

WHAT IS ESSENTIALS?

- A. “Essentials” is a course for teenagers and above. It is an introduction to Reformed doctrine (teaching).
- B. “Essentials” is a course of systematic instruction concerning:
 - a). The Knowledge of God,
 - b). The Doctrine of Scripture, and
 - c) The six main sections of Christian Doctrine:
 - 1) Theology (lessons 1-7)
 - 2) Anthropology (lessons 8-11)
 - 3) Christology (lessons 12-17)
 - 4) Soteriology (lessons 18-23)
 - 5) Ecclesiology (lessons 24-27)
 - 6) Eschatology (lessons 28-30)

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The knowledge of God is *precious*.

A. The Knowledge of God *generally*.

1. **The knowledge of God means, first, that God knows Himself as a personal, willing, thinking, and conscious Being**
 - a. God knows Himself perfectly, and He knows all things outside of Himself (I Cor. 2:10-12).
 - b. In knowing Himself perfectly, God delights in Himself as the highest and sole good.
 - c. Only if God knows Himself can He make Himself known to others. An impersonal force cannot make itself known to others so that they can know it.
2. **God, as a thinking, knowing Being, made man as a rational, moral creature in His image so that He would know Him**
 - a. Men, unlike animals, are conscious and self-conscious personal beings.
 - b. As originally created, man knew God with the knowledge of personal delight.
 - c. But man sinned and no longer knows God, or even desires to know God.
3. **Man cannot be happy without the knowledge of God which he has lost by sin.**
 - a. No other knowledge—e.g. science, philosophy, or art—can bring satisfaction to the soul of man.
 - b. Man has lost the precious knowledge of God and is miserable, but yet he constantly flees from the knowledge of God and suppresses it—he knows that there is a God but he hates him.

B. The Knowledge of God *specifically*

1. **The knowledge of God is not merely *intellectual* knowledge (dead orthodoxy)**
 - a. It is much more than a collection of *facts* about God.
 - b. Intellectual knowledge—concepts and doctrines—is *part* of the knowledge of God (e.g. Jer. 9:23-24 speaks of a knowledge of *understanding*), as we are called to love God with our “*mind*” (Matt. 22:37).
 - c. But, there is a danger in a merely “intellectual” knowledge of God. What is it? Pride. The subject is so lofty that a man can be carried away in pride by what he knows.
2. **The knowledge of God is not merely *emotional* knowledge either (mysticism)**

- a. Some, in rejecting cold intellectualism, go to the opposite extreme of mysticism. For them, the knowledge of God is “secret whisperings of the Almighty” or “fuzzy, spine-tingling feelings.”
 - b. There is definitely a “warmth” about the knowledge of God. It is the knowledge of a personal God, and it produces joy and other emotions. We love God with our “*heart*” (Matt. 22:37).
 - c. But, there is a danger in a merely “emotional” knowledge of God—such people, who embrace this, tend to reject doctrinal knowledge altogether. Emotions are purely subjective and change like the weather. They are, therefore, not a firm foundation to base truth upon.
- 3. But the knowledge of God in Scripture is the rich idea of *intimacy, love and fellowship***
- a. This is the knowledge of *the covenant*. The essence of the covenant is “friendship,” so when the Bible speaks of knowing God it refers to the personal knowledge which only close friends enjoy.
 - b. Close friends desire to disclose themselves to one another, to open up to one another, and not to have secrets. A striking example of this is found in Gen. 18:17-19.
 - c. Close friends desire to learn and know about one another as much as possible. God knows us thoroughly, more than we can ever know ourselves—He knows our sins and weaknesses—but we only *begin* to know God. If we are truly His friends, we desire to know Him more and more.
 - d. Close friends know one another with the knowledge of experience. Read a biography of the Prime Minister and you will know something *about* him, but you have never met him and you certainly do not *know* him. You have never *experienced* him. But God says, not just know *about* me, but know *ME*.
 - e. Close friends know one another with the knowledge of *love*. They seek one another, delight in each other’s company, and give themselves to one another.
- 4. In this light, we are speaking of the covenant with GOD—friendship with GOD and knowledge of GOD**
- a. This is not friendship between equals. This is knowledge which must lead to worship, to holy reverence, and to awe.
 - b. This is knowledge which humbles us—the more we know God, the more we are amazed that God would condescend to know us.
 - c. This is practical knowledge—the more I know of God, the more I serve Him, the more I love Him, and the more I desire Him. If such knowledge does not lead me to love, serve and desire God, it is that knowledge which puffs up. We must never lose sight of this.
- 5. The knowledge of God is *necessary* knowledge**
- a. It is above all things *precious*. Without this knowledge we perish and are destroyed (Hos. 4:6). This knowledge is eternal life (John 17:3). Ignorance of this knowledge is death. We may be ignorant of many things, but ignorance of the knowledge of God is fatal.
- 6. It is *true* knowledge**
- a. In knowing God, we know Him as He truly is—not, of course, as He knows Himself, but as He truly is. Our knowledge of God is not a different kind of knowledge than the knowledge God has, but is a finite measure. We will never know God as He knows Himself.
 - b. Our knowledge of God *must be accurate*. All false doctrine is an attack on the knowledge of God.

7. The knowledge of God is *impossible* knowledge

- a. Man cannot know God because God is infinite and man is finite.
- b. How do we know something? By examining and observing it.
- c. How do we know a personal being? Again, we could observe him or her, or we could ask him or her to tell us.
- d. But God is incomprehensible (Job 11:7-10). He dwells in inapproachable light (1Tim. 6:16). Even the angels cover their faces before His Majesty. Man is darkness, and by reason, logic, meditation, or philosophy he cannot find God (Rom. 11:33-36; Is. 40:13-18; I Cor. 2:10-11).
- e. In the next section, we shall look at how God is known (i.e. by revelation).

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW:

In the previous section, we saw that the knowledge of God is “precious” above all things:

- A. That it’s not simply a knowledge *about* God (i.e. exclusively of the mind), although this is certainly part of it.
- B. That it’s not simply an *emotional* knowledge (i.e. exclusively of the feelings and heart), although this is not absent.
- C. But is, rather, a personal, experiential knowledge of love and friendship (i.e. the covenant)

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF *REVELATION*

A. This is the only possibility because God is incomprehensible

1. God dwells in unapproachable light (I Tim. 6:16); the angels veil their faces before Him. If God hides from man, man can never find Him.

- a. God is too *high* and exalted a being for mere creatures to understand Him. He cannot be deduced logically—man’s reason will not discover Him, mathematical formulae will not prove Him, nor do philosophical “proofs” reveal Him.
- b. If you could understand God, then you would be as great as God.
- c. Man’s mind is also darkened by sin (Eph. 4:18), and he is incapable of knowing spiritual and heavenly realities (I Cor. 2:14).
- d. Man does not want to find God. “There is none that seeks after God” (Rom. 3:11)

2. There are two ways in which God reveals Himself to human beings. Specifically, there are two ways in which God reveals Himself *to us*, His people.

- a. God reveals Himself to us through the *creation*—“a most elegant book,” as Belgic Confession, Article 2 says.
- b. God reveals Himself to us through His *Word* (Heb. 1:1-3)
- c. The unbelieving world beholds the revelation of God in the creation, but this revelation, in their eyes, is only of His wrath, eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1:18, 20), and is enough to merely leave them without excuse.

