecost, though they may indicate the eternal nature of the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In any case, it is not certain enough to warrant a division within the church.

The importance of the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be overstated. Without the Trinity, how could Christ as a mere creature bear the full wrath of God in the atonement? How could we rely on him for justification by faith alone? Should we even pray to Jesus or worship him? Are we saved by a creature rather than by the Creator? In fact, a false view of the Trinity results in many dangerous errors!

Tritheism denies the third statement. Few have held such a view, though perhaps some evangelical believers lean toward it through a lack of awareness of the unity of God.

Scripture does not affirm any ontological difference between the members of the Trinity, but it does describe some distinction in how each relates to each other and to the world. For instance, the Father spoke the universe into being, the Son carried out these creative decrees, and the Spirit manifested God’s presence during the creation events (Gen 1:1–3; Jn 1:3). All are equal in attributes and deity, but they eternally differ in their roles. The unchangeable God has always existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The persons of the Trinity enjoy ontological equality but economic subordination.

God is not merely divided into three parts, and the persons of the Trinity are not simply additions to God’s being; each is fully God. Each person of the Trinity is also a person, not simply another aspect of God or way of looking at God. In fact, the being of each person is equal to the whole being of God. This doctrine is a paradox, and we will never be able to understand it fully, yet we know and affirm true things about the Trinity. We reflect the goodness of the Trinity as we take part in marriage or participate in the church body; these things show unity in diversity and thereby glorify God.

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<sup>74</sup> For further discussion, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, appendix 6, 1233–34).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Ask students to list various analogies for the Trinity and discuss the shortfalls of each analogy.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What three statements does the text use to summarize the doctrine of the Trinity?
- What is modalism? What does the text identify as a critical flaw in this viewpoint?
- What is Arianism? How does the text handle the Arian view of the phrase “only begotten Son”?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Triune God” (J. Gresham Machen, excerpts from *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*)  
<http://www.westminsterconfession.org/the-doctrines-of-grace/the-triune-god.php>
- “Trinitarian Heresies” (Monergism.com)  
<http://www.monergism.com/Trinitarian%20Heresies.html>
- “Trinity” (J. I. Packer, excerpt from *Concise Theology*)  
<http://www.monergism.com/Trinity.html>

## ***Chapter 15 – Creation***

### **Key Terms**

concordist theory, creation ex nihilo, Cro-Magnon man, day-age theory, deism, dualism, flood geology, gap theory, homo sapiens, ideal time theory, immanent, literary framework theory, macroevolution, materialism, mature creationism, microevolution, neocatastrophism, old earth theory, pantheism, pictorial day theory, progressive creationism, theistic evolution, transcendent, twenty-four-hour day theory, young earth theory

### **Key Points**

- God created everything ex nihilo, and it was very good.
- God stands above creation and is intimately involved in it.
- Secular evolutionary theories conflict with the biblical data and have serious shortcomings.
- It is not possible to determine the age of the universe; young earth and old earth views are both valid for believers.

### **Chapter Summary**

God created everything out of nothing (ex nihilo), it was originally very good (Gen 1:31), and he created all of it for his own glory. The whole Bible continually declares that God created everything that exists and that nothing exists that he did not create (Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Rev 4:11). God's creative work also includes the creation of time, the creation of the entire spiritual universe (Neh 9:6), and the direct, personal creation of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:7, 21–22; 1 Cor 11:8–9). That God directly created the first humans means we are not like the other creatures; God made us in his image as the highest of his created work. The Father created, but the Son and the Spirit participated in the creation of all things as well. Scripture often states that everything was created “through” the Son (e.g., Jn 1:3; Col 1:16); the Holy Spirit is described as present and giving life to God's creation (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30).

God remains transcendent and immanent in relationship to his creation. He stands above his created work, yet he actively involves himself in it. Creation depends on God, but creation is distinct from God. This biblical view stands in contrast to materialism, pantheism, dualism, and deism. Materialism simply runs contrary to the whole of Scripture; pantheism inaccurately assumes that even great evil is a part of God's character. Dualism overvalues the power of the created universe, undervalues the goodness of creation, and denies God's lordship over creation. Deism fails to account for the continual witness in Scripture of God's immanence (Job 12:10; Col 1:17; Eph 4:6).

Scripture also bears witness that God created all things for his own glory (Rev 4:11; Isa 43:7; Ps 19:1–2). In all of creation, we can see God's infinite power and wisdom (Rom 1:20). Even though creation glorifies God, he did not need to create in order to receive glory; his creative work was a freely willed act (Rev 4:11). If the omnipotent God created everything for his glory, it naturally follows that the universe would fulfill this purpose. After completing his work, God declared it all to be very good (Gen 1:31), and the NT affirms that God's creation is still good (1 Tim 4:1–5).

If accepted scientific opinion contradicts our understanding of Scripture, we must recognize that the conclusions of science have caused and will continue to cause believers to examine and improve their understanding of Scripture. However, countless Christians who have examined Scripture remain opposed to the prevalent scientific acceptance of evolution. Hence, we must affirm the following.

1. Our current understanding of Scripture and of the natural world is incomplete. When we know and correctly understand all the facts, no final conflict will exist between the two.
2. Any secular theory that denies the existence of God or his creative work is inconsistent with the biblical record. Theistic evolution also falls short; it is an unnecessary compromise, as the current data do not compel belief in an evolutionary model, and it is inconsistent with the scriptural record of a purposeful, immanent Creator. The theory of evolution also faces significant challenges. Philosophers have pointed out internal, logical inconsistencies and flawed reasoning. The fossil record has continued to conflict with the evolutionary model; it contains too few changes within species and too many “sudden, fully-formed” appearances of species. The theory still fails to account for how everything began in the first place, and if evolution is true, it seems ethically to require eugenic practices. Finally, the gap theory has no significant support in Scripture and is contrary to Exodus 20:11.
3. We cannot easily determine the age of the earth or the length of the days of creation. There are evident gaps in the biblical genealogies, it is difficult to know how long ago mankind first appeared on earth, it is entirely possible that plants and animals died (and fossilized) before Adam and Eve sinned, dinosaurs seem to have existed many years before mankind, and the “days” of creation need not be literal twenty-four-hour periods of time. In fact, the Hebrew term elsewhere appears to denote longer periods of time (e.g., Gen 2:4; Job 20:28; Prov 21:31). In contrast, the language of Genesis 1 strongly implies a twenty-four-hour day, the plants are created a day before the sun is created, which seems to require a briefer period, and Jesus speaks of Adam and Eve existing at the beginning of creation (Mk 10:6). Given these things, both the old earth and young earth views seem valid for Christians.

Among old earth theories, proponents of the day-age view hold that God created everything in six long periods. This view suffers from inconsistencies between the order of creation and our current scientific understanding of the development of life. Proponents of the literary framework view argue that Genesis 1 is not a chronological account but rather a framework for describing God’s activity. This view suffers from the clearly sequential language of Genesis 1. Among young earth advocates, some propose that the universe was created with apparent age. Unfortunately, this seems to make God a deceiver, and it faces a quandary in addressing the fossil record: did God create a false history? Others suggest that Noah’s flood caused the appearance of age as well as the current fossil record; however, almost all geologists reject this. It seems that the evidence from Scripture leans toward a young earth, while the evidence from creation favors an old earth. Both are possible and neither is certain; we must be willing to wait for progress while allowing for civil disagreement. Ultimately, our goal is truth.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by having a student read Genesis 1:1–2:3.
- Ask students to identify their view on the age of the earth and the arguments they found most compelling. Allow some time for civil debate on these views.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What is meant by describing God as immanent and transcendent? Contrast this with deism.
- Identify two arguments for the day-age theory and provide objections to both arguments.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Answers to Common Questions about Creation” (Mark Driscoll)  
<http://theresurgence.com/2006/07/03/answers-to-common-questions-about-creation>
- “A Young Earth—It’s Not the Issue!” (Ken Ham)  
<http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs/1866.asp>
- “Creation in Old Testament Theology” (Paul R. House)  
<http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Creation%20in%20OT%20Theology.pdf>

## ***Chapter 16 – God’s Providence***

### **Key Terms**

Arminian, Calvinist, concurrence, decrees of God, free choices, free will, government, middle knowledge, preservation, primary cause, providence, Reformed, secondary cause, voluntary choices, willing choices

### **Key Points**

- God preserves, concurs with, and governs all created things to fulfill his holy purposes.
- God’s sovereign control does not limit our responsibility; our choices are real and have real results.
- The Arminian viewpoint faces many significant challenges, and failure to address these challenges undermines the greatness of God’s omniscience, omnipotence, and trustworthiness.

### **Chapter Summary**

The doctrine of God’s providence teaches that God, who created all things, also preserves, concurs with, and governs all created things. The church has long debated the nature of God’s providential activity; this text will present a Reformed position and then consider opposing arguments.

God preserves all created things (Heb 1:3; Col 1:16–17) with their created properties. He preserves a star in such a way that it will continue to fuse hydrogen until it exhausts its supply, at which point it will cool and become a “red giant.”

God concurs with all created things, including inanimate objects (Job 37:6–13; Ps 104:14), animals (Num 21:6; Matt 10:29), “chance” events (Prov 16:33), human affairs (Acts 17:26; Rom 13:1–7), and every part of our lives (Prov 16:9; 20:24), including our choices (Ps 33:14–15). God works through the properties of created things; stars shine and God causes stars to shine. God never does anything evil (Jas 1:13–14), but God uses our choices to do what is evil to his own wise ends (Gen 50:20; Jer 25:8–12; Acts 2:23; Rom 9:17). Even so, people are responsible for evil choices (Isa 66:3–4; Rom 9:19–20). Evil is real, and we should always seek to avoid it (Rom 3:8). We cannot comprehend how God’s concurrence works concerning evil; it is a mystery, and we might ask if we have any sort of “free will.” If Christ is upholding everything (Heb 1:3), then no choice or deed is outside God’s providential control; we do not have a free will in the “absolute” sense, yet we do make willing choices that have real effects within the constraints of God’s sovereign rule.

God governs all things; he brings about his purposes in every case (Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28). God’s providential government of all things is the way in which he works out his decrees, and these purposes were established before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4; 2:10). In working out his decrees, God works through human beings, but we remain responsible for our actions. God has ordained that our actions bring about real consequences and that he will effect his decrees through our choices, deeds, and prayers (Jas 4:2; Jn 16:24). Again, we will never comprehend God’s governance, but we must act and trust God to accomplish his purposes. For instance, Paul knew that God had ordained the election of some but suffered so that they might obtain salvation (2 Tim 2:10). Because God is in control—nothing simply happens by chance—trust and

thankfulness should characterize our lives rather than fear (Matt 6:26, 31; 10:29–31; 1 Thess 5:16–18).

Many evangelicals hold an alternative viewpoint, which this text refers to as the Arminian view. This viewpoint maintains that for human freedom and choices to be real, God cannot cause them or plan them. His providence does not include every detail of our lives, but instead he merely responds to our actions and decisions. Four arguments summarize this viewpoint, presented here with rebuttals.

1. “The verses used to support the Reformed position are exceptions rather than the rule; God does not normally work in the manner described by the Reformed view.” In response, it must be said the verses used do not describe exceptions; God does not cause some snow to fall or some plants to grow. He causes all snow to fall (Job 37:6) and all plants to grow (Ps 104:14). Paul states that God “works *all things* according to the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11 ESV, italics added).
2. “The Reformed view makes God responsible for sin and evil.” The Arminian view rejects this and states that God does not ordain or cause any evil or sin. Yet, in response, Joseph says that God intended the sinful choices of Joseph’s brothers for good (Gen 50:20), and Jeremiah says that God sent the Babylonians as a punishment against the Israelites (Jer 25:8–12).
3. “If God causes a choice, it is not a real choice.” In response, it must be noted that Scripture assigns the responsibility for our choices to us. If God ordains a real choice, then it is a real choice, just as when God ordains a real thunderstorm, it is a real thunderstorm.
4. “The Reformed view leads to fatalism, while the Arminian view promotes responsible choices and actions. In the end, Calvinists live like Arminians anyway.” This objection fails to understand the Reformed view of providence; we must act and trust God to bring about his will. Calvinists do share many views with Arminians: both believe in personal responsibility, the efficacy of prayer, and the value of obedience and danger of disobedience. However, Calvinists can live with a greater trust in God’s promise to bring all things—even great human evil—together for the good of those who love him (Rom 8:28); this is dependent not on our free choices but on his sovereign ability to accomplish it.

Four additional objections remain against the Arminian view: (1) the Arminian view eliminates (or severely undermines) God’s omniscience regarding the future. It naturally leads to open theism. Some argue that God knows but does not plan the future, yet a God-known future is as certain as a God-planned future; our choices are no more free in one than in the other. (2) If God did not want evil to exist in the world, why does it exist? If he could not prevent it, he is not omnipotent. If it must exist for our choices be genuine, then will we be free to choose evil in heaven? Are God’s choices real? Could he choose evil someday? (3) If God did not want evil to exist in the world, how can we know that he will defeat it? (4) Proponents of the Reformed view are unable to resolve two issues (how God ordains without blame our choices to do evil, and how God causes us to make free choices), but Arminians face many more questions about the nature of God’s omniscience, omnipotence, and trustworthiness (Does he know the future? Can he prevent evil? Can he fulfill his promises?).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statements, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: (1) “If God has determined all things in advance, there is no purpose in prayer or evangelism.” (2) “God must allow the possibility of evil or our choices are not real.”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Identify two Arminian objections to the Reformed view and provide a response to each.
- Identify three events in Scripture when God used humanity’s evil choices for his purposes.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “A Sovereign and Personal God” (D. A. Carson)  
[http://gospelpedlar.com/articles/Sin/Will/sov\\_personal.html](http://gospelpedlar.com/articles/Sin/Will/sov_personal.html)
- “The Sovereignty of God” (John Murray)  
<http://www.opc.org/cce/sovereignty.html>
- *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (J. I. Packer)  
<http://www.chapellibrary.org/files/archive/pdf-english/dsah.pdf>

## **Chapter 17 – Miracles**

### **Key Terms**

cessationist, mighty work, miracle, natural law, sign, signs of an apostle, wonder

### **Key Points**

- Miracles characterize the church age; they have not ceased, and they were not restricted to the apostles.
- Miracles confirm the gospel, help the needy, aid ministry, and glorify God.

### **Chapter Summary**

“A miracle is a less common kind of God’s activity in which he arouses people’s awe and wonder and bears witness to himself.”<sup>75</sup> Other definitions of miracles fall short; miracles are not simply God’s intervention in the world (as if he does not intervene every second), nor are they exceptions to natural law (as if the laws of nature function apart from God’s providential hand), nor are they simply events that natural causes cannot explain (as if God does not use natural causes in working miracles). As stated, miracles bear witness to God (1 Kgs 18:17–40) and arouse our awe (Mk 1:21–28). Some answers to prayer may fit this definition, while others may not, but for both we can give thanks to God.

In the OT, miracles are usually associated only with a prominent leader, yet after Jesus begins his ministry, miracles take place through many of the people of God. While the NT records many miraculous signs as evidence of Jesus’ deity (e.g., Jn 3:2; Acts 2:22), it also describes miracles by the apostles and other believers as evidence of their message (Lk 10:1, 9, 17–20; Acts 8:6–8; 9:40–42). In fact, Paul speaks of “the working of miracles” (1 Cor 12:10) as a spiritual gift. It seems, then, that a more regular occurrence of miracles is a distinctive feature of the church age.

Miracles serve several purposes. They confirm and advance the message of the gospel (Jn 3:2; Heb 2:4), and they bear witness to the arrival and spread of God’s kingdom (Matt 12:28; Lk 4:18). Additionally, miracles help people in need and bear witness to the compassion of Jesus (Matt 14:14; Lk 7:13–15). Miracles also remove obstacles to ministry, and they bring glory to God (Matt 8:15; Acts 9:36–41; Jn 9:3).

The apostles and their close associates enjoyed a ministry marked by many miracles, and cessationists have argued that miracles were restricted to this era. Peter’s ministry included so many miraculous occurrences that people sought just to have his shadow pass over them (Acts 5:12–16), and Paul summarized his own ministry as characterized and strengthened by many signs and wonders (Rom 15:18–19). Some propose that 2 Corinthians 12:12 restricts miracles to apostles, in which Paul states, “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you ... with signs and wonders and mighty works.” However, Paul makes this statement in the midst of an argument for the validity of his message in contrast to the message of false apostles and teachers (2 Cor 11:13–15); in fact, Paul is distinguishing in this very phrase between the signs of a true apostle and miraculous works. Miracles accompanied but were distinct from the signs of a true apostle. A review of 2 Corinthians enables us to identify some marks of a true apostle, such as true knowledge of Jesus and the gospel (2 Cor 11:6), selflessness (2 Cor 11:7–11), and gaining

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 355.

strength out of weakness (2 Cor 12:10). Paul is not seeking to restrict miraculous works to the apostles.

More recently, Norman Geisler has restricted the definition of “miracle.” He argues that those who performed miracles were always immediately successful, that these miracles occurred without relapse, and that they gave confirmation of God’s messenger. However, Mark 8:23–25 presents an example of Christ performing a miracle in stages because it enabled him to teach the disciples on the nature of spiritual growth. Matthew 17:14–21 shows that disciples who had previously performed miracles were unable to cast out a demon. This is evidence that those with the power to perform a miracle are not always successful; in this case, the disciples lacked faith and therefore lacked power. Geisler’s restrictive definition does not hold up. God does not always enable believers to perform or participate in miracles whenever they wish, nor are miracles always immediately successful. Instead, the Holy Spirit continues to give the gift of miraculous power as he wills (1 Cor 12:7–11).

Cessationists also point to Hebrews 2:3–4 as evidence that miraculous activity was restricted to the apostles: “[The gospel] was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.” However, this passage does not restrict miraculous attestation only to those who heard, and many who were not apostles heard the Lord as well.

In light of the above, it does not seem appropriate to believe that miracles took place only among the apostles. Though many miraculous events marked their ministry, we should see this as a pattern for the church age rather than the exception.

What of false miracles (Ex 7:11; Acts 8:9–11; Rev 13:11–14)? We must affirm that God’s power is much greater than Satan’s power and that we will know the workers of false miracles by their denial of the gospel (1 Cor 12:3; 1 Jn 4:2).

Should we seek miracles today? It is wrong to seek miracles for personal gain (Acts 8:21–22), for entertainment (Lk 23:8), or for an opportunity to criticize the gospel (Matt 16:1–4). Paul criticizes the seeking of signs and wisdom (1 Cor 1:22–24) but affirms that he performed such signs (2 Cor 12:12), so he must not be criticizing the right use of miracles. Instead, he is stating that signs and wisdom cannot save. The church is right to seek miracles for the purposes stated above—to confirm the gospel, to help those in need, to tear down obstacles to ministry, to glorify God—and we have this example in the early church (Acts 4:29–30).

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”<sup>76</sup>
- Ask students to discuss whether we should consider answers to our prayers as miracles. Prompt further discussion by asking students to describe times when they experienced a miraculous answer to prayer.

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<sup>76</sup> This hymn, written by Martin Luther, can be found in *ibid.*, 374. A slightly updated version of this hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Y-TsRjm5Y&feature=BFa&list=PL231A9D1558E2552F&index=9> (accessed July 8, 2011).

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Should Christians seek miracles today? If so, for what reasons?
- What is Norman Geisler's restrictive definition of "miracle"?
- Why does the text state that miracles are not to be defined as "exceptions to natural laws"?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- "The Miracles as Parables" (Craig L. Blomberg)  
[http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gp6\\_miracles\\_bloomberg.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gp6_miracles_bloomberg.pdf)
- "A Test Case: Miracles" (Vern Poythress, chap. 9 in *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology*)  
[http://www.frame-poythress.org/Poythress\\_books/Symphonic\\_Theology/bst9.htm](http://www.frame-poythress.org/Poythress_books/Symphonic_Theology/bst9.htm)

## **Chapter 18 – Prayer**

### **Key Terms**

faith, “in Jesus’ name,” prayer, waiting on the Lord

### **Key Points**

- Prayer is personal communication with our Creator.
- A healthy prayer life is marked by persistence, sincerity, holiness, and faith.

### **Chapter Summary**

In prayer, we communicate personally with God. We pray, not to inform God, but to express our dependence on him and to grow in faith. We pray also in order to have a closer relationship with God and to participate in his kingdom’s purposes.

Prayer is effective. It actually changes the way God acts. For instance, because we pray, God meets our needs (Jas 4:2; Lk 11:9–10), and he forgives sins (Ex 32:9–14; 2 Chron 7:14; 1 Jn 1:9). Effective prayer becomes possible because Jesus Christ mediates for believers; he brings us into God’s presence and enables our confident prayers (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 10:19–22).

Jesus often refers to prayer in his name (e.g., Jn 14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–24). He is instructing us, not to tack his name on the end of a prayer, but rather to pray by his authorization and in agreement with his character. Most prayers in Scripture are addressed to the Father, yet Scripture also records prayer to Jesus Christ (Acts 7:29; 2 Cor 12:8). Though there are no recorded prayers addressed to the Holy Spirit, neither is there a command forbidding such a prayer. It seems appropriate to pray to the Spirit when we are praying for something related to how he interacts with mankind, such as the distribution of spiritual gifts or the provision of comfort or assurance to believers.

Concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in prayer, Paul affirms that the Spirit makes our prayers effective (Rom 8:26–27), and he instructs us to pray in the Spirit (Eph 6:18). To pray in the Holy Spirit is to pray with a “conscious awareness of God’s presence surrounding us and sanctifying both us and our prayers.”<sup>77</sup>

A healthy prayer life includes a number of important aspects. For instance, we are to pray according to God’s will (1 Jn 5:14–15; Matt 26:39). To begin with, this means to pray for things that we know God desires: for wisdom (Jas 1:5), for obedience (Matt 6:10), or for our sanctification and sexual purity (1 Thess 4:3–7). It also means that when we pray about something for which we have no clear indication of God’s will, we pray with a spirit of submission to whatever it is that he desires.

We also should pray with faith; we should have a confident assurance that God will answer our request (Mk 11:24; Jas 1:6). Prayer is strengthened by obedience (Ps 66:18; 1 Pet 3:7, 12). This does not mean that God will refuse to hear our prayers unless we have achieved sinless perfection, but it does mean that personal holiness increases the effectiveness of prayer. Prayer should include a confession of known and unknown sins (Matt 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9; Ps 19:12) as well as daily forgiveness of those who have sinned against us (Matt 6:14–15).

As with holiness, prayer is also strengthened by humility (Jas 4:6, 10; Lk 18:10–14). Additionally, God honors persistence in prayer. Often, believers will pray for the same thing for

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<sup>77</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 381.

a very long time (Deut 9:25–26; Lk 18:1–8) as well as simply praying about many things for a very long time (Lk 6:12). This persistence brings about growth in our relationship to God, and Paul encourages us to continue in prayer and thanksgiving (1 Thess 5:17; Col 4:2). In the same manner, prayer should be earnest and sincere; we should not fake emotional intensity, but we should pray with real emotion (Heb 5:7; Amos 7:2).

Often, when we pray persistently with a spirit of submission, we will need to wait on the Lord to respond (Pss 38:15; 130:5–6). Waiting for an answer and persisting in prayer shows that we are serious about our requests. Scripture encourages and records private prayer (Dan 6:10; Lk 5:16; Matt 6:6) as well as group prayer (Matt 18:19–20; Acts 4:24).

In Scripture, prayer and fasting often occur together and in many different situations (Neh 1:4; Dan 9:3; Acts 14:23). Fasting assists prayer because it fosters a greater sense of trust in God, focuses our prayers and thoughts, reminds us of the need to sacrifice ourselves to God, gives us growth in self-control, heightens our awareness of God’s presence and activity, and expresses our earnestness.

There will always be unanswered prayers. Even martyrs in heaven plead for God’s vengeance, and he tells them to wait (Rev 6:10–11). Many prayers will remain unanswered because we do not pray according to God’s will (Jas 4:3), because we do not pray with faith (Jas 1:6–8), or because God has some other means by which he desires to accomplish his purposes (Lk 22:42). If our prayers go unanswered, we can trust that God is working even these unanswered prayers together for his glory and our good (Rom 8:28), and we can continue to pray earnestly. God sometimes answers a request after years of prayer (1 Sam 1:19–20; Lk 2:25–35). In all cases, prayer should be marked by praise and thanksgiving to God (Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:18).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with prayer, then ask students to discuss the following question, “What kind of prayers would characterize a legalistic approach to God?” Prompt further discussion by asking the opposite question: “What kind of prayers would characterize a person who trusts in Christ’s grace?”
- Close class with prayer. Read Matthew 18:19–20 aloud, then ask the students to break into groups of two or three. Have them pray with one another for personal requests that they have been praying about for many months or years.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What does it mean to pray in Jesus’ name? What does it mean to pray according to God’s will?
- What function does the Holy Spirit fulfill in prayer?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Calvin on Prayer” (John Calvin, selections from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*)  
<http://www.chapellibrary.org/files/archive/pdf-english/copr.pdf>
- “How to Pray” (Tim Keller; MP3)  
[http://download.redeemer.com/rpcsermons/Lords\\_Prayer\\_1990/How\\_To\\_Pray.mp3](http://download.redeemer.com/rpcsermons/Lords_Prayer_1990/How_To_Pray.mp3)
- “Corporate Aspects of the Lord’s Prayer” (Philip Ryken)  
<http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/corporate-aspects-lords-prayer>

## ***Chapter 19 – Angels***

### **Key Terms**

angel, angel of the LORD, archangel, cherubim, living creatures, Michael, principalities and powers, seraphim, sons of God, watchers

### **Key Points**

- Angels are created, finite, spiritual beings.
- Angels participate in fulfilling God’s purposes, serve God, and demonstrate his goodness and glory.

### **Chapter Summary**

“Angels are created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies.”<sup>78</sup> That they are “created” means that they have not always existed; God created them as he created all things (Neh 9:6). Their moral judgment is evident in that some of them chose to sin (2 Pet 2:4), and their intelligence is evident in their interactions with mankind and in their praise of God (Matt 28:5; Rev 4:11). As spirits, angels are not normally visible.

The authors of Scripture use various titles for angels, including “sons of God” (Job 1:6), “watcher[s]” (Dan 4:13), “dominions,” “authorities” (Col 1:16), and so forth. Angels are not the only heavenly beings mentioned in Scripture. We also read of cherubim—beings that guard the Garden of Eden and on which God is enthroned (Gen 3:24; Ezek 10:18–22). Seraphim are those beings engaged in continual worship of the Lord (Isa 6:2–7), and the “living creatures” stand around God’s throne as representatives of creation also engaged in worship (Ezek 1:5–14; Rev 4:6–8). It also appears that angels fall into some rank and order. Jude 9 calls Michael an “archangel,” and Daniel 10:13 refers to him as “one of the chief princes.” We have no evidence or mention of other archangels; in fact, Gabriel is the only other angel named in Scripture (Lk 1:19; Dan 8:16).

As finite, created beings, angels are limited to one location and one time. Scripture does not tell us how many angels exist; at various points, we read of tens of thousands (Deut 33:2), myriads upon myriads (Rev 5:11), or even innumerable angels (Heb 12:22). While Scripture affirms that angels aid in protecting us (Ps 91:11–12; Matt 18:10), it does not support the concept of individual “guardian angels.”

Angels are not given in marriage, and they do not enjoy the type of family relationships that exist among human beings (Matt 22:30). They do enjoy a significant amount of power (2 Pet 2:11); it seems that they enjoy more power than humans do, until the Lord’s return (Heb 2:7; 1 Cor 6:3).

At several points in the OT, we read of “the angel of the LORD.” In some instances, the angel of the LORD is evidently God himself; he promises blessing, and people refer to him as God and he refers to himself as the Lord (Gen 16:10, 13; 22:12; 31:11–13). Perhaps the clearest evidence that the angel of the LORD is God is found in Exodus 3:2–6, in which he appears to Moses in the burning bush and states, “I am the God of your father.” Instances that speak of “an

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 397.

angel of the LORD” or of a specific angel of the LORD probably refer to an actual angel rather than to God (2 Sam 24:16; Zech 1:11–13; Lk 1:11).

Angels were created sometime between the beginning of the first day of creation and the end of the sixth day of creation. Exodus 20:11 clarifies, “In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, *and all that is in them*, and rested on the seventh day” (italics added). It is likely that the angels were the first of his creation, as Genesis 1:2 specifies that the earth remained formless (whereas the heavens are not mentioned), and Job 38:6–7 tells us that the angels shouted for joy as God formed the earth. The angels that rebelled must have rebelled after the sixth day of creation, because after the sixth day, “God saw *everything* that he had made, and behold, *it was very good*” (Gen 1:31, italics added).

