

Outline

Lesson 4 –Theology: Who is God?

I. Introduction – Theology – Who is God?

- A. Theology: The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God
- B. The Ultimate Source of Truth – Colossians 2:2-3 “Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
- C. Westminster Confession – trying to capture the infinite essence of God’s nature

II. What is Eternal Life?

- A. Scriptural emphasis on eternal life – Luke 18:18, John 3:16, John 4:13-14, John 5:24, John 5:39-40, John 6:27, John 6:54
- B. “Now this is eternal life...” John 17:1-3 “...that they may know you...”
- C. Spurgeon’s and Paul’s perspective – “I want to know Christ...”
- D. God’s perspective – Hosea 6:6, Jeremiah 9:23-24 ...that he knows me...”
- E. Connection between knowledge of God and knowledge of self

III. Meaning of Names

- A. Names of God – El Qanna – A jealous God – Deuteronomy 4:23-24, Zechariah 8:2, Exodus 34:14
- B. Jacob, Abram, Moses, Simon, Saul, John, Jesus
- C. Your name – Your identity in Christ and as a child of God

IV. The Attack

- A. The Battle – 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself against the knowledge of God...”
- B. On God – His nature, His character
- C. On His Word – Throughout history men have tried to destroy God’s Word
 - 1. Jesus Seminar – democratic voting process on God’s Word
 - 2. Ezekiel 22:26-28 – “...her priests have done violence to my law...”
 - 3. Joram and Jehoram – Unraveling a supposed conflict – Can you trust the Word of God? – “The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings”

V. Conclusion – God’s word can be trusted

- A. 1 Peter 1:24-25 “...the word of the Lord stands forever.”
- B. Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active...”

Lesson 4 - Theology

Introduction



Having explored the concept of truth itself and examined the biblical view of human nature – two basic issues that *had* to be settled before we could move on to the present discussion – Dr. Tackett now takes us to the eastern point of the compass and proceeds to lay the third and most important foundation of our "Truth Temple:" *Theology*, or that branch of study and investigation that grapples with the question, "Who is God?" *Knowing God*, he argues, ought to be our passion and our highest goal; for until we look upon *His* face, we cannot rightly know ourselves or begin to grasp the meaning of our existence in the world.

Themes

Knowing God is absolutely central to the meaning of human life, for it is only in the context of intimate, personal relationship with Him that we experience *eternal life*. At the same time, there is no assignment more daunting, no task more demanding, no challenge more overwhelming, than that of seeking to understand the being, nature, character, and attributes of the eternal Creator, who is Himself the ultimate source of all truth (Colossians 2:3). So impossibly huge is this endeavor that we could not hope to tackle it at all except for the fact that He has graciously *revealed* Himself to us in His Word. Apart from this *revelation*, mankind gropes and struggles in the darkness to piece together even the most flawed and rudimentary concept of God.

In line with this thought, R. C. Sproul asserts that ours is an era in which the knowledge of God has been *eclipsed* – not completely destroyed, but *obscured* and *shadowed* by lies and misconceptions. Given this situation, it is essential that we establish two main points: 1) that God exists; and 2) that the Bible, the vehicle of His self-revelation, is utterly reliable. Following Sproul's lead, Dr. Tackett uses a significant portion of this tour to respond to attacks that have been leveled against God's Word over the course of history (another aspect of the *Cosmic Battle*). He answers the objections of Voltaire, Robert Ingersoll, and liberal theologians such as Julius Wellhausen and the members of the Jesus Seminar. He also illustrates the Bible's historical accuracy by helping us resolved an apparent scriptural discrepancy concerning the dates of King Jehoram's reign.

But the heart of this episode's message hits much closer to home. For in the end, Dr. Tackett makes it clear that we cannot truly know ourselves until we have begun to know God in the fullness and richness of His multifaceted nature and character – not only as the God of mercy and grace, but also as the God who is a consuming fire, *jealous* for the purity of the covenant relationship (*El Qanna*). When this knowledge dawns upon us, we can expect two things to happen. First, the revelation of God's character will, like a mirror, reveal things to us about ourselves, so that we, along with the prophet Isaiah, are compelled to cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5). But then secondly, as He raises us out of our despair and shows us who we are and who we can be *in Him*, we will be granted the gift of a *new name* – a whole new concept of our being, our identity, and our purpose in life *with God*. Once again, the fruit of this experience will be personal transformation.

Points to Watch for

During the course of this tour, the theme of the *Cosmic Battle* is revisited several times and from a number of different angles. As in the first three episodes, Dr. Tackett consistently returns to the point that fallen man *resists* the truth, and that, as Christians, we are thus called to "cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself *against the knowledge of God*, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man, says Dr. Tackett, has a tendency "play fast and loose" with God's Word, *not* because he is seriously interested in ascertaining the facts about biblical history, but because he is unwilling to face up to the convicting power of divine revelation as it applies to his personal life. In the final analysis, God's Word is the main thing standing in the way of "self-actualization" as it is promoted by the gurus of contemporary culture. Some students may find it difficult to accept this idea.

The Truth Project - Lesson 4 Theology: Who is God?