B. In addition, revelation is possible because of the way in which God made man—i.e. man is a rational, moral creature, capable of receiving revelation.

- 1. Stones, trees, or brute beasts are not able to receive the revelation of God. They do not know God, and neither do they know that He is to be worshipped. They act out of instinct.
- 2. Only angels and human beings, as rational moral creatures, can know God, but because of the fall the ability of men to know anything of Him has been severely diminished.
- 3. Adam, for example, could look at all the animals, perceive what each of them revealed about God, and name them. His mind, heart and will were not corrupted by sin. It is a mistake to think that Adam was primitive. We, in comparison with Adam, are primitive.
- 4. Not even the angels in heaven can know God, unless God reveals Himself.

II. HOW DO WE KNOW GOD?

A. We begin with *special* revelation, not *general* revelation, because (as will be seen later) general revelation cannot properly be understood without special revelation.

1. **Special revelation is *God's speech to us in Holy Scripture.***

- a. As a covenant God, God is a *speaking* God. This is why the Bible so often refers to “*dumb*” idols—they do not speak.
- b. The first action of God recorded in Scripture is speaking—“And God said ...” (Gen. 1:3).
- c. As soon as God created Adam, He *spoke* to Him. Their fellowship consisted always of speaking. In like manner, our fellowship with God is our speaking to Him, and He speaking to us.
- d. Long before there was any *written* Word of God, there was the *spoken* Word of God—i.e. God spoke to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, etc. God did not command His Word to be written until the time of Moses when God's people became a nation.

2. **God's revelation in words is in a form of which we can understand, otherwise it would not be “revelation.”**

- a. Some theologians have denied this. They have said that God is so exalted above us that it is impossible for men to know Him as He really is.
- b. But, if God cannot really be known, we cannot worship Him, we cannot love Him, we cannot have fellowship with Him, and we therefore serve an unknown & unknowable god.
- c. What God reveals about Himself is true—not exhaustive, but true nonetheless.

3. **Throughout history, God spoke to His people, but it became necessary for this revelation to be written down. Hence, we have the Scriptures.**

- a. Hebrews 1:1 speaks of the various ways in which God spoke before the Scriptures were completed: “diverse manners”—which include voices from heaven, dreams, visions, signs and wonders, etc. —and “at sundry times.”
- b. But occasional messages from heaven, as wonderful as that is, are not enough, for when those who heard the voices pass away, who will know what was said, except a record be made?
- c. Now we have the complete and permanent revelation of the Old and New Testaments, according to which Christ's Spirit has led the church into all truth. ALL truth is contained in the Scriptures—we need no more and we dare not ask for any more.

4. **But even the Bible is not enough for us to know God**

- a. By nature we cannot understand the spiritual *meaning* of Scripture. God must open our understanding.
- b. The natural man, the unbeliever, can understand the words of Scripture to some extent: he understands the words and reads it as he would read any other book, but he cannot perceive the true meaning—the message itself is foolishness to him and he hates it (I Cor. 2:14).
- c. Only when the Spirit opens the heart of someone will there be true understanding (I Cor. 2:10).
- d. Thus, we cannot boast that we came to a knowledge of the truth by our own efforts (I Cor. 4:7).

5. **How are the Bible and Jesus Christ related?**

- a. A person can only know Jesus Christ through the Scriptures (John 5:39).

- b. One who does not believe the Bible can know *some* things about the historical Jesus of Nazareth, but cannot know Jesus Christ—the Savior and the Anointed of God.

B. God also reveals Himself to us by means of *general revelation*

1. Even though the Scriptures are the main source of the knowledge of God, as revealed by the Spirit, we also have revelation of God in the creation.

- a. God made the earthly a picture of the heavenly. God designed this world so that everything would speak of Him, of His glory, His Majesty, His wisdom, and His power. And the child of God sees God in the world (Psa. 19:1-2).
- b. This is why Jesus spoke in parables: He took earthly phenomena and showed how they relate to the kingdom of heaven (e.g., seeds, sheep).
- c. But we are so dull of heart that we do not even notice—we only see glimpses of the glory of God. Adam perceived it more and we will do so again one day in heaven. Then every blade of grass will reveal God to us in ways we never imagined.

2. Yet, it would be a mistake to make the two kinds of revelation equal in value. We can only understand general revelation when, as Calvin explained it, we put on the *spectacles of Scripture*.

- a. Many discard these spectacles—e.g. theistic evolution. General revelation, we are told, reveals an old earth and evolution, and the Bible teaches creation. Since both are “books of God”, we must honor both, and use the book of creation to interpret the book of the Scriptures.
- b. The opposite is true: the Bible makes God more clearly and fully known. Therefore, we use the BIBLE to interpret the book of nature. When we do, we see that evolution is false. Therefore, the interpretation of nature by unbelieving scientists is false.

C. Finally, and briefly, *God also reveals Himself to the wicked by general revelation. The heathen have some knowledge of God in nature as evidenced even in their pagan religions*

- 1. All men know that there is a God—that He is powerful and that He must be worshipped (Rom. 1:20)—but apart from this, they know very little about God.
- 2. Can the wicked use the light of nature to seek after God and by improving it attain to a saving knowledge of God? Absolutely not! (Rom. 8:5-8)
- 3. Are heathen religions a sincere attempt to seek after the true God revealed in creation? No! (Rom. 1:21-23, 25, 28)
- 4. Does God show *favour* to the wicked by giving them some knowledge in creation? No, for general revelation is a revelation of God’s *wrath* (Rom. 1:20).
- 5. Anything the wicked receive from God in creation they suppress and misuse (Canons III/A/4 & B5).

I. THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

A. What is the Bible?

Holy Scripture is the 66 books of the Old Testament & New Testament, the Word of God.

1. Which is (most) true?:

- a. The Bible *contains* the Word of God?
- b. The Bible is *a record of* the Word of God? or,
- c. The Bible is *a testimony to* the Word of God? **or**
- d. The Bible “*is*” the Word of God? [Answer: d.]

2. What is inspiration?

- a. **Negatively, inspiration is not a general influence that God has on a man**
Inspiration is not the imparting of creative genius to a man (in the sense that Shakespeare and Mozart were ‘inspired’). What do we mean when we say Shakespeare is inspired? It means that he is *inspiring*, that his words move the reader, that he is intellectually or emotionally stimulating. Many think of inspiration in that sense—e.g. “When I read the Psalms they *inspire* me.”—but, in actual fact, even if a part of the Bible does not “*move*” us (or “speak to us,” as many say) it is still **INSPIRED**.
- b. **Positively, God moved, illumined and directed certain men by the power of the Holy Spirit to write His Word**
 - 1) Inspiration is described vividly in II Pet. 1:21—
“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were **moved** by the Holy Ghost.” (N.B. the word “moved” is the same word for “driven” in Acts 27:17).
 - 2) II Tim. 3:16 says that God “breathed out” the Scriptures.
 - 3) The result of such inspiration is that we have the very Word of God.