Angels fulfill several purposes: (1) They demonstrate for us the greatness of God’s love and plan for humanity. God did not make angels in his image, and he has not provided a means of atonement for those angels that rebelled against him. Additionally, angels cannot bear children or have dominion over creation. Instead, they serve us (Heb 1:14). (2) Angels remind us of the great unseen reality that surrounds us. For instance, when we worship, we can remember that we worship in the presence of countless unseen angels (Heb 12:22). (3) Angels are an example for us. When God wills something, they do it “immediately, joyfully, and without question.”<sup>79</sup> Angels also exemplify genuine worship of God as they stand before his throne and rejoice in his holiness (Isa 6:3; Rev 5:11–12). (4) Angels participate in carrying out God’s plans. They convey messages (Lk 1:11–19), they destroy the enemies of God (2 Chron 32:21; Acts 12:23), and they will join the Lord in his mighty return (Matt 16:27). (5) Angels serve God’s purposes in that they glorify him; they worship him for his attributes, they praise him for the obedience of Christ (1 Tim 3:16), and they honor him for our worship and obedience (1 Tim 5:21; 1 Cor 4:9).

It is good for us to be aware of angels in our daily lives, as we come to worship and with regard to our daily choices; these spiritual beings witness our obedience and disobedience. When we find unexpected protection or aid in the midst of danger, we should consider that God may be accomplishing this through his angelic servants. At the same time, we should refuse to receive false doctrine from angels (Gal 1:8; 2 Cor 11:14). For example, if it is true that an angel delivered the Book of Mormon, the revelation found therein runs so evidently contrary to the truth of Scripture that we can reject it without fear. We also should not worship angels (Col 2:18; Rev 19:10), we should not pray to angels (1 Tim 2:5), and we should beware of an unhealthy desire to see and communicate with angels. Angels have appeared to many in the NT age (Acts 8:26; 12:6–11), and the author of Hebrews instructs us that we may encounter such beings (Heb 13:2), so we have no reason to conclude that angels have stopped appearing to people today.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Angels from the Realms of Glory.”<sup>80</sup>
- Question 5 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (p. 409 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider our future role in judging angels. Ask students to discuss what this role says about mankind.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>80</sup> This hymn can be found in Ibid., 410–11. Traditional accompaniment music and on-screen lyrics can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyFb\\_RbVBeA&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyFb_RbVBeA&feature=related) (accessed July 8, 2011).

- When were angels likely created, and when did the sinful angels rebel and fall?
- How do angels show the greatness of God's love for human beings?

#### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels” (J. Hampton Keathley III)  
<http://bible.org/article/angelology-doctrine-angels>
- “Angels” (Sam Storms)  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/angels/>

## ***Chapter 20 – Satan and Demons***

### **Key Terms**

demon possession, demonized, demons, distinguishing between spirits, exorcism, Satan

### **Key Points**

- Demons seek to destroy people made in God’s image and to hinder the spread of the gospel.
- Believers in the church age have authority in Christ to wage spiritual warfare.
- Christians cannot be demon possessed, but they may come under severe demonic attack.

### **Chapter Summary**

“Demons are evil angels who sinned against God and now continually work evil in the world.”<sup>81</sup> These beings were originally created “very good” (Gen 1:31), but it seems that by Genesis 3, these beings had rebelled against God (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). It is possible that Isaiah 14 refers to Satan’s fall, but it is unlikely that Genesis 6:2–4 intends to describe the marriage of demons to human women; rather, this is probably describing intermarriage between those who worshiped God and those who did not. Satan is the chief of demons; he appears in Scripture as the enemy of the Lord and the Lord’s people (Job 1:7–2:7; Matt 4:1–11; 16:23).

Sin originated with Satan (Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 3:8). He fell before Adam and Eve fell, and he works to tempt others to sin. Satan sought to tempt Jesus (Matt 4:1–11), and his forces now seek to draw others away through any means possible, including deception and murder (Jn 8:44; Rev 12:9). They hope to blind the world to the gospel (2 Cor 4:4) and to hinder the witness of the church through fear, sickness, temptation, doubt, and many such things. Even so, Satan and his demons can act only as God allows them to act; God’s control limits their activity (Job 1:12; 2:6; Jude 6). Additionally, they have much less power than God does. They cannot know the future or our thoughts (Isa 46:9–10).

God’s work throughout the history of redemption has had a significant effect on the nature of demonic activity. In the OT, many nations worshiped false Gods that were in fact demons (Deut 32:16–17; Ps 106:35–37; 1 Cor 10:20). In its wars, Israel fought by the power of the Lord against nations that fought by the power of demonic forces. However, there are no cases of exorcism recorded in the OT, though through his music, David occasionally brought King Saul some temporary relief from an evil spirit (1 Sam 16:23). At the arrival of Jesus, everything changed; he was able to cast out demons with power and authority (Mk 1:27), and they remained cast out! Jesus stated that his power over demons was evidence that the kingdom of God had arrived in the Messiah (Matt 12:28–29). He had bound Satan (probably when he prevailed against him in the wilderness), and he was reclaiming many people from the domain of darkness. This same power continues into the church age; disciples received this authority (Mk 3:15), and

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<sup>81</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 412.

many in the church enjoyed this same power (Acts 9:5–7; 16:18). During Christ’s millennial reign, demonic forces will have no power to deceive (Rev 20:1–3), and at the end, they will be completely defeated and cast into eternal torment (Rev 20:10).

Contrary to today’s generally naturalistic outlook, demons continue to act in the world today (1 Pet 5:8), and it is a mistake to suppose otherwise. We must recognize that we cannot attribute a demonic origin to every sinful act or evil occurrence. In fact, much of the NT is filled with instructions to Christians to live righteously; Paul does not instruct believers to cast out spirits of sexual immorality or jealousy; rather, he instructs them to stop engaging in those sins (Gal 5:16–26). An exorcism does not precede most of the recorded instances of gospel proclamation, and there is no evidence in the NT of “strategic level spiritual warfare.”<sup>82</sup> While Scripture usually focuses on the choices and actions of people, Paul still instructs us to remain resistant to demonic forces (Eph 4:26; 6:11–20).

The term “demon possession” is often used to imply a state in which a person has lost complete volitional control; the person has no remaining power left to choose right over wrong. Given this definition, we must affirm that it is not possible for a Christian to be demon possessed (Rom 6:14; Col 1:13), though they may fall under demonic attack (Lk 4:2; 2 Cor 12:7). It is possible for a Christian to suffer a significant level of demonic attack or influence, particularly if they engage in ongoing sin or if they fail to pursue a healthy Christian life. Some outward signs enable us to recognize demonic influence (e.g., bizarre, violent, destructive activity, patently incorrect doctrinal statements, etc.), and some believers will be better able to perceive the source of these things than others (1 Cor 12:10). Through Christ, all believers possess the authority to “rebuke demons and command them to leave”<sup>83</sup> (Lk 9:1; 10:17–19). Jude 9 does not limit this ability; Jude instructs believers to act only within the bounds of their God-given authority (Jude 6–10). Our God-given authority to resist the Devil (Jas 4:7; Eph 6:10–18) finds its basis in Christ’s work on the cross (Heb 2:14; Col 2:15). In our daily lives, this may take the form of a brief spoken command in the name of Jesus.

When Christians minister to others in the area of spiritual warfare, a few things will prove helpful: (1) Our conversation and behavior must encourage confidence rather than fear (1 Cor 14:33; 2 Tim 1:7). (2) We should avoid focusing on communicating with demonic forces; we should instead focus on ministering to our fellow believer with the truth of Scripture. (3) We must avoid an inappropriate level of curiosity and fascination with demons. (4) If the person to whom we are ministering is not a believer, we must encourage them to accept Christ immediately (Matt 12:43–45). (5) We must take heed for our own spiritual health, or we will find ourselves weak in spiritual warfare (Matt 17:18–20). (6) We must rejoice in our salvation rather than in our power over demons (Lk 10:20). The proclamation of the gospel will bring power over the works of the Devil (Acts 8:5–8; 1 Cor 2:3–5).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking students to discuss what areas in their culture seem to be under significant demonic influence today. Prompt further discussion by asking why they think the church does not often experience the type of spiritual warfare described in the Gospels and Acts.

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<sup>82</sup> See the description in *ibid.*, 421.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- According to the text, why can a Christian not be “demon possessed”?
- Describe the different stages of demonic activity within the history of redemption (i.e., the OT, the ministry of Jesus, the new covenant age, the millennium, and the final judgment).

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Demons: Disarmed, Displayed, Defeated” (Sam Storms; in 2 parts)  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/demons-disarmed-displayed-defeated-part-i-215/>  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/demons-disarmed-displayed-defeated-part-ii-215/>
- “Myths about Spiritual Warfare” (Wayne A. Detzler)  
<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ref-rev/04-1/4-1-detzler.pdf>

## Part 3 – The Doctrine of Man

### *Chapter 21 – The Creation of Man*

#### Key Terms

image of God, *imago Dei*, likeness

#### Key Points

- God created all humanity in his own image and named us “Man.”
- Human beings bear the image of God in their relationships, their moral capacities, their spiritual natures, their emotional and cognitive faculties, and so forth.
- The fall corrupted the image of God in mankind, but redemption in Christ can progressively restore this image.

#### Chapter Summary

From the beginning, Scripture refers to the human race with the term “man” (Gen 5:1–2). This does not require us to avoid gender-neutral terms, but the fact that God chose to call the human race “man” instead of “woman” “probably has some significance for understanding God’s original plan for men and women.”<sup>84</sup>

God had no need for us. God does not lack for love or fellowship within the persons of the Trinity, yet he created us so that he might receive glory (Isa 43:7; Eph 1:11–12). Because this is true, our purpose in life is to glorify God, and we do this in enjoying him (Pss 16:11; 27:4; 1 Pet 1:8). It is not wrong for God to seek his own glory over that of another; there is no other person to whom such glory is due! It is idolatrous to give that glory to another (Rom 11:36; Acts 12:22–23; Rev 4:11).

God created man and woman in his own image (Gen 1:27). The Hebrew terms *tselem* and *demût* both denote something that is similar but not identical to that which it represents, and Moses later uses these same terms to describe the similarity between Adam and Seth (Gen 5:3). For humans to be in the image of God means that we are similar to God in very many ways—we possess intellectual abilities, volition, dominion over the earth—but we are not identical to God. At the fall, the image of God in mankind was warped. We are not as like God as we once were in our intellectual abilities, our moral faculties, our dominion, and many other areas. This image is not lost (Gen 9:6), however, and through the redemption that is in Christ, we can increasingly regain our likeness to God (Rom 8:29; Col 3:9–10; 2 Cor 3:18). When Christ returns, this

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 440.

recovery will be complete, and we will enjoy the fullness of the image of God once again (1 Cor 15:49; Col 1:15; 1 Jn 3:2).

Our similarity to God includes a number of aspects. We are morally like God. We have an awareness of right and wrong, and our likeness to God shows forth when we do what is right. We are spiritually like God. We have immaterial spirits and a spiritual life, and we will never cease to exist. We are mentally like God. We can think and reason, we are capable of communicating in abstract and complex language, we have complex and wide-ranging emotions, we can think reflectively about the distant future, and we are highly creative. We are relationally like God. We enjoy community and friendship, we reflect the image of God in marriage, and we relate as dominion-bearers to creation. We are not physically like God; he has no body (Jn 4:24; Rom 1:23). However, our physical bodies reflect a likeness to God. We can see, we can hear, we can speak, we can enjoy creation, we can use our bodies in ways that reflect God's image. In most of the above areas, we differ from other creatures not so much in kind but in degree. Animals can experience rudimentary emotion or communicate in a primitive fashion, and this also glorifies God. However, mankind is "much more like God than all the rest of creation."<sup>85</sup>

As we grow in our understanding of what it means to be made in God's image, we will likely develop a deep sense of the worth of all men and women. Children, the unborn, people with severe mental disabilities, people of every socioeconomic background, even people who actively hate God—all are made in his image and must be valued as God's image-bearers.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read Romans 1:18–23.
- Present the students with a definition of the noetic effects of sin, then ask students to discuss the following question: "How can our sin distort our ability to reflect the image of God with our mental faculties?"

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- How do our physical bodies reflect the image of God?
- How do men and women reflect the image of God in their relationship to the rest of creation?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- "The Image of God" (Charles Lee Feinberg)  
[http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted\\_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/01-Genesis/Text/Articles-Books/Feinberg-Image-BS.pdf](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/01-Genesis/Text/Articles-Books/Feinberg-Image-BS.pdf)
- "Men and Women in the Image of God" (John Frame, chap. 12 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*)  
[http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/rbmw/men\\_and\\_women\\_imagegod.pdf](http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/rbmw/men_and_women_imagegod.pdf)
- "Some Perspectives on the Image of God in Man from Biblical Theology" (Robert C. Newman)  
<http://www.newmanlib.ibri.org/RRs/RR021/21image.htm>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 449.

## ***Chapter 22 – Man as Male and Female***

### **Key Terms**

difference in role, equality in personhood, mutual submission, primogeniture

### **Key Points**

- God created man and woman in his own image.
- God created men and women equal in person and value but distinct in role and function.
- The fall twisted the way men and women perceive and pursue their roles today, but redemption in Christ can progressively restore both to their original created functions.

### **Chapter Summary**

As stated in the previous chapter, God created man and woman in his image (Gen 1:27). In doing so, God created us to show forth his image in our relationships, in our personal ontological equality, and in our functional differences.

God created humans as relational beings; we are not fitted for isolation. The relational aspect of our existence now finds its deepest expression in marriage (Gen 2:24). The marriage between husband and wife reflects the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:23–32) as well as the plurality of persons within the Trinity (Gen 1:26). Some may object that Christ was not married and that Paul urged singleness (1 Cor 7:7–9). Yet Christ has taken the entire church as his bride, and Paul urges singleness not for its own sake but for the sake of God’s kingdom. A believer may choose to forgo the reflection of God’s image within marriage in order to reflect his image in serving the church.

As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in importance and personhood, so too are men and women. God created both in his image, and he values both equally. A church with only male members would be unable to reflect the image of God with the fullness available to a church that has male and female members. In fact, the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marks the church age with a new emphasis on this equality (Acts 2:17–18; Gal 3:27–28); the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to man and woman alike (1 Cor 12:11).

The Trinity manifests ontological equality but differences in function. In redemption, for instance, the Father sends the Son, the Son obeys the Father and dies for our sins, and both send the Spirit to empower the people of God (Lk 22:42; Phil 2:6–8 ;Jn 16:7). If there are functional differences between the persons of the Trinity, then we can expect to find functional differences between people made in God’s image. Paul draws this comparison when he states, “The head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3 ESV). As the Father and Son

share equality in deity and personhood, so do men and women. As the Father and Son differ in their roles and functions within the Trinity, so do husbands and wives.

The roles for men and women were distinct even before the fall. Whereas God created male and female animals at the same time, when creating human beings, he created Adam first (Gen 2:7, 18–23). This seems to imply that God thought of Adam as having some level of leadership in a way similar to the leadership of a firstborn child; Paul uses this line of reasoning to restrict certain roles in church leadership to men (1 Tim 2:13). Additionally, God identifies Eve as a helper fit for Adam (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:9), which implies a difference of functions from the beginning. Similarly, Adam named Eve, which also implies some level of authority over her (Gen 2:19–23), and as has been mentioned, God named the human race “Man” (Gen 5:2). It also seems that the serpent’s approach to Eve was intended to disrupt the authority structures that God had created (Gen 3:1; 1 Tim 2:14). In contrast to this, God first approached Adam after the fall (Gen 3:9), and biblical authors later state that Adam was the representative for the human race (1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5:12–21). Rather than creating new functions for husbands and wives, the curse resulted in a distortion of existing roles (Gen 3:16–19). The curse brought a desire to women to conquer their husbands, and it resulted in men ruling in a harsh, unloving manner. As it does with our reflection of the image of God, redemption brings a progressive restoration also of our original functions (Col 3:18–19; Eph 5:22–33; 1 Pet 3:1–7). We find this in Paul’s command for Christians to submit to one another (Eph 5:21). His command is explained in the following verses—wives submit to husbands, children submit to parents, servants submit to masters—using a term that “always implies a relationship of submission to authority”<sup>86</sup> (Eph 5:22–6:9).

The above brings us to a couple of conclusions. First, Christian husbands and wives both must resist falling into aggressive patterns. Husbands must not play the tyrant, and wives must not compete for authority over the family. Second, both must resist falling into quiet docility. Husbands must not become lazy about their responsibilities to lead, and wives must not be entirely passive and uninvolved in the family’s decision-making process. Rather, husbands should love and lead in a thoughtful and considerate manner, and wives should submit to their husbands in a joyful, intelligent way.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Ask students to discuss the following questions: “Does a marriage relationship show forth the image of God more fully than a single person in isolation? Why or why not?”
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “It is possible for two people to be completely equal in value and personhood while having different responsibilities and differing amounts of authority?”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Identify three arguments used in the chapter to support the idea that God originally intended husbands to function as leaders in their marriages.
- How does the distinction of roles between men and women reflect the image of God?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

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<sup>86</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 465.

- “The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood” (The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood)  
<http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/The-Danvers-Statement>
- “The Essence of Femininity: A Personal Perspective” (Elisabeth Elliot)  
[http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/rbmw/essence\\_of\\_femininity.pdf](http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/rbmw/essence_of_femininity.pdf)
- *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. Wayne Grudem)  
<http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/biblicalfoundations.pdf>
- *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Wayne Grudem)  
[http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/evangelical\\_feminism.pdf](http://www.cbmw.org/images/onlinebooks/evangelical_feminism.pdf)
- “The Order of Creation” (R. C. Sproul)  
<http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/The-Order-of-Creation>

## ***Chapter 23 – The Essential Nature of Man***

### **Key Terms**

creationism, dichotomy, monism, soul, spirit, traducianism, trichotomy

### **Key Points**

- Scripture treats man as a unified whole but describes a nonmaterial aspect of our nature.
- Scripture uses the terms “spirit” and “soul” interchangeably.

### **Chapter Summary**

What is the nature of man? Trichotomists hold that human beings are made up of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. They attribute man’s intellect, will, and emotions to his soul, but they argue that a man’s spirit comes alive only at regeneration (Rom 8:10). Dichotomists maintain that human beings are made up of two parts: a material body and an immaterial soul/spirit. Monists assert that man is simply material and that he ceases to exist at death, though he may be resurrected at some future date. Most evangelical theologians have rejected this last view (Gen 35:18; Ps 31:5; Lk 23:43). This text will affirm and support the dichotomist viewpoint before examining trichotomist arguments.

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the unity of individual humans. God created Adam as a whole person, and we will be redeemed as whole, unified persons (Gen 2:7; 1 Cor 15:51–54). Once we recognize this reality, however, we must go on to consider what Scripture says of our immaterial nature.

To begin with, the terms “soul” and “spirit” seem to be interchangeable (cf. Jn 12:27 with Jn 13:21; Lk 1:46–47). For example, in describing death, Scripture says that Rachel’s soul “departed” (Gen 35:18), and Jesus “gave up” his spirit (Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30). Moreover, Jesus speaks of body and soul (Matt 10:28), while Paul and James speak of body and spirit (1 Cor 5:5; Jas 2:26). Additionally, Scripture speaks of sinning with one’s soul or spirit, but it does not draw a distinction (2 Cor 7:1; Isa 29:4). In fact, “everything that the soul is said to do, the spirit is also said to do, and everything that the spirit is said to do, the soul is also said to do.”<sup>87</sup> While trichotomists would restrict emotions, volition, and thought to the soul, Scripture speaks of the spirit thinking and knowing (Mk 2:8; 1 Cor 2:11) or experiencing emotions (Acts 17:16; Jn 13:21). Whereas trichotomists would also restrict worship and prayer to the spirit, Scripture speaks of our souls worshipping (Pss 103:1; 146:1; Lk 1:46) or praying to God (1 Sam 1:15; Ps 62:1). Scripture simply does not distinguish between soul and spirit.

Trichotomists use a number of passages and arguments to support the notion that soul and spirit are separate aspects of our nature. For instance, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 speaks of being blameless in our “spirit and soul and body.” Yet this appears to be a series of synonyms for the sake of emphasis (Matt 22:37). We are to be entirely blameless! Hebrews 4:12 describes Scripture as “piercing to the division of soul and of spirit.” In this case, the author does not seem to be saying that Scripture divides soul *from* spirit. Rather, he is seeking to describe the utter penetrating power of Scripture: it cuts to the core of our spirits, our souls, our joints, our marrow, our hearts, our thoughts.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 476.

First Corinthians 2:14–3:4 (ESV) describes people who are “of the flesh,” people who are “natural” (lit., “soul-ish”), and people who are “spiritual.” However, this passage is drawing a difference between those who are influenced by the Holy Spirit and those who are not. First Corinthians 14:14 seems to distinguish between praying with our spirits (in tongues) and praying with our minds, but this appears to be a comment on the nature of praying in tongues; Paul does not understand the content of his prayer. He is not stating that his spirit is praying separately from the rest of his person.

Many trichotomists argue that they experience a spiritual perception of God that is different from their normal emotive and cognitive experiences. This, they would argue, is their spirit in contrast to their soul. However, Scripture speaks of our spiritual perception taking place in our soul as well (Lk 1:46; Ps 103:1; Mk 12:30). Some trichotomists argue that the spirit is what distinguishes us from animals, yet our bodily and spiritual activities both distinguish us from animals. We are different from animals because we relate to God in ways that animals never can. Others argue that the spirit is what comes alive at regeneration (Rom 8:10), but numerous Scriptures refer to the alive and rebellious spirits of God’s enemies (e.g., Dan 5:20; Deut 2:30).

In conclusion, none of the arguments for trichotomy hold up. This viewpoint remains prone to antimaterial or anti-intellectual tendencies. The “spirit” is held forth as the part of our being that relates to God, so our bodies, our minds, and our emotions are often devalued. At the same time, a dichotomist view, which recognizes the overall unity of man, will lead us to value our intellects, our emotions, and our bodies and to seek holiness in our whole being (2 Cor 7:1; Col 1:10; Gal 5:17, 22).

In contrast to monism, Scripture does describe an immaterial part of human beings that can exist apart from the body (Acts 7:59; Lk 23:43; Phil 1:23–24; 2 Cor 5:8). Regarding the origin of our souls, two views have been common within the church. Creationism maintains that God creates a new soul and unites it to a person’s flesh between conception and birth. This view seems to have better biblical support, as many passages describe children as gifts from God, knit together by him in the womb (Pss 127:3; 139:13). In addition, Zechariah 12:1 speaks of God as the one “who forms the spirit of man within him” (NIV). The second view—traducianism—asserts that children inherit their souls from their parents at conception. This view finds support in the notion that God made us in his image, able to create others like ourselves (Gen 1:27–28); it also finds support in the passages that describe descendants as present in the loins of their ancestors (Heb 7:10). Additionally, traducianism best accounts for inherited sin and best takes into account that God rested from creation on the seventh day. It seems that creationism, however, has the best support from the text of Scripture, though we can affirm that as God creates individual children, he involves the human parents to some degree.

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Be Still, My Soul.”<sup>88</sup>
- Ask students to discuss the following question: “If God rested from creation on the seventh day, where do the souls of new children come from?” Prompt further discussion by reminding them of God’s providential activity through secondary causes.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> This hymn can be found in *ibid.*, 488–89. A traditional rendition of this hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GXXLtPUTOc&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Provide two arguments for traducianism.
- Describe trichotomy, explain one argument for this view, and provide a rebuttal.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Trichotomy: A Beachhead for Gnostic Influences” (Kim Riddlebarger)  
<http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/theological-essays/trichotomy.pdf>
- “The Nature of Man” (Gilbert Sanchez)  
<http://chalcedon.edu/research/articles/the-nature-of-man-2/>

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<sup>89</sup> See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 319.

## **Chapter 24 – Sin**

### **Key Terms**

age of accountability, dualism, impute, inherited corruption, inherited guilt, inherited sin, mortal sin, original guilt, original pollution, original sin, Pelagius, propitiation, sin, total depravity, total inability, unpardonable sin, venial sin

### **Key Points**

- Sin is any moral failure in our deeds, our emotions, or our beings.
- Through Adam’s sin, we have all inherited guilt and corruption.
- Every sin separates us from God, but some sins are much more harmful in their results.
- The unpardonable sin is a conscious, willful slander of what one knows to be the work of the Holy Spirit as being the work of Satan.

### **Chapter Summary**

“Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature.”<sup>90</sup> This means that while stealing and adultery are sin, so also are the desires to steal and commit adultery (Ex 20:17; Matt 5:22, 28). Moreover, our very nature can be sinful. In Ephesians 2:3, Paul states that believers once were “by nature children of wrath.” The most common definition of sin apart from the above is simply to say that sin is selfishness, yet Scripture does not define sin this way. In fact, some self-interest is praised (Matt 6:20; Ezek 33:11), and many sins are simply not selfish as we commonly understand selfishness (e.g., selfless devotion to a false god or a harmful political ideal). Worse yet, this definition might suggest that God is sinful in righteously seeking his own glory (Isa 42:8)!

God did not sin, and he is not guilty for sin (Deut 32:4; Job 34:10; Jas 1:13). At the same time, we must affirm that sin did not surprise or challenge God (Eph 1:11; Dan 4:35); rather, God ordained that sin would enter the world through the choices of moral agents. Sin first manifested itself in the angelic realm with the fall of Satan and the demons, but it manifested itself in creation through the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1–19). Their sin typifies sin in general: it challenged our basis of knowledge (Is God true?), it challenged our basis for moral standards (Is God right?), it challenged our identity (Are we subordinate to God?), and like all sin, it was irrational (Ps 14:1; Prov 10:23).

Adam’s sin affects us in two ways. First, Adam’s sin means that we have inherited guilt (Rom 5:12, 18–19). God imputes Adam’s sin to us; he regards us as sinners who are guilty before him. Though some may protest that this is unfair, we must remember that we have all also committed many sins for which we are guilty. What is more, if we think it unfair for Adam to represent us in the garden, we must also consider it unfair for Christ to represent us on the cross. Second, Adam’s sin means that we have inherited corruption (Ps 51:5; Eph 2:3). Because Adam sinned, we have a natural, inborn tendency to sin as well. In our very natures, we have no spiritual good (Rom 7:18; Jer 17:9); every part of us is corrupted by sin. In our actions, we have no ability to do any spiritual good (Rom 3:9–20; Jn 6:44).

Because of this inherited guilt and corruption, every person is sinful (1 Kgs 8:46; Jas 3:2; 1 Jn 1:8–10). Some have rejected this and argued that we must be able to do the good that God

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 490.

commands us to do, or he would not hold us responsible for our sins. However, Paul states in Ephesians 2:1 that we were “dead” in our sins, unable to do any good, yet Scripture still affirms that we are guilty before God (Rom 5:12–21). Our ability does not limit our responsibility. This leads us to ask if infants are guilty before they commit any actual sins, and if infants that die before they can understand the gospel are able to be saved. Psalms 51:5 and 58:3 indicate that we are sinful *in nature*, if not in deed from before birth, so we must say that if infants who die before sinning are saved, it is not because they are innocent but because of Christ’s redemptive work applied on their behalf through the Holy Spirit (1 Tim 2:5, Jn 3:3). It is possible for God to regenerate an infant before birth (Lk 1:15; Ps 22:10), but Scripture does not tell us how often this takes place. God’s frequent pattern in Scripture is to save the children of those who believe in him (Heb 11:7; Jn 4:53; Acts 14:4), and we have no reason to think that it would not be the same for believers’ children who die very young (2 Sam 12:23).

No sin is worse than other sins in terms of our legal guilt before God; every sin separates us from God (Jas 2:10–11; Gal 3:10). However, some sins are worse in terms of their consequences. Some sins bring much more harm to our lives or to the lives of others, and they bring more harmful spiritual results (Jn 19:11; Ezek 8:6, 13, 15). These sins are those that bring more dishonor to God, those that cause more harm to people, and those that are done with hardened hearts (Num 15:30).

When a Christian sins, they remain forgiven (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 15:3) and still a part of God’s family (1 Jn 1:8; 3:2). Still, when a Christian sins, God is displeased and he disciplines us (Eph 4:30; Heb 12:6). Our sin harms our Christian life and witness and makes it more difficult to pursue Christlikeness (Rom 6:16). Furthermore, we lose heavenly rewards (1 Cor 3:12). We must be wary, because a persistent pattern of disobedience to Christ and a lack of the fruit of the Holy Spirit indicate that a person has not placed his or her faith in Christ and is not a Christian.

The unpardonable sin (Matt 12:31–32; Mk 3:29–30; Heb 6:4–6) is the “unusually malicious, willful rejection and slander against the Holy Spirit’s work attesting to Christ, and attributing that work to Satan.”<sup>91</sup> This sin is unpardonable because the person who knows that Jesus Christ is God and believes that the Holy Spirit is working through him but then maliciously attributes that work to Satan has rejected all the means by which God brings a person to repentance and forgiveness.

God punishes sin both to deter and to warn. However, he punishes sin primarily because his holy righteousness requires it (Jer 9:24; Rom 3:25–26).

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking students to discuss the following question: “Why is it important to insist on the historical reality of Adam and Eve’s first sin as the Bible describes it?” Prompt further discussion by having a student read Romans 5:12–21, then ask students, “If there were no real first sin, does Paul’s argument fail? Specifically, can God impute Christ’s righteousness to us?”

## **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What does the text define as “the unpardonable sin”?
- What happens when a Christian sins?

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 508.