How can one define or describe God? It is like trying to define eternity.

The answer is we can't completely. The amazing thing is that the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, creator of the universe has chosen to reveal Himself to us.

Theology: the study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God.

The Cosmic Battle Key Verses

"... Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col 2:2-3 (NAS)

The Ultimate Source of Truth

The **ultimate source of all truth** is the nature, character, being and attributes of **God Himself**

Nothing that is **true** can **contradict** the Nature of God.

How does the world respond to the question – who is God?

Not an easy question. "It depends on which worldview you use to frame the answer".

Westminster Confession

"There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory;...most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."

An attempt to answer the question: Who is God?

R.C. Sproul: The knowledge of God has not been **destroyed** but rather **eclipsed** in our day.

What keeps us from understanding that God is really who He says He is? Our passion should be to remove the filters which hide who God is – in our lives and in the lives of others.

What is Eternal Life? - John 3:16

Jesus spoke on the subject on many occasions

John 3:12-15

Luke 18:18

John 4:13-14

John 5:24

John 5:39-40

John 6:27

John 6:54

John 17:1-3

John 17:1-3

¹After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³**Now this is eternal life: that they may know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Jesus is not just the clinical knowledge of God – Intimate relationship

Knowing Only?

We are talking about the relationship,

The social order,

The personal communion

And the objective, real relationship

That exists between God and man.

Eternal life is bound up in our relationship with Him.

John 5:39-40

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that **by them you possess eternal life**. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

Not clinical knowledge – a relationship is necessary. Jesus is not demeaning the Scriptures; He is stating that they stopped there.

Spurgeon's Perspective

"The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the doings, and the existence of the great God which he calls his Father."

Paul's Perspective

Philippians 3:8-10

⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

God's Perspective

Hosea 6:6 (NAS)

⁶For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the **knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (ESV)

²³Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴but let him who boasts boast in this, **that he understands and knows me...**"

My Journey

Jehovah shalom

Jehovah Jireh

Sovereign

Holy, Holy, Holy

Immanuel

The Vine

El Qanna –Deut 4:23-24

"...For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a **jealous** God."

What does it mean for God to be jealous? I thought jealousy was not a good thing?

This is what the Lord Almighty says:" I am very **jealous** for Zion; I am burning with **jealousy** for her."

Zechariah 8:2

Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, **whose name is Jealous**, is a jealous God."

Exodus 34:14

El Qanna – zeal that arises when sin threatens a covenant relationship. We should be like our Father

Names Mean Something

Jacob (supplanter) changed to **Israel** (strives with God) - Gen 32:28

Abram (father of height) changed to **Abraham** (father of a multitude) - Gen 17:5

Moses (taken out of the water)

Simon (hearing) changed to **Peter** (rock)

Saul (demanded) changed to **Paul** (little)

You shall name the child **John** (God is Gracious) - Luke 1:13

You shall name Him **Jesus** (Savior)

Hungering For God

Psalms 42:1-2

¹ As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...

Gazing upon the face of God.... We not only begin to know Him but also begin to know ourselves

This is what transforms us. ...and it came through the Word of God.

Should we be surprised then that it is the character of God and the Word of God that is under the fundamental attack from the world, the flesh, and the devil?

The Attack

II Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension **that sets itself up against the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

R.C. Sproul: - "...we have to address two main points...We need to establish the existence of God and the trustworthiness of Scripture." If we can do both, 90% of the work of defending Christianity would be solved.

It should not be surprising that these two areas are what is under attack.

The Attack On God

His Nature...twisting, distorting, denying, ignoring

And His Word...accusing, demeaning

Attack on God's Word

All attempts to...

extinguish,

suppress,

discredit,

destroy,

dilute,

deny,

ignore

...

By all the powers...

empires,

religion,

philosophy

science,

academia,

judiciary,

...

- All have failed

Can you think of any other book that has had as many attacks as the Bible?

Yet it still exists as the number one selling book in the world.

Attack on God's Word

Voltaire (1776)

"100 years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." - (100 years later his home was used as a warehouse for the distribution of Bibles in Europe)

In 1778 - "It took 12 men to start Christianity; one will destroy it." (That same year he died)

Attack on God's Word

Robert Ingersoll: "In 15 years I will have this book [the Bible] in the morgue."

(15 years later, Ingersoll was in the morgue. A pastor purchased Ingersoll's desk and spent his life writing sermons on it.)

The claims to destroy the Bible have all failed

1 Peter 1:24-25

²⁴ "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵but **the Word of the Lord stands forever.**"

Julius Wellhausen - Father of "Higher Criticism"

Documentary Hypothesis: "JEDP"

Attempt to get the world to believe that the Scripture was just the works of man evolved over time and cannot be trusted

Moses didn't write the Pentateuch. Many authors evolved over time.

Led to much "liberal" theology.

Jesus Seminar 1985 – Started with 30 Biblical scholars

We will examine Scripture and determine if Jesus really said what Scripture records as His words.