3. Is there a human element in Scripture?

- a. Some say it must be a human book **because human beings wrote it**—e.g. “After all, it did not fall out of heaven, bound in leather, complete with maps!”—but we do not claim that it was dictated by God word for word to the human writers (that is the claim of Joseph Smith for the Book of Mormon).
- b. **Others say that the *spiritual* parts about salvation are God’s Word but the more *earthly* part (e.g. the creation account, history, etc.) are the ideas of the human writers.** But, if we cannot trust the Bible on the account of history, why believe it on spiritual matters? Besides, II Pet. 1:20-21 denies this by stating that Scripture is not of any “private interpretation,” and that its being written was “not by the will of man.”
- c. **Others say that God gave good “ideas” or “thoughts” to the people and they then interpreted them.** So, in other words, the Bible is simply *a testimony to* the religious experiences of Israel and the Apostles. We **reject** such notions—the Bible *is* the Word of God. When Scripture speaks, God speaks (see Mark 7:13; Acts 4:25; Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8; Heb. 3:7).

B. What further can we say about inspiration?

1. Organic inspiration

- a. **The word “organic” means “living.”** The Reformed use the term organic to distinguish it from mechanical. When God inspired men to write, He inspired them *as men*, not as machines, typewriters, or quill pens.

- b. **Organic inspiration presupposes God’s sovereignty and providence.** God eternally determined to write the Scriptures. He directed history in such a way that Scripture would be produced exactly as He had determined (e.g., God shaped Moses, his life, his personality, to prepare him to be the writer of Genesis to Deuteronomy. The same is true of David, John, Peter, etc. All write *as men*, but the end result is exactly what God intended. *The Bible is a miracle.*
- 2. **Graphic inspiration**
 - a. **The word “graphic” means “pertaining to writing.”** By graphic we mean that the Holy Spirit moved men to write, so that what was written is the Word of God.
 - b. **The Scriptures mean “the writings.” Thus Jesus insisted, “It is written ...” (Matt. 4:4)**
- 3. **Verbal inspiration**
 - a. **The word “verbal” means “pertaining to words”** so that the inspiration of the Bible includes even the word choice. That is why in Bible study and in preaching we examine the *words*, the *tenses*, the *prepositions*, the *grammar*, the *word order*, etc. All this is important. It is important, then, to have a word-for-word translation of the Bible.
 - b. **God did not simply inspire the “thoughts”** of Moses, and leave it up to him to put it into his own words. The word choice itself was determined by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:4; Prov. 30:5-6; Gal. 3:16).
- 4. **Plenary inspiration**
 - a. **The word “plenary” means “full.”** A plenary session of parliament is where all members are present.
 - b. **By plenary inspiration we mean that “the whole Bible” is inspired.** Every one of the 66 books, every chapter and verse, the historical parts, the poetical parts, the prophetic parts, and even the genealogies are all inspired (cf. II Tim. 3:15-17 [“All Scripture”] and II Pet. 1:20-21 [“no prophecy of the Scripture”].)

II. THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God?

A. Negatively, not “apart from” Scripture itself.

- 1. We do not believe that the Bible is the Word of God because of the findings of science or archaeology.
- 2. We do not believe that the Bible is the Word of God because the Church (Rome) “says so” (Eph. 2:20).

B. Positively, the Bible testifies of itself to be the Word of God.

- 1. **For proof of this, the Bible does not make an occasional claim but countless claims to being the Word of God.** Consider the number of times the prophets proclaimed, “Thus saith the Lord...,” and look up Rom. 3:2; Luke 24:44; I Cor. 14:37; Luke 1:70; II Pet. 3:15-16; I Thess. 2:13, etc.). Jesus testifies to the Bible as the Word of God; He accepted it without question.
- 2. A person cannot say, “The Bible is a wonderful book, full of lofty teachings, and Jesus is a great teacher, but the Bible is not divinely inspired.” If the Bible is not divinely inspired, it is a book of lies, and Jesus is a deceiver or deluded.
- 3. **The Bible’s own testimony is a very credible witness.** How do you know anyone wrote any given book? First, the book’s own testimony.

4. **But, in addition to that, the Holy Spirit witnesses** in the heart of the child of God that the Bible is the Word of God. The child of God reads the Bible and hears it preached and he knows that this is God's Word. The child of God knows the Author; he knows the truth of which the Bible speaks; he knows the love of God, the forgiveness of sins and the fellowship with the Father. He needs no more proof. But the Holy Spirit only testifies to the truth of God's Word by means of the Bible itself.

III. THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

- A. We have established that the Scripture claims for itself divine inspiration (organic, graphic, verbal and plenary) but this brings up the question.

Which books are inspired?

1. **Rome's position is that those books are inspired which *the Church* declares to be inspired.** But this makes the Scriptures' authority depend upon the Church.
2. **Our view is that the Bible has its *own* authority:** believers recognized the individual books of the Bible almost immediately after they were written and were circulated (cf. Belgic Confession, Article 5 ["they carry the evidence in themselves"]). Other books were rejected (e.g. The Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Judas, etc.).
3. The church made official pronouncements concerning the Canon at early councils but this was simply *confirming what believers already held* (e.g., Athanasius in 367 AD).

B. What about the Apocrypha?

"The Apocrypha" means "hidden writings". These writings are not included in the Old Testament Scriptures but recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.

Why we reject the Apocrypha:

1. Neither the Jews (Rom. 3:2), nor the Lord Jesus, nor the Apostles included them. Jesus recognized the Jewish canon (Luke 24:44; Matt. 23:35).
2. The Apocrypha, unlike the Canonical Old Testament books, was written in Greek during the "intertestamental" period, after Malachi.
3. The Apocrypha contains absurdities, historical errors (cf. Judith 1:1) and doctrinal errors (Ecclesiasticus 3:3; II Mac. 12:44-45). II Maccabees specifically denies inspiration (II Mac. 15:38).
4. The Apocrypha are therefore not inspired Scripture, but contain some useful material. However, the Apocrypha have no authority in doctrine or practice for the Christian Church.

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

A. In the last section we looked at the inspiration of Scripture

1. We saw that inspiration is *the work of God to move men whom He has prepared to write what He has revealed so that the end product is the Word of God* (“moved, illumined, infallibly directed”).
2. Scripture is not simply inspiring but is *inspired*;
3. We looked at four types of inspiration: organic, graphic, verbal and plenary.

B. We also looked (briefly) at other matters:

1. The testimony of Scripture (from itself and also from the Holy Spirit) and the Canon of Scripture.
2. Today we look at the perfections or attributes of the Scriptures. Because the Bible is God’s book it has particular characteristics. All of the perfections of Scripture we look at are derived from its divine Author.

I. INFALLIBILITY OR INERRANCY

A. These two words basically mean the same thing. “Infallible” means that the Bible “cannot err” [make mistakes]; and “inerrant” means “without error”. You could write an inerrant book but not an infallible one.