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- “What Is Sin?” (J. Gresham Machen)  
<http://www.westminsterconfession.org/introduction-to-the-christian-faith/what-is-sin.php>
- “Original Sin: Depravity Infects Everyone” (J. I. Packer)  
[http://www.monergism.com/\\_original\\_sin\\_depravity\\_infect\\_1.php](http://www.monergism.com/_original_sin_depravity_infect_1.php)
- “What Is Sin?” (David Powlison)  
[http://www.monergism.com/what\\_is\\_sin\\_by\\_david\\_powlison.php](http://www.monergism.com/what_is_sin_by_david_powlison.php)

## Chapter 25 – The Covenants Between God and Man

### Key Terms

covenant, covenant of grace, covenant of redemption, covenant of works, new covenant, old covenant

### Key Points

- A covenant agreement includes parties, conditions, blessings, and consequences.
- Three covenants exist: a covenant of works, a covenant of redemption, and a covenant of grace.

### Chapter Summary

In speaking of the manner in which God relates to man, we speak of God's covenants with us. The covenants that we address in this chapter are those unchangeable, legal agreements initiated by God that outline the commitments and requirements in the relationship between God and humanity. We cannot change the covenant; we can only accept or reject the terms and obligations. While it is true that these terms are unchanging, it is also true that a new covenant may replace an old covenant.

The *covenant of works* is that covenant established by God with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen 2:9, 15–17). While Genesis does not include the term “covenant” in its description of these first events, Hosea declares of Israel, “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant” (Hos 6:7 ESV). Paul also speaks of Christ's role as similar to Adam's (Rom 5:12–21); they both serve as the representative heads of a group of people, which would indicate that Adam was in a covenant with God before his sin. The covenant of works fits the pattern of covenants in Scripture. There are two parties (God and man), there are requirements (do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), there are consequences for disobedience (death), and there are blessings for obedience (life).

In some senses, the covenant of works remains active. If we could be perfectly obedient in our lives, we would receive the blessing of obedience, but disobedience carries consequences (Rom 7:10; 6:23; Gal 3:12). We know that Christ kept the covenant of works, living a life of perfect obedience to God's commands (1 Pet 2:22; Rom 5:18–19). This active obedience ensures the efficiency of his death on the cross. However, other aspects of the covenant of works are no longer in force. We have no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and our inherited sin nature means that we are unable to keep the provisions of this covenant. Additionally, believers receive the blessings of this covenant not through our own obedience but through Christ's obedience.

The *covenant of redemption* is the agreement made before creation between the members of the Trinity. In this covenant, the “Son agreed to become a man, be our representative, obey the demands of the covenant of works on our behalf, and pay the penalty for sin, which we deserved.”<sup>92</sup> Our understanding of this covenant comes from many places in Scripture. For instance, we see that the Father gave the Son a people to redeem as well as a work to accomplish (Jn 17:2–4). We also see that the Father agreed to send the Son as a representative and to accept his work as sufficient for the redemption of many (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:18–19). The Father also gave the Son all authority in heaven and on earth, including the authority to send the Holy Spirit to

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 518.

believers (Matt 28:18; Acts 2:33). The Son agreed to incarnate (Gal 4:4), to remain perfectly obedient (Heb 10:7–9), to die on the cross (Phil 2:8), and to gather all of the elect to himself (Jn 17:12). The Holy Spirit agreed to empower Jesus for ministry and obedience (Lk 4:1, 14, 18) and to “apply the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work”<sup>93</sup> to the elect (Jn 14:16–17, 26).

Finally, the *covenant of grace* is that covenant established by God to save man after the fall. It is called a covenant of grace because it is “entirely based on God’s ‘grace’ or unmerited favor toward those whom he redeems.”<sup>94</sup> The parties to this covenant are again God and humanity, though in this covenant, Christ acts as the mediator: he fulfills the covenant condition for the elect. The condition in this covenant is simply faith in the work of Christ as our Savior. This was as true for the faithful in the OT as it is for the faithful today. In fact, Paul states that both David and Abraham were justified—they received the benefits of the covenant—because of their faith in the Messiah to come. Faith in Christ is still the condition for entrance into the covenant of grace, and obedience to God’s commands provides evidence of this initial faith (Jas 2:17). The blessing for accepting and entering into the covenant is eternal life in a personal relationship with the Creator (Jer 31:33). The outward sign of entrance into this covenant was circumcision in the OT; in the NT and today, we mark entrance into this covenant by baptism and continuance in the covenant by participation in the Lord’s Supper.

While this covenant has remained unchanged in its essence, the provisions have varied. Immediately after the fall, there was merely the insinuation that a relationship with God might be maintained in the promise of a Savior to come (Gen 3:15) and in God’s provision of clothing (Gen 3:21). After the flood, God’s promises showed that he was relating to creation graciously. Beginning with Abraham, the elements of the covenant of grace are all in place (Gen 15; 17). Scripture often speaks of Christ fulfilling the covenant with Abraham (e.g., Rom 4:1–25; Gal 3:6–18). This covenant of grace is the “new covenant,” and it stands in contrast to the old covenant, made under Moses at Mount Sinai (Lk 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:6–13). The new covenant far exceeds the old covenant because it brings the Messiah, the final atonement for sins, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read Jeremiah 31:31–34, another to read Jeremiah 32:36–41, and another to read Jeremiah 33:7–10, 14–16.
- Ask students to discuss the following question: “In what ways does the presence of the promised Holy Spirit make the new covenant much better than the old covenant?”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What role did the Holy Spirit fulfill in the covenant of redemption during Christ’s earthly ministry? What role does the Holy Spirit fulfill in the covenant of redemption today?
- What are the necessary components of a covenant agreement?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Everlasting Covenant” (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones)  
[http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=lloydjones\\_covenant.html](http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=lloydjones_covenant.html)

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 519.

- “Introduction: On Covenant Theology” (J. I. Packer)  
[http://www.gospelpedlar.com/articles/Bible/cov\\_theo.html](http://www.gospelpedlar.com/articles/Bible/cov_theo.html)
- “Covenant of Works” (R. C. Sproul)  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/covenantworks.html>
- “The Covenant Promise of the Spirit” (C. H. Spurgeon)  
[http://www.mbrem123.com/holy\\_spirit/sermon.php](http://www.mbrem123.com/holy_spirit/sermon.php)

## Part 4 – The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit

### Chapter 26 – The Person of Christ

#### Key Terms

Apollinarianism, Arianism, Chalcedonian definition, communication of attributes, Docetism, Eutychianism, God, hypostatic union, impeccability, incarnation, kenosis theory, logos, Lord, Monophysitism, Monothelite view, Nestorianism, Son of God, Son of Man, virgin birth

#### Key Points

- “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”<sup>95</sup>
- Christ’s natures suffered no mixture, confusion, or loss.

#### Chapter Summary

Christ’s humanity began at the virgin birth (Matt 1:18–25); this virgin birth shows that salvation comes from the Lord (Gal 4:4–5), enables humanity and deity to be united in one person, and makes it possible for Christ to be fully human without inherited sin. Christ’s human body also proves his full humanity. He was born, he grew, he became tired, he hungered and thirsted, he was physically weak, and he died (Lk 2:7, 40, 52; Jn 4:6; 19:28; Matt 4:2; Lk 23:26, 46). Even in his resurrection, Jesus had a human body (Lk 24:39). He also had a human mind, soul, and emotions (Lk 2:52; Jn 12:27; 11:35). In fact, his humanity was so evident that many people believed he was merely a man (Matt 13:53–58). In one key respect, Jesus was different from every other human being: he was without sin (Lk 4:13; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). Some have asked if Jesus could have sinned. After all, Scripture says that he was tempted (Lk 4:2) but also that God cannot be tempted (Jas 1:13). It seems right to say that if Jesus’ human nature had existed apart from his divine nature, then his human nature would be able to sin. His human nature never existed apart from his divine nature, and any sin would require his whole person (human and divine), so it was not actually possible for Jesus to sin.

Jesus’ full humanity was necessary (1 Jn 4:2–3) so that he might represent us in perfect obedience (Rom 5:18–19), that he might stand in our place (Heb 2:16–17), that he might mediate between humans and the Father (1 Tim 2:5), that he might rule over creation as God intended for mankind (Heb 2:5–9), that he might provide us with an example of holiness (1 Jn 2:6), that he might present the blueprint for our resurrection bodies (1 Cor 15:42–44), and that he might sympathize with us as our High Priest (Heb 2:18; 4:15–16). Jesus will be fully human forever (Lk 24:39; Acts 1:11; 7:56; Rev 1:13).

Scripture repeatedly proclaims Jesus’ full deity. At various points, the NT authors call Jesus God (*theos*; Jn 1:1, 18; Rom 9:5; 2 Pet 1:1), at others they call him Lord, which was a common Greek translation for the Hebrew term *Yahweh* (*kyrios*; Heb 1:10–12; Lk 2:11). Moreover, Jesus claims deity (Jn 8:58–59; Mk 14:61–62; cf. Rev 22:13 with Rev 1:8), and he refers to himself most frequently with the clearly divine title “the Son of man” (cf. Dan 7:13–14).

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 527.

Many other evidences point to his deity. He controlled the wind and the waves (Matt 8:27–27), he manifested his glory in miracles (Jn 2:1–11), he knew people’s thoughts (Mk 2:8), he forgave sins (Mk 2:5–7), he raised himself from the dead (Jn 2:19; 10:17–18), and he is counted worthy to receive worship (Phil 2:9–11; Rev 5:12).

Philippians 2:5–7 has caused some theologians to argue that Jesus Christ gave up some of his divine attributes while on the earth; however, the phrase “emptied himself” more likely means that he “made himself nothing” (NIV). The implication is that Jesus underwent a change in his status and privilege but not in the essential attributes of his divine nature. In fact, if Jesus gave up essential aspects of his deity, we would expect Scripture to speak on this clearly and repeatedly, but it does not. We must conclude that Jesus Christ is fully divine. The doctrine of the incarnation—of Christ’s full humanity and full deity in one person—is a paradox beyond our full comprehension, but it is not unintelligible. As with Christ’s humanity, his deity is fully necessary because only the infinite God could bear the full penalty of sins, because salvation comes from the Lord and no human can save himself (let alone all mankind), and because only one who is fully God could mediate between man and God (1 Tim 2:5).

Various teachers have put forth several inadequate views on the incarnation. Apollinarianism maintains that Christ had a human body but a divine mind and spirit. However, the church has rejected this because Christ’s full humanity is necessary to save humanity fully (Heb 2:17). Nestorianism held that Christ had two discrete persons, one fully human and one fully divine, which never joined. The church rejected this because Christ always acts as one person, and Scripture presents no indication of a struggle or communication or distinction between his human and divine natures. Monophysitism posited that Christ had a unique, third kind of nature that was an admixture of his human and divine natures. The church rejected this because it made Christ neither fully human nor fully divine. If true, he could not represent, nor mediate, nor save. Instead, the Chalcedonian definition asserts that Jesus Christ was fully human and fully divine in one person, without confusion, mixture, or loss in either nature.

We can affirm that Christ’s human nature did some things that his divine nature does not do, and vice versa. For instance, his human nature aged to about thirty years (Lk 3:23), but his divine nature exists eternally (Jn 1:1–2). His human nature slept, while his divine nature maintained all of creation (Mk 4:38; Col 1:17). It seems appropriate, then, to say that Jesus had a distinct human will and a distinct divine will in one person. At the same time, anything his human nature does, Christ does. Anything his divine nature does, Christ does. That is why Paul can say Christ died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3), and Jesus can affirm his own eternity (Jn 8:58). The NT authors often speak of one nature when referring to an action done by the other nature. For instance, Paul refers to Christ in 1 Corinthians 2:8 as the crucified Lord of glory. Hence, we can state, “Remaining what he was, Christ became what he was not.” Some attributes were communicated between natures; Jesus’ human nature became worthy of worship and unable to sin, and his divine nature became able to experience suffering and death as a substitutionary sacrifice. In conclusion, the incarnation is certainly the greatest mystery in the universe.

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Fairest Lord Jesus.”<sup>96</sup>

### Suggested Essay Questions

- Define Monophysitism and Apollinarianism and explain the problems with these heresies.
- What support does Scripture give for Christ’s full humanity? What does it give for his full deity?

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- *On the Incarnation* (Athanasius, with an introduction by C. S. Lewis)  
<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm>
- “Can a Christian Deny the Virgin Birth?” (R. Albert Mohler)  
<http://www.albertmohler.com/2008/12/23/can-a-christian-deny-the-virgin-birth/>
- “How Could Jesus Be Both Divine and Human?” (R. C. Sproul)  
<http://glenwoodhills.org/etc/prINTER-friendly.asp?ID=505>

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<sup>96</sup> This hymn can be found in *ibid.*, 567. A contemporary version of this hymn, sung by Ross Parsley and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abgY3pKNJeQ> (accessed July 8, 2011).

## ***Chapter 27 – The Atonement***

### **Key Terms**

absolute necessity, active obedience, atonement, blood of Christ, consequent, example theory, general redemption, governmental theory, impute, limited atonement, moral influence theory, particular redemption, passive obedience, penal substitution, propitiation, ransom to Satan theory, reconciliation, redemption, sacrifice, unlimited atonement, vicarious atonement

### **Key Points**

- Christ earned our salvation through his active obedience in life and his passive obedience in death.
- Christ paid the penalty for our sins as our substitute, not as an example or as a payment to Satan.
- Christ did not pay the penalty for the sins of those who reject him; he paid for the sins of the elect.

### **Chapter Summary**

God's love and justice caused the atonement (Jn 3:16; Rom 3:25–26); without God's love, we have no redemption, and without his justice, we have no payment for our sins. The atonement was not necessary insofar as God did not have to save anyone (2 Pet 2:4). Yet because God chose to save some, the atonement was absolutely necessary (Matt 26:39; Lk 24:25–26; Rom 3:26).

Christ's active obedience (his sinlessness) provides for us a perfect representative righteousness (Phil 3:9) that replaces the representative disobedience of Adam (Rom 5:19). Christ's passive obedience (his suffering) provides a payment of the penalty for our sins. Specifically, he suffered for his entire life (Matt 4:1–11; Heb 5:8; 12:3–4), and he suffered the cross. At the cross, he suffered a terribly painful crucifixion (Mk 15:24), he suffered the pain of bearing our sins (Isa 53:6, 12; Gal 3:13), he suffered abandonment by his friends (Matt 26:56), he suffered a breach in his relationship with the Father (Matt 27:46), and he suffered the wrath of the Father (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10). Regarding Christ as our propitiation, we affirm that God justly demands payment for sin and that the suffering of Christ makes reconciliation to the Father possible.

Christ did not sneak in to rescue us from an angry God. Rather, God sent the Son to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21); this payment was completed in one act rather than in the eternal suffering of the Son (Isa 53:11; Heb 9:25–28). As well as paying the penalty for our sins, the blood of Christ cleanses our consciences (Heb 9:14), provides us access to the Father (Heb 10:19), frees us from our sinful lives (1 Pet 1:18–19), and increasingly cleanses us from sin (1 Jn 1:7). This view of Christ's death is the penal substitution theory: Christ paid a penalty as our substitute. The NT teaches that Christ's death affects us in several ways. We deserve to die for our sins, but Christ died as a sacrifice for us (Heb 9:26). We deserve to suffer God's wrath, but Christ died as a propitiation for us (1 Jn 4:10). We have been separated from God, but Christ died to reconcile us to the Father (2 Cor 5:18–19). We are captives to sin and Satan, but Christ died to redeem us from bondage (Col 1:13).

Origen held that Christ died to ransom us from Satan; however, this fails to account for

the fact that the payment for sin is due to the Father, and it ascribes more power to Satan than is right. Peter Abelard affirmed the moral influence theory—the notion that Christ died to show us how much God loved us—and maintained that we find forgiveness when we love God. Still, this view fails to account for the many passages that speak of Christ bearing our sin, it fails to address how Christ’s work satisfied the Father’s justice, and it lacks any payment for sins. Faustus Socinus taught the example theory—that Christ died to give us an example of obedience and trust. This view also fails to account for any payment for our sins, and it seems to affirm that man can save himself through Christlike obedience. Hugo Grotius held the governmental theory—that Christ died so that we would know what the penalty for sins is, not to pay the penalty for our actual sins. He held that we are forgiven not through Christ’s work but only because God decided to forgive. This seriously undervalues God’s justice.

The notion that Jesus descended into hell appears only in the Apostle’s Creed, once in AD 390 and once in AD 650; in the former, the Greek states only that Christ descended into the grave. This summary will address two passages that seem to support this claim. Acts 2:27 (KJV) says that God will not leave Christ’s soul “in hell.” However, the Greek term here is the common term for “death” rather than “hell.” First Peter 3:18–20 describes Christ preaching “to spirits in prison” who had disobeyed during Noah’s time. It is unlikely that this describes Christ preaching in hell, to fallen angels, or to OT saints. The first seems strange given Peter’s urge to evangelize now, the second finds no support in Peter’s letter or elsewhere, and the third runs contrary to the description of spirits who “did not obey.” Instead, it seems this passage is saying, “During Noah’s day, Christ even preached in the spirit to people who are now spirits in prison.” In contrast, Christ affirmed that after his death, he would immediately enter the Father’s presence (Lk 23:43, 46). Hence, we can reject the idea that he descended into hell.

The Reformed view of particular redemption points to passages that describe Jesus dying for his people (Jn 10:11, 15; Acts 20:28; Rom 8:32–33) and to the fact that Christ’s death also secured other benefits for us, such as faith and holiness (Eph 1:3–4; 2:8). The non-Reformed view (unlimited atonement) points to passages that describe Jesus dying for the sins of the world (Jn 1:29; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 Jn 2:2). Both views agree that God will not save everyone, that we can rightly offer the gospel to every person, and that Christ’s death is sufficient to pay the penalty for as many or as few as God has decreed.

The Reformed view also argues the following: (1) Those who die condemned suffer the penalty for their sins, so Christ could not have suffered that penalty in their place. (2) Christ did not potentially redeem us; he actually redeemed us. (3) There is eternal unity in the plans and work of God to redeem the elect (Rom 8:28–30). (4) The passages used to support unlimited atonement need not mean that Christ paid the penalty for every person’s sins. For instance, John 1:29 and 2 Corinthians 5:19 do not mean that all sinners have had their sins forgiven, but only that Christ has generally reconciled sinners to God. Passages that describe Christ dying “for” the world likely refer to the free offer of the gospel to all people everywhere. First John 2:2 can mean that Christ makes propitiation available to everyone.

It is a mistake to focus on God’s purpose rather than on what he did in the atonement; he did not pay the penalty for the sins of unbelievers who will be condemned. Christ died to make salvation available to all, but his death paid the penalty only for the sins of the elect. In any case, those who hold either of the above views will affirm that no one is saved apart from belief in Christ, and no one who comes to Christ will be turned away. God is not insincere in his offer; all who wish to come and who do come will be saved. Finally, we must bear in mind that Scripture says little on this issue.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “Jesus Christ died for the sins of all people.”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Describe Hugo Grotius’s governmental theory and identify two problems with it.
- Identify one passage used to argue that Christ descended into hell and refute that argument.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Nothing but the Blood” (Mark Dever)  
[http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article\\_print.html?id=38245](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=38245)
- “The Case for Definite Atonement” (Roger Nicole)  
<http://www.apuritansmind.com/Arminianism/NicoleCaseDefiniteAtonement.htm>

## ***Chapter 28 – Resurrection and Ascension***

### **Key Terms**

ascension, exaltation of Christ, humiliation of Christ, incorruptible, raised in glory, raised in power, resurrection, session, spiritual body, states of Jesus Christ

### **Key Points**

- Christ rose again to a new kind of life in a resurrection body.
- The resurrection ensures our regeneration, our justification, and our future resurrection.
- Christ ascended into heaven, and he sits at the Father's right hand until his return.

### **Chapter Summary**

The entire NT assumes and bears witness to the resurrection of Christ. The Gospels each include an account of the resurrection (Matt 28:1–20; Mk 16:1–8; Lk 24:1–53; Jn 20:1–21:25), the book of Acts recounts the apostolic proclamation of this resurrection, the Epistles rest on the assumption that Christ has risen and will return, and the book of Revelation repeatedly describes the risen Lord.

Christ's resurrection was unique. He did not rise again simply to live to age and to die once more; rather, he rose from the dead with a new, incorruptible, resurrection body.<sup>97</sup> This resurrection body was physical (Lk 24:39) and was usually recognizable to his disciples (Matt 28:9).<sup>98</sup> While some have posited that Jesus' resurrection body was usually spiritual and that it only occasionally took on fleshly form, the Scriptures do not require this conclusion. On those occasions when Jesus was removed from the disciples' sight, it is possible that the Spirit simply took him away (as with Philip in Acts 8:39) or that he was hidden from their sight (as with Peter in Acts 12:10). In those moments when Jesus is said to join the disciples in a locked room, it is just as likely that the door was unlocked and opened for him (as with Peter in Acts 12:10). In fact, Jesus' continued emphasis on his physicality (Lk 24:30, 39–43; Jn 20:27) gives us strong reason to affirm that this is the nature of his resurrection body. The idea that the resurrection will be physical in nature conforms to God's approval of creation (Gen 1:31) and Paul's claim that creation longs for the resurrection (Rom 8:19–22).

Scripture affirms that both the Father and the Son participated in the resurrection. Repeatedly, the authors of the NT state that the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 6:4; Gal 1:1), and Jesus states that he also took part in this event (Jn 2:19–21; 10:17–18).

The resurrection is doctrinally significant. First, Christ's resurrection ensures our new birth. Peter declares that our new birth takes place through the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet 1:3), and Paul says that God made us alive and raised us up with Christ (Eph 2:5–6). In other words, while we did not receive our resurrection bodies at the moment of regeneration, we did receive a new kind of life that empowers us for obedience to God and ministry for the kingdom. Second, Christ's resurrection ensures our justification. The evidence that we are counted righteous before God is found in the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. Paul states that Jesus was sacrificed for our sins and “raised for our justification.”<sup>99</sup> There remains no sacrifice for sins, no wrath to

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<sup>97</sup> For further descriptions of the resurrection body, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 831–35.

<sup>98</sup> As for the disciples on the way to Emmaus, Luke 24:16 says they were kept from recognizing Jesus.

<sup>99</sup> Rom 4:25.

bear, no more punishment to be meted out, and the resurrection proves this to be true. Third, Christ's resurrection ensures our future resurrection. The one "who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us ... into his presence."<sup>100</sup>

The resurrection is also ethically significant. Because of the resurrection of Christ and the promise of the future resurrection of the saints, Paul declares that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). Because we have a hope in the resurrection, we are called to devote this life to seeking Christ and his glory (Col 3:1–4); we must put off sin and pursue righteousness (Rom 6:5–14).

After his resurrection, the Lord ascended into heaven. The account of this event (Acts 1:9–11) makes clear to us that Jesus went to a specific place rather than simply disappearing from sight.<sup>101</sup> At his ascension, Jesus received glory and honor and authority that had not been his while on earth (Jn 17:5; Phil 2:5–11). At this moment, Christ is receiving honor in heaven, with angels singing his praise and declaring his worth, his glory, and his power (Rev 5:12). In receiving this honor and glory, Christ sat down at the right hand of God (this is sometimes called his "session"), and he remains there in power until his future, earthly return (Ps 110:1; Eph 1:20–21; 1 Pet 3:22). As is true for his resurrection, his ascension and session is also doctrinally significant for our lives. Our union with Christ means that we also can look forward with confidence to a future ascension into heaven with him (1 Thess 4:17). We have assurance that our final home will be with him in heaven (Jn 14:2–3), and we can now share—in part—his authority over the universe (Eph 2:6). We now have the authority in Christ to wage spiritual warfare against the powers of wickedness (Eph 6:12; 2 Cor 10:4), and we will share his authority over creation in the age to come (1 Cor 6:3; Heb 2:5–8; Rev 3:21).

In discussing Christ's life, death, and resurrection, some theologians refer to the states of Christ: his humiliation and exaltation. His humiliation includes his incarnation, suffering, death, and burial, and his exaltation includes his resurrection, ascension, session, and return (Phil 2:5–11).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the video "Reliability of Christ's Resurrection" by Lee Strobel,<sup>102</sup> and ask the students to discuss which of Strobel's claims seem to them to be most significant.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What is the doctrinal significance of Jesus Christ's ascension and session for believers?
- What three things does Jesus Christ's resurrection ensure for believers?
- What is meant by "the humiliation of Christ"?

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<sup>100</sup> 2 Cor 4:14.

<sup>101</sup> For discussion of heaven as a place, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1159–60.

<sup>102</sup> This 8-minute video is available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diKEZb9\\_M8Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diKEZb9_M8Q) (accessed July 8, 2011).

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- “The Life of Jesus, after the Ascension” (George C. Fuller)  
[http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted\\_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/WTJ-NT/Fuller-JesusAfterLkActs-WTJ.pdf](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/WTJ-NT/Fuller-JesusAfterLkActs-WTJ.pdf)
- “Jesus Christ: Risen, Ascended, and Enthroned” (Mark Johnston)  
<http://www.reformation21.org/articles/jesus-christ-risen-ascended-and-enthroned.php>
- “The Resurrection of Christ” (J. Gresham Machen)  
<http://homepage.mac.com/shanerosenthal/reformationink/jgmresurrection.htm>

## ***Chapter 29 – The Offices of Christ***

### **Key Terms**

intercession, king, priest, prophet

### **Key Points**

- Jesus Christ fulfills the OT offices of prophet, priest, and king in a manner far superior to those who originally fulfilled these roles.
- Believers can imitate Christ in fulfilling these same roles.

### **Chapter Summary**

Christ fulfills the OT offices of prophet, priest, and king. He serves as our Prophet in that he reveals God the Word of God to us; he serves as our Priest in that he offers the sin-atonement sacrifice on our behalf (and is himself that sacrifice); he serves as our King in that he rules over the church and all of creation.

Christ is the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15–18. In these verses, Moses declared that the Lord God would raise up a prophet like Moses and that this prophet would speak the words of God to the people of God. Jesus did serve in this capacity—many who saw Jesus declared him to be a prophet (Jn 4:19; Mk 8:27–28)—but the NT epistles never refer to Jesus as a prophet or *the* prophet. Hebrews 1:1–2 even intentionally distinguishes between the prophets and Jesus as the “Son.” While Jesus is the prophet that Moses promised, he is greater than the OT prophets because he is the one about whom they prophesied. He’s greater yet because he is the one who provided them with the words of prophecy about his coming!

Christ is our perfect Priest. In a manner greater than that of the OT priests, Christ offered a perfect sacrifice, which was his own body on the cross (Heb 9:26). While the OT priests offered sacrifices yearly because these sacrifices could not perfect the people of God (Heb 10:1–2), Christ offered a sacrifice (himself) just once, and it perfects all who trust in him. He is our great High Priest (Heb 4:14). As our Priest, he brings us into God’s presence. The OT high priest could enter the Holy of Holies only once a year, and the people had to remain outside, but Christ has entered into the Holiest of Holies through his own flesh, and he calls us to enter with him (Heb 10:19–22). As the priests of the OT would offer prayers for the people, Christ continually offers prayers on our behalf (Heb 7:25; Rom 8:34). He sits in the Father’s presence and offers our specific requests and petitions, requests that have been offered with the aid of the Spirit (Rom 8:26).

Jesus Christ is also our King. As the king of Israel ruled over the people of God, Christ now rules over all the people of God for all time. His rule is not of this world (Jn 18:36) but is in fact over all of creation. God has set him above “all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named ... and he put all things under his feet.”<sup>103</sup> In the end, every knee will bow and every tongue will proclaim, “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”<sup>104</sup>

As coheirs with Christ, and as people made in the image of God, we also bear the roles of prophets and prophetesses, priests and priestesses, kings and queens. In Eden, Adam was given

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<sup>103</sup> Eph 1:21–22.

<sup>104</sup> Phil 2:11.

knowledge of God and the ability to speak truthfully about God. He could even repeat God's very words for Eve. Adam and Eve could also function in a priestly capacity, offering up prayers and sacrifices of thanksgiving in God's presence. They also functioned as a king and queen over creation, having dominion over the works of God (Gen 1:26–28). Sin limited mankind's ability to fulfill these roles. Our knowledge of God, while available in creation, became twisted, we were no longer able to worship freely in God's presence, and our dominion turned into tyranny. God reintroduced these roles in the kingdom of Israel, Christ perfectly fulfilled these roles, and now Christians can imitate Christ in each of these roles. We can speak truth to the world, bringing God's Word to those who have need of it. Peter calls us "a royal priesthood,"<sup>105</sup> meaning that we can worship in God's presence together or offer up sacrifices of good works in his name. Paul says we are even to offer ourselves as a sacrifice, thereby imitating Christ's self-sacrifice (Rom 12:1). We are also kings, raised up with Christ and seated "in the heavenly places."<sup>106</sup> He has given us spiritual authority (Matt 18:18–19), and when he returns, we will reign with him in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev 22:5).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Ask students to list ways that they can fulfill a prophetic, priestly, or kingly/queenly role today. Encourage creativity in the answers. (For instance, mowing our lawn is a mark of dominion over creation; dying on the mission field is a sacrifice of praise; creating art can be prophetic.) Often this question will result in a great deal of excitement over how we can live out these roles. Mark down the various answers on the board, then ask students to discuss how doing the things listed can result in greater glory for Christ and more successful fulfillment of the Great Commission.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What makes Christ a better priest than the priests of the Old Testament? What makes him a better prophet than the prophets of the Old Testament?
- Describe a couple of ways that Christians can fulfill each of the roles of prophet, priest, and king.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- "Three Things Briefly to Be Regarded in Christ—viz. His Offices of Prophet, King, and Priest" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, chap. 15)  
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iv.xvi.html>
- "Christ Our Great High Priest" (Martin Luther, *Assorted Sermons*)  
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/sermons.iii.html>
- "The Triple Cure: Jesus Christ – Our Prophet, Priest, and King" (Kim Riddlebarger)  
<http://www.modernreformation.org/default.php?page=articledisplay&var1=ArtRead&var2=370&var3=main&var4=Home>

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<sup>105</sup> 1 Pet 2:9.