The Colored Beads:

Red: Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it (That's Jesus)

Pink: Jesus probably said this (Sure sounds like Jesus)

Grey: Jesus did not say this, but the ideas contained in it are close to his own (Well, maybe)

Black: Jesus did not say this; it represents the perspective or content of a later or different tradition (There's been some mistake)

They voted

The Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6:

Our Father (red) in the heavens, (black)

Your name be revered, (pink)

Impose your imperial rule, (pink)

Enact your will on earth as you have in heaven. (black)

Provide us with the bread we need for the day. (pink)

Forgive our debts (pink)

To the extent that we have forgiven those in debt to us. (pink)

And please don't subject us to test after test, (gray)

But rescue us from the evil one. (black)

According to the Jesus Seminar 82% of the words of Jesus were not actually spoken by Him.

Ezekiel 22:26-28

²⁶ Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷ Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. ²⁸ Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says'-when the LORD has not spoken.

A Personal Crisis:

How true is Scripture?

2 Kings 8:16

2 Kings 1:17

2 Kings 3:1

Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings – Edwin Thiele

1. The two kingdoms used different means of dating
 - A. Judah used the accession year
 - B. Israel used the dating of the world
2. Use of co-regency

Do we **really believe** the **Scriptures** to be the **Word of God**?

Why So Fierce?

Hebrews 4:12, 13 (ESV)

¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Do not be surprised when the world attempts to rip away the validity of the Word of God.

May we hunger and thirst for the Word of God resulting in us drawing nearer to God's revelation to us. We would begin a life-long quest to know Him.

Key Terms – Lesson 4

Deism: The belief that God created the universe and has since assumed no control over life, exerted no influence on nature, and given no supernatural revelation.

El Qanna: A name of God: "For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14). See also Deuteronomy 4:23-24 and Zechariah 8:2

Eternal Life: To know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent to earth. A deeply personal and intimate relationship. See John 17:3.

Jesus Seminar: Started in 1985 in Berkley, California, by Robert Funk and thirty-five other liberal New Testament scholars. The Seminar,--which now includes about 100 members--meets twice a year to debate technical papers. At the close of debate on each agenda item, members vote using colored beads to indicate the degree of authenticity of Jesus' words or deeds.

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918): A 19th century German liberal scholar who suggested the Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD), which theorizes that the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) was not written by Moses but evolved over time and was compiled from at least four sources written by various authors. Numerous scholars have refuted the theory.

Pantheism: Belief that God and the material world are one and the same thing and that God is present in everything; pantheism sometimes entails belief in many deities. A form of spiritual naturalism.

Theism: Belief that God created and governs humans and the world.

Theology: The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God.

Westminster Confession of Faith: A confession of faith drawn up by the 1646 Westminster Assembly, which remains a standard of doctrine within many Protestant churches. The full confession took more than five years to complete and provides advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government, and discipline for the church.

Why Not Start With God?

I have been asked this question a number of times. We attempted to answer it in the DVD, but it was way too brief, and it demands a more detailed response.

We actually began with God in Tour 1. If you recall, we were dealing with the critical importance of truth, examining the very clear declaration by Jesus that the reason He was born was to testify to the truth. We established the reality that the primary battle that rages around us and within us is the battle between truth and lie. We then made the point that the ultimate source of truth is the very character, nature and being of God, and that the forces of evil, in reality, are ultimately arrayed against who He is. It was in this context that we pointed out that all of our tours were going to follow one central theme: "gazing upon His face".

In Tour 2, we took note of the two presuppositions of our worldview: 1) that God exists and 2) that He has revealed Himself to us. That revelation, through His creation and through His Word, provided for us the fundamental answers to all of the critical philosophical questions of life. We examined, in contrast, the wandering futility of those who attempt to answer those questions without Him and the deep ethical consequences of that position. We paused briefly to look at the nature of God to discover that His laws are not capricious, but an expression of His character.

In Tour 3, we spent most of our time dealing with man, who he really is, the state that he is in, and the true solution to His problem. We began with God's creation of man, the separation that occurred between God and man at the Fall, the glorious work that Christ undertook to redeem us from the curse of death, and the promised glory that awaits those who are His. We ended by noting the inability for those who deny God to have any basis for ethical notions or even ethical language. The problem of evil is a greater problem for those who stand opposed to the reality of God than for us.

In fact, every tour will focus upon God. In Tour 5, we will deal with Science. But we will begin with the reality that the heavens declare His glory and that all of science is meaningless without the beginning notion that we live in a rational, ordered universe rather than a random, purposeless one. In Tour 6, History, we will gaze upon the Sovereignty of God to comprehend that we are part of His larger story and not just one of a billion other pitiful creatures fighting to make our own little script successful. Tour 7 through 12 will take us on a fascinating tour that will examine one jewel after another, each pointing to some aspect of God's nature.

So, we did begin with God and we will end with God. And we will look upon Him everywhere in between. But, to be honest, Tour 4 comes after one, two, and three, primarily because we live in a culture that has so bought the lies of the world, that we are not able to deal directly with the question "who is God" without some preparation. As the Old Testament priests underwent a lengthy ritual before they entered the Holy of Holies, so too, we must often prepare our hearts and minds before we engage this awesome question.

In the end, my prayer is that we will daily ask this question and daily seek its answer: "Who are you, O Lord?"