



## **Introduction to Systematic Theology**

Textbook: Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem

### I. Definition of Systematic Theology:

A. Any study that answers the question, “What does the whole Bible say to us today about any given topic” (--John Frame, RTS)

1A. Theology is the study of God in general and in particular what the Bible teaches on any given topic

2A. Every Christian does “Systematic theology”

B. Relation to other disciplines

1. Exegesis

2. Biblical theology (emphasis on historical development, individual authors)

3. Historical theology

4. Philosophical theology

5. Apologetics

6. Ethics

II. Why should we study systematic theology?

A. The basic reason: To obey the Great Commandment and to obey the Great Commission

C. Other benefits

1. Helps us overcome sinful ideas and actions

2. Helps us make wise decisions

3. Helps us grow as Christians (Col. 1:9-10; 1 Tim. 4:6, 6:3)

III. How should Christians study systematic theology? (= how should we study Scripture?)

A. With prayer (Ps. 119:18; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 1:17-19; Note on meditation on Scripture: Ps. 1:2)

B. With humility (1 Pet. 5:5; Jas. 1:19-20, 3:13, 17-18; 1 Cor. 8:1)

C. With reliance upon the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:11-15)

D. With submission to Scriptures absolute authority (Matthew 5:17-20, Hebrews 4:12)

E. With reason

1E. “We are free to use our reasoning abilities to draw deductions from any passage of Scripture as long as those deductions do not contradict the clear teaching of some other passage of Scripture” (Isa. 55:8-9; Ps. 139:6; Rom. 11:33-34)

2E. Paradox is acceptable in systematic theology (“a seemingly contradictory statement that may nevertheless be true”); (inevitable with finite understanding)

3E. Contradiction is not acceptable (Ps. 119:160)

F. With complete dependence upon accurately interpreting the Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15)

IV. More important / less important doctrines

A. Does it affect other doctrines?

B. Does it affect people’s faith, Christian life?

C. Is it central to the gospel?

D. Does it promote love among brothers?

E. Does it empower us to go and make disciples?

## VII. Relationship between doctrine and life

A. Sound doctrine is a necessary part of Christian maturity (Eph. 4:12-14; Titus 1:9, 2:1-6,10; Col. 1:9-10, 29; 1 Tim. 6:3)

B. False doctrine harms the church, turns people away from the faith (Titus 1:11, Rom. 1:18, 21, 25; 1 Tim. 1:5-6, 10, 4:1, 6:20-21; Acts 20:27)

C. Truth always sets us free and transforms our lives (John 8:30-32, 2 Timothy 3:15-17)

## VIII. Presuppositions for studying Systematic Theology

1. God's Word is fully inspired and completely true. It is the final authority on all matters to which it speaks
2. The God of the Bible is the one true God
3. God in His very nature is infinite and incomprehensible. We know what we can know about God because He has revealed it
4. God has not revealed everything there is to know about Him but what He has revealed, He has done so for the purpose that we may know Him, be transformed to be like Him and obey Him

5. God's revelation finds its epicenter and coherence in the person of Jesus Christ
6. All truth is understood accurately only when it is seen through its reflection of and congruence to Christ
7. God's revelation is rational and reasonable. Even though this is true, because of sin we can only accurately know God's revelation through the new birth and the illumination of the Spirit.
8. We come to understand God's revelation as we rely upon the Spirit, prayerfully seek the Lord and diligently study His Word
9. The accurate study of Scripture should always take into account the use of language, literary genre, historical context, authorial intent and the historical development of doctrine
10. A doctrine is true when it is supported exegetically, exalts Christ and the gospel and produces godliness in the lives of those who believe and obey