<sup>106</sup> Eph 2:6.

## Chapter 30 – The Work of the Holy Spirit

### Key Terms

blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, “in the Holy Spirit,” manifestation of God’s active presence

### Key Points

- The Holy Spirit manifests God’s presence through his empowering, purifying, revealing, and unifying ministries.
- The Holy Spirit pours out God’s blessing in response to obedience and withholds God’s blessing in the face of disobedience.

### Chapter Summary

“The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church.”<sup>107</sup> The Holy Spirit has been present and active in creation since the beginning (Gen 1:2), he fills the church with power now (Acts 1:8), and he is the promise for believers of what we will experience in the resurrection (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). In describing his work, this chapter will address four aspects.

1. *The Holy Spirit empowers.* This means that the Holy Spirit gives life to every breathing creature (Ps 104:30; Job 34:14–15) and that he gives new life to the elect (Jn 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6). He also empowers people for service. He gives skill in leadership and wisdom (Deut 34:9), in artistic endeavors (Ex 31:2–5), in judgment and battle (Judg 3:10), and in many other areas. Yet in the OT, while the Holy Spirit empowered people in many ways, he had not yet come in the powerful way that God had promised (Ezek 36:26–27). In the NT, the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’ ministry (Lk 4:14), and at Pentecost, God poured out the Holy Spirit on the church (Acts 2:1–4). The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples (Acts 6:5, 8; Rom 15:18–19), and he gives spiritual gifts to equip all Christians for ministry (1 Cor 12:11). He also empowers prayer (Rom 8:26) and spiritual warfare (Acts 13:9–11).
2. *The Holy Spirit purifies.* When we become Christians, the Spirit washes and sanctifies us spiritually (1 Cor 6:11; Titus 3:5). After this, the Spirit continues to purify us, bringing about growth in holiness and enabling us to better reflect the character of God (Gal 5:22–23; 2 Cor 3:18).
3. *The Holy Spirit reveals.* In Scripture, we read that the Holy Spirit revealed God’s words to the OT prophets and the NT apostles (Ezek 11:5; 2 Pet 1:21; Jn 16:13). He also reveals God’s presence with perceivable phenomena, such as prophecy, a dove, or a rushing wind (Num 11:25–26; Jn 1:32; Acts 2:2–3). He reveals God’s presence through his work within the lives of individual believers, giving them confidence in their adoption and giving them gifts for ministry (Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6). In line with this, he gives guidance to the people of God; this is sometimes very direct (Matt 4:1; Acts 8:29), and other times it involves an internal leading and awareness of his desires (Acts 15:28; Gal 5:16–26; Rom 8:14). He also reveals himself and his activity through a godlike atmosphere. For

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<sup>107</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 634.

instance, we may experience an atmosphere of love and peace (Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 14:33), or we may experience a spirit of unity (Eph 4:3). The Holy Spirit also reveals himself by giving us a confident feeling of assurance (1 Jn 3:24; Rom 8:16), and he teaches the things of God to God's people (Jn 14:26; 16:13; Eph 1:17–19).

4. *The Holy Spirit unifies.* In the Holy Spirit's arrival at Pentecost, he filled believers (not just a few select leaders) and he established the church as a community (Acts 2:1–18, 42–47). For this reason, Paul can speak of the Spirit as giving fellowship (2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1–2), and he can speak of division as being opposed to the Spirit's leading (Gal 5:18, 20). In 1 Corinthians 12:12–26, Paul points to the fact that believers share in one Spirit as evidence that we are to be united.

Scripture makes it evident that the Holy Spirit will give or withhold God's presence and blessing depending on how pleased he is with what he sees. For instance, the Spirit often came on Samson (Judg 13:25; 14:6) but left him after he persisted in sin (Judg 16:20). In a similar manner, the Spirit turned against Israel when they rebelled (Isa 63:10). Paul warns of this in Ephesians 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19, urging Christians not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit. Scripture also describes a deeper level of disobedience that results in death (Acts 5:3, 9) and a knowing apostasy that brings only judgment (Heb 10:26–29). Worse yet, Scripture describes a level of disobedience so severe that the Holy Spirit will never return to convict (Matt 12:31–32); this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the willful, malicious attributing of the Holy Spirit's work to Satan.

In contrast, “in the life of Christians whose conduct is pleasing to God, the Holy Spirit will be present to bring great blessing.”<sup>108</sup> He gives us gifts for ministry (1 Cor 12:11), he grants us close fellowship with him (Phil 2:1), and he provides clarity as we read Scripture (2 Cor 3:16). In fact, it is possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit to the extent that we feel what God feels and desire what God desires and minister by God's strength (Eph 5:18; Acts 4:8; 9:17). We must depend on the Spirit in all things.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Spirit of the Living God.”<sup>109</sup>

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What does the text mean when it says that the Holy Spirit purifies?
- Identify three ways in which the Holy Spirit empowers.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- *A Primer on the Holy Spirit* (Winfield Bevins)  
<http://theresurgence.com/files/HolySpirit.pdf>
- “How Are Believers Guided into ‘All Truth’?” (John Owen)  
[http://www.the-highway.com/hsguided\\_Owen.html](http://www.the-highway.com/hsguided_Owen.html)
- “The Holy Spirit a Comforter” (Charles Spurgeon)  
[http://www.nonprofitpages.com/elm/chs\\_comfort.htm](http://www.nonprofitpages.com/elm/chs_comfort.htm)

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 648.

<sup>109</sup> A contemporary version of this hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BagH-zTfnsQ> (accessed July 8, 2011).

## Part 5 – The Doctrine of the the Application of Redemption

### Chapter 31 – Common Grace

#### Key Terms

common grace, special grace

#### Key Points

- God pours many undeserved blessings on all people.
- Common grace is evident in every realm of life: physical, intellectual, moral, creative, societal, and religious.
- Common grace does not save, but it does demonstrate God’s goodness, justice, and glory.

#### Chapter Summary

Common grace is the grace of God whereby he bestows many blessings on all people, both believers and unbelievers. Common grace differs from saving grace in its results (it does not save), in its recipients (it is given to all), and in its source (it derives from the patience of the Father rather than from Christ’s atoning work).

Common grace can be seen everywhere. It is evident in the physical realm; unbelievers enjoy continued life in spite of their sin, all people enjoy God’s blessings in the sun and the rain (Matt 5:44–45), and the world is filled with beauty in spite of the curse of sin. Even unbelievers, who deserve none of this, can enjoy God’s common grace with a simple walk through the woods. Common grace is also evident in the intellectual realm. All people have a knowledge of God (Rom 1:21), and even unbelievers have the ability to grow in knowledge and to distinguish between truth and falsehood. “This means that all science and technology carried out by non-Christians is a result of common grace.”<sup>110</sup>

Common grace is also evident in the moral realm. Unbelievers still have a notion within themselves of what is right and what is wrong (Rom 2:14–15). Because of this, many unbelievers will live morally approvable lives, and many will enjoy the benefits of living in a generally moral society. For instance, unbelievers benefit from living in a society that prohibits theft and murder: they are not as likely to be robbed or murdered! God also demonstrates common grace to unbelievers by allowing them to see or to experience the consequences of immoral behavior; these consequences are a warning of his coming judgment. In a similar way, common grace is evident in the societal realm, as God has instituted human government for the good of those governed (Rom 13:1–7).

Common grace is also evident in the creative realm. Many unbelievers are gifted to express themselves through representative art forms, literary endeavors, musical compositions, or athletic achievements. Common grace also appears in the religious realm. Unbelievers can enjoy the benefit of the prayers of believers (Matt 5:44; 1 Tim 2:1–2) as well as the benefit of contact with loving believers.

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<sup>110</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 659.

Common grace and special grace often interact. Common grace often benefits the recipients of special grace; believers benefit from the ability of unbelieving and believing people to build our church buildings or to bind our Bibles. Believers often bring blessing into the lives of unbelievers through their impact on society. Christians have played a leading role in eliminating slavery, in gaining political and economic rights for women, in assisting the victims of natural disasters, and many other such things. Common grace never saves a person. God's goodness to unbelievers can predispose them toward acceptance of the gospel (indeed, Romans 2:4 says it is meant to draw them to repentance), but regeneration remains a work of special, saving grace.

Why would God shower so many blessings on undeserving sinners? First, we know that he does so to bring about the redemption of all of the elect. Peter states that God withholds final judgment so that the elect might reach repentance (2 Pet 3:9–10). Second, God gives these blessings to demonstrate his goodness and mercy. He is kind to all people, even to “the ungrateful and the evil.”<sup>111</sup> Common grace also demonstrates God's justice: he has repeatedly invited sinners to turn to him in repentance and faith, and they have continued to reject his offer of grace. Finally, common grace is another means by which God demonstrates his glory. All men and women reflect the glory of God as they use his gifts to exercise dominion over creation.

We must remember that common grace will not save a person, and those individuals who seem to enjoy significant amounts of blessing in this life will not necessarily be saved. They must trust in Jesus Christ, or they too will suffer condemnation. When unbelievers do good things, we must not slander these deeds as evil. For instance, if a wealthy atheist donates significant amounts of money to eradicate polio, we should thank God for his common grace in that act. Finally, we should respond to the doctrine of common grace with thanksgiving and praise; God's grace is abundant even in the lives of those who have rejected him!

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “The doctrine of common grace conflicts with the doctrine of total depravity.”
- Question 3 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (p. 666 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider how the doctrine of common grace might cause us to change the way we relate toward unbelieving neighbors or friends. Have students discuss this question.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- The text listed several realms in which God's common grace is evident. Identify three and give a couple of examples for each of these realms.
- How does common grace demonstrate God's justice? How does it demonstrate his glory?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- *The Problem of Good* (Scott Kauffmann)  
[http://www.iccsermons.org/Teaching/problem\\_of\\_good.pdf](http://www.iccsermons.org/Teaching/problem_of_good.pdf)

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<sup>111</sup> Lk 6:35 ESV.

- “Common Grace: An Irenic Proposal” (Esther Meek)  
[http://commongroundsonline.typepad.com/common\\_grounds\\_online/2006/04/common\\_grace\\_an.html](http://commongroundsonline.typepad.com/common_grounds_online/2006/04/common_grace_an.html)
- “The Good Elements in False Religions” (Johannes G. Vos)  
<http://www.the-highway.com/articleFeb08.html>

## Chapter 32 – Election and Reprobation

### Key Terms

determinism, election, fatalism, foreknowledge, predestination, reprobation

### Key Points

- In his sovereign good pleasure, God has chosen some for salvation, and in sorrow, he has passed over others.
- Election is not based on any good in us; God does not elect based on foreknowledge of our faith.

### Chapter Summary

The *ordo salutis* begins with election: “an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.”<sup>112</sup> Several passages in the NT affirm that God ordains beforehand those who will be saved. Paul speaks of God foreknowing and predestining, then calling, justifying, and glorifying (Rom 8:28–30). Luke writes of Gentiles who believed and says they were ordained for eternal life (Act 13:48). Paul describes believers as chosen before the foundations of the world and predestined for adoption according to God’s purpose (Eph 1:3–12). Peter calls us God’s elect and a chosen race (1 Pet 1:1; 2:9). John speaks of God’s enemies as those whose names were not written in the Book of Life before creation (Rev 13:7–8; 17:8). The doctrine of election appears throughout the NT.

The NT teaches election as a comfort for believers. Paul reminds his readers of election so that they will trust that God is working all things out for their good (Rom 8:28–30). It also teaches election as a reason to worship the Lord. In Ephesians 1:5–6, Paul says that we were chosen “to the praise of his glorious grace.” Moreover, it teaches election as a reason for evangelism. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:10, “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus.” In other words, he expects success in evangelism because God has ordained some to salvation.

Some object that election turns us into robots; they hold that if God elects, our choices have no significance, and our universe is simply spinning on its cogs like a machine. Yet the NT consistently portrays salvation as something worked by a personal God in a relationship with persons. There is no coldness in it (Eph 1:5; Ezek 33:11). Jesus invites all people to come to him (Matt 11:28), and he says that those who reject him have done so out of their own hardness of heart (Jn 5:40; Matt 23:37).

Others have argued that God looks forward and sees saving faith in a person’s heart and that he chooses to save them because of that; they claim he saves because he foreknows a person’s faith. However, when the Scriptures mention God’s foreknowledge, they speak of him not merely as knowing facts about people but as knowing individuals in a personal, relational manner (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9). Additionally, when the Scriptures speak of election, they do not state that God chose us because of our faith or any other good thing about us. For instance, Romans 9:11–13 says that God chose Jacob before he had done anything either good or bad. Repeatedly, Paul emphasizes grace as the reason God chose to save us (Rom 11:5–6; Eph

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<sup>112</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 670.

1:5–6; 2:8–9; 2 Tim 1:9). In fact, if we affirm election on the basis of faith, we begin the steady slide into salvation by merit. We would be teaching that we have saved ourselves by having faith rather than that God has saved us by his grace for his own good purposes (Eph 1:5–6). Moreover, if God elects because he foresaw our faith, this does nothing to address the issue of fatalism. If God knows some event will happen in the future, then it is as certain as if he had determined it himself. Our destinies remain determined, but we must conclude some other, impersonal force determines them. This is no good. God elects simply because he desired to love us.

Still others have objected to election along some of the following lines. Some hold that election means we have no choice in whether or not to accept Christ. However, as stated in chapter 16, God can work through our desires to bring about his purposes; he can cause us to choose Christ freely. Some claim that this means that our choices are not actual choices. Yet if God has said that our choices are real, then they are real. In the same manner, some have objected that election makes us puppets, but God has created us with a real will and the ability to make real choices. Some have argued that election gives unbelievers no chance to believe, but the record of Scripture is that people choose to reject Jesus (Jn 5:40; 8:43–44; Matt 23:37). Furthermore, Paul answers this objection in Romans 9:20, “Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” (ESV).

To the objection that election is unfair, we can respond that God had no need to save anyone. He made no provision for the salvation of fallen angels, and he need not save any of us (2 Pet 2:4). Again, Paul reminds us that the creature has no right to question the Creator’s choices or justice (Rom 9:20–24). God can do whatever he desires with his creation. Some may object that Scripture describes God as desiring to save everyone (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). Yet, from the Reformed perspective, God’s revealed will (what he commands) is distinct from his hidden will (what will happen); from the Arminian perspective, God desires our freedom more than he desires to save everyone. In other words, the Reformed system holds that God’s glory is his highest value, and it is shown in election (Rom 9:22–23). The Arminian system holds that man’s freedom is God’s highest value. On balance, the Reformed perspective has much greater biblical support.

“Reprobation is the sovereign decision of God before creation to pass over some persons, in sorrow deciding not to save them, and to punish them for their sins, and thereby to manifest his justice.”<sup>113</sup> This is the most difficult doctrine in Scripture, yet it is something Scripture clearly teaches (Jude 4; Rom 9:17–23). While election is presented as a reason to rejoice, reprobation is presented as something that brings sorrow to God; it should cause us sorrow as well (Ezek 33:11; Rom 9:1–4).

The doctrine of election should cause believers to feel a great sense of humility and confidence in God alone. We are saved only by God’s grace, and for this we should praise him eternally.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “If God causes a person to love their spouse, they feel a real love for their spouse.” Encourage discussion by focusing on the adjective “real.” After this, replace “their spouse” with “him (God).” Guide the discussion toward whether election makes our choices fake.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 685.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why does this text deny election on the basis of God's foreknowing a person's faith?
- The text identifies three ways that Scripture encourages us to view election. What are these?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- "The Salvation of All Men" (John Calvin)  
[http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=calvin\\_varsermon21.html](http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=calvin_varsermon21.html)
- "For He Chose Us in Him before the Creation of the World" (Kim Riddlebarger)  
<http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/for-he-chose-us-in-him/>
- "What Is Election" (Sam Storms)  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/what-is-election/>

## ***Chapter 33 – The Gospel Call and Effective Calling***

### **Key Terms**

effective calling, external calling, gospel call, internal calling

### **Key Points**

- God effectively calls the elect through the proclamation of the gospel.

### **Chapter Summary**

In Paul's abbreviated review of the *ordo salutis*, he states that God called the elect (Rom 8:30). In this, Paul refers to God's effective calling: it is an act of God the Father. The NT tells us elsewhere that God calls his people out of darkness and into a relationship with his Son (1 Pet 2:9; 1 Cor 1:9), he calls his people to be saints and to live in holiness (Rom 1:7; 1 Thess 4:7), and he calls his people to endurance and eternal life (1 Pet 2:20–21; 1 Tim 6:12). God's effective calling is distinct from gospel proclamation, but it takes place through the proclamation of the gospel (2 Thess 2:14; Rom 10:14). In this, God "summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith."<sup>114</sup> Effective calling is entirely a work of God, and without it, no one can turn to God (Jn 6:44; Acts 16:14).

Three elements make up the gospel call: (1) As we proclaim the gospel, we must include some core facts: all people have sinned (Rom 3:23), the penalty for our sin is death (Rom 6:23), and Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom 5:8). (2) We must invite listeners to turn to Jesus in repentance and faith. God does this throughout Scripture, calling non-Christians to himself at every moment (Matt 11:28–30; Rev 3:20). (3) The proclamation of the gospel must include a promise of forgiveness, of eternal life, and of assurance in Christ Jesus (Jn 3:15; 6:37; Acts 3:19).

The gospel call is critical. Without it, no person would be saved (Rom 10:14); God uses the gospel call to address us in our hearts, our minds, and our wills. He addresses our hearts by calling us to feel the weight of our sin and his glory. He addresses our minds with the facts of sin, judgment, and salvation in Jesus Christ crucified and risen again. He addresses our wills by calling us to turn to him. This all takes place through the gospel call.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read Romans 10:14–17, then ask students to discuss the following claim: "Most Christians are willing to go and proclaim the gospel but are planning to stay. The church needs Christians who are planning to go and proclaim but are willing to stay."

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What are the three elements of the gospel call listed in the text?
- Describe the difference between the gospel call and effective calling.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 692.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Man on the Island: Facing the Truth about Those Who Never Hear the Gospel” (Russell D. Moore)  
[http://www.russellmoore.com/documents/russellmoore/The\\_Man\\_on\\_the\\_Island.pdf](http://www.russellmoore.com/documents/russellmoore/The_Man_on_the_Island.pdf)
- “Effectual Calling” (Thomas Watson)  
[http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/watson/wsc\\_wa\\_031.html](http://www.shortercatechism.com/resources/watson/wsc_wa_031.html)

## ***Chapter 34 – Regeneration***

### **Key Terms**

born again, born of the Spirit, born of water, irresistible grace, regeneration

### **Key Points**

- Regeneration is entirely an act of God, in which he makes our spirits alive and able to respond to him in saving faith.
- Regeneration will bring about actual results in our lives, including love for others and growth in sanctification.

### **Chapter Summary**

“Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us.”<sup>115</sup> In this definition, we affirm that regeneration is totally a work of God. In fact, we play no active role in our regeneration. John 1:13 states that those who become children of God are “born, not of blood nor of the will or the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” God the Father does this work in the hearts of the elect through the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:8; Eph 2:4–5). Regeneration occurs when God effectively calls us with the gospel (also called “irresistible grace”), before we respond in saving faith.

We cannot describe the nature of regeneration; it is a mystery. We were dead in our sins (Eph 2:1), and we are made alive again in God (Eph 2:5). Regeneration affects our whole person. God makes our whole person alive in regeneration, and we become a “new creation.”<sup>116</sup> We cannot be sure when this takes place; for children who have grown up in a Christian home, or for those in regular attendance at a church, it may not take place in an outwardly recognizable moment. In these cases, the outward change will not seem to take place so rapidly, but it will become evident over time in how they live and the desires they have. For many who are saved as adults, there is a clear moment in their lives when they realized that they were dead in their sins, and they trusted in Christ for salvation. Often, the results in this case will be visible and recognizable: they will begin to trust Christ, they will feel assurance of forgiveness, they will experience delight in worship. In both cases, believers are not sure exactly how regeneration took place.

Regeneration logically precedes saving faith. Jesus says in John 3:5, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Our conversion marks our entrance into God’s kingdom, so he must mean that we receive new birth prior to our conversion. Additionally, Acts 16:14 says that God opened Lydia’s heart so that she could receive Paul’s proclamation of the gospel and respond in faith. This again places regeneration before saving faith. Many churches and teachers speak of regeneration as the outward evidence of faith, but it is better to refer to that as sanctification.

Regeneration—if it is genuine—will bring about real results in a person’s life. For instance, the regenerated person will have Christlike love for others (1 Jn 4:7) and will overcome the world (1 Jn 5:3–4). Regeneration will result in protection from Satan (1 Jn 5:18), and the regenerated person will bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). The fruit of the Spirit will

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 698.

<sup>116</sup> 2 Cor 5:17.

become more and more evident in the believer's life, and those who are not believers will clearly lack these character traits.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read John 3:8 and another to read Ephesians 2:1–10.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “If we trust in Christ, we will be born again.”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What is the connection between effective calling and regeneration?
- Describe two specific results of genuine regeneration.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “A Divine and Supernatural Light” (Jonathan Edwards)  
[http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/edwards\\_light.html](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/edwards_light.html)
- “Regeneration: The Christian Is Born Again” (J. I. Packer)  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/packer/regeneration.html>

## ***Chapter 35 – Conversion (Faith and Repentance)***

### **Key Terms**

faith, repentance, trust

### **Key Points**

- Conversion is a single act of faith and repentance, in which we willingly turn from our sin and place our faith in Christ.
- Saving faith includes knowledge of the facts of the gospel, agreement with these facts, and a personal trust in Christ to save us.
- Repentance includes sorrow for our sin and a decision to turn from our sin and to walk in obedience to Christ.
- Repentance and faith continue throughout the life of a believer.

### **Chapter Summary**

After God has effectively called us through the gospel, and after he has given us new spiritual life, we respond to him in conversion. “Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”<sup>117</sup> Conversion is a process of turning from our sin and to Christ.

Saving faith is more than mere knowledge. While we must know who Christ is and what he did (Rom 10:14), this knowledge is not sufficient. In fact, even the demons have this knowledge (Jas 2:19). Nor is it sufficient to know the facts and to agree that they are true. Nicodemus and King Agrippa both knew and agreed with some truths about Jesus, but neither had placed their faith in him (Jn 3:2; Acts 26:27–28). In addition to knowing and agreeing with the facts of the gospel, we must decide to rely on Jesus to save us. This is saving faith—a “trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.”<sup>118</sup> Believers do not merely believe that Christ died to pay the penalty for sins in the same way that we might believe that metal conducts electricity. Believers must place their trust in Jesus to pay the penalty for their own sins and to reconcile them to the Father. The Scriptures speak of this as “believing in” Jesus (Jn 3:16; Acts 16:31) or “coming to” Jesus (Jn 6:37; Matt 11:28–30). In other words, we put our confidence in who Jesus is and what he did. This faith will naturally grow as we learn more about Jesus Christ (Rom 10:17).

“Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”<sup>119</sup> Like saving faith, repentance is more than simply knowing and agreeing that sin is wrong. Many people engage in wicked behavior with the knowledge that what they do is wrong, and they never repent. Repentance is also more than simply feeling sorry about our sins; it includes a decision to forsake our sin and to live in obedience to Christ instead. Paul describes a grief for sin that goes beyond normal worldly grief; it produces repentance that leads to salvation (2 Cor 7:9–10).

In speaking of conversion, Scripture treats faith and repentance as two aspects of a single act. A person turns from sin (repentance) and to Christ (faith). Some evangelical scholars have

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<sup>117</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 708.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 710.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 713.

argued against including repentance in our understanding of conversion; they state that it promotes a works-based “lordship salvation” and that saving faith only requires trusting Christ as our Savior. Some have argued that salvation only requires intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel. In both cases, they argue that submitting to Christ as our Lord is an optional later step of sanctification. However, Christ speaks of salvation as taking on his yoke (Matt 11:28–29), and Scripture continually portrays salvation as an act of turning in repentance and faith (Isa 55:6–7; Acts 20:21; Heb 6:1). At some points, it refers only to faith (Jn 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9), and at others it refers only to repentance (Lk 24:26–27; Acts 2:37–38; 3:19; Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:10). Often today, people pray to receive Christ, and this seems like an appropriate manner to express to God our sorrow over our sin, our trust in him, and our commitment to follow him.

When we recognize the role of repentance in conversion, we begin to understand the anemic results in many ministries today. All too often, the gospel is presented as a package of facts to which one must subscribe, and there is no call for people to decide to turn from sin and to Christ. Many who have merely assented to certain facts will wonder why no change has taken place in their lives, but this is because they have not personally responded to Christ in faith and repentance.

Faith and repentance begin at conversion, and they continue throughout the life of the Christian. Every day, believers repent from sin; every day, believers trust in Christ (Matt 6:12; Rev 3:19; Gal 2:20).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Just As I Am.”<sup>120</sup>
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “If we insist that in order to be saved, a person must commit to forsake their sin and to obey Christ, we are presenting a form of works-based salvation.”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Define “saving faith.” Why is mere knowledge of the gospel not enough?
- How do faith and repentance continue in the day-to-day life of a Christian?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “All of Life Is Repentance” (Tim Keller)  
[http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All\\_of\\_Life\\_Is\\_Repentance-Keller.pdf](http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf)
- “Saving Faith” (A. W. Pink; chap. 1 in *Practical Christianity*)  
<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/savingfaithweb.html>
- “Repentance” (J. C. Ryle)  
[http://www.gracegems.org/24/Ryle\\_repentance.htm](http://www.gracegems.org/24/Ryle_repentance.htm)
- “As Long as You’re Sincere, Does It Matter *What* You Believe?” (R. C. Sproul)  
<http://www.inchistalone.org/Sincere1.htm>

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<sup>120</sup> This hymn can be found in *ibid.*, 720. Accompaniment music and on-screen lyrics can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1KPkkUR4o&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

## Chapter 36 – Justification (Right Legal Standing Before God)

### Key Terms

forensic, impute, infused righteousness, justification

### Key Points

- At conversion, God considers our sins forgiven and he imputes Christ's righteousness to us.
- While Protestants affirm justification by faith alone, Catholics affirm justification by a combination of grace and meritorious works.
- We are justified through faith in Christ because faith is the attitude of total dependence on him.

### Chapter Summary

At the moment of conversion, in response to our faith, God justifies us (Rom 3:26, 28; 5:1; Gal 2:16). "Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight."<sup>121</sup>

The Greek verb *dikaioō* most commonly means "to declare righteous" (Lk 7:29; Rom 4:5). Paul uses it in an explicitly legal sense in Romans 8:33–34, writing, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?" (ESV). The Hebrew term *tsāḏak* also supports the legal understanding of justification (Deut 25:1); Isaiah 5:23 condemns those "who justify the wicked for a bribe" (NASB). Again, we see this term means "to declare righteous" rather than "to make righteous." Hence, theologians call justification a forensic declaration.

When God justifies us, he declares us to be righteous in his sight. In other words, we no longer have any penalty to pay for any sin (Rom 8:1, 33–34), and we are actually righteous in God's sight. We have not moved from a state of sinful rebellion to a state of simple neutrality; rather, God has fully forgiven our sins (Rom 4:6–12), and he has put righteousness on us (Isa 61:10; Rom 3:21–22; 4:3; 5:19).

In this second aspect of justification, then, God imputes Christ's righteousness to us: he thinks of it as belonging to us, or he accredits it to us (Rom 4:3, 6; 5:17). When Adam sinned, God imputed his guilt to all mankind (Rom 5:19). When Christ died, God imputed our sins to Christ (2 Cor 5:21). When we trust in Christ, God imputes Christ's righteousness to us (1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9; Rom 3:21–22).<sup>122</sup> The gospel rests on justification by faith in the perfect Messiah, Jesus Christ. On this very issue, the Protestants sought to reform the Roman Catholic Church, affirming that justification does not make us good and that it is not based on our own intrinsic goodness (as if we had any). If justification changed us and then declared us righteous according to our intrinsic goodness, we would remain unrighteous and unforgiven—sin would still remain in us, and our past sins would still separate us. Paul then could not speak of God's free gift of righteousness and eternal life (Rom 5:17; 6:23).

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<sup>121</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 723.

<sup>122</sup> For further discussion on the imputation of Adam's sin to us, see *ibid.*, 494–96. For further discussion on the imputation of our sins to Christ, see *ibid.*, 573–74.