1. **We teach that the Bible contains no errors of any kind whatsoever on any subject.**
 - a. The Bible infallibly teaches us the way of salvation and the way to live a godly life, as well as all other things.
 - b. It is not true that the Bible is trustworthy only on “spiritual” matters but on all other things is fallible.
 - c. Some speak in weasel words: “The Bible is inerrant in that the writers did not intend to deceive us.” “The Bible faithfully reflects the thinking of that day.” *Honest mistakes* not cunningly devised fables!
2. **The Bible is infallible and inerrant because its Author is God.**
 - a. Human beings err when writing books, but inspiration prevented that happening in *God’s* Book.
 - b. It’s important to remember that *God* moved men to write the very words which *He* had determined before the foundation of the world, that *God* prepared men to be the instruments and that no human opinion mars the Bible (II Pet. 1:20-21).
 - c. Never, then, can we say that “*Oh, that is simply the opinion of Paul. He never shook off His primitive rabbinical prejudice against women.*”
3. **Thus the Bible is called pure truth.**
 - a. “*The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*” (Psa. 12:6) “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth*” (John 17:17).
 - b. The Lord Jesus and the Apostles accepted the historical accuracy of the Old Testament without hesitation. Consider the following passages: Matt. 19:4 (Adam); Matt. 12:40 (Jonah); Matt. 24:38-39 (Noah); Luke 17:32 (Lot).

B. Infallibility does not mean everything in the Bible is *literally* true.

1. For example, *the Bible contains a lot of poetry and other figurative language*. It speaks of the mountains skipping with joy and the trees of the forests clapping their hands (Is. 55:12); it speaks of a beast of ten horns and seven heads (Rev. 13:1). These things are true but not literally true.

2. However, much of the Bible is history and is expected to read as such. The Creation, the Flood and the miracles of the Old Testament and New Testament are such. Scripture itself determines this for us.

II. AUTHORITY

The word “authority” means “the right to rule”.

A. Because the Bible is God’s Word and not man’s opinion it has a twofold authority.

1. First, the Bible determines what a man must *believe*.

- a. The Bible determines what a man must believe *about God*. It is God’s own revelation about Himself
- b. The Bible determines what a man must believe *about Christ* and salvation (II John 9; John 5:39; II Tim. 3:15).
- c. The Bible determines what a man must believe about himself—a creature of God; now a sinner.
- d. And the Bible determines what a man must believe about earthly things insofar as the Bible has revealed something about these things. See John 3:12 concerning earthly and heavenly things.
- e. All of this is summed up in II Tim. 3:16 (“All Scripture ... is profitable ... for doctrine ...”).

2. Second, the Bible determines what a man must *do*.

- a. God determines what is right and what is wrong: righteousness and sin are His to define, and He has done so in His Word. Ethics are not the opinions of men, or the consensus of society.
- b. God determines how the Church will worship, what the Church will do (preach, sacraments, discipline).

B. *Only* the Bible is authoritative

1. **The Church is not the authority:** not the individual congregation, not the officebearers, not the gathering of assemblies (classes, synods, general assemblies, etc.), not the pope and all his theologians, etc. The Bible is authority!
2. **My opinions or feelings are not the authority:** when the Bible clashes with my opinions, my reasoning, my comforts and desires, then, the Bible must overrule. If the Bible teaches something, the Bible must be believed and obeyed, even if this means death itself (Is. 66:2). How very easy it is to allow feelings to rule.
3. **Science and human reason are not the authority:** even if every scientist in the world is against the Bible, the Bible is still true, and must be obeyed no matter what consequence.

III. THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. The “unity” of Scripture means that although it is made up of many parts it has one Author and one message. That in itself is a miracle.

1. If you asked 40+ men to write parts of a book in a diversity of languages over a period of thousands of years you would not expect there to be one main message, especially if none of these writers consulted one another.
2. Moreover, you’d expect there to be many contradictions between the different writers. But since the Bible has one Author, the Holy Spirit, we have one organic whole with one main message—Jesus Christ.

B. The one main message of Scripture is revealed progressively throughout history.

1. God does not reveal Christ in all His perfections at once; He prepares His people for Him gradually.
2. Progressive revelation is the gradual unfolding of the truth so that with the close of the New Testament Canon all has been revealed. Earlier revelation, however, is not contradicted by later revelation, but is, rather, supplemented and complemented by it.
3. Any so-called contradictions in Scripture are simply our inability to reconcile things which seem to be contradictory. Most of these can be explained by a careful analysis of the context, allowing clearer passages to explain less clear passages as Scripture interprets Scripture.

IV. THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

A. **The Bible alone is enough for the Church and the Christian to know everything necessary for salvation and a holy life (II Tim. 3:16-17 - "... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works").**

1. The Bible tells us *everything we need to know* - by searching Scripture we can define every necessary doctrine.
2. The Bible does not tell us *everything we want to know* to satisfy our curiosity, or to answer all our questions.
3. The Bible as to its *main principles* tells us everything we need to know *to guide us in godly living*; it does not tell us, e.g., whom we should marry, or what job we should take, or what we should eat for breakfast, etc.

B. **There are two main deniers of the sufficiency of Scripture: Rome and Charismaticism**

1. Rome teaches "*The Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence. Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single deposit of the Word of God which is entrusted to the Church.*"
2. The Charismatics pay lip service to Scripture but because they believe in continued revelation they deny the sufficiency of Scripture. Many Charismatics prefer experience to Scripture.

V. THE PERSPICUITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. **"Perspicuity" means "clarity". The word "perspicuous" means "something see-through", like a clear window or a pure lake. The greatest figure the Bible uses to describe its own perspicuity is light.**

1. This means that the Bible as to its main teachings is so clear that even a child or a person of lesser intellect can understand it – see Psa. 119:9 ("a young man"), 119:130 ("the simple"), and II Tim. 3:15 ("a child").
2. This does not mean that everyone can gain the same depth of understanding or that everything in the Bible is crystal clear (see II Pet. 3:16).
3. The Bible is clear and yet at the same time very profound. The simplest child can understand it, but the most experienced theologian never plumbs its depths.

B. **Denials of the perspicuity of Scripture are common.**

1. Some have simply said that the Bible is a difficult book and therefore lazy church members don't bother to study.
2. Others say that the Bible can only be understood by theologians and it would be better for the common people not to read it (Rome's view).
3. Today, we are told, that to understand the Bible you need scientists and experts in various fields (i.e. scholars).

4. All these are attempts of men to remove the Scriptures from the people and put them in the hands of experts.

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

A. In the previous section, we looked at the inspiration of Scripture

1. We saw that inspiration is *the work of God to move men whom He has prepared to write what He has revealed so that the end product is the Word of God* (“moved, illumined, infallibly directed”).
2. We looked at four types of inspiration: organic, graphic, verbal, and plenary.
3. We also looked at the perfections or attributes of Scripture, which it has by virtue of its Divine Author: infallibility (inerrancy), authority, unity, sufficiency and perspicuity (clarity).

B. In this section, we begin the doctrine of God: **Theology Proper.**

Traditionally, we divide the doctrine of God into five sections: 1) His essence, 2) His Names, 3) His Attributes, 4) His Persons, and 5) His Works. We will first look at God’s “essence”.

1. What or who is God?

- a. Can God be defined? What does it mean to “define” something? It means to place it in a category to distinguish it from other things of the same class. It is to limit it. But God *defies* definition (Is. 40:25).
- b. Do the Creeds define God? Yes – see Belgic Confession Article 1, Westminster Confession of Faith 2:1, and Westminster Shorter Catechism Q.4.
- c. The Bible, however, never defines God. The Bible simply tells us that God “is” and calls us to worship Him as He has revealed Himself (Ex. 34:6-7).

