

L LORD

OF HEAVEN & EARTH:

*LESSONS ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER
OF THE GOD OF SCRIPTURE*

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LORD OF HEAVEN & EARTH: Lesson Notes

****Class participants can prepare for each session by reading through the lesson notes and being prepared to discuss the Thought Questions in class****

LESSONS

1. TOTHEPRAISEOFHISGLORY

A lesson on Christian theology as a basis for praise to God

2. ETERNAL POWER & DIVINE NATURE

A lesson on the results and limitations of recognizing God in nature

3. MAKER OF HEAVEN & EARTH

A lesson on the identity of God revealed in the act of creation

4. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

A lesson on the transcendent nature of God

5. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A lesson on the immanent character of God

6. HOW LONG, O LORD?

A lesson on God and the problem of evil

7. THE GOD OF ISRAEL

A lesson on the story of Yahweh, Israel, and the blessing of the world

8. GOD WITH US

A lesson on the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth

9. FATHER, SON & SPIRIT

A lesson on the Trinity revealed in salvation

10. ALPHA & OMEGA

A lesson on the God who makes all things new

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LESSON 1: TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY – Christian theology as a basis for praise to God

❖ Defining & Defending Theology

- THEOLOGY is inherent to the life of every Christian.
- Good Theology results in PRAISE of the Living and True God.
- Bad Theology results in IDOLATRY.

❖ Approach

- God can be known by means of his 'self-revelation.'
- There are four identifiable sources of theological knowledge. All of these bring something to bear on what we know about God.
 - SCRIPTURE – the controlling source of all knowledge of God, as the inspired revelation from God himself in 66 books of the Old and New Testaments
 - TRADITION – the activity of the church to reflect upon Scripture to foster spiritual growth and maturity
 - RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE – an accumulated knowledge about God based arising through first-hand encounter with life
 - REASON – human mental capacity to process life experience
- Authority of Scripture
 - Scripture reveals God's reality and activity, not human projections.
 - The Unity of Scripture is constituted by its overarching narrative of the creation and redemption of God's world.
 - Scripture is the truthful and inspired Word of God.
- God is known by his attributes, actions, and aims & purposes. The lessons in this class will attempt to know God by his activity in the world as revealed in Scripture.

❖ Final Considerations

- 'Theology Proper' studies God as God; other aspects of theology fall within this.
- Similarities and Differences between Theology and 'Doctrine'
 - Example: 1 Cor. 15:3-5 is the fact of what is taught (Doctrine); 1 Cor. 15:20-22 is the theological assertion which gives weight to the teaching
- Theology as using accommodative language
 - Example: God as 'Father' is an appropriate metaphor for God because of all the positive qualities of fatherhood that God retains. However, some attributes of human fatherhood do not apply to God (e.g. 'gender' or 'domination')

❖ Themes & Goals

- The major theme of the class is the biblical motif of the Heavens and the Earth as a figure for the fellowship between God and humanity. Goals of the class should help draw this theme out:
- Introduce basic concepts for understanding who God is (and who he is not!)
- Recognize both the transcendent nature, and relational character of God
- Understand the aims and purposes of God for his Creation
- Renew our devotion to God as Trinity
- Give purpose to our vocation as the bearers of God's image to the world

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❖ In Praise of God

- Ephesians 1:3-14

❖ Thought Questions

- One classic definition of theology is 'Faith seeking understanding.' Why is it important that people of faith seek to understand that faith?
- How would you summarize the term 'revelation?'
- What might we learn differently (or additionally) about God from understanding his purposes for, and actions in, the world than we might learn by understanding his divine attributes?