Catholics understand justification as an internal transformation toward holiness. Justification begins at baptism, and it continues only if we continue in faith in the teachings of the Catholic Church (rather than mere continued faith in Christ for forgiveness of sins). In other words, the Roman Catholic Church teaches justification as infused righteousness rather than imputed righteousness. God gives us some level of internal righteousness, though we cannot be sure just how much. Hence, “the degree of justifying grace is not identical in all the just.... The measure of the grace of justification received varies in the individual person who is justified, according to the measure of God’s free distribution and to the disposition and the co-operation of the recipient himself.”<sup>123</sup> In the end, the Catholic view of justification bases our eternal life with God partially on our merit and works, in contradiction to the clear testimony of Scripture (Rom 6:23; Eph 2:8–9).

No one will be able to accomplish justification through works; it is a free gift (Rom 3:20–24). God’s grace is unmerited and wholly accomplished in Christ (Eph 2:8–9; Titus 3:4–7).

God justifies us through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:23–26; 5:1; Gal 2:16). Scripture does not teach that our faith earns God’s favor, or that faith is the intrinsic goodness in us for which God justifies us. God justifies us through faith as an instrument or means, not as an activity, and he does so because of the work of Christ (Rom 5:17–19). It seems that God chose faith as the instrument of justification rather than love or wisdom or peace because “faith is the one attitude of the heart that is the exact opposite of depending on ourselves. When we come to Christ in faith we essentially say, ‘I give up! I will not depend on myself or my own good works any longer... Therefore, Jesus, I trust you and depend on you completely to give me a righteous standing before God.’”<sup>124</sup>

Does James contradict this? James 2:24 says, “A person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” Yet James uses the term “justify” in a different sense. Rather than describing a declaration of righteousness, James uses the term to indicate a demonstration of righteousness. The Greek verb *dikaioō* certainly allows this (Lk 10:28–29; 16:15). This sense fits other uses of the term in James (Jas 2:21), and it fits with James’ repeated insistence that works prove the reality of a living faith (Jas 2:18, 26).

The doctrine of justification by faith alone matters. This doctrine gives real hope to unbelievers to whom God offers full, free forgiveness. This doctrine also gives believers real confidence, as “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”<sup>125</sup>

## Pedagogical Suggestions

- Open class by asking one student to read Romans 3:20–28 and another to read James 2:20–26. Ask the class to discuss and resolve the apparent tension between these two passages.

## Suggested Essay Questions

- Describe the difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant views of justification.

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<sup>123</sup> Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, ed. James Canon Bastible, trans. Patrick Lynch (St. Louis: Herder, 1955), 262; quoted in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 729.

<sup>124</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 730.

<sup>125</sup> Rom 8:1.

- According to the text, why did God choose faith as the instrument (or means) of justification?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Five Arguments against Future Justification according to Works” (Richard Phillips; in 2 parts)  
<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/five-arguments-against-future-justification-part-1/>  
<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/five-arguments-against-future-justification-part-2/>
- *Counted Righteous in Christ* (John Piper)  
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/online-books/counted-righteous-in-christ>
- “What Does It Mean to Be Justified? A Brief Exposition of Romans 3:21–26” (Daniel Wallace; in 2 parts)  
<http://bible.org/article/what-does-it-mean-be-justified-brief-exposition-romans-321-26-part-1>  
<http://bible.org/article/what-does-it-mean-be-justified-brief-exposition-romans-321-26-part-2>

## ***Chapter 37 – Adoption (Membership in God’s Family)***

### **Key Term**

adoption

### **Key Points**

- After regeneration and conversion, and distinct from justification, God adopts the elect into his family, with many resultant privileges.

### **Chapter Summary**

“Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.”<sup>126</sup> We have plenty of scriptural evidence for this event. For instance, John 1:12 says that believers “become children of God.” Paul, in Romans 8:14–17, says that we are “sons of God” and that we “have received the spirit of sonship.” Scripture regularly speaks of God’s people with “family” language. In fact, as God’s children, we are also brothers and sisters to one another (Rom 9:7–8; Gal 4:28), and Jesus stands as the firstborn, elder brother among many siblings (Rom 8:29). The Holy Spirit bears witness in our hearts to our adoption (Gal 4:4–7), and this adoption is the result of God’s great love (1 Jn 3:1–2). While we enjoy many benefits now, we look forward to the fullness of our adoption at the resurrection (Rom 8:23).

Adoption takes place after regeneration and conversion. We become sons and daughters of God after we respond to him in faith (Gal 3:23–26). It also occurs separately from justification; God certainly could not accept us into his presence without justification, but he certainly could without adoption. In adopting us as well, God has chosen to pour out great privileges on us in our relationship with him. As stated, adoption shows God’s great, unmerited, and unconditional love (1 Jn 3:1–2).

We enjoy many benefits as God’s adopted children. First, we can relate to God as his beloved children rather than as his enemies or slaves (Gal 4:7; Rom 8:15–16). In other words, we can enjoy his clear love for us (1 Jn 3:1–2), his understanding of us (Ps 103:13–14), his care for our needs (Matt 6:32; 7:11), and an inheritance in the heavenly places (Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 1:4). Second, our Father has sent us the Holy Spirit to lead us and give us victory over the power and love of sin (Rom 8:13–14). Third, God disciplines his children (Heb 12:5–6). While on first glance this might strike us as an unpleasant aspect of adoption, it is a beautiful gift from God through which he trains us up in righteousness and holiness (Heb 12:10–11). Fourth, we enjoy the privileges of family life in the church; we have countless brothers and sisters (1 Tim 5:1–2; Mk 3:31–35). Essentially, the whole church is working together as a family for the glory and honor of our Father. We bring him honor as we imitate him and live holy lives (1 Pet 1:14–16; Eph 5:1; Phil 2:15).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking students to discuss the following question: “How will a fuller understanding of our adoption by God benefit the worldwide body of Christ?”

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<sup>126</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 736.

- Question 3 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (pp. 742–43 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider how our earthly fathers might affect our view of God as our Father. Have students discuss ways in which believing parents might hinder their children from appreciating God’s paternal role. How might believing parents help their children to appreciate better God’s paternal role?

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- In what way is discipline a privilege of adoption?
- Distinguish between adoption and justification. Identify when these occur and what they do. How is adoption distinct from justification in an eschatological sense?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Abba Changes Everything: Why Every Christian Is Called to Rescue Orphans” (Russell D. Moore)  
[http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article\\_print.html?id=88275](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=88275)
- “Adoption” (John Murray)  
[http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=murray\\_adoption.html](http://www.reformationfiles.com/files/displaytext.php?file=murray_adoption.html)
- “Adoption—The Spirit and the Cry” (Charles Spurgeon)  
<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1435.htm>

## ***Chapter 38 – Sanctification (Growth in Likeness to Christ)***

### **Key Terms**

perfectionism, sanctification, sinless perfection

### **Key Points**

- Sanctification begins at regeneration, progresses in life, and comes to completion at death.
- Sanctification affects mind, body, volition, emotion, and spirit—it affects the whole person.

### **Chapter Summary**

“Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.”<sup>127</sup> Sanctification differs from justification in several key aspects. For instance, in justification, every Christian experiences a once-for-all-time, God-wrought, perfect legal standing. In sanctification, Christians experience and cooperate with a continuous, not-yet-perfect internal transformation.

Sanctification begins at regeneration. When we are born again, we begin the process of renewal (Titus 3:5), and we cannot remain in a sinful pattern of life (1 Jn 3:9). In some sense, we can speak of this initiating moment of sanctification as a completed event (1 Cor 6:11; Acts 20:32) because it marks a distinct break from the dominion of sin (Rom 6:11, 14, 18; Col 1:13). Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can now overcome temptation.

Sanctification progresses during our earthly life. We grow in sanctification, and we gain greater power against sin (Rom 6:19); God’s power is transforming us into his image “from one degree of glory to another.”<sup>128</sup> We are becoming more like Christ, and our new nature undergoes continual renewal (Col 3:10). In fact, the NT epistles overflow with exhortations to holiness because the authors expect that we will grow in Christlikeness. Progress in sanctification varies between believers, and in some very rare cases—if a person has no good Christian fellowship, or if they never attend to Scripture and prayer—a believer may not appear to experience much progress at all. Such a situation, however, is “highly abnormal.”<sup>129</sup>

When we die, our sanctification will be completed, at least for our souls (Heb 12:23; Rev 21:27). Because redemption involves the whole person, our bodies will also experience complete sanctification at the Lord’s return (Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:23, 47–49).<sup>130</sup>

Jesus commands us to be perfect (Matt 5:48); Paul tells us to make our holiness perfect, and he prays for God to sanctify us wholly (2 Cor 7:1; 1 Thess 5:23); John says believers do not sin (1 Jn 3:6). Do these verses indicate that we can reach sinless perfection in this life? On inspection, they do not teach this. It is a false assumption that God will always enable obedience to his commands; no one can obey all of his moral laws. When Jesus commands moral perfection, he is pointing out that God’s standard should be our own. We cannot reach it, and therefore we need some means of grace and forgiveness. Paul also is pointing to a goal. He

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 746.

<sup>128</sup> 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>129</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 750.

<sup>130</sup> For further discussion, see “Glorification,” chapter 42 in *ibid.*, 828–39.

states, not that any person can reach moral perfection, but that believers should yet pursue it. Because John uses the present-tense verb form, 1 John 3:6 is better translated, “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him” (cf. 1 Jn 3:9).

Many verses state that no person can reach sinless perfection. Ecclesiastes 7:20 tells us that “there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.” Jesus even instructs his disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of their sins (Matt 6:11–12). Paul commands the Roman church not to let sin “reign” or “have dominion” over them (Rom 6:12, 14), which seems to make clear that believers will continue to wage war with sin during their earthly lives. James 3:2 even says, “We all make many mistakes,” and 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”! The clear record of Scripture is that it is not possible for believers to be completely free from sin in this life. At the same time, this does not imply that we have no hope of progress (Romans 6). We will progress in sanctification and in closeness to God, and as we do, we will grow in our awareness of the presence of sin within us (Job 42:5–6; Isa 6:5).

God and man work together in the process of sanctification (Phil 12:12–13). God the Father works in us to have right desires, and he equips us to do right things (Phil 2:13; Heb 13:20–21). God the Son earned our sanctification (1 Cor 1:30), and he exemplified our goal (Heb 12:2; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 Jn 2:6). God the Holy Spirit dwells in us and transforms us (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Thess 2:13; Gal 5:22–23).

We play a passive role in sanctification. We yield to God’s work within us, and we depend on him to transform us into the image of Christ (Rom 6:13, 19; 12:1). We also play a very active role in sanctification. Indeed, Paul urges us to work out our salvation (Phil 2:12), the author of Hebrews orders us to chase after holiness (Heb 12:14), John tells us that we purify ourselves through hope in Christ (1 Jn 3:3), and Peter instructs us to go all out in the pursuit of sanctification (2 Pet 1:5). We must recognize both our passive and active roles in this work: we must trust God to work in us, and we must obey his commands.

Sanctification brings transformation to our minds (Col 3:10), our emotions (Gal 5:22–23), our wills (Phil 2:13), our spirits (2 Cor 7:1), and our bodies (1 Thess 5:23; Rom 6:12; 1 Cor 6:19–20). In short, it progressively conforms our whole person into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).

Scripture offers many motivations for growth in sanctification, including love for God (Jn 14:15), a desire for a clear conscience (1 Tim 1:5), a desire to serve God’s kingdom well (2 Tim 2:20–21), a desire to see others trust in Christ (1 Pet 3:1–2), a desire for blessings (1 Pet 3:9–12), a desire to avoid discipline (Heb 12:3–11), a desire for heavenly rewards (Matt 6:19–21), a desire for closeness to God (Matt 5:8), a desire for emotional health (Phil 4:9; Heb 12:1–2), and a desire simply to do what is right (Phil 4:8). Growth in sanctification will bring us great joy (Rom 14:17).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking one student to read Philippians 2:12–13 and another to read Romans 6.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “Christians today are either lazy about sanctification or legalists in their understanding of sanctification.”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Identify four motives for obedience to God.
- Distinguish between sanctification and justification. Identify when these occur and what they do.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Gospel-Driven Sanctification” (Jerry Bridges)  
[http://www.ouruf.org/d/cvt\\_sanctification.pdf](http://www.ouruf.org/d/cvt_sanctification.pdf)

## ***Chapter 39 – Baptism in and Filling With the Holy Spirit***

### **Key Terms**

baptism by the Holy Spirit, baptism in the Holy Spirit, baptism with the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, new covenant experience of the Holy Spirit, old covenant experience of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, two-class Christianity

### **Key Points**

- The Pentecostal belief that believers should seek a “second experience” of baptism in the Holy Spirit rests on inaccurate understandings of the relevant texts.
- Pentecost marked a transition between the old and new covenant ministries of the Spirit.
- Poor teaching on this topic leads to a “two-class” view of Christianity, and this harms the church.
- We can describe subsequent experiences of the Holy Spirit as “being filled with the Holy Spirit.”

### **Chapter Summary**

The Pentecostal position that believers experience a postconversion baptism in the Holy Spirit finds support in the following manner: (1) Jesus’ disciples were born again before Pentecost (Jn 20:22), (2) Jesus promised them a future baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 8), (3) the disciples received it at Pentecost by postconversion baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), (4) if Christians request and receive a similar baptism, they will have greater power in ministry, and (5) later examples in Acts seem to show believers experiencing a baptism with the Holy Spirit subsequent to their salvation (Acts 8:12, 14–17; 19:1, 6). In evaluating this argument, we must ask how the NT uses the phrase “baptism with the Holy Spirit,” and then we must explore these “second experiences” in Acts.

The mention of being baptized “with the Holy Spirit” appears only seven times in the NT. The four Gospels record John the Baptist’s prophecy regarding Jesus as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33). Two passages in Acts directly refer to the events of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:16). The remaining passage—1 Corinthians 12:13—speaks of baptism “in” or “by” the Spirit at our conversion. This differs among English translations, and many Pentecostal theologians reject this as a description of the same experience described in the other passages. They claim that the Spirit is the agent of baptism in this passage, while he is the element of baptism in the other passages. However, the Greek expression in this passage is almost identical; the preposition is the same. “As far as the apostle Paul was concerned, baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred at conversion.”<sup>131</sup>

So what can we make of the disciples’ experience at Pentecost? The answer seems to lie in the significance of the day of Pentecost. While the Spirit was present and at work among the people of God in the OT (Ex 31:3; Judg 14:6; Ps 51:11), his ministry was less extensive then. No examples of exorcism appear in the OT, and the Spirit fell only on a limited number of leaders (Num 11:16–17). God had promised a “new covenant” in which the Spirit’s ministry would spread powerfully (Jer 31:31–33; Ezek 36:24–31; Joel 2:28–29). At Christ’s appearing, believers began to glimpse the promised new covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:14–44), but the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 768.

Spirit had not yet fallen on the disciples. At Pentecost, he did, and the disciples received new covenant power in the Spirit. Thus, the day of Pentecost marks an important transition between the old covenant work of the Spirit and the new covenant work of the Spirit. The disciples' experience at Pentecost was a second experience only because they were living during this transition. It should not be taken as a pattern for us today. Instead, we experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the believers at Corinth did—at our conversion (1 Cor 12:13).

How should we understand the “second experiences” in Acts 8 and 19? The best explanation of the event in Acts 8 is that “God, in his providence, sovereignly waited to give the new covenant empowering of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans directly through the hands of the apostles so that it might be evident ... that the Samaritans were not second-class citizens but full members of the church.”<sup>132</sup> The Acts 19 event portrays a number of people who had heard John the Baptist's message of a Messiah to come but who had not yet heard of Christ's redemptive work or even the Holy Spirit! What is telling is that when they did believe in Jesus, they received the Spirit (Acts 19:5–6). These passages do not support the idea of believers receiving a “second experience” of the Holy Spirit.

At this point, we should point out the harm that comes from promoting a “two-class” view of the church. The Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit ends up dividing the church into ordinary and “Spirit-baptized” believers. Other Christian groups have promoted similar divisions, such as “spiritual” and “carnal” Christians. However, such divisions promote exactly that—division! Scripture never teaches any type of “two-class” Christianity, but it is evident that Christians all experience different amounts of growth throughout their life.

In pursuing a special, postconversion baptism in the Holy Spirit, believers often spend time in a period of prayer, confession, repentance, renewed commitment, and petitions for fresh power in ministry. Such activity is bound to result in growth. The believer will certainly experience more fruitfulness in their walk and ministry, but we should not now see them as in a special, second category of “Spirit-baptized” Christians. Other terms and phrases for this experience will help, such as “a large step of growth” or “a new empowering for ministry.”<sup>133</sup> A more common expression in the NT is “being filled with the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18; Acts 4:8; 7:55). As this phrase appears in Scripture, it is not a onetime event but something that can occur repeatedly in a Christian's life. In any event, phrases like these eliminate harmful and incorrect divisions within the church.

As a final note, being filled with the Holy Spirit sometimes results in speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6), but not always (Lk 4:1; Acts 4:31; 7:55). As with the other spiritual gifts, we must affirm that the Holy Spirit gives the gift of speaking in tongues “as he wills.”<sup>134</sup>

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Close class with the worship song “Holy Spirit, Rain Down.”<sup>135</sup>

## **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why had the disciples in Acts 19:1–7 not yet received the Holy Spirit?

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 774.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 781.

<sup>134</sup> 1 Cor 12:11.

<sup>135</sup> This hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-SI\\_HRWooA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-SI_HRWooA) (accessed July 8, 2011).

- Why is the experience of the disciples at Pentecost not representative for today's Christians?

#### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit? A Biblical Investigation” (Andreas J. Köstenberger)  
[http://biblicalfoundations.org/pdf/JETS\\_Holy\\_Spirit.pdf](http://biblicalfoundations.org/pdf/JETS_Holy_Spirit.pdf)
- “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” (Sam Storms; in 2 parts)  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/baptism-of-the-holy-spirit-part-i/>  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/baptism-of-the-holy-spirit-part-ii/>

## ***Chapter 40 – The Perseverance of the Saints (Remaining a Christian)***

### **Key Terms**

assurance of salvation, eternal security, perseverance of the saints

### **Key Points**

- God will preserve all true believers through their faith until the end, and only those who persevere by the power of God until the end are true believers.
- Hebrews 6:4–6 and similar passages indicate that some who give many external indications of conversion may finally fall away.
- It is possible to have deep and growing assurance in this life.

### **Chapter Summary**

“The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.”<sup>136</sup> This doctrine should give great confidence to those who are born again, as they can trust that God will keep them. It should also prevent against giving false assurance to those who were never truly believers.

Many Scripture passages teach that God will preserve those who are born again. Jesus says that at the last day, he will raise up to eternal life those who believe in him (Jn 6:38–40). Elsewhere, he promises that his sheep will never perish (Jn 10:27–29). Paul, writing in Romans 8:30, declares that those whom God has called and justified, he has also glorified; Paul speaks of it in the past tense as a certainty! Other verses speak of the Holy Spirit as guaranteeing our inheritance until we acquire it (Eph 1:13–14; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22). First Peter 1:5 speaks of believers as “by God’s power ... guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Scripture continually promises that God’s power, working through our faith, will ensure that no true believer is lost.

The second part of this doctrine is also an important emphasis in Scripture. Peter never states that God guards us apart from our faith (1 Pet 1:5); in fact, Jesus says to his listeners that they are truly disciples only if they “continue in [his] word.”<sup>137</sup> Paul uses similar language in his letter to the Colossian believers (Col 1:22–23), as does the author of Hebrews (Heb 3:14). Both affirm that we must continue in the faith until the end. This does not mean that we can have no assurance until we die, but it does mean to warn people who are considering falling away or who have fallen away. Those who have left the fellowship of the church and their faith in Christ cannot have assurance (1 Jn 2:19).

Some who give many signs of conversion will fall away. As Judas prepared to betray the Lord, the other disciples didn’t have any idea that he was a false disciple (Matt 26:22). Jesus says that many who prophesy, exorcise, and do mighty works will not know him (Matt 7:21–23). Hebrews 6:4 describes such people as having “once been enlightened,” meaning that they have understood the gospel but not necessarily responded in saving faith. It says they “have tasted the heavenly gift.” Matthew uses the same word to say that Jesus tasted but would not drink the bitter wine (Matt 27:34). In other words, they have tasted God’s goodness in Christ, but they

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<sup>136</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 788.

<sup>137</sup> Jn 8:31–32.

have not accepted it. It describes these people as “partakers in the Holy Spirit” (Heb 6:4 NASB), but this term can also mean a loose association (Lk 5:7). Paul warns believers against this type of relationship with unbelievers (Eph 5:7), not because they will be transformed by unbelievers but because this association can harm their testimony. Hence, Hebrews 6:4 is likely speaking of people who have been influenced but not transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit. Finally, this text says that these people cannot be restored to repentance. This likely indicates that they had once felt sorrow for sin but not repentance unto salvation, which comes with saving faith. In conclusion, these people will know the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the wickedness of sin, but they will want no part of Christ. They will be known by their fruit (Heb 6:7–12).

Some questions can help give believers assurance of their salvation. First, they can ask themselves if they trust in Christ for salvation right now (Col 1:23). Do they trust right now that Christ forgives their sins and will take them into his presence forever? Do they rely on their own good works or only on the merits of Christ as a sufficient, perfect Savior? Scripture calls for present faith, not for a testimony to some past experience of belief that does not continue today.

Second, they can ask themselves if there is any evidence of the Holy Spirit’s regenerating work in their hearts. Does he bear witness within their hearts that God has adopted them (Rom 8:15–16)? Does he reproduce spiritual fruit in their lives (Gal 5:22–23; Matt 7:16–20)? Do others notice godly character traits in their lives? The New Testament never suggests that the unregenerate can convincingly fake the fruit of the Spirit. Do they continue in a relationship with Jesus? Do they obey God’s commands (1 Jn 2:4–6)? Scripture says that salvation will bear clear results.

Third, they can ask themselves if they see a pattern of growth in their Christian lives. Peter states that believers will never fall who add to their faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, and brotherly affection (2 Pet 1:10). We can gain confident assurance as we grow in these things, and our assurance will increase over time. These three questions should give strong assurance to a genuine believer, and that person need never ask, “Will I someday fall?” Instead, they should gain confidence that God’s power will work through their faith to preserve them until the end.

When faced with a person who has fallen away from faith in Christ, both Calvinists (who believe Christians cannot fall away) and Arminians (who believe Christians can fall away) will likely counsel them in the same way. Both will stress that the person does not appear to be a Christian now, and both will call on the person to repent of their sins and to trust in Christ for salvation. Because many churches have taught only the first half of this doctrine, many who have once made a profession feel that they are eternally secure and that they need not persist in faith or obedience. We must guard against offering false assurance through the poor teaching of this doctrine.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking one student to read John 10:24–30, another to read 1 Peter 1:3–9, and a third to read 2 Peter 1:3–11.
- Question 3 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (p. 806 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider whether we know of people in ministry whose “‘fruit’ is always destructive” and whether people who believe true doctrine might not be born again. Have students discuss this possibility and how it should influence us as we consider potential elders and pastors for ministry in our churches.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What questions does the text state will help give a believer assurance of salvation?
- How will both Calvinists and Arminians counsel a “backslider”?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Sincerity and Assurance of Salvation” (Tim Challies; in 3 parts)  
<http://www.challies.com/theology/sincerity-and-assurance-of-salvation>  
<http://www.challies.com/theology/assurance-of-salvation-part-2>  
<http://www.challies.com/theology/assurance-of-salvation-part-3>

## ***Chapter 41 – Death and the Intermediate State***

### **Key Terms**

annihilationism, communion of the saints, death, limbo, limbus partum, purgatory, soul sleep

### **Key Points**

- Death is not a punishment for believers but the natural result of living in a fallen world.
- At death, believers go immediately into God's presence, and unbelievers go immediately into eternal punishment.
- The doctrines of soul sleep and purgatory are not scriptural.

### **Chapter Summary**

The penultimate stage in the *ordo salutis* is death. Even Christians die, though this is not a punishment for sins (Rom 8:1). Rather, it is the natural result of living in this sin-cursed world until that time when God destroys death permanently (1 Cor 15:26, 54–55). Until then, Christians and non-Christians continue to age, suffer sickness and disaster, and die. In the lives of believers, God uses death to perfect our sanctification. Paul makes this clear in Romans 8:28, when he writes, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (NASB). Our suffering and eventual death can be seen in light of the Lord's good purposes for us, as he disciplines us for our good (Heb 12:6, 10–11). Sometimes God disciplines us because of sin we have committed; other times God uses discipline to strengthen us in obedience and faith (Heb 2:10; 5:8). In recognizing that death is not a punishment for sin but a means of sanctification, many believers will grow less fearful in the face of death.

What is more, death brings about a complete union with Christ. In death, we share in his sufferings (Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 4:13; Phil 3:10). Because of this, we must place greater value on obedience to God in the face of death than on preserving our lives. By the end of his life, Paul had gladly risked death many times (Acts 14:20–22; 2 Cor 11:23–27), and he could gladly proclaim in 2 Timothy 4:7 that he had “fought the good fight” and “finished the race” and “kept the faith.” A similar conviction strengthened many in the OT to accept death rather than release (Heb 11:35); it strengthened Peter and the apostles to risk death in proclaiming the gospel (Acts 5:29). It encourages believers to realize that we can honor the Lord even in dying faithfully.

We should view our own death with joy at the knowledge that we go to meet Christ (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21–23). We need not fear death, because dying will never separate us from Christ (Rom 8:38–39). At the same time, while we can be joyful that Christian friends and relatives have joined the Lord, it is also appropriate to feel sorrow at the loss of their presence. Stephen's friends wept at his death (Acts 8:2), and Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus (Jn 11:35). Yet Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 that we should “not grieve as others do who have no hope.” We grieve at the loss yet rejoice that our friends and relatives have entered into Christ's presence. Even in these moments, we can worship God for the life of our loved ones and for his goodness (2 Sam 12:20; Job 1:20–21).

When unbelievers die, however, it is right that we feel deep and real sorrow (Rom 9:1–3). We must bear in mind that we have no certainty that they persisted in unbelief; often people facing death will begin to search their hearts, and some will come to genuine repentance and faith. Yet without evidence of this, it would be wrong to tell others that this person has gone to

heaven. Instead, we should share the sorrows of others (Rom 12:15) and look for opportunities to share the gospel with those still living. It is also right for us to speak of the good things they did in their life (2 Sam 1:19–25).

When believers die, they enter immediately into God’s presence. In Luke 23:43, Christ indicated no delay when he promised the thief, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” The author of Hebrews speaks of dead believers right now worshiping around God’s throne (Heb 12:23). Once we are away from our body, we are with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23).

We can reject the doctrines of purgatory and soul sleep as unscriptural. The Roman Catholic Church relies on 2 Maccabees 12:42–45 as its primary support for the doctrine of purgatory, but this is an apocryphal source, which is not equal to Scripture, and it contradicts the clear meaning of the passages above. The Scripture passages to which Roman Catholic theologians often point do not support the idea that believers will undergo suffering after they die (2 Tim 1:18; Matt 5:26; 1 Cor 3:15; Matt 12:32). For instance, 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 speaks of our work being judged and tested by fire, and Paul writes, “If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (ESV). This passage never speaks of a person burning or suffering in fire, but of his or her work burning up; what is more, it limits this to the day of judgment! This cannot support the concept of purgatory. Additionally, the doctrine of soul sleep remains unsupported. Often Scripture speaks of death as “sleep” or “falling asleep” (e.g., Matt 27:52; 1 Cor 15:6, 18, 20, 51), but these are clearly metaphorical expressions. For a Christian, death is as temporary as sleep. The Scriptures mentioned above (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Lk 23:43; Heb 12:23) all plainly point to a conscious existence with God immediately after death.

Scripture says little about the state of OT saints after death, but what it does say indicates that they also went into the presence of God rather than into some state of limbo (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11; Ps 23:6). It is possible that they experienced much greater joy and blessing when Christ completed his redemptive work and returned to heaven.

Given the above, it is wrong to pray for the dead. Just as the souls of believers immediately enter into the Lord’s presence (and our prayers do not make this possible), the souls of unbelievers immediately enter into eternal punishment (and our prayers cannot change this). Scripture continually holds that for unbelievers who die, only judgment lies in wait (Heb 9:27; Rom 2:5–10). Scripture does not state that any person will receive a second chance to believe after death; indeed, Paul’s evangelistic zeal would be very strange if this were the case. Finally, on the day of judgment, unbelievers’ bodies will be raised up and united with their souls, and at that time, God will judge them in the body (Matt 25:31–46; Jn 5:28–29; Acts 24:15).

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “My Jesus, I Love Thee.”<sup>138</sup>
- Ask students to discuss the following question: “How should believers respond to the death of unbelieving friends or relatives?” Prompt further discussion by asking, “Do we live like practical universalists? Do we witness with the same fervor as those who believe all will be saved?”

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<sup>138</sup> This hymn can be found in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 827. A fairly traditional rendition of this hymn, including music and on-screen lyrics, can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYfBZnMve\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYfBZnMve_E) (accessed July 8, 2011).