2. But what is essence or being?

- a. **The essence of something is what makes it what it is** and distinguishes it from all others. God’s being is altogether different from our being. Indeed, God is altogether “other” so that everything else is creature, and, as creatures, they derive their being from God, and depend entirely on God.
- b. **But God is self-existent:** He is infinite and independent in His being. *He “is”*. In an absolute sense we cannot really say, “We are.” We *become*, we *change*, we *depend on God*, but *God “is”* (Rom. 11:33-36; Isa. 43:18, John 8:58).
- c. The four words we use to describe God’s being are that He is a *personal* being, a *spiritual* being, a *transcendent* being, and an *immanent* being. In reality, we could call God’s personality, spirituality, transcendence and immanence “attributes” because, as we shall see, God IS His attributes, as much as He IS His Being. In this case, we will stick with the traditional theological approach.

I. THE FOUR “ATTRIBUTES” OF GOD’S BEING

A. God Is A *Personal* Being

1. What is a person?

- a. By personal we mean that God is a rational, self-conscious and conscious being. This means that God thinks, plans, wills, speaks, lives, works, and loves *within Himself*. He is an active and intelligent being.
- b. There are many denials of the personality of God: some conceive of God as a higher power, or as an abstract force (e.g. “May the Force be with you”) or as Fate or as some philosophical abstraction. Can you think of any others?

2. What in the Bible indicates that God is personal?

- a. First, God **does** the things which persons do. God *loves* sinners. God *forgives* sins - only persons do that.

- b. Second, the Bible always calls God “**he**” and never “it.” And God always calls Himself “I” or “We.”
 - c. Third, God always reveals Himself as **masculine**, never feminine. Always, Scripture gives God titles such as “Father,” “Lord,” “King,” etc. But never is the true God called “Mother,” “Lady,” or “Queen.” The Son became a *man*, not a woman. Bibles with inclusive language are to be condemned here, because only paganism has female deities (e.g. Ashtoreth; Our Lady).
 - d. Fourth, God reveals Himself through **names**. A person has names, an abstraction does not.
- 3. Why is it important that God be personal, practically?**
- a. Only if God is personal can we have fellowship with Him. Such personality is essential for the covenant.
 - b. Only if God is personal can He be worshipped. Prayer must be to a personal being.

B. God Is A Spiritual Being

- 1. “Spiritual” means that God is not physical or material. *John 4:24 & Luke 24:39.***
- a. This means that God does not have a physical body, He does not have a color or shape, and He is not limited.
 - b. **Are there other spiritual beings?** Yes. Angels are spiritual. How does God’s spirituality differ from theirs? God is an “infinite” Spirit - angels are “finite” spirits. They are not eternal, omnipresent spirits - they depend on Him for their existence. Angels are “ministering spirits” – God is their Lord and their Father (Heb. 12:9).
 - c. **Who denies the spirituality of God?**
 - 1) Pagans have gods with bodies.
 - 2) The Mormons deny it within their book, Doctrine and Covenants (“*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s, the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a Personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us*” [130:22]). This teaching that the Father is fleshly has led to the revolting Mormon teaching regarding the virgin birth. He was not conceived by the HS but “*When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost... Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven... Now, remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost*” (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, vol. I., pp. 50-51, <http://mrm.org/virgin-birth>).
 - 3) The prosperity preacher Kenneth Copeland denies the spirituality of God: “God is very much like you and me ... A being that stands around six foot two inches or six foot three inches, that weighs around a couple of hundred pounds, and has a [hand] span nine inches across”(Isa. 40:12).

2. Objections

- a. **If God is spiritual how can Jesus Christ, who is a real man, be God?** In answer to this, we affirm that the Eternal Son of God is spiritual and remains forever spiritual *as to His divinity*. At the Incarnation his divine nature did not become physical, nor was it mixed with a physical human nature. The two natures of Christ are distinct. Jesus Christ remains forever the spiritual Son of God who has assumed our human nature.

- b. **If God is spiritual why does the Bible speak of His “hands” (Ps. 32:4), His “eyes” (Ps. 33:18), etc.?** These are *anthropomorphisms*, figures of speech where a human characteristic is applied to God. Because we are human beings, and God is so high, He speaks to us in this way so we can better understand Him. God’s hand is the real hand of which our hands are dim reflections - the same applies to God’s eyes, etc. But, the Bible also speaks of the “wings” and “feathers” of God (Ps. 91:4) No fool takes those things literally.
- c. **Practically speaking, what does God’s spirituality mean for me?** First, I may not make an image of Him (Deut. 4:15-18), or conceive of Him in any way not revealed in His Word. There must be no, “I like to think of God as ...” in our thoughts, for then we become guilty of Ps. 50:21. We have no right to think of God except as He has revealed Himself. Our worship of Him must reflect His spirituality (John 4:24).

C. God Is The *Transcendent* Being

- 1. **God’s “transcendence” is His infinite and absolute *exaltedness* over His creation.**
 - a. God’s transcendence is closely linked to His sovereignty, His omnipotence and His Majesty. The Psalms are full of God’s transcendence (Ps. 113:4-6; Ps. 47:2). As the transcendent One, God is the Most High God, the High and Lofty One, the Majestic One, the One who is to be feared and worshipped (Is. 57:15; I Chron. 29:11; Heb. 1:3).
 - b. God’s transcendence is also linked to His independence. He is exalted above and more glorious than all creatures. He has no need of anyone or anything to make Him more glorious than He is or to add to His infinite blessedness (Is. 40:13-17).
- 2. **God’s transcendence is denied today.**
 - a. Pantheism denies God’s transcendence. Pantheism is the teaching that *God is the creation*. Modern-day pantheists include the “New Age” movement, the modern “ecological” movement, and the idea of “Mother Earth”. Pantheism denies that an independent sovereign God created all things and is distinct from them.
 - b. God’s transcendence is also denied practically where there is widespread irreverence for God. The modern church world does not stand awestruck before God, but brings God down to her level.

D. God is the *Immanent* Being

- 1. **The word immanent means “remaining in.”** God “remains in” His creation while being distinct from it.
- 2. God is present with His whole Being in every part of creation (Acts 17:27-28; Jer. 23:24.)
- 3. Deism denies God’s immanence.
- 4. It is necessary for the covenant, however, that God be immanent.

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

A. In the last lesson we looked at God’s essence.

1. What are the six traditional sections of Dogmatics? Answer: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology.
2. What are the five traditional sections of Theology? The essence, names, attributes, persons and works of God.
3. What is essence? Answer: Essence is being, what makes something what it is in distinction from everything else.

