

Systematic Theology: The study (logos) of the Divine (Theos) organized in self-consistent, comprehensive categories that correspond to God's revelation of Himself.

Outline of Our Sessions

Session 1: Revelation, Reason, God (Berkhof 1-8); Session 2: Creation and Man (Berkhof 9-13)

Session 3: *Christ and Redemption* (Berkhof 14-22); Session 4: Church, Mission, Eschatology (Berkhof 23-30)

I. Christ

- A. Human Nature - Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures. He is the "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15) who was born of the virgin Mary. He was truly human, sharing the nature of sinful humanity, without the guilt of personal sin.
- B. Divine Nature - Jesus is the incarnate God, the Second Person of the Triune God. He is truly God, possessing all of the attributes of the invisible God in His divine nature.
- C. One Person - Jesus Christ the Lord is one person with two natures, human and divine. His two natures are still part of His everlasting reality, now with a glorified human nature.
- D. Death-Resurrection-Ascension - Jesus submitted to Torah in a faithful, sinless life. He gave Himself in His physical death on the cross of Golgotha as the reconciling, substitutionary sacrifice, satisfying the just wrath of God. In this He became the ransom to free His people, and thus was the victor over sin, death, and Satan. In doing so, He demonstrated God's love toward His people. He was raised on the third day, the first day of the week, and then after equipping His apostles, ascended to the right hand of the Father. He baptized and empowered His followers with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. From His throne He rules heaven and earth and empowers His people through the Holy Spirit by means of Word and Sacrament to accomplish His will in creation. His rule within and by means of His people is the Kingdom of God.
- E. Return - Jesus came in power and glory ending the Old Creation world in Jerusalem in 70 Anno Domini.. After all the nations shall be made disciples of Jesus, He will appear again in power and glory. In the last day there will be a bodily resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous and a final judgment to eternally dispose of free, personal creatures, whether spiritual beings (angels) or men. The justified shall live with Him forever in sinless glory and the condemned shall suffer just torment according to their evil. At this point we shall not be far from the beginning of all things. Then there shall be a renewed and wondrous cosmos for the never-ending purposes of God to further reveal His glory and further bless His people.

II. Salvation

- A. Christ's Faithfulness - The faithfulness of Jesus resulted in His atoning murder on the cross. The death of the righteous, sinless Christ liberated the cosmos for the glorious revelation of the sons of God. God raised Jesus bodily from the dead, thereby, defeating our final enemy, death. Jesus' ascension provides for our union with Him in heavenly rule.
- B. Community Faithfulness - The salvation available in Christ through union with Him in the Church is certified in baptism and renewed in communion. Salvation is not only an individual relationship with a person and the Triune God, but also a corporate relationship of Christ and the Church. Salvation is ordinarily realized by each person in the bounds of the covenantally objective people of God, requiring corporate worship, prayer, sacraments, and service.
- C. Believer's Faithfulness - God, according to His own purposes, determines whom to enlighten spiritually among spiritually dead persons with His Spirit, resulting in a response of faith. Faith in Jesus applies His righteousness in life and death to believers through union with Him in His body. resulting in justification, adoption, and glorification. The faithfulness of believers is a response to the work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit renewing a believer's life. Followers of Christ are called to live in obedience to the Law of God (i.e., the moral precepts of Scripture). Obedience to the moral claims of Scripture before faith or after faith are not the basis of salvation, but the result of union with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Conscious dependence on the Spirit of God is the means of a life of faith, obedience,

Session 3: Overview of Systematic Theology

and holiness. The glory of God is man fully alive and the glory of man is seeing the Father, through the Son, and in the life of the Holy Spirit (Irenaeus).

- D. God determines the earthly life of all creatures and has permitted carnal death since the fall of Adam. Those united to Christ in His death and resurrection shall all be raised to life and immortality. Yet, the bodily death of those in Christ before the day of resurrection results in the separation of body and soul. The souls of those in Him are immediately received into His presence while their bodies rest in death until the final day of life in the resurrection.

Quotes from Berkhof:

It is best to say that the atonement is rooted in the love and justice of God: love offered sinners a way of escape, and justice demanded that the requirements of the law should be met, John 3:16; Rom. 3:24-26

It is customary to distinguish a twofold obedience of Christ. His active obedience consists in all that He did to observe the law in behalf of sinners, as a condition for obtaining eternal life; and His passive obedience in all that He suffered in paying the penalty of sin and discharging the debt of His people.

Reformed Churches on the other hand believe in a limited atonement. Christ suffered and died for the purpose of saving only the elect, and that purpose is actually accomplished. Christ not merely made salvation possible but really saves to the uttermost every one of those for whom he laid down His life, Luke 19:10; Rom. 5:10; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:7.

When we speak of common grace, we have in mind either (a) those general operations of the Holy Spirit whereby He, without renewing the heart, exercises such a moral influence on man that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted; or (b) those general blessings which God imparts to all men without any distinction as He sees fit.

Moreover, it should be said that regeneration in the most restricted sense of the word, that is, as the implanting of the new life, is a direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit. It is a creative work in which for that very reason the word of the gospel cannot very well be used as an instrument. It may be said that Jas. 1:18 and I Pet. 1:23 prove that the word of preaching is used as an instrument in regeneration, but these passages refer to regeneration in a broader sense, as including the new birth. In that more inclusive sense regeneration is undoubtedly wrought through the instrumentality of the Word.

Regeneration, as the implanting of the new life, precedes internal calling, and internal calling precedes regeneration in the broader sense, or the new birth. We find the greater part of this order indicated in the record of the conversion of Lydia, Acts 16:14, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us (external call); whose heart the Lord opened (regeneration in the restricted sense) to give heed to the things which were spoken by Paul (internal call)."

Justification may be defined as that legal act of God by which He declares the sinner righteous on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is not an act or process of renewal, such as regeneration, conversion, or sanctification, and does not affect the condition but the-state of the sinner. It differs from sanctification in several particulars. Justification takes place outside of the sinner in the tribunal of God, removes the guilt of sin, and is an act which is complete at once and for all time; while sanctification takes place in man, removes the pollution of sin, and is a continuous and lifelong process.

Sanctification may be defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which, He purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works.

Sanctification naturally leads to a life of good works. These may be called the fruits of sanctification. Good works are not perfect works, but works that spring from the principle of love to God or faith in Him, Matt. 7:17, 18; 12:33, 35; Heb. 11:6, that are done in conscious conformity to the revealed will of God, Deut. 6:2; I Sam. 15:22; Jas. 2:8, and have as their final aim the glory of God, I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23. Only they who are regenerated by the Spirit of God can perform such good works.