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why does this text state that 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 does not teach the doctrine of purgatory?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Holy Spirit Will Help You Die” (John Piper)  
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/the-holy-spirit-will-help-you-die>
- “Grief: Finding Hope Again” (Paul David Tripp)  
<http://www.ccef.org/grief-finding-hope-again>

## ***Chapter 42 – Glorification (Receiving a Resurrection Body)***

### **Key Terms**

glorification, spiritual body

### **Key Points**

- The final stage in the application of redemption is glorification, when believers receive a new, glorified resurrection body like that of Christ.
- Both the Old and New Testaments teach of the resurrection.
- Our resurrection bodies will be imperishable, glorious, powerful, spiritual, and physical.
- All of creation will be renewed at the resurrection.

### **Chapter Summary**

Our redemption is not merely spiritual; Christ has redeemed our whole persons, which means that Christ has also redeemed our bodies. When Paul speaks of our future glorification in Romans 8:16–24, he says that we look forward to the “redemption of our bodies.” Glorification, which is the final step in the process of redemption, will take place at the return of Christ. He will raise up the bodies of believers from the dead, and he will reunite these bodies with their souls. He will change the bodies of living believers, and at this time, all believers will receive perfect resurrection bodies.

We find discussion of the resurrection throughout Scripture. In the NT, Paul speaks at length of our resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12–58. He says that all who belong to Christ will be “made alive” (v. 22) at his coming; “the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (v. 52). Elsewhere, Paul says that Christ will bring the believing dead with him at his return, and the bodies of the dead will be raised (1 Thess 4:14–16). Jesus also spoke of the resurrection, stating that he would raise his people up “at the last day” (Jn 6:39–40, 44, 54).

In the OT, we also discover some evidence that the authors had hope for a future resurrection. Job declares, “I know that my Redeemer lives ... And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.”<sup>139</sup> The psalmist states, “God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.”<sup>140</sup> Isaiah prophesies, “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!... The earth will give birth to the dead.”<sup>141</sup> Daniel also has a clear prophecy: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”<sup>142</sup>

Our resurrection bodies will be “imperishable.”<sup>143</sup> They will never deteriorate, get sick, or die. They will not slowly degrade over time. We will, in our resurrection bodies, display what God intended for humanity at creation. Our bodies will also be glorious. Jesus states in Matthew 13:43 that “the righteous will shine like the sun,” and Daniel 12:3 says, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (ESV). This shining gloriousness is similar but greater than the glory

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<sup>139</sup> Job 19:25–26 ESV.

<sup>140</sup> Ps 49:15 NIV.

<sup>141</sup> Isa 26:19 ESV.

<sup>142</sup> Dan 12:2.

<sup>143</sup> 1 Cor 15:42.

that shone from Moses' face, and similar to the way Jesus shone at his transfiguration. Paul also states that our resurrection bodies will be "raised in power" (1 Cor 15:43). In other words, our bodies will be strong and able to do all that God intended. Finally, our resurrection bodies will also be spiritual. Given Paul's intended contrast between "natural" and "spiritual," this means that our bodies will be "completely subject to the will of the Holy Spirit and responsive to the Holy Spirit's guidance."<sup>144</sup> Our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's resurrected body (1 Cor 15:49).

Some people claim that Paul does not mean that we will have real bodies in the age to come. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul writes, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." However, by "flesh and blood," Paul likely means "our human nature as it is right now." In fact, in the verse just preceding, he says, "As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." This means that we will have resurrection bodies just like that of Christ. The Lord sought to make it clear to his disciples that he had an actual body after his resurrection. In Luke 24:39, Jesus says, "Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (ESV).

Many have asked if our resurrection bodies will resemble our present bodies. Given Paul's use of metaphor in 1 Corinthians 15—that the resurrection will be similar to a plant sprouting from a seed—it is probably best to say that "whatever remains in the grave from our own physical bodies"<sup>145</sup> will be used by God in the creation of our resurrection bodies. Christ's resurrection body was not identical to his earthly body, but it was quite similar, and Elijah and Moses were recognizable at the transfiguration, even to those who had not known them during their earthly lives. This indicates that in some way we will retain our personal identities, and others will be able to identify us.

Paul makes clear in Romans 8:19–23 that God will renew all of creation at the moment of our glorification. In fact, Paul states that creation itself is waiting "with eager longing" for our glorification. No longer will the earth bear thorns and thistles, no longer will the rivers flood and destroy or the crops fail to drought, no longer will bees or snakes harm us, no longer will the desert be uninhabitable. Instead, the entire earth will "blossom and produce food abundantly for our enjoyment."<sup>146</sup>

Some passages indicate that God will also raise unbelievers from the dead for judgment (Jn 5:29; Acts 24:15). The text will address this in further detail in Chapter 56.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking the students to address the following question: "Are we looking forward to being with God in some distant, heavenly realm, or are we looking forward to being in God's presence here on earth? How does our answer to this question affect the way we live our lives right now?"

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What evidence do we have from Christ's resurrection that our own resurrection bodies will be physical?
- What does Paul mean when he says our resurrection bodies will be "spiritual"?

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<sup>144</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 832.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 833.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 836.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Great Christian Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body” (Matt Perman)  
<http://contendforthefaith2.com/body2.html>
- “Christ’s Resurrection and Ours” (Stephen J. Wellum)  
[http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt\\_2002fall6.pdf](http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt_2002fall6.pdf)
- “Jesus’ Resurrection and Christian Origins” (N. T. Wright)  
[http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_Jesus\\_Resurrection.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Jesus_Resurrection.htm)

## ***Chapter 43 – Union With Christ***

### **Key Terms**

being raised with Christ, communion of saints, dying with Christ, “in Christ,” mystical union, one body in Christ, union with Christ

### **Key Points**

- We are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.
- Our union with Christ affects every part of our lives; it strengthens us for ministry and it enables us to imitate Christ in our daily lives.
- Our fellowship with Christ results in fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

### **Chapter Summary**

Our union with Christ deserves mention. This union affects every aspect of our relationship with the Father, and a study of our union with Christ contains within itself the entire study of the application of redemption. Our union with Christ includes “several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.”<sup>147</sup>

To be “in Christ” is to share in several aspects of Christ’s person and work. For instance, God chose us in Christ and gave us grace even before he created the world (Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9). While Christ was on earth, God continued to consider us “in Christ.” In other words, “whatever Christ did as our representative, God counted it as being something we did, too.”<sup>148</sup> This means that when Jesus obeyed, God was glad to think of us as having perfectly obeyed as well (Rom 5:19), and when Christ died for sins, God was glad to lay on him our sins (2 Cor 5:21). God also chose to think of us as being buried, raised, and glorified with Christ (Eph 2:4–6). Additionally, we now live out this reality in an actual relationship with Christ. Our union with Christ in his death and resurrection means that we are now dead to sin and alive to God and to righteousness (Rom 6:11; 1 Pet 2:24). We are now alive in Christ, and we can act in Christ. This means that we speak truth in Christ (Rom 9:1), we rejoice in Christ (Phil 3:1), we exhort others in Christ (1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:12), we labor in Christ (1 Cor 15:58), and we abide in Christ (Jn 15:4–5). In every way, we are in Christ—in the mind of the Father, in our lives, and even in our relationships with other believers. Paul tells us that we are members of the same body and thereby “members one of another.”<sup>149</sup> Because of our individual union with Christ, we grow in corporate union with Christ and in unity with one another.

To have “Christ in us” is to have the actual, indwelling presence of Christ within us. His presence in us means that we have great spiritual strength (1 Jn 4:4) and that we can have confidence in Christ’s power working within us (Gal 2:20).

To be “like Christ” means to imitate Christ. Paul and John instruct us to imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Jn 2:6), so our union with Christ means that we should live as Christ lived. In repeated instances, the NT authors instruct us to imitate Christ in our marriages (Eph 5:25), in

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 840.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 841.

<sup>149</sup> Rom 12:5.

our relationships with others (Rom 15:7; Col 3:13), in our suffering (1 Pet 2:21; 4:13), and in our whole lives (Heb 12:1–2; Phil 2:5–11). This imitation extends even to sharing in Christ’s glory at his return (Rom 8:17; Rev 3:21). We imitate Christ to become like Christ—to be changed into his likeness and conformed to his image (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29)—and to glorify Christ himself (2 Thess 1:10–12; Jn 17:10).

To be “with Christ” is to have deep personal fellowship with Christ. In our gatherings and in our evangelism, Christ is present with us (Matt 18:20; 28:19–20). He comforts us (2 Thess 2:16–17), he teaches us (Matt 11:29), and he works with us (2 Cor 6:1). When we worship, we actually enter into the presence of Christ (Heb 12:22–24). To be “with Christ” also means to be with one another as believers united in Christ (1 Jn 1:3). Through our union with Christ, we are actually in the Father and the Holy Spirit (Jn 17:21; Rom 8:9), the Father and the Holy Spirit are in us (Jn 14:23; Rom 8:11), we become like the Father and the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:15–16; Gal 5:22–23), and we have fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 1:3; Rom 8:16).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking different students to read Ephesians 1:3–14, Romans 16:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:1, and Romans 9:1.
- Ask the students to discuss the following questions: “How can we *labor* in Christ? How can we *exhort others* in Christ? How can we *speak truth* in Christ?” List their answers on the board.
- Ask the students to consider and discuss the following question: “How does our union with Christ affect God’s view of our sin?” During the discussion, draw their attention to the punishment as well as the forgiveness of our sin in Christ.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What are the four aspects of our union with Christ identified in this chapter?
- What does it mean that God thinks of us as “in Christ” during his life on earth?
- In speaking of our union with Christ and other believers, the chapter identifies several metaphors and analogies that Scripture uses to describe this union. Identify two of these metaphors or analogies.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Bands of Love: or, Union to Christ” (C. H. Spurgeon)  
[http://www.spurgeon.org/s\\_and\\_t/bol1865.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/s_and_t/bol1865.htm)
- “Reckoned as Risen” (John Stevenson)  
<http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/rom06-01.html>
- “Mystical Union between Christ and the Saints” (Thomas Watson)  
<http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/rom06-01.html>

## Part 6 – The Doctrine of the Church

### Chapter 44 – The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes

#### Key Terms

body of Christ, church, *ekklēsia*, invisible church, marks of the church, visible church

#### Key Points

- The true church is invisible and consists of all true believers for all time.
- The necessary marks of a true church are biblical teaching and the proper administration of the sacraments.
- The church exists to worship God, to nurture believers, and to bear witness in the world.

#### Chapter Summary

“The church is the community of all true believers for all time.”<sup>150</sup> Paul tells us that “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”<sup>151</sup> indicating that the church includes all believers, for whom Christ died. Therefore, this definition naturally includes all of those who are truly saved in both the OT and the NT ages. The strong connection between believers in the OT and believers in the NT appears in how the Lord calls his people to himself in both eras. Additionally, the NT authors speak of the believers of the OT as a “church,” using the Greek term *ekklēsia* (Acts 7:38; Heb 2:12).

The true church is invisible; we cannot know who is and who is not a true believer. The visible church, as Christians see it, includes all who profess faith in Christ and who live in accordance with Scripture. The difference between the two becomes obvious in that there will be some within the visible church who are not true believers (Acts 20:29–30; Matt 13:24–30). We may rightly apply the term “church” to a local group of believers as well as to the universal body of all true believers. Scripture uses a variety of metaphors and analogies to describe the church, including a family (1 Tim 5:1–2), a marriage (Eph 5:31–32), branches on a vine (Jn 15:5), a new temple and a holy nation (1 Pet 2:4–10), and many more. Perhaps the most familiar metaphor is simply “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:12–27; Eph 4:15–16; Col 2:19).

Evangelical Protestants differ on the nature of the relationship between Israel and the church. Dispensational theologians hold that Israel has received earthly promises from God that will be fulfilled in an earthly manner, while the church has received spiritual promises that will be fulfilled in a spiritual, heavenly manner. The church and Israel, then, are not part of the same church. Progressive dispensationalists reject the notion of separate purposes for Israel and the church and see no distinction between the two. However, they hold that the OT prophecies regarding Israel will be fulfilled among ethnic Jewish believers during the millennium. Nondispensational Protestant and Catholic theologians have affirmed that all OT and NT believers are included in one church, which is the people of God. Paul affirms Abraham as the father not merely of Israel but of all who believe in Christ (Rom 4:11–12). Additionally, Peter

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<sup>150</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 853.

<sup>151</sup> Eph 5:25.

speaks to the church as “exiles of the Dispersion”<sup>152</sup> and later describes them with explicit reference to the people of God in the OT, calling them a “a chosen race, a royal priesthood.”<sup>153</sup>

The church is distinct from the kingdom of God (i.e., the reign and rule of God) in a few specific ways: (1) the church is not the kingdom of God, (2) the kingdom of God brings the church into being, (3) the church testifies to the kingdom in the world, (4) the church serves the kingdom of God, (5) the church is the steward of the kingdom of God. In other words, we cannot conflate the two, nor can we regard the kingdom of God as some distant eschatological hope. The kingdom of God is here already and active within the church, but the church is not the fullness of this kingdom.

Prior to the Reformation, there was merely one visible church, and it actively excluded much heresy. After the Reformation, it became necessary to discern what constitutes a true church. Early Reformers were in close agreement as to the definition of a true church: true churches have biblical instruction and the right administration of the sacraments. Such a definition remains appropriate for today as well; churches that teach false doctrine (e.g., the Mormon church, Jehovah’s Witnesses) are not true churches. Additionally, a group of Christians that does not practice the sacraments is not trying to identify itself as a church. If a local Bible study began to administer the Lord’s Supper and baptism, it would seem right to consider this group a church.

In considering the Roman Catholic Church today, it is not possible to determine whether it is a true or false church; there is simply too much diversity between the parishes. Some lack both biblical instruction and the right administration of the sacraments, while some have both of these marks as the result of a sincere saving faith on the part of the local parish leadership. In the case of the latter, it would be hard to consider it a false church. Within the liberal branches of Protestantism as well, there are many false churches that teach works-righteousness and that reject the authority of Scripture.

The church exists to worship God, to nurture believers, and to bear witness in the world through evangelism and mercy. Paul instructs believers to devote their time to corporate worship (Col 3:16), and elsewhere he states that our gifts in ministry are for the nurture and edification of the body (Eph 4:15–16). After his resurrection, Christ commissioned his disciples to go into all nations and to make disciples (Matt 28:19–20), and many passages in the NT command us to give help to those who are in need (1 Jn 3:17; Jas 1:27). A church must seek to keep these purposes in balance; to neglect any of these ministries will bring harm to the church and will hinder the growth of its members. Individual believers, however, will likely be gifted and drawn toward one of these ministries to a greater degree.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking one student to read Romans 4:7–12 and another to read 1 Peter 2:4–10.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “The church replaces Israel as the people of God today.”

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<sup>152</sup> 1 Pet 1:1.

<sup>153</sup> 1 Pet 2:9.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Describe the dispensational view of the difference between the church and Israel.
- What two marks are mentioned as necessary for a true church?
- Define the kingdom of God and describe three differences between it and the church.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “What Are the Nine Marks?” (9Marks Ministries; brief video clips)  
<http://www.9marks.org/what-are-the-9marks/>
- “The Church and the Truth” (R. B. Kuiper)  
[http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/rb\\_kuiper/rb\\_kuiper.church.truth.html](http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/rb_kuiper/rb_kuiper.church.truth.html)
- “The Church” (J. I. Packer)  
<http://www.monergism.com/The%20Church%20by%20J.I.%20Packer.html>

## ***Chapter 45 – The Purity and Unity of the Church***

### **Key Terms**

Eastern church, purity of the church, separation, unity of the church, Western church

### **Key Points**

- The church must pursue both purity and unity.
- Some situations will call for separation by believers from false or less pure churches, though many believers may remain to work for the purity of the body.

### **Chapter Summary**

While there are true and false churches, Scripture seems to distinguish between true churches that are more pure and true churches that are less pure. For instance, Paul seems to be much less concerned with doctrinal or moral issues at the church in Philippi than at the church at Galatia (Phil 1:3–11; Gal 1:6–9). In other words, some churches are less pure in their doctrine and conduct, and some churches are more pure. “The purity of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God’s revealed will for the church.”<sup>154</sup> As churches pursue purity, they must also work for unity, seeking to eliminate divisions among true Christians.

Certain things make a church more pure (e.g., correct biblical doctrine, genuine worship of God, holiness among the members, care for the poor) and a significant failure in one of these areas will weaken the purity of the church. Often churches will consider their strengths to be important, yet churches must pursue purity in all of these areas; Christ seeks a spotless, blameless church (Eph 5:26–27). The NT encourages all believers to work for the purity of the visible church through effective witness (Matt 28:19–20), through proper government of the church (1 Tim 3:1–13), and through love for Christ (1 Pet 1:8). It will take time and work to purify the church, and Christians should seek to find a true church in which they can minister and worship and contribute to its growth in purity. When a church begins to stray from God-centeredness and into man-centeredness, it will find itself moving away from purity and in the direction of becoming a false church.

Scripture continually stresses unity within the church. Jesus prays for our unity (Jn 17:21–23), and Paul appeals to us to set aside dissension and to pursue unity (1 Cor 1:10; Phil 2:2; Eph 4:1–3). In fact, Scripture contains no direct instructions for Christians to separate from one another over doctrinal differences. We are to separate from unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14–17; 2 Tim 3:1–9), and we are to separate from believers who are disregarding church discipline and persisting in flagrant sin (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:11–13), but these commands address the purity of the church. While pursuing the purity of the church, we must also work for the unity of the visible church.

For the first thousand years of the church, no significant division arose within the church. In AD 1054, the Eastern church divided from the Western church over papal authority. The pope had added the *filioque* clause<sup>155</sup> to the Nicene Creed, and the Eastern church denied his authority to make this change. Half a millennium later, the Reformation further split the Western church,

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<sup>154</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 874.

<sup>155</sup> See the discussion on this clause in *ibid.*, 246–47.

and for the next five hundred years, Protestant groups have continued to separate and divide. During the twentieth century, an attempt at ecumenical unity began and faltered with little evangelical support. In spite of this history of division, there has been growth in unity across denominational lines in the spread of the charismatic movement, home Bible studies, and reduced doctrinal awareness among laypeople.

Some churches have separated in such a way that the groups have refused to cooperate with one another on the fulfillment of the Great Commission or in worship. Other divisions have resulted in a proscription on personal fellowship between members of the different organizations. Churches have divided for right and wrong reasons. Some have divided over doctrinal differences, some over issues of conscience, and some over practical considerations.

In considering whether to divide over a doctrinal difference, it seems that a severe deviation from biblical truth demands such a division only when that doctrinal error has become so pervasive and serious that a church is no longer a true church. Paul generally instructs believers to pursue the purity of their church—to pray and to repent and to change—but not to abandon a true church. If a church has become a false church, a believer who leaves does not leave a true church but leaves only an organization that affirms falsehood. In the case that a church begins to affirm doctrinal error, God may call some Christians to leave and others to remain and to work for the restored purity of that church.

With matters of conscience, 2 Corinthians 6:14 seems to instruct a believer to separate from a church only in the event that remaining in that church would cause the believer to lose their freedom to obey God. Additionally, there are occasions when God may lead a believer to separate from a church if they encounter many hindrances to effective ministry or find little fellowship within that church. Perhaps they have sought change, and change has not occurred. In such a situation, believers must pursue wisdom and maturity through prayer, for withdrawal is a serious decision.

Christians may find themselves in a position that seems to call for stronger levels of separation; when unbelievers control the other group, this may be necessary. In any event, Scripture never commands a believer to avoid all fellowship with members of another denomination or church group.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Ask students to identify their individual denominational backgrounds and have them describe what distinguishes their denomination from others. Seek to keep this conversation civil!
- Ask students who have switched church groups to describe what led to the change.
- Close class with the hymn “Blest Be the Tie that Binds.”<sup>156</sup>

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What is the difference between a false church and a less pure church?
- The text states that a reduced doctrinal awareness has led to greater interdenominational unity. What dangers does this change present for the purity of the church?

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<sup>156</sup> This hymn can be found in *ibid.*, 885. Traditional accompaniment music and on-screen lyrics can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2uU\\_QvTpHs&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2uU_QvTpHs&feature=related) (accessed July 8, 2011).

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity” (R. Albert Mohler Jr.)  
<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>
- “An Anthill on Which to Die: What a Colony of Insects Could Teach Us about the Church” (Russell D. Moore)  
<http://www.russellmoore.com/2007/11/18/an-anthill-on-which-to-die-what-a-colony-of-insects-could-teach-us-about-the-church/>
- “Why I Walked” (J. I. Packer)  
[http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article\\_detail.php?344](http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?344)

## ***Chapter 46 – The Power of the Church***

### **Key Terms**

“binding and loosing,” excommunication, “keys of the kingdom,” power of the church, to take up the sword

### **Key Points**

- God has given the church authority to engage in spiritual warfare, to preach the gospel, and to exercise church discipline.
- The church and the state should remain separate; neither should rule the other. Believers, however, should seek to influence their governments for good.
- Church discipline protects believers, the body at large, and the honor of Christ.

### **Chapter Summary**

In discussing the power of the church, we will look at three areas in which God has given the church authority: (1) engaging in spiritual warfare; (2) proclaiming the gospel; and (3) exercising church discipline. Each represents an important aspect of church life.

Regarding spiritual warfare, Paul tells us to gird ourselves with various weapons—prayer, truth, Scripture, faith, and so on—and he encourages us that these weapons have spiritual power to destroy falsehood and faithlessness (Eph 6:10–18; 2 Cor 10:3–4). For example, the gospel we proclaim has power to destroy sin and to draw unbelievers to faith (Rom 10:17; Jas 1:18), and it has the power to crush demonic opposition (Acts 13:8–11; 16:16–18). God also enables us to wage spiritual warfare against false teachers and wolves within the church (1 Cor 4:19–20; 2 Cor 13:2–4). While the apostles enjoyed a distinct degree of spiritual power, believers today still have the power and authority to engage in some level of spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10–18; 2 Cor 10:3–4). God continues to grant the church success in areas of spiritual warfare, and as we are faithful, he will enable us to accomplish his will.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus tells Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Given the other uses of “key” in the NT (Lk 11:52; Rev 1:18; 9:1), Jesus is saying that disciples have the authority to open the door to the kingdom of heaven through the proclamation of the gospel. Peter used this key at Pentecost (Acts 2:14–42), the apostles used this key in writing the NT, and believers use this key when they share the gospel today. Given the similarity between this passage and his words regarding church discipline in Matthew 18:17–18, we can infer that Jesus also speaks here of the authority for the church to exercise such discipline. This authority comes with some apparent limits: (1) The church cannot define right and wrong (this authority belongs to God). This binding and loosing will be effective against only actual sin rather than some congregation’s unbiblical definition of sin. (2) The church cannot forgive sin in the absolute sense. This also belongs to God. However, Jesus’ words gives us confidence that when the church enacts legitimate church discipline or rightly releases from such discipline, God has begun a corresponding spiritual process as well.

Does the authority of the church include the authority to use physical force to fulfill its mission? We must answer in the negative. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world and neither are our weapons (Jn 18:36; 2 Cor 10:4). While God gives civil government authority to use physical force against evildoers (Rom 13:1–7), he never gives it the authority to compel religious belief.

Jesus certainly refused such authority to his followers (Lk 9:54–55). In any case, compelled Christianity is no Christianity. It follows from this that civil government should not seek to rule the church, nor should the church seek to rule the state. They are separate spheres (Matt 22:21; Jn 18:36; 2 Cor 10:3–4). At the same time, it is good for Christians to seek to influence government to pass laws consistent with biblical moral principles (e.g., laws against murder, rape, drug abuse, abortion, homosexual conduct, domestic violence, and other such things). Such laws do not compel religious belief, and they benefit our neighbors.

Church discipline has several purposes: (1) It makes it possible for the body to restore the wandering believer to obedience and to reconcile him or her to right relationships with other believers and with God (Matt 18:15; Gal 6:1; Jas 5:20). If church members practiced the first steps of private, gentle admonition and prayer, it is likely that churches would have to exercise very little formal church discipline. Yet if a brother or sister persists in sin, Paul urges the church to discipline with the hope that they will repent (1 Tim 1:20; 1 Cor 5:5). (2) Discipline inhibits the spread of sin among members (Heb 12:15; 1 Cor 5:2, 6–7). (3) Discipline guards the honor of Christ and the purity of the church. If a church allows sin to fester and grow, this brings shame on Christ (Rom 2:24; 1 Cor 5:1–2). Christ desires a pure and spotless church (2 Pet 3:14; Eph 5:27); in fact, if the church will not properly exercise discipline, Christ will (1 Cor 11:27–34; Rev 2:14–16, 20–23).

The church should exercise discipline when a situation involving one’s sin against another cannot be resolved with the help of two or three witnesses (Matt 18:15–17) or when its members engage in ongoing, public sins. Church discipline always calls for maturity, gentleness, and a regard for legitimate disagreements over areas of conduct (Gal 6:1; Rom 14:1–23).

In Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus provides a template for church discipline: (1) Awareness of the sin should remain with the fewest people possible; this enables an easier process of repentance, and it does less harm to the wandering sibling, the body, and the honor of Christ. (2) We must increase the strength of the disciplinary measures until we reach a resolution. We cannot quit after a single, private meeting if we reach no resolution. If we cannot resolve the situation, Jesus instructs us to “tell it to the church.” If the offending sibling will not listen to the church, then the church is to exclude him or her from the body; this person can no longer participate in fellowship or in the Lord’s Supper.

Paul adds some instructions regarding the discipline of church leaders in 1 Timothy 5:19–21. To protect elders from false, personal attacks, Paul requires the evidence of multiple witnesses. If such evidence exists, and the elder persists in sin, they are to be rebuked publicly.

If repentance occurs at any point in the process of discipline, the Christians aware of the sin should immediately welcome their sibling back into fellowship. Our desire should be for restoration and reconciliation, not revenge. We must pursue church discipline in a gentle, humble manner, aware of our own proclivity for sin (Gal 6:1), and we should forgive those who sin against us (Matt 18:21–35).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statements, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: (1) “It is impossible for a church that refuses to practice church discipline to be healthy.” (2) “It is right for churches to promote laws against homosexual conduct.”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What powers do the “keys of the kingdom” represent?
- In what two ways does the discipline of elders differ from that of other church members?

#### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Lost Practice of Church Discipline” (Tim Challies)  
<http://www.challies.com/articles/the-lost-practice-of-church-discipline>
- “A Church Discipline Primer” (Jonathan Leeman)  
<http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/church-discipline-primer>

## **Chapter 47 – Church Government**

### **Key Terms**

apostle, bishop, classis, congregational government, consistory, deacon, diocese, elder, episcopalian government, general assembly, hierarchical government, local elders, officer, overseer, pastor, presbyterian government, presbytery, priest, rector, session, synod, vicar

### **Key Points**

- The NT identifies three church offices: apostle, elder, and deacon.
- The NT pattern of church government is leadership by plural elders.
- Scripture restricts the role of pastor, or elder, to men.

### **Chapter Summary**

Church officers are those members vested with certain rights and responsibilities for ministry to the body. The NT addresses just three offices: apostles, elders, and deacons. Apostles played a unique role in the church; they spoke and wrote God’s Word in an absolute, authoritative sense. Two qualifications designated a person as an apostle: (1) being an eyewitness to the resurrected Jesus and (2) receiving an apostolic commission from Jesus (Matt 10:1–7; Acts 1:22; 1 Cor 9:1). Some passages identify as apostles men who had not been among the original twelve (Gal 1:19; Acts 14:14), but Paul states that he is the last (1 Cor 15:7–9).

In every NT church, we discover leadership by plural elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1–2). No passages suggest any other form of church government. Scripture uses various terms for elder, such as pastor, bishop, or overseer (1 Tim 3:1–2; Acts 20:17–38; Phil 1:1). Elders governed the NT churches (1 Tim 5:17) and taught the Word (Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 3:2); qualifications for elders include gentleness, monogamy, and so forth (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9). In essence, elders should set an example of Christlikeness for the body. On the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:12) qualification, it helps to recognize that all of the other conditions refer to a man’s *present status* as opposed to his entire history. Paul does not say, “has only been married once,” though he could have, and Scripture never indicates that remarried widowers have a lower moral character. Thus, “husband of one wife” prohibits polygamists from holding office. Paul cautions the church against haste in selecting and installing elders (1 Tim 5:17–22); Jesus demonstrated the same (Lk 6:12–13).

The descriptions of deacons indicate an administrative, service-oriented role under the authority of the elders (Acts 6:1–6; 1 Tim 3:8–13). Paul may intend to identify Phoebe as a deaconess (Rom 16:1), though given his “husband of one wife” condition in 1 Timothy 3:12, this seems unlikely.

In contrast to a hierarchical leadership structure, several reasons exist for the local bodies to select or affirm their church officers: (1) the NT churches model this approach (Acts 6:3; 15:22), (2) the NT places final governing authority with the body rather than some outside leadership (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:4), (3) the leaders remain accountable to the local body, and thereby (4) they are less likely to stray from true doctrine, (5) government works best with the consent of the governed.