B. The Essence of God

1. *Personal* (a rational, conscious being of activity and intelligence, having names, and is masculine)
2. *Spiritual* (non material, invisible; may not be worshipped with images)
3. *Transcendent* (exalted over all creation—something that is denied by pantheism)
4. *Immanent* (remaining in the creation—something that is denied by deism)

I. THE NAME OF GOD IS THE REVELATION OF WHO GOD IS

A. This is not true of us although even with us there is some reflection of this:

1. **Our names are simply *labels* which distinguish us from other people.**
 - a. There is no deep meaning behind our names. You have a name because your parents thought it was a nice name. Probably it went well with your surname, etc.
 - b. Also *to name something suggests authority over it*:
 - 1) Your parents gave your name;
 - 2) A wife takes her husband’s name (feminists dislike this practice);
 - 3) Adam named the animals;
 - 4) You name your pet dog, etc.
2. **Still, our names are important.**
 - a. We do not like to have our name misspelled, mispronounced or forgotten. And how does a prisoner feel when he is stripped of his name and given a *number* instead? A name is one’s honor, one’s dignity, etc.
 - b. When a person tells his name to someone he opens up to him and reveals to him something – you do not give your name to just anyone.
3. **In the Bible names are very important. They are more than mere labels.**
 - a. For example, some people have their names changed by God Himself – e.g. Abraham (“father of a multitude”), Israel (“prince with God”).
 - b. Others have names which are very meaningful – e.g. Elijah (“My God is Jah”), Methuselah (“When He dies it shall be sent”); Ichabod (“There is no glory”).
 - c. The name of something in Scripture indicates *the very essence of something* as it is revealed to us creatures: Adam, before the Fall, had great insight into this and was able to name the animals in Gen. 2:19.

B. The Name of God Tells Us Who God Is

1. **The name of God is not a label *we* attach to Him but is *the name He gives Himself* and reveals to us.**
 - a. There is none higher than God so only God can name Himself – we have neither the authority nor the ability to name Him.
 - b. God reveals His name to us so that we can have *fellowship* with Him. How would prayer and worship be possible without knowledge of God’s name? How would you call upon an unknown God?

- c. God reveals His name to us *so that we can speak about Him and to Him with reverence*. He gives us His name so that we *use* His name. This can be illustrated by the fact that if I told you my name and you continued to refer to me with “hey, you” instead of my name I would take that as an insult. *God expects us to use His names* and to do so properly and with reverence, see Psa. 111:9).
- 2. Because God’s name is a revelation of God, God is His Name.**
- a. Thus the Bible uses God and God’s name interchangeably: Psa. 18:49, “Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and *sing praises unto thy name*;” Ps. 86:12 “I will *praise thee*, O Lord, my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.”
 - b. Therefore the Bible commands a reverent use of God’s Name in the third commandment. To blaspheme the name of God is to blaspheme God; to praise the name of God is to praise God.
 - c. Therefore when we call upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13) we do more than simply use a label; we call upon *God who has revealed Himself*. Many call upon God but do not know Him. They do not call on His name.
 - d. Jesus praying in John 17:6 that He has manifested God’s name means that *He has revealed to them who God is* - in “words” (v.8) and by His “Word” (v.17). Indeed, God has exalted His Word above His name (Ps. 138:2). One who is ignorant of God does not know His name no matter how exalted His language might be.

II. THE NAMES OF GOD IN PARTICULAR (AND WHAT THEY REVEAL ABOUT HIM)

A. GOD

1. **The name God appears in Genesis 1:1 (“In the beginning God ...”), and its Hebrew is El or Elohim.**
 - a. The name comes from a word which means “strong” or “mighty” and reveals that God is the *All Powerful One*.
 - b. The name El often appears with other combinations, e.g. El Shaddai.
 - c. The name God (El) appears throughout the Bible often in names and places, either as a prefix or suffix: e.g. Elisha, Daniel, Bethel, Michael, etc.
2. **When we hear the Word “God” we must think of the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth.**
 - a. The word “God,” or the term “My God,” should never be on our lips as a swear word or used with a loose tongue.
 - b. The words “in vain” in the Third Commandment mean “empty” or “worthless.” We must not treat God’s name as an empty thing.
 - c. We also should not use variations of the word “God”, such as “golly,” “gosh,” “gee,” etc.

B. Lord

1. **The name “Lord” (not all in capitals) means Master or Ruler.**
 - a. The word Lord refers to a master who rules over His servants, or a king who rules over his subjects, or a husband who rules over (has authority over) his wife.
 - b. The Lord in the New Testament is very often Jesus Himself. His full title is The Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:11).
2. **What do we mean when we call God or Jesus Christ “our Lord”?**

- a. When we call God “Lord” we confess that *we belong to Him* and that we are His property, both by creation and by redemption.
- b. When we call God “Lord” we confess that we are His servants over whom He has authority. As His servants we are those who obey Him (Luke 6:46). Much of the prattle in prayer, “O Lord” denies Him *when there is no obedience*.

C. LORD (all in capitals) or JEHOVAH (YHWH, Jahweh)

1. **This name derives from the verb “to be” and means, “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14).**
 - a. God’s being is of Himself. *He is*. He depends on none outside of Himself.
 - b. God never changes - He always is. This unchangeableness is nothing abstract: He is unchangeable in His promises, in His faithfulness to be the God of His people, and to give His people salvation.
 - c. Thus it was appropriate that God revealed Himself by this Name to Moses at the Burning Bush (Ex. 3). He had come to inform Moses that He had not forgotten His people in Egypt and that His covenant promises were still sure. Thus Jehovah is God’s *covenant* name.
2. **Among the Jews this name was particularly sacred or holy. They feared even to pronounce this name.**
 - a. Lev. 24:11 tells of an incident when a man blasphemed THE NAME, Jehovah (cp. v. 11 & 16).
 - b. The Jews became foolishly superstitious in this. They thought by protecting the consonants and vowels used in the word they could avoid blaspheming the name. But a man can blaspheme *the name* without even using the word.
 - c. The name Jehovah or Yahweh was the *Tetragrammaton* (the four letters). In the New Testament, it is always translated Kurios, never Jehovah. The KJV indicates the name Jehovah by LORD with all capital letters.
 - d. The name appears as prefixes and suffixes – Jo- and -iah (e.g., Zachariah, Josiah, Joshua, etc.)
3. **The name JEHOVAH never appears in the New Testament because Jesus is *Jehovah Salvation*.**
 - a. The name Jesus means “Jehovah Salvation,” and throughout the New Testament, Jesus is the revelation of God as Savior and Lord. He also takes the divine name in John 8:58 (“Before Abraham was I AM”).
 - b. Jesus has the name which is above every name (Phil 2:9-10; cp. Isa. 45:22-23). By His name all men must be saved (Acts 4:12). In His name men pray and receive forgiveness of sins (John 15:16; Luke 24:47).
 - c. The name Jesus means Jehovah Salvation. To believe in Jesus means more than believing in the five letters J-E-S-U-S – it means to believe in the revelation of who Jesus is (which is the *biblical* idea of “name”), so that to believe in Jesus means that I believe that Jesus is the only perfect Savior who effectually saves (cp. LD 11 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*).

Introduction & Review

A. We are now in Theology proper, the doctrine of God

1. Theology proper has five parts: God’s *essence*, God’s *names*, God’s *attributes*, God’s *Persons* & God’s *works*.
2. We saw that God’s essence is: *personal* (a rational, conscious being of activity and intelligence, capable of fellowship with other persons); *spiritual* (non material and invisible, not limited by space); *transcendent* (infinitely exalted above all creation); *immanent* (present in [but distinct from] creation with His whole being).
3. God’s Name is *the revelation of who God is* (it is not a mere label, but a revelation of His Being. God’s name indicates that He is personal, and the knowledge of His name gives us fellowship with Him; His names are God (the Mighty One), Lord (the Master, Ruler and Owner to whom we belong and to whom we owe obedience), and Jehovah (the unchanging faithful covenant God).