The three main types of church government differ on their selection of officers and on the authority given to the congregations. In episcopalian government, archbishops have authority

over many bishops, who have authority over various dioceses, which consist of several churches led by rectors. This approach assumes that the church needs bishops to replace apostles, yet Scripture does not indicate the apostles sought to establish any such line of succession. In fact, the Lord ordains through the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:28); his ordaining has no need for a physical, apostolic lineage.

In presbyterian government, a congregation selects elders, elders from several churches comprise a presbytery, and members of the presbyteries comprise a general assembly. This system allows elders to serve many churches, it can portray much unity in the church, and it can protect against doctrinal error. However, the NT never describes elders as having authority over other bodies, this system often undermines the will of the congregants, and it often results in top-down adoption of false doctrine.

In congregational government, often one elected pastor is set over several elected deacons. The arguments for this structure remain unconvincing. Moreover, while the NT does not require plural elders, we should not ignore the clear pattern of every church it describes. What is more, a single-pastor system often results in abuse of authority and decreased accountability.

Many other churches have multiple congregationally elected local elders and a preaching pastor who is an elder, often as a “first among equals.” Such a system preserves the NT pattern described above, and it does not expand elders’ authority beyond a local body. Such churches will often limit the authority of the elders by establishing term limits and sabbaticals, as well as requiring that certain large decisions come before the whole body (e.g., calling a pastor, purchasing land, etc.). Churches practicing this form of government can display unity through voluntary associations with like-minded bodies.

Congregational government occasionally manifests itself as an elected board of directors set over an elected pastor, or as a pure democracy, or as an amorphous, structure-free think tank. The first usually undermines any spiritual authority the pastor may have, the second often fails under the weight of bickering and indecision, and the third quickly collapses as feelings often overtake wisdom.

Evangelical churches have often failed to recognize the full equality of men and women (Gen 1:27) and have thus neglected the wisdom and gifts of their female members. It will greatly benefit the church to correct this mistake; however, we must recognize that Scripture restricts the office of elder to men (as well as that of deacon, in the event that deacons are functioning as elders within a church).

In 1 Timothy 2:11–14, Paul writes, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” (ESV). In context, Paul is addressing the issue of a church assembly. He has not indicated that women are teaching false doctrine in Ephesus, nor does he simply forbid a woman “to teach falsely.” He does not cite a lack of education on the part of the women; such a lack was not likely. In 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36, Paul prohibits women from evaluating prophecies (an authoritative role) but not from giving them (1 Cor 11:5). In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, the conditions for leadership assume such leaders are men. Moreover, the NT frequently compares the church to a family, indicating that the church has similar leadership patterns. Additionally, Jesus set a pattern of male leadership in selecting his apostles, and such a pattern has been the example of the history of the whole Bible and of the church. The Holy Spirit gives gifts as he wills, but he does not desire us to use his gifts in disobedience to his words. This distinction of roles is not a temporary cultural artifact; God established it at creation.<sup>157</sup> Still,

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<sup>157</sup> See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 459–67.

church leaders should establish measures whereby they can draw on the wisdom and insight of both the male and female members as they make decisions.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with a prayer for clarity and unity during the discussion, then ask students to discuss the following question: “Should churches appoint women as elders and pastors?”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Identify three problems the text found with the presbyterian form of church government.
- What are the qualifications for apostles? Why does this office not continue today?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “But What *Should* Women Do in the Church?” (Wayne Grudem)  
<http://www.cbmw.org/Journal/Vol-1-No-2/But-What-Should-Women-Do-In-The-Church>

## Chapter 48 – Means of Grace Within the Church

### Key Terms

Eucharist, extreme unction, holy orders, laying on of hands, means of grace, sacrament

### Key Points

- Many activities in the church function as means of grace and blessing.

### Chapter Summary

“The means of grace are any activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give more grace to Christians.”<sup>158</sup> The church usually focuses on just three—preaching, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper—yet many more activities in the church function as means of grace.<sup>159</sup> We will first consider these three activities before reflecting on several more, though this list of activities is by no means exhaustive.

God brings much grace and blessing through *the preaching of his Word* (Rom 1:16; Matt 4:4). Scripture gives wisdom (Ps 119:105), convicts of sin and trains in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16), brings hope to the desperate (Rom 15:4), and brings about growth in the church (Acts 6:7; 12:24). We can trust that God’s Word works in power and never returns void (Isa 55:10–11; Heb 4:12).

God also brings blessing through *baptism* (Matt 28:19–20). As an act of obedience and a public profession of faith, baptism brings joy and blessing and God’s favor to the participant. For the assembled brothers and sisters, the baptism of a believer brings a refreshed pleasure in our union with Christ. *The Lord’s Supper* brings blessing and grace as well. As we gather to share in the bread and the cup, we grow in unity with each other and with the Lord (1 Cor 10:16–21). In this activity, we express our continued abiding in Jesus, and we should expect spiritual nourishment (Jn 6:48–56).<sup>160</sup>

In addition, God brings many blessings through *corporate prayer*. As we gather to pray with genuine faith, the Holy Spirit often brings about increased unity, happy fellowship, and growth in spiritual power (Acts 4:24–31). God certainly blesses us through answers to our prayers (Acts 12:5–17), and the author of Hebrews affirms that in prayer, we find mercy and grace during difficult times (Heb 4:16). Similarly, God brings great blessing through *corporate worship*. As we engage in genuine, spiritual worship, we will experience God’s presence and leading (Acts 13:2; 2 Chron 5:13–14; Jas 4:8).

*Church discipline* also brings grace. As we rightly discipline unrepentant siblings, the church grows in purity and believers grow in their desire for holiness (1 Tim 5:20). When a wrongdoer turns and repents, he or she experiences much grace in God’s forgiveness (2 Cor 7:9–13a). We would do well to see church discipline as a great source of blessing rather than disregard it as unpleasant.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 950.

<sup>159</sup> In speaking of these activities as “means of grace,” we must distinguish between the view held in this text and that of the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas Catholics view certain activities (e.g., baptism) as “means of salvation,” the Protestant view is that these activities are a means of additional blessing for believers.

<sup>160</sup> For further discussion on baptism and the Lord’s Supper, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, chapters 49 and 50, respectively.

Paul emphasizes the spiritual blessings of *giving generously*. In 2 Corinthians 9:6, he writes, “Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (ESV). Just below that, in 9:8, he tells the believers, “God is able to make all grace abound to you” (ESV), and in 9:11, he writes, “You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God” (ESV). When believers give, we can expect that it will bring blessing to the recipient whose needs are met, to the giver as a spiritual harvest of grace, and to others as they praise God.

God also brings grace and blessing through *the spiritual gifts* (1 Pet 4:10). With these gifts, we edify the whole church (1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:11–16), and we grow in gratefulness for God’s undeserved favor. In line with this, *regular Christian fellowship* also operates as a means of grace and blessing in our lives. The author of Hebrews strongly urges us not to give up meeting together but rather to meet and continually encourage one another (Heb 10:24–25). In such fellowship, we grow to love one another more deeply, and we bless one another with help during difficult times (Gal 6:2).

Additionally, God brings blessing through *evangelism*. Frequently, the Holy Spirit will fill the Lord’s people as they proclaim the gospel (Mk 13:9–11; Acts 4:8, 31). This evangelism brings grace to the hearers, some of whom are drawn to saving faith, and it brings grace to the evangelists, who experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. Occasionally, an individual does this activity alone, but it is often the work of many in the church (1 Cor 3:5–6), and as such, it brings grace to the church.

In a similar manner, God brings grace and blessing into the church as individuals in the body *minister to one another*. Sometimes believers exhort or encourage one another (Col 3:16); at other times they lovingly rebuke wandering fellow believers (Jas 5:19–20). Believers assist one another in times of material need (1 Jn 3:17), and elders anoint the sick with oil and pray over them (Jas 5:14). Often believers will minister to one another through *the laying on of hands*. In doing so, sometimes believers heal one another (Lk 4:40; Acts 28:8). At other times, believers lay on hands to bless or encourage or equip for ministry (Mk 10:16; Acts 6:6; 13:3). In fact, Hebrews 6:1–2 identifies this activity as an “elementary” or “foundational” aspect of the Christian life.

Many churches have practiced footwashing as an ordinance (Jn 13:14), but it does not seem necessary to practice footwashing as we do baptism and the Lord’s Supper. For instance, footwashing does not symbolize any redemption event (such as Christ’s crucifixion, burial, and resurrection), nor does it symbolize any aspect of continuing in the Christian life. Moreover, the apostles and early church do not record any ongoing observance of footwashing. The church will profit from considering Christ’s teaching on love and humility in this act, but it does not need to practice the ceremony of footwashing.

The study of the means of grace within the church should encourage us to look for the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit as congregations worship, pray, evangelize, give, and many such things. At the same time, we should be wary of neglecting the fellowship of the church, as doing so will cut us off from the means by which the Spirit brings blessing to believers.

## **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Make a list on the board of the means of grace discussed in this chapter. Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in

their responses: “A Christian that refrains from regular fellowship at a local church will not grow.”

- Question 4 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (p. 963 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider where our churches are lacking in these means of grace and how we might improve this. Have students discuss this question.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What arguments does the text provide against requiring footwashing as an ongoing ordinance?
- What is difference between the Protestant understanding of the means of grace and the Roman Catholic understanding of sacraments?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Prayer as a Means of Grace” (B. B. Warfield)  
<http://www.mbrem123.com/life/warprayer.php>
- “An Apologetic for Using the Means of Grace” (David Wayne)  
<http://jollyblogger.typepad.com/jollyblogger/2010/10/an-apologetic-for-using-the-means-of-grace.html>

## Chapter 49 – Baptism

### Key Terms

believable profession of faith, believers' baptism, covenant community, *ex opere operato*, immersion, paedobaptism

### Key Points

- Baptism symbolizes our unity with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.
- Baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith.
- Protestant arguments for paedobaptism fail to account for the meaning and purpose of baptism.

### Chapter Summary

Jesus commanded his followers to practice baptism and the Lord's Supper. While some churches refer to these as "ordinances," and others as "sacraments," this text will use these terms interchangeably. This chapter will advocate credobaptism, the view that "baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>161</sup>

In the NT, baptism by immersion was the only practiced method. Three arguments support this method: (1) The Greek word *baptizō* means to "immerse" something in water. (2) This meaning best fits the passages that refer to baptism in the NT; the authors speak of the baptizands as coming "up out of the water" (Mk 1:5, 10; Acts 8:36–39) and of baptisms occurring where "water was plentiful" (Jn 3:23 ESV). (3) The symbolism of baptism requires immersion. As Christ died and was buried in the earth and rose again, we go down into the water and rise up again, proclaiming to all that we have died to our old life and risen again to new life in Christ Jesus.

Since baptism symbolizes the beginning of the Christian life, only those who have become believers should receive the sacrament. The NT speaks of baptizing only those who have "received" the gospel, or who have "believed" the good news, or who have given a believable profession of faith in some manner (Acts 2:41; 10:44–48). Elsewhere, Paul refers to baptism as signifying a believer's entrance into the faith (Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3–4; Col 2:12). Paul never speaks of infants being "baptized into Christ" or being "buried with Christ."

The Roman Catholic Church practices paedobaptism. They argue that baptism brings about salvation and that only priests may perform the sacrament. The Roman Catholic teaching on baptism depends on their view that the sacraments effect grace regardless of the faith of the participants; the sacraments work *ex opere operato*. Protestant churches reject this viewpoint; new birth is by faith alone and requires no work on behalf of the believer (Eph 2:8–9; Rom 6:23). Some passages, however, seem to speak of baptism as necessary for salvation. For instance, John 3:5 says that one must be "born of water and the Spirit" to enter the kingdom of God, but this is most likely a reference to the promises of Ezekiel 36:25–27: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you ... And I will put my spirit within you." The washing in view here is the spiritual washing promised to members of the new covenant. First Peter 3:21 states, "Baptism ...

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 967. Proponents of the credobaptist view will be identified in this chapter as Baptists.

now saves you,” but immediately Peter clarifies his comment: “not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience.” Again, the focus in this passage is an internal, spiritual event.<sup>162</sup>

Some Protestant groups also baptize infants; however, they do not view this baptism as effecting salvation for the recipient. Rather, they hold that baptism replaces the OT symbol of circumcision and that it is now the outward symbol of entrance into the covenant community of God’s people. Additionally, they point to the recorded practice of household baptisms as support for the practice of baptizing the infants of believers. In response, those who hold the Baptist position argue that circumcision did not symbolize an internal reality, and faith was not a requirement for entrance into the Jewish community. In addition, the NT never refers to a covenant community made up of believers and unbelieving relatives but refers only to the church of regenerated believers. Faith is the entrance requirement, and baptism marks out those with faith. Regarding household baptisms, in most cases there is evidence that the whole household actually did come to saving faith (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15; Acts 18:8). Paedobaptists also have no clear answer as to the meaning of baptism. Perhaps they could argue that it symbolizes the possibility of future regeneration, but this puts the meaning of baptism far outside that given to it by the authors of the NT. Finally, Baptists reject paedobaptism because over time, it will result in a greater number of unconverted members of the covenant community; this can only undermine the purity of the church and its doctrine.

Even though baptism does not bring about regeneration, it is a means by which the Holy Spirit brings blessings to people. It brings spiritual benefit to believers because God blesses obedience, it benefits recipients through the joy of publicly professing their faith, and it benefits the church members by strengthening and encouraging their faith. While baptism is necessary for obedience, it is not necessary for salvation. To affirm otherwise is to require some work in addition to faith, and Paul repeatedly opposes such a notion (Gal 5:1–12; Eph 2:8–9). The thief next to Christ received salvation, and this took place through faith without an act of baptism (Lk 23:43).<sup>163</sup> Given the arguments for credobaptism, it seems appropriate to say that a person must merely be “old enough to give a believable profession of faith.”<sup>164</sup> This age will vary from person to person.

It is possible for believers on both sides of the debate to fellowship within the same church if they will agree to allow for the teaching and practice of both methods. In allowing for gracious disagreement and diversity of practice, churches will demonstrate their unity in the Lord. As with the Lord’s Supper, Scripture does not prohibit any church member from performing the ordinance. Given the meaning of baptism, it is right for it to take place within the church and before the assembled body; it is also good for an official representative of the church to administer and explain the sacrament.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking one student to read Romans 6:3–5 and another to read 1 Peter 3:21–22.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “A Christian could refuse baptism for her entire life and still

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<sup>162</sup> See also Titus 3:5, which teaches that we are washed in regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>163</sup> The thief died after Christ did (Jn 19:32–33) and so was saved after the new covenant had taken effect.

<sup>164</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 981.

be saved.” Discuss the role of obedience in the Christian life, as well as the truth of Eph 2:8–9.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What does John 3:5 mean when it speaks of being “born of water and the Spirit”?
- Describe the Protestant paedobaptist position and give a passage that supports this viewpoint.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Is Infant Baptism Scriptural?” (John Murray)  
<http://www.westminsterconfession.org/worship/is-infant-baptism-scriptural.php>
- “Why I Am a Baptist” (Sam Storms)  
<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/why-i-am-a-baptist-212/>

## **Chapter 50 – The Lord’s Supper**

### **Key Terms**

communion, consubstantiation, Eucharist, “not discerning the body,” spiritual presence, symbolic presence, transubstantiation, ubiquity of Christ’s human nature

### **Key Points**

- The Lord’s Supper proclaims the death of Jesus, our part in his redemption, the unity of the church, and Christ’s love and blessings.
- The Roman Catholic Church teaches transubstantiation, the Lutheran church teaches consubstantiation, and most Protestant churches teach a symbolic view of the Lord’s Supper.

### **Chapter Summary**

Just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus established the Lord’s Supper as an ordinance for the church (Matt 26:26–29; Mk 14:22–25). The Lord’s Supper proclaims and signifies several things: (1) in sharing the Lord’s Supper, we proclaim Christ’s death (1 Cor 11:26). The bread and cup symbolize Christ’s broken body and shed blood. (2) We proclaim our participation in Christ’s death. In sharing this meal, we tell others that we have a share in Christ’s redemptive work on the cross. (3) The Lord’s Supper symbolizes the spiritual sustenance we receive in Christ, and in fact, it provides such sustenance. (4) The Lord’s Supper proclaims the unity of the church (1 Cor 10:17). In joining together at a meal, we declare our fellowship with one another—Jew or Gentile, male or female, young or old, black or white, rich or poor—on the basis of Christ’s death on our behalf. (5) Christ affirms his love for each of us by inviting us to share in his table. (6) Christ also affirms that the blessings of salvation are actually for us. In sharing the Lord’s Supper, we are reminded of the promise of a future meal in the presence of the Lord and of our place within Christ’s eternal family. (7) In taking the Lord’s Supper, we affirm our faith in Christ; we affirm that we have placed our trust in him—in his broken body and shed blood—for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches transubstantiation. They affirm that the bread becomes the actual body of Christ and the wine becomes the actual blood of Christ during the administration of the Eucharist. In teaching this, they also affirm that the elements convey the grace of God to the worshipers, but only in proportion to the disposition of the recipient. Additionally, they believe that Christ is actually sacrificed; this sacrifice is distinct from his sacrifice on the cross but is still an “propitiatory sacrifice ... [which] effects the remission of sins and the punishment for sins.”<sup>165</sup> This view is to be rejected for two significant reasons: (1) Jesus was clearly speaking in a metaphorical sense while offering the bread and the cup. “The bread was in his hand but it was distinct from his body.”<sup>166</sup> (2) The book of Hebrews declares that Christ’s sacrifice took place only once and needs never to be repeated (Heb 9:25–28). His sacrifice is final and complete.

Martin Luther taught, and the Lutheran church teaches, consubstantiation. Rather than holding that the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ, they hold that the body of

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<sup>165</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 412–13; quoted in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 992.

<sup>166</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 993.

Christ is present “in, with, and under” the bread in the same way that magnetism is in a magnet. To affirm this viewpoint without denying the reality of Christ’s presence in heaven, Luther taught the ubiquity of Christ’s human nature. In other words, he taught that Christ’s human nature is omnipresent, but he had no support for this viewpoint from Scripture. The consubstantiation view is rejected because “it too fails to realize that Jesus is speaking of a *spiritual* reality but using *physical* objects to teach us.”<sup>167</sup>

The viewpoint held by most Protestants today is that the elements of the Lord’s Supper symbolize the body and blood of Christ and also his spiritual presence among us (Matt 18:20). Because of the nature of this ordinance, Protestants affirm that only those who place their faith in Christ should receive the elements. Some Protestants hold that only baptized Christians should participate in communion. Since communion represents a believer’s continuance in the faith, it is better not to deny their participation but to urge them to be baptized as soon as possible. It is also important that participants engage in self-examination (1 Cor 11:28). In doing so, believers spiritually examine their conduct and their relationships with other members of the body of Christ to see if that behavior and those relationships reflect the character of Christ.

Scripture gives no clear direction as to who should administer the sacrament of communion or how often it should be offered. It seems appropriate for a responsible leader, such as a pastor or elder, to administer the elements in the context of a church congregation. It would also speak “more clearly of our unity and spiritual equality in Christ if both men and women ... assisted in distributing the elements of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>168</sup> If carried out in such a way that believers can engage in self-examination, confession, and worship, then communion could take place every week for the edification of the body.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Close class with a quiet communion service. After distributing the elements, offer a time for personal examination, and then read 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 aloud. Pause after verse 24 to take the bread, and again after verse 25 to take the cup. Close this time with a brief prayer of thanksgiving.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Identify and describe the Lutheran view of the Lord’s Supper.
- Describe two things that the practice of the Lord’s Supper affirms or symbolizes.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “What Makes Something a Sacrament?” (Michael Horton)  
<http://wscal.edu/resource-center/resource/what-makes-something-a-sacrament>
- “The Remembrance of Christ” (C. H. Spurgeon)  
<http://www.reformedsermonarchives.com/sp2.htm>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 994.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 998.

## Chapter 51 – Worship

### Key Term

worship

### Key Points

- The church must worship God with our voices, in spirit and in truth.
- Worship will result in joy, edification, sanctification, and spiritual closeness with God.
- Churches must commit prayer and energy to enabling true worship of God, as this is the purpose for which all people have been created.

### Chapter Summary

“Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts.”<sup>169</sup> Worship should characterize our entire lives, but we are called to devote ourselves to singing God’s praises and adoring him in our hearts (Col 3:16). God assembled his people at the exodus for the sake of receiving their worship (Ex 7:16), and he organized Israel’s calendar around festivals of worship. In Isaiah 43:6–7, we read that God created us for his glory, and in Ephesians 1:12, we read that God has called us “to live for the praise of [Christ’s] glory.” Only God is worthy of worship (Rev 22:8–9), and we are called to worship him “in everything” (1 Pet 4:11).

True worship of God will bring about several results.

1. We experience joy and delight in God, and we enjoy a foretaste of heaven’s pleasures. The psalmist declares, “Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!... For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.”<sup>170</sup>
2. God takes delight in us and in our worship; we bring joy and delight to God’s heart (Isa 62:3–5; Zeph 3:17). The fact that God delights in our worship should encourage us.
3. We draw spiritually near to God (Heb 10:19, 22). Genuine worship actually takes place in God’s presence; in worship, we are joining with the voices of the angels and the spirits of believers.
4. God draws near to us as well (Jas 4:8). As God made himself known among his people during the dedication of Solomon’s temple, he will continue to make himself known among his people when he is pleased with the praise that they offer.
5. We are edified by God. God meets us in worship, he ministers to our hearts, he builds up our faith, and he refreshes our souls (1 Pet 2:4–5). In fact, during worship we “will often experience an intensification of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>171</sup>
6. We can expect God’s enemies—the demonic forces opposed to the gospel—to flee.
7. “Unbelievers will from time to time have the secrets of their heart disclosed, and they will fall on their face and ‘worship God and declare that God is really among you’ (1 Cor 14:25; cf. Acts 2:11).”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 1002.

<sup>170</sup> Ps 84:4, 10a ESV.

<sup>171</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1008.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 1009.

Worship is our purpose, and as such it is eternally valuable. Paul instructs us to live wisely and to make the most of the time we have by filling that time with “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord.”<sup>173</sup> In other words, if we desire to do the will of God, we should worship him. His eternal delight in our worship will never fade.

Genuine worship must take place “in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23–24). We cannot simply worship God physically but must worship him with our spirits. A genuine attitude of worship will come over us, and we will respond in true, spiritual worship when we begin to grasp God’s character and works. Unfortunately, many evangelical churches do not have true worship until after the message has drawn their hearts and minds to consider the glories of God, at which point the service ends. It is critical that we evaluate our services and times of worship to make our worship more effective. Pastors and elders will need to commit themselves to prayer for God’s blessing on worship and to teaching on the nature of worship in God’s presence. Believers will need to pursue reconciliation and unity with the other members of the body, and the church must jointly pursue personal holiness. Congregations should seek to create atmospheres that are conducive to focused times of worship, and they should seek songs that allow them to express their hearts effectively.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class with the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy.”<sup>174</sup>
- Close class with three or four worship songs, as time permits. The following are recommended:
  - “How Great is Our God”<sup>175</sup>
  - “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)”<sup>176</sup>
  - “We Fall Down”<sup>177</sup>
  - “Blessed Be Your Name”<sup>178</sup>
  - “In Christ Alone”<sup>179</sup>

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Describe three benefits of true worship.
- According to this chapter, what motivates true, spiritual worship?

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<sup>173</sup> Eph 5:19.

<sup>174</sup> This hymn can be found in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1015. A slightly updated version of this hymn, sung by Robin Mark Mandate and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx6PZ4ttGJc&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

<sup>175</sup> A contemporary version of this hymn, sung by Chris Tomlin and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CITjo9QsHaM> (accessed July 8, 2011).

<sup>176</sup> A contemporary version of this hymn, sung by Chris Tomlin and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXI9nWLSJtk&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

<sup>177</sup> This contemporary hymn, sung by Chris Tomlin and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34yPZiD8OMs&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

<sup>178</sup> Music and on-screen lyrics can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkkjC13PHs8> (accessed July 8, 2011).

<sup>179</sup> This contemporary hymn, sung by Phillips, Craig, and Dean and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWXcRVZWtB8&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).

### Other Media Sources/Websites

- “Authentic Worship” (Harold Best)  
<http://ccc138.org/article.asp?ID=769&CatName=Christian%20Living>
- “Evangelistic Worship” (Tim Keller)  
<http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/evangelisticworship.pdf>
- “The Whole Earth Is Full of His Glory: The Recovery of Authentic Worship” (R. Albert Mohler Jr.)  
[http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt\\_1998winter2.pdf](http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt_1998winter2.pdf)

## ***Chapter 52 – Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1): General Questions***

### **Key Terms**

apostle, cessationist, distinguishing between spirits, gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing, interpretation of tongues, miracle, miraculous gifts, nonmiraculous gifts, office, prophecy, speaking in tongues, teaching, word of knowledge, word of wisdom

### **Key Points**

- The Holy Spirit equips all believers with spiritual gifts, though he does not equip all equally.
- First Corinthians 13:8–13 teaches that certain spiritual gifts will cease when the Lord returns.

### **Chapter Summary**

In the OT, the Spirit enabled and gifted various people in various ways (Ex 35:30–35; 1 Sam 19:20), but the new covenant age came with a more powerful ministry of the Spirit (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 1:8; 2). In this new age, the Spirit equips believers with many gifts so that the church might fulfill its ministry as we wait for Christ’s return (1 Cor 1:7; 13:10). The NT describes a large number of gifts in six different passages (Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 7:7; 12:8–10, 28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:11); these lists are not exhaustive, and some of the different gifts seem similar in nature. In any case, God has blessed the church with a wide variety of gifts, and a healthy church will be diverse in gifting. This diversity should express itself in greater unity.

Different believers will have different gifts in different measures at different times. For instance, Paul spoke in tongues more than the Corinthian believers did (1 Cor 14:18), and he encouraged Timothy to strengthen his gifts (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). This is to be expected, as the Holy Spirit apportions gifts however he desires (1 Cor 12:11). No one person will have every gift (1 Cor 12:29–30), nor will one gift appear in every person—some believers may not be gifted in evangelism, for instance. Generally, Christians possess gifts permanently, though some gifts are naturally nonpermanent (e.g., marriage in 1 Cor 7:7). In some cases, the Spirit may temporarily give a gift for a specific need (Judg 16:28; Acts 7:55); in others, a believer may so neglect their gifts or persist in serious moral error that such gifts will be withdrawn (1 Tim 4:14; Matt 25:29).

All spiritual gifts are miraculous in that the Holy Spirit has empowered them. Some gifts seem “natural” (e.g., teaching, administration, giving), and others seem “miraculous” (e.g., tongues, healing, prophecy), yet Scripture does not distinguish between gifts in this manner. It may be harmful for us to do so if it causes believers to think that the more miraculous gifts are unlikely to occur. We should expect both, and we should expect God to work in both.

Believers should have an understanding of their own gifting (Rom 12:6–8; 1 Pet 4:10). If many members in a church do not, the leaders in that church may need to expand the opportunities available to their members for varied ministry. Believers should examine themselves, exploring their interests and talents. Often believers can engage in ministry opportunities that allow them to discover whether they have certain gifts. Paul encourages believers to pursue the gifts that result in greater edification and encouragement of others (cf. 1 Cor 12:31 with 1 Cor 14:5). Believers can seek these gifts through prayer (1 Cor 14:13), through ministry opportunities, and through the continued use of their present gifts (Lk 19:11–27). As

stated, every believer receives spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7, 11), but an individual's gifting should not be used to measure his or her spiritual maturity (Matt 7:22–23).

First Corinthians 13:8–13 deserves consideration in the cessationist debate. This passage describes a time when prophecies and tongues will cease, when what is “perfect” arrives. The purpose of this passage seems to be to point out that prophecy and tongues are imperfect gifts that fill a certain need now, but when the perfect comes, they will be rendered obsolete. Love, however, will not be made useless by this event. In all likelihood, this event is Christ's return. (1) Verse 12 seems to be clearly referring to the Lord's return, describing a time when we shall see “face to face,” and we “shall know ... as [we] have been fully known” (ESV). In other words, at the Lord's return, the imperfect gifts will no longer be necessary because we will see Jesus and our minds will not be limited by sin or corruption (Rev 22:4). (2) If Paul is seeking to demonstrate the superiority of love, it makes sense that he would argue that love will last into eternity because love is essential to God's plans for creation. (3) Paul has earlier described spiritual gifts as fulfilling a purpose until the Lord's return (1 Cor 1:7).

Some cessationists have objected that this passage does not give us a clear time when the gifts will cease, yet Paul specifies that the imperfect gifts will pass away “when” the perfect comes. Other cessationists argue that the phrase “when the perfect comes” (1 Cor 3:10) refers to the close of the canon. If the imperfect gifts are various means of revelation, then “the perfect” must also be a means of revelation. The perfect means of revelation could only be God's completed Scriptures. Hence, when the canon was closed, prophecy and tongues ceased. Nonetheless, this argument rests on the assumption that these gifts provide revelation on par with Scripture, and the NT does not seem to support this assumption. Additionally, nothing in this passage sustains the notion that Paul is referring to the “maturing of the church.” The only event that plainly fits this passage is the time of Christ's return.