B. In this lesson we begin the third section of Theology proper, God’s attributes.

1. We will see, first, what an attribute is, and what is special about God’s attributes.
2. We will see, second, how God’s attributes are classified or divided.
3. We will examine God’s attributes in turn so that we might better know Him and worship Him.

I. ATTRIBUTES

A. What is an attribute?

1. An attribute is the characteristic or the quality of a person or a thing.
2. Created things have attributes: e.g. a knife is *sharp*; fire is *hot*; ice is *cold*. But God’s attributes differ from the attributes, qualities or characteristics of created things.

B. God’s attributes

1. God’s attributes are not something which we attribute or ascribe to God. We do not say, “I think God is [...],” but God, rather, reveals His attributes to us in Scripture. Without that revelation we could never know them.
2. The word *attribute* does not do justice to the reality of God’s attributes. It is the word used traditionally in theology. You might say that the attribute of water is wetness, but God’s attributes are infinitely greater than that. God’s attributes are His *perfections*, His *virtues*, His *wonders*, and His *praises*. I Pet 2:9 speaks of God’s “praises” and the word there means excellent qualities or virtues.
3. The attributes of God are *essential* to His being – they are not “additions” to Him. Without His attributes He is not God. God cannot lose or lay aside His attributes – e.g. God cannot lay aside His sovereignty by “choosing to be less sovereign” to accommodate man.
4. God’s attributes are infinite perfections of His Being. They have no limit or measure. God is infinitely holy, infinitely wise, infinitely gracious, etc. God, being infinite, does not *grow* in holiness, wisdom, mercy, etc.
5. God IS His attributes. We might say that a person is wise, but God IS wisdom. We might say that a person is loving, but God IS love.

C. We classify God’s attributes so that we can better understand them. The traditional classification is “incommunicable” and “communicable”.

1. The word *communicable* means “something which can be *shared, transferred, passed on or transmitted*”, and obviously *incommunicable* means “something which cannot be shared”. There are some of God’s perfections or qualities which He *shares* with creatures and which they can therefore *display or reflect*.
2. There are limitations to this distinction. For example, how do we classify them? *Which* are communicable? Are any *really* communicable? Can God *really* communicate some [or any] of His perfections to us? For example, some theologians seem to make omnipotence and omniscience communicable attributes, whereas others would think it better to classify them as incommunicable [along with His infinity].
3. Our possession of God’s (communicable) attributes is essentially different to God’s: for example, God IS His attributes, but we simply possess some of them as a gift; God’s attributes are infinite and perfect in Him, whereas we have some of them in a creaturely measure, and we *grow* in them [e.g., wisdom].
4. Yet, this possession of some of God’s attributes is part of the wonder of our salvation. II Pet. 1:4 speaks of “being partakers of the divine nature.” And other passages speak about the image of God being restored in us, and us being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

II. INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES (Independence, Simplicity, Infinity, Immutability, Omnipotence & Omniscience)

A. INDEPENDENCE

1. **God’s independence means that He depends on no one and nothing outside of Himself (self-sufficiency).**
 - a. God is independent in His Being. No one created God. God IS.
 - b. God does not depend on any for the continuation of His existence. He has life of Himself (Is. 40:28; Acts 17:25; Rom. 11:35).
 - c. God does not need anyone or anything outside of Him to complete Him, to make Him more blessed or more glorious than He already is. No creature ever adds to Him. None gives Him something which He needed. None tells Him something which He did not already know.
 - d. This has important applications for salvation: God does not need the cooperation of sinners in salvation.
2. **It is of the nature of the creature to be dependent on the Creator, but of the Creator to be *absolutely independent*.**
 - a. God’s independence means that He has made all creatures depend on Him (Psa. 104:27). An independent creature is an impossibility. Even in heaven we will depend on God for all things.
 - b. God is the source of all existence: He created, He sustains, He governs, He gives life and He takes it away.

B. SIMPLICITY & ONENESS (UNITY)

1. **God’s Oneness & Simplicity mean that God’s essence or being is One: there is only ONE God.**
 - a. The Bible knows of only one God and God will not tolerate rivals, or others gods before Him (Is. 43:10; 44:8).
 - b. The doctrine of the Trinity is no denial of God’s oneness, because God is one *in Being*, not persons.
 - c. There can only be one God because of the incommunicable attributes of God - for there can only be one “independent” being (all other beings must be dependent); there can only be one “infinite” being (all other beings must be

finite); there can only be one “omnipotent” being (all other beings must be less powerful than He is and must derive their power from Him) etc.

2. God’s Oneness & Simplicity also mean that *God is not composed of parts, but is one unified being.*

- a. God IS His Being; God’s will is God willing, etc.
- b. God is not made up of parts so that *part* of God is holiness, *part* is love, *part* is infinity, etc. God is *infinite* holiness, *infinite* love, *infinite* power, etc.
- c. This means also (very importantly) that *all of God’s attributes are one*. God does not have one primary attribute and then lesser attributes (some say that God IS love to the expense of His other perfections), and God’s attributes in no way conflict within the Being of God. So, one attribute never overrides or contradicts or is in conflict with another attribute.
- d. This is denied widely today by men who say that God has two contradictory wills, or that His love will triumph over His holiness.

C. INFINITY

1. God’s infinity is His *limitlessness* or His *boundlessness* first with respect to time (eternity).

- a. God has no beginning and no ending; He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Isa. 44:6; Rev. 1:17), the alpha and the omega (Rev. 1:8, 22:12-13, 21:5-7).
- b. He is not bound by, limited by, or affected by time (Heb. 1:10-12; Ps. 90:1; Mic. 5:2). We become older with time but God is “The Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:13).
- c. With God there is no past or future but only eternal present.
- d. God will never cease to exist; heaven is eternal life.

2. God’s infinity is His *limitlessness* or His *boundlessness* second with respect to space (omnipresence).

- a. God is present everywhere at all times with the whole of His Being; we creatures are limited by space. Space itself is a creature of God. In eternity, before the beginning of Gen. 1, there was no space.
- b. Because of God’s omnipresence, He is not limited to temples made with hands but can be worshipped everywhere (Acts 17:24).
- c. Because of God’s omnipresence, no man can escape Him. The wicked cannot find anywhere where He is not; even in hell, God is present in His punishing wrath; and God’s people can never go anywhere where He is not; He never leaves us; He is with us wherever we are. I Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7-10.

Introduction & Review

A. Review

1. What are the five parts of Theology? Answer: essence, names, attributes, persons, works.
2. What four words do we use to describe God’s essence? Answer: Personal, spiritual, transcendent, immanent.
3. How does God’s name differ from ours? Answer: Ours are mere labels; God’s name is the revelation of Himself. His main names are God, Lord, Jehovah.

B. Attributes

1. What is an attribute? Answer: A quality or characteristic of something or someone.
2. How do God’s attributes differ from ours? Answer: His attributes are essential to Him; His attributes are perfectly and infinitely His; God IS His attributes. What alternative name to attributes: perfections, virtues.
3. Explain the distinction incommunicable and communicable. Answer: Some of God’s attributes are shared with and reflected in God’s children in a creaturely, finite way. It is part of salvation (II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:29).
4. God’s incommunicable attributes are *independence*, *simplicity* (oneness), *infinity* (eternity and omnipresence), *immutability*, *omnipotence* (sovereignty) and *omniscience*.