Cessationists argue that if those with the NT gift of prophecy speak words that are the very words of God, then we should treat these words as Scripture; nevertheless, no noncessationist views congregational prophecy in this way. Cessationists also argue that some charismatics treat the gift of prophecy as providing personal guidance equal in authority to Scripture. Yet the improper use of a gift should not cause us to rule out the proper use of the gift. Regarding the use of congregational prophecy for guidance, noncessationists continually urge caution. Cessationists also argue that the miraculous gifts accompanied only the delivery of new Scripture, but miracles have several purposes,<sup>180</sup> and there is no evidence that miracles ceased with the death of the apostles. Even if miraculous gifts occur today with less power than at the time of the apostles, we should not oppose them. Rather, we should thank God for them. Finally, a church will have to take care not to fall into imbalance in their use of the miraculous gifts, but this risk does not mean that churches should discount these gifts.

## Pedagogical Suggestions

- Open class with the hymn “Come, Thou Almighty King.”<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> For further discussion, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 359–61.

<sup>181</sup> This hymn can be found in *ibid.*, 1048. A slightly updated version of this hymn, sung by Mike Rayson and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGRBe44AczY> (accessed July 8, 2011).

- Have a student read 1 Peter 4:10–11, then ask students to discuss the following question: “Do churches today harm themselves in being too narrowly focused on only a few spiritual gifts? If so, which gifts do they focus on, and how are they harmed?”

### **Suggested Essay Question**

- What purpose do spiritual gifts serve in the church age?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The Most Excellent Way: When Does Perfection Come?” (D. A. Carson; MP3)  
<http://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10248/1953/b27b.mp3?sequence=1>
- “Finding Your Gift” (James M. Boice)  
[http://www.tenth.org/fileadmin/files\\_for\\_download/New\\_Member\\_Articles/findingyourgift.pdf](http://www.tenth.org/fileadmin/files_for_download/New_Member_Articles/findingyourgift.pdf)

## Chapter 53 – Gifts of the Holy Spirit (2): Specific Gifts

### Key Terms

apostle, cessationist, distinguishing between spirits, gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing, interpretation of tongues, miracle, miraculous gifts, nonmiraculous gifts, office, prophecy, speaking in tongues, teaching, word of knowledge, word of wisdom

### Key Points

- The NT gift of prophecy involves spontaneous revelations that are not equal to Scripture.
- It is right to use medicine and to pray for healing; the gift of healing gives us a preview of the resurrection.

### Chapter Summary

Prophecy in the NT is “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.”<sup>182</sup> Some confusion today springs from the fact that God revealed Scripture in the OT through “prophets,” but in the NT, those who spoke and wrote God’s words receive the name “apostles.” The Greek word *prophētēs* had taken on a broad range of meanings and did not connote someone who spoke God’s very words (Titus 1:12). Several passages give us reason to believe that NT prophets did not speak with the authority of Scripture (cf. Acts 21:4; 21:10–11 with Acts 21:32–33). Elsewhere, Paul instructs believers not to despise but to test prophecies (1 Thess 5:20–21), and even to submit prophecies to group evaluation (1 Cor 14:29–38). Finally, the apostles often urge believers to closely heed Scripture (2 Tim 2:15–16; 2 Pet 1:19–20), but they do not give similar instructions regarding prophecies. It seems better not to speak of prophecy with phrases such as “Thus says the Lord,” but rather, “It seems like God is bringing this to mind.”

NT prophecy involves a spontaneous revelation; God presses something on the mind of a believer, and he or she feels compelled to share it with the congregation (1 Cor 14:30–31). Such prophecy differs from teaching in that Scripture routinely treats teaching as having greater authority. For example, Paul tells Timothy to teach his instructions rather than to prophesy them (1 Tim 4:11; 6:2).

This view of prophecy may seem too subjective to some, but its subjectivity may provide a helpful balance for Christians who are overly “objective.” One must seek Scripture as well as listen to the Lord for guidance and prompting.

Generally, NT prophecy includes all types of edifying content (1 Cor 14:3, 25), and many in the congregation can participate in building up the body in this manner (1 Cor 14:31). Paul even tells believers to make this gift our earnest desire (1 Cor 14:39). If a church decides to begin integrating this gift with greater frequency, it should do so with prayer, careful teaching, much patience, and encouragement of those who have been using the gift already. At the same time, the church should take care to reemphasize the greater value of Scripture as the very words of God.

The gift of teaching is “the ability to explain Scripture and apply it to people’s lives.”<sup>183</sup> We find many mentions of this throughout the NT (Acts 15:35; 18:11; 1 Tim 6:2–3), and during

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<sup>182</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1050.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 1061.

the NT age, such teaching was based on the OT (Rom 15:4) as well as on the teachings of the apostles (2 Thess 2:15).

Paul also mentions the gift of miracles, or acts of power (1 Cor 12:28). This might include deliverance from harm (Acts 5:19–20; 28:3–6) or triumph over demons (Acts 16:18). In any case, these works glorify God and help the church.

The gift of healing addresses a need that arose because of the fall. In the atonement, Christ guaranteed our complete physical restoration, so healing miracles seem to be a foretaste of the joys of resurrection. These healing miracles can confirm the gospel message, help the sick, remove hindrances to ministry, and glorify God. While praying for healing, we should also willingly use medicine; it is a gift of God that medicine exists, but it would be wrong to trust doctors instead of trusting the Lord (2 Chron 16:12–13). It is right to pray that medicine would be especially effective (2 Kgs 20:7), but when medicine is unavailable, God can certainly still heal (Lk 4:40; 8:43–44).

The NT shows healing miracles taking place through the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and prayers of faith (Lk 4:40; Mk 6:13; Jas 5:14–15). As we pray for healing, we are declaring that we think it is God's will to heal, and this seems to be a right mindset given Jesus' compassionate healing ministry. We should pray for healing (Jas 4:2), and we should recognize both that God sometimes heals and that he does not always heal. If he chooses not to heal, we can continue to thank and glorify him because we know that he works even great sickness out for our good and his glory (Rom 8:28).

The gifts of tongues and interpretation hint at our full future unity. The gift of tongues is simply "prayer or praise spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker."<sup>184</sup> Because of this, those who speak in tongues speak to God (1 Cor 14:2, 28). Paul's comments make it clear that prayer in tongues involves the spirit but not the mind (1 Cor 14:14–15) and that such glossolalia is self-controlled rather than wildly ecstatic (1 Cor 14:27–28). If no interpretation is available, Paul instructs believers to refrain from speaking in tongues publicly (1 Cor 14:27–28), but if interpretation is available, then this communication becomes valuable and edifying to the church (1 Cor 14:5). Not every believer will speak in tongues (1 Cor 12:30), but Paul encourages those who do that they cannot unknowingly curse Jesus while communicating in tongues (1 Cor 12:3). Romans 8:26–27 may also describe this gift.

Paul also describes words of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 12:8). Some define these gifts as being remarkably similar to prophecy, but these are most likely nonmiraculous. Rather than describing a believer receiving spontaneous revelation, these are probably describing a believer with nonmiraculous wisdom or knowledge in a situation.

Finally, Paul mentions the gift of discerning between spirits (1 Cor 12:10). This is the ability to recognize whether a person is being influenced by the Holy Spirit or by demons. Such a gift may also enable a believer to distinguish between various kinds of spirits (Lk 13:11; Acts 16:16; 1 Jn 4:6).

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read 1 Corinthians 12:7–11.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another on their responses: "If we pray for God to heal a headache and then take ibuprofen, we prove our lack of faith in prayer."

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 1070.

- Ask students to discuss the following question: “Why does Scripture have more authority than phrases or thoughts that God brings to your mind through the Holy Spirit?”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Describe the difference between the NT gift of prophecy and the work of OT prophets.
- What common methods of healing do we find used in the NT?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Prophecy and Tongues: Pursuing What Is Best” (D. A. Carson; MP3)  
[http://thegospelcoalition.org/resources/a/prophecy\\_and\\_tongues](http://thegospelcoalition.org/resources/a/prophecy_and_tongues)

## **Part 7 – The Doctrine of the Future**

### ***Chapter 54 – The Return of Christ: When and How?***

#### **Key Terms**

eschatology, general eschatology, imminent, maranatha, parousia, personal eschatology, second coming of Christ

#### **Key Points**

- Christ will return in a visible, audible, physical, personal manner, but we cannot know when he will return.
- It is possible but unlikely that all of the signs preceding Christ's return have been fulfilled.

#### **Chapter Summary**

In contrast to the personal eschatology of chapters 41 and 42, the remaining chapters will focus on general eschatology. This chapter will address Christ's second coming by first detailing the aspects on which evangelicals agree and then exploring one area of disagreement: the timing of his return.

All evangelicals agree that Christ is going to return suddenly in a visible, audible, physical manner (Matt 24:44; Heb 9:28; 1 Thess 4:16). His return dominates the message of the NT, and the passages describing it cannot be read as implying a mere spiritual return (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:16).

In addition, evangelicals agree that we ought to eagerly await the Lord's return (Rev 22:20; Titus 2:12–13). Unfortunately, as believers get caught up in the cares and worries of the world, this deep longing decreases; we can find a helpful indicator of our own spiritual health in the degree to which we long for Christ's appearing. Even as we anticipate his return, we should still commit ourselves to long-term projects; we have no idea when he will return, but we can live in a state of readiness and be engaged in using the talents that he has given us (Matt 24:44; 25:15–30).

Evangelicals also agree that we cannot know when Christ will return (Matt 24:44; 25:13). Jesus declared that he himself does not know (Mk 13:32–33)! Hence, we can discount any attempts to set dates or years or seasons as incorrect and pointless. Various religious groups (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses) have made predictions, and every single one has been wrong. What is worse, many people who believe these predictions begin to withdraw from their lives and ministries, and great harm can result in the lives of these individuals.

All evangelicals agree that Christ's return will result in judgment on the wicked, reward for the people of God, and eternal life with Christ for believers. The triune God will reign and receive worship forever, and all sorrow and suffering and sin will be no more.

Christians disagree over the nature and length of the great tribulation and the millennium, whether Christ will return before or after the millennium, whether there will be a secret pretribulational rapture of believers, and how God will bring about the salvation of Israel. Even so, people with these various views still affirm the inerrancy and authority of Scripture. These

eschatological questions remain of secondary importance, though continued, gracious study of them will help the church to gain greater unity.

The question on which evangelicals disagree is this: Could Christ return at any time? An overwhelming number of passages in Scripture predict a sudden, unexpected return.<sup>185</sup> If we had no NT passages about signs preceding Christ's return, we would conclude that the answer to our question is, "Yes, absolutely." Was John wrong when he prophesied that the Lord would return soon (Rev 22:7, 12, 20)? Did Jesus wrongfully teach that he would return quickly after his ascension? None of the passages necessitate this interpretation, and John likely spoke with the same prophetic foreshortening common to all biblical prophets. In any case, the Lord has his own view of time (2 Pet 3:8–9).

In spite of the passages mentioned above, several other texts describe signs and events that must come first. The gospel must be preached to all nations (Mk 13:10). A great tribulation must take place (Mk 13:7–8, 19–20). Many false prophets must arise with signs and wonders (Mk 13:22). The skies must fall apart (Mk 13:24–25). The Antichrist must arise (2 Thess 2:1–10). Israel must experience a great turning to Christ (Rom 11:12, 25–26). In fact, if we did not have the NT passages describing Christ's sudden return, we would conclude that the answer to our question is, "No, not yet."

As we look at these passages, we have two options. We could say that Christ could not return at any moment. However, this view seems to quash the force of Christ's warnings to live in readiness for his return, and it treats the signs in a manner that decreases rather than increases our eager expectation. This does not seem to be Christ's intent (Lk 21:28). Our other option is to say that Christ could return at any moment, but then we must reconcile the apparent tension in these passages. We could decide that Scripture describes two separate returns—a secret rapture of believers and a later victorious return—but the passages do not clearly teach this. We could say that every sign has been fulfilled and Christ could return right now, but this is not convincing on a review of the passages. Or we could say, and this text will affirm, that "it is unlikely but possible that the signs have already been fulfilled."<sup>186</sup>

In fact, the gospel may have been preached to all nations (Col 1:5–6, 23), but many tribes and language groups still have not heard of Christ. The great tribulation may have occurred during the Roman siege of Jerusalem (AD 66–70), yet Christ describes a greater tribulation than anything that has ever taken place or ever will (Mk 13:19–20), and the last century has produced countless disasters that exceed that of the Jewish War. Many false prophets may have arisen and performed signs and wonders, but Christ's words seem to predict a widespread and popularly convincing manifestation of this activity. The language used to speak of the heavens falling apart may metaphorically refer to the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70), but Christ speaks of his own, literal return in these heavens; it seems better to treat them as real meteorological occurrences. Nero (or Hitler, or Stalin) could have been the Antichrist, but he died. Israel may have experienced the promised, extensive turning to Christ for salvation, but it is doubtful, and some have argued that Romans 9–11 does not promise any such large, future salvation for Israel.

On review, apart from the signs in the skies, it is possible though unlikely that these signs have already been fulfilled. Moreover, the heavens can certainly shatter just before Christ's return. Therefore, we can say that it is possible though unlikely that Christ could return at any moment. We cannot know, and we must be ready.

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<sup>185</sup> For a list of these passages, see *ibid.*, 1095–96.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 1100.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read Matthew 24:14. Ask students to discuss the following questions: “In light of this verse, what must happen before Christ returns? How should this verse affect the priorities of the church?”

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What are some signs that must take place before Christ returns?
- What are three aspects of Christ’s return about which all evangelicals agree?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “When Will the Kingdom Come?” (George Eldon Ladd, chap. 9 in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*)  
[http://gospelpedlar.com/articles/Last%20Things/GK/gk\\_ch9.html](http://gospelpedlar.com/articles/Last%20Things/GK/gk_ch9.html)

## ***Chapter 55 – The Millennium***

### **Key Terms**

amillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, great tribulation, historic premillennialism, midtribulation rapture, millennium, postmillennialism, posttribulational rapture, posttribulational premillennialism, premillennialism, pretribulational rapture, pretribulational premillennialism, rapture

### **Key Points**

- Scripture seems to teach that Christ will establish a literal, earthly, millennial reign at his return.
- Scripture does not clearly teach that Christ will rapture believers before the great tribulation.

### **Chapter Summary**

Revelation 20:1–10 describes a millennial reign of Christ, and the church has held varying views on the nature and length of this “millennium.” Amillennialism interprets this passage as a description of the church age, in which Christ has greatly reduced Satan’s power and during which believers who have died now reign with Christ in heaven. This age will continue until Christ returns, resurrects the dead, glorifies believers, and judges the wicked. Postmillennialism holds that because of the spread of the church and considerable Christian influence on society, the church age will transition into a millennial period of peace and righteousness. This millennial period will last for a long time, and then Christ will return, resurrect the dead, glorify believers, and judge the wicked. In essence, postmillennialism maintains that the gospel has power to change lives and transform societies.

Historic premillennialism asserts that at the end of the church age, and after a period of severe tribulation, Christ will return to initiate his millennial kingdom. Dead believers will rise again, all believers will receive resurrection bodies, and all will reign with him. Satan will be bound until the end of this time, then he will be released; he will gather together living unbelievers, and they will attempt to battle against Christ. Christ will crush his enemies, resurrect the wicked for judgment, and lead his people into the eternal state. Pretribulational premillennialism holds to this same series of events, but it argues that Christ will secretly gather his people to himself at the beginning (or in the middle) of the period of great tribulation. After seven years of tribulation, Christ will return to the earth to establish his millennial reign. This view remains popular among dispensationalists who desire to preserve a distinction between the church and Israel.

Amillennialists present several arguments: (1) only one, obscure passage (Rev 20:1–6) seems to teach a literal, future millennial reign, (2) Scripture only seems to teach one bodily resurrection (Jn 5:28–29; Dan 12:2), (3) it seems impossible that glorified believers and sinners could live together in the millennium, (4) it seems impossible for the wicked to persist in sin in the face of the glorified Jesus Christ, (5) a millennial reign has no clear purpose, and (6) Scripture seems to describe the resurrection, judgment, and re-creation of the universe as occurring at the same time. In response to the first, Scripture needs to state something only once for it to be true, and the passage is straightforward from a premillennial viewpoint; and in fact, many other passages seem to teach a future period greater than the current age but still short of

the glory of the eternal state (Isa 11; Zech 14:5–21). To answer the second, Scripture does not teach only one resurrection; in fact, Revelation 20:6 speaks of “the first resurrection,” implying a second. The other passages (Jn 5:28–29; Dan 12:2) do not rule out the possibility of two resurrections. As for the third argument, Jesus did live in his glorified body for forty days among sinners, as did many OT saints (Matt 27:53). To answer the fourth, even one of Jesus’ disciples persisted in sin in the face of Jesus’ ministry; sin is not rational. In response to the fifth, God may have many purposes for such a millennium, such as demonstrating his righteousness and his design for earthly society. Ultimately, amillennialism cannot adequately incorporate Revelation 20.

Postmillennialists also present several arguments: (1) the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) seems to teach that the whole world will eventually fall under the power of the gospel, (2) parables of the kingdom of God point toward this same likely dominion of the gospel, and (3) the world seems to be becoming more Christian. The first and second arguments cannot hold because Christ never indicated the extent of the spread of the gospel or the kingdom. We can agree that they will spread and grow, but we cannot know that they will triumph over the whole world. To answer the third claim, we need only to point out that the world is also becoming much more evil; in fact, many passages in Scripture deny the core of the postmillennial viewpoint (Matt 7:13–14; 24:21–30; 2 Tim 3:1–5).

This text affirms historic premillennialism. In support of this view: (1) the OT contains several passages describing a period that surpasses this current age but still contains some sin, rebellion, and death (Isa 11; 65:20; Zech 14:5–21; Ps 72:8–14), (2) the NT also seems to describe the millennial period in passages other than Revelation 20 (Rev 2:26–27; 1 Cor 15:23–25), (3) the binding of Satan seems to imply a greater restriction of his activity than anything we now experience (cf. Rev 20:2–3 with 1 Pet 5:8), and (4) Revelation 20:4–5 most likely describes resurrected believers reigning in a future kingdom after the advent of the Beast (Rev 13:1–18).

Will Christ secretly return and rapture believers to himself prior to the great tribulation? Those who hold such a view maintain that it would be inappropriate for believers to remain on earth during the outpouring of God’s wrath, that Jesus promises a rescue in Revelation 3:10, that Christ’s victorious arrival at the end of the tribulation leaves no enemies on earth during the millennium, and that this view makes his imminent return possible. In response, not all of the suffering during the tribulation results from God’s wrath, Jesus’ words to the church in Philadelphia do not apply to the universal body of Christ at some future date, Christ can defeat his enemies without actually killing all of them, and other views also allow for Christ’s return to take place at any moment. In fact, against the pretribulational view, we should note that the NT never clearly promises a secret rapture. First Thessalonians 4:16–17 instead seems to describe a very public gathering of believers. Moreover, some passages directly link the end of the tribulation and the Lord’s return (cf. Matt 24:29–31 with 1 Thess 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:51–52). Finally, the NT does not explicitly teach that Christ will return twice.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by asking a student to read Mark 13.
- Provide the following Agree/Disagree statement, and allow students to interact with one another in their responses: “God usually protects believers from suffering, so we can expect that he will remove believers from the earth before the great tribulation.”

- Question 4 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (p. 1136 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider the positive and negative effects of a pretribulational rapture view. Have students discuss this.

### **Suggested Essay Question**

- Identify two reasons from the text for rejecting a pretribulational, secret rapture of believers.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “The End of History—The Moral Necessity of Eschatology” (R. Albert Mohler Jr.)  
<http://www.albertmohler.com/2008/06/09/the-end-of-history-the-moral-necessity-of-eschatology/>
- “Three Millennial Views: A Chart” (The Reformed Reader)  
<http://www.reformedreader.org/mchart.htm>

## ***Chapter 56 – The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment***

### **Key Terms**

annihilationism, conditional immortality, eternal conscious punishment, final judgment, great white throne judgment, hell, judgment of the nations, universalism

### **Key Points**

- Believers and unbelievers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ; believers will be rewarded, and unbelievers will be condemned.
- Unbelievers will suffer eternal, conscious punishment.

### **Chapter Summary**

John describes a future judgment of believers and unbelievers (Rev 20:11–15), and other passages teach the reality of this final judgment (Acts 17:30–31; Rom 2:5; 1 Cor 4:5). Those who hold a dispensational viewpoint argue that there will be three different judgments. At the “judgment of the nations,” Christ will determine who enters the millennial kingdom (Matt 25:31–46). At the “bema seat judgment,” Christ will determine and distribute rewards to believers (2 Cor 5:10). At the “great white throne judgment,” Christ will condemn unbelievers (Rev 20:11–15). This text, however, views these passages as describing a single, final judgment. In fact, Matthew 25:31–46 describes punishments remarkably similar to those in Revelation 20:11–15. This final judgment will take place after the millennium (Rev 20:1–11).

At the final judgment, Christ will judge the living and the dead (2 Tim 4:1; Acts 10:42; Jn 5:26–27). Unbelievers will stand and receive judgment, which includes degrees of punishment (Rev 20:12–13; Lk 12:47–48; 20:47). At that time, God will judge unbelievers for every wrong deed or word (Eccl 12:14; Matt 12:36).

Believers will also stand judgment (Rom 14:10–12; Matt 25:31–46). At this time, God will give various rewards to believers (Rev 11:18); he will not condemn us (Rom 8:1). Scripture even indicates that he will not bring our sins to light at that time (Mic 7:19; Ps 103:12; Isa 43:25; Heb 8:12). As with the punishments for unbelievers, the rewards for believers will also vary in degree (1 Cor 3:12–15; 2 Cor 5:10). There is no indication, however, that believers will enter the eternal state with any less than complete joy; believers who receive greater reward will devote themselves entirely to God’s worship, just as will those who receive lesser rewards (Rev 4:10–11).

Angels also will face judgment (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6), and we will participate in judging them (1 Cor 6:3). Indeed, believers will participate in judging the world (1 Cor 6:2; Rev 20:4; Matt 19:28).

Though at death believers enter into God’s presence and unbelievers enter into punishment, God has established a final judgment to display his glory before all mankind. All people will witness his justice and his mercy, his righteousness and his grace. This final judgment will be perfectly just; God will display no partiality (1 Pet 1:17; Rom 2:11; Rev 19:1–2).

The doctrine of the final judgment gives us confidence that justice will occur; “all accounts will be settled and all will be made right.”<sup>187</sup> Because of this, we can freely forgive

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 1147.

those who harm us (Rom 12:19). If God will bring about the final judgment, we do not need to take revenge for the injuries we have suffered, nor do we need to persist in bitter resentment. We can trust the just Judge of the world to do what is right (1 Pet 2:22–23; Gen 18:25). Additionally, the fact of the final judgment should encourage us to live holy lives full of good works (Matt 6:20).

In connection with the final judgment, Scripture clearly describes hell as “a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.”<sup>188</sup> Jesus describes hell as unending (Mk 9:43, 48), and he describes those in hell as conscious and suffering (Lk 16:22–24, 28). John refers to it in Revelation 14:9–11 as a place of torment and restless suffering; in Revelation 19:3, he says that its smoke rises forever.

Those who hold to annihilationism argue that the sufferings of hell will come to an end at some point. They maintain that God will destroy the wicked (Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 5:3; 2 Pet 3:7), that a loving God would not punish people eternally, that a just God would not punish temporal sins eternally, and that the existence of suffering, evil people in hell would diminish the glory of the new universe. However, the destruction of the wicked does not necessarily mean that the wicked cease to exist. In addition, if we can affirm that a loving God punishes the wicked in hell even temporarily, why could we not affirm that he punishes them eternally? Both present a tension with our understanding of God’s reconciling love, but the idea that unbelievers receive no punishment (immediate annihilationism) presents a much more significant problem. In fact, it would encourage the wicked toward more wickedness while they lived. Moreover, a sin against God is not temporary or limited; his glory and holiness are inconceivable, and the extent of the hatefulness of sin is also inconceivable. Finally, unpunished sin would diminish the glory of God in the new creation.

As God triumphs over evil at the final judgment, we will glorify his justice and mercy (Rev 19:1–3; Rom 9:22–24). For now, this doctrine will prompt great sadness in us (Rom 9:2; Ezek 33:11), “yet we must also realize that whatever God in his wisdom has ordained and taught in Scripture is right.”<sup>189</sup>

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- Open class by showing the video “MSNBC Host Makes Rob Bell Squirm: You’re Amending the Gospel so that It’s Palatable.”<sup>190</sup> After showing this video, ask the class to discuss whether the doctrine of hell overrides the doctrine of God’s love.

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- What should believers expect at the final judgment?
- The text describes some influences that the doctrine of final judgment should have on our lives. Identify three of these.

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Living Like There Is Hell to Pay” (Chris Davis)  
<http://www.whittonavenue.org/2011/03/living-like-there-is-hell-to-pay/>

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 1148.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 1152.

<sup>190</sup> This video is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg-qgmJ7nzA> (accessed July 8, 2011).

- “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (Jonathan Edwards)  
[http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/edwards/edwards\\_angry.html](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/edwards/edwards_angry.html)
- “How Does Hell Glorify God?” (James M. Hamilton Jr.)  
<http://www.9marks.org/ejournal/how-does-hell-glorify-god>

## ***Chapter 57 – The New Heavens and New Earth***

### **Key Terms**

heaven, new heavens and new earth

### **Key Points**

- After judgment, God will remake the heavens and the earth.
- We will dwell in the new creation in our resurrection bodies.
- The new creation will be a place of perfect peace and joy in God's presence.

### **Chapter Summary**

After the resurrection and the final judgment, God will welcome us into the “full enjoyment of life in the presence of God forever.”<sup>191</sup> We will not merely “go to heaven”; we will live in a renewed creation (Isa 65:17; 2 Pet 3:13). In this renewed creation, God will join heaven to earth, and we will live in his presence forever.

In speaking of heaven, we describe that place where God “most fully makes known his presence to bless.”<sup>192</sup> God is present everywhere at all times, but Scripture often describes heaven as the place where he reveals his glory and receives our worship (Isa 66:1; 1 Pet 3:22). Heaven is not a mindset or a way of thinking; it is an actual place, even though we cannot sense it with our natural perceptive faculties. Scripture speaks of it as the place to which Jesus ascended (Acts 1:11), and Jesus speaks of it as a place that he is preparing for his disciples (Jn 14:2–3). After the final judgment, God will remake the heavens as well as earth. Romans 8:19–21 tells us that creation will be “set free from its bondage to corruption” (ESV). Disagreement remains between scholars as to whether we look forward to the renewal of this present creation or to an entirely new creation. Given God's declaration of this creation as “very good,”<sup>193</sup> it seems preferable to affirm that God will renew this creation. We will live within this new creation in our resurrection bodies, which God will make perfect and incorruptible (1 Cor 15:50–55). These physical bodies will again be “very good,” and we will be able to fulfill those purposes for which God created us. Because we will have physical bodies in a new physical creation, Scripture speaks of eating and drinking in God's presence (Rev 19:9) and of trees and rivers in the city of God (Rev 22:1–2). While it is impossible for us to know the details of the new creation with certainty, we can affirm that we will likely carry on many physical activities for the glory of God. In addition to this, we will not do these activities in a timeless state, but we will instead experience an unending succession of moments. For instance, Revelation 22:2 speaks of a tree that bears fruit “each month.” As created beings with a “start date,” we will never experience timelessness.

This hope—the hope of our resurrection into a new heavens and a new earth—should give us strong motivation to store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth. In Matthew 6:19–20, Jesus says simply, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

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<sup>191</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1158.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Gen 1:31.

“This new creation will be a place of great beauty and abundance and joy in the presence of God.”<sup>194</sup> Revelation describes the heavenly city as a beautiful, holy city, radiant and colorful, free from evil and full of God’s glory (Rev 21–22). In this city, we will enjoy God’s personal presence, and we will be his people (Rev 21:3–4); we will even see his face (Rev 22:4). We will join the saints and sing “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”<sup>195</sup>

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

- If possible, have students memorize Revelation 21:1–4 before class, then have them recite this to each other at the beginning of the class session.
- Question 6 in the “Questions for Personal Application” (p. 1165 in *Systematic Theology*) asks us to consider what we think we will feel when we finally stand in God’s presence and see him face-to-face. Have students discuss this question.
- Close class with the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy!”<sup>196</sup>

### **Suggested Essay Questions**

- Why does this chapter deny that we will experience timelessness in the new creation?
- Why does this chapter affirm that God will renew the present creation rather than destroy and make an entirely new creation?

### **Other Media Sources/Websites**

- “Praise, One of the Chief Employments of Heaven” (Jonathan Edwards)  
<http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/praise.htm>
- “Heaven: Not Just an Eternal Day Off” (Anthony Hoekema)  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/juneweb-only/6-2-54.0.html>

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<sup>194</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1163.

<sup>195</sup> Rev 4:8.

<sup>196</sup> This hymn can be found in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1015. A slightly updated version of this hymn, sung by Robin Mark Mandate and including on-screen lyrics, can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx6PZ4ttGJc&feature=related> (accessed July 8, 2011).