I. GOD’S INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES (CONTINUED).

A. IMMUTABILITY

1. **The word immutable means unchangeable and means that God does not change in His being or in His attributes.**
 - a. This means that God IS; He does not develop, change or become something different. He does not grow older; He does not become more wise, or more holy, etc. He IS infinitely and perfectly what He IS. His name Jehovah, “I AM THAT I AM” reflects this perfection of God (Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17).
 - b. Change implies imperfection: if something changes it either becomes better (so it was not perfect before the change) or it becomes worse (it has ceased by the change to be perfect).
 - c. This means, too, that God cannot be changed by something outside of Himself. “There is change around, about and outside of Him and there is change in people’s relations to Him; but there is no change in God Himself” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. II, p. 158).
2. **God’s immutability also applies to God’s will or purpose.**
 - a. Remember, that God’s will or purpose is God willing or God purposing. God’s will cannot be separated from God Himself. Since, God is immutable in His being, His is also immutable in His will (Heb. 6:17; Job 12:32; Ps. 115:3; Num. 23:19).
 - b. However, the Bible speaks of God’s repentance, and of God changing in response to the actions of men. How can we understand *this* in light of God’s immutability? Quite simply, we understand such language as describing not what happens in God but how God’s dealings *appear to have changed* in relation to His creatures. For example, Gen. 6:6 is an expression of divine abhorrence for sin; the repentance of God at the repentance of Nineveh shows

that it was never God's purpose to destroy Nineveh at this time, but the threat was the means used to stir them up to seek the mercy of God, etc. In addition, the immutability of God means that prayer cannot change God's mind.

- c. God is immutable in all of His attributes: inflexibly holy and just to the terror of the wicked, and immutably merciful and loving to the consolation of His people.

B. OMNIPOTENCE or SOVEREIGNTY

1. Omnipotence means "All powerful."

- a. God's omnipotence is His ability to rule (might) and His right to rule (authority)
- b. God possesses all power and might and authority.
- c. God's power is His ability to do all things which He wills to do which are in harmony with His nature.
- d. There are things which God cannot do: for example, God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2); God cannot deny Himself (II Tim. 2:13); God cannot die (I Tim. 1:17); God cannot become unholy, unrighteous, unwise; He cannot divest Himself of any of His attributes, etc.

2. Omnipotence also means sovereignty, His rule as King.

- a. God's sovereignty is His rule over and control of all things without exception.
- b. Because God is sovereign He is able to and *actually does* accomplish all things which He has purposed. Ps. 135:5-6; Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11).
- c. Because God is sovereign none can thwart His will. He is the supreme King.
- d. God's sovereignty is especially seen in salvation, choosing to save some, and not all, as He pleases.

C. OMNISCIENCE

1. Omniscience means "All knowing."

- a. God's omniscience is His perfect knowledge of all things, past, present and future; because He is omniscient, He never learns, He never remembers and He never forgets.
- b. When Scripture speaks of God *remembering* His people it means a regard of love, a thinking upon with favor, or an acting in accordance with a promise, e.g., God remembered Noah (Gen. 8:1); God remembered His covenant (Gen. 9:16); the dying thief asks Jesus to remember him when He comes into His Kingdom (Luke 23:42); when Scripture speaks of God *forgetting*, it means a deliberate disregard (e.g., Hos. 4:6).
- c. Since God knows all things it is foolish to try to hide from Him. All our secret deeds are open before Him; that is a terrifying thought to the wicked; but at the same time it is our comfort (Ps. 139:1-6).

2. God knows the *future* with an infallible knowledge

- a. He knows the future, not because He good at predictions as if He had a crystal ball, but because He knows exactly what He will do with His creation. Nothing surprises Him. Nothing unexpected happens which takes Him off guard. Acts 15:18 ("Known unto God are all His works from the beginning ...").
- b. God's knowledge means that He can reveal the future to His prophets. Omniscience concerning the future is unique to Jehovah. Men can guess, make intelligent predictions but only God knows with certainty (Is. 41:21-24). Think of some of the detailed prophecies of Scripture: Gen. 15:13-14; Is. 44:26-28; Dan. 7-8; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 24, etc.

- c. God's foreknowledge of His people is *not that He sees what they will do* (repent and believe) and then reacts to that, but is His knowing them in love before the foundation of the world (see Amos 3:2; Matt. 7:23; Rom. 8:29).

II. THESE, THEN, ARE GOD'S INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES.

- A. We can never become *independent*; we can never become *one and simple*; we can never become *infinite* with respect to time or space; we can never become *immutable*; we can never become *omnipotent*; we can never become *omniscient*.
- B. Our response to these attributes of God is to worship Him, for who indeed is like God?!
- C. Next week we shall look at God's communicable attributes, ones which can in the miracle of salvation be reflected in us.

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

A. Attributes

1. An attribute is a quality or characteristic of something or someone.
2. How do God’s attributes differ from ours? His attributes are essential to Him; He is perfectly and infinitely His attributes; God IS His attributes. Alternative names for attributes are “perfections” and “virtues”.
3. What is the distinction between incommunicable and communicable? Some of God’s attributes are shared with and reflected (communicable) in God’s children in a creaturely, finite way. This is part of salvation (see II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:29).

B. God’s incommunicable attributes are

1. *Independence*: that God depends on nothing outside of Himself for His being or for His continuance.
2. *Simplicity* (oneness): that there is one God; He is not composed of parts, and that He is at peace with Himself.
3. *Infinity*: God is limitless both with respect to time (eternity) and space (omnipresence).
4. *Immutability*: God is unchangeable and unchanging in His being, in His will and in His purpose.
5. *Omnipotence* (sovereignty): God possesses all power and authority and can do (and does) what He pleases.
6. *Omniscience*: God knows all things perfectly, past, present and future because He has decreed all things.

I. GOD’S COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

A. As such

1. **God gives some of His attributes to His people when He renews them after the image of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:10).**
 - a. He gives them to us in a finite way – we never become infinitely holy, wise, loving, etc.
 - b. He gives them only to His people. The reprobate never partake of the attributes of God – no totally depraved person does, because he is in the image of Satan (John 8:44).
 - c. It is part of our adoption as God’s children that *we become like Him* and begin to show forth His glorious characteristics (Rom. 8:29). But even in this life we only have a small beginning of this.
2. **Our partaking of the communicable attributes of God never makes us God, or gods.**
 - a. We remain always creatures – finite, and dependent on God. God remains God forever. Even in heaven, when we will be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, we will only ever be creatures while He remains God alone (Rev. 21:3). The lie of the devil will never be realized (Gen. 3:5).
 - b. We will never possess the incommunicable attributes and we only have the communicable ones in a limited creaturely way.

B. HOLINESS

1. The word “Holy” in Scripture means “separated” or “consecrated.”

- a. God’s holiness is *His devotion to Himself*. It is His *self-consecration* so that everything in His being and everything which He does is for His own glory. God’s Name is to be exalted above all others; God’s will is to be accomplished; God’s honour is to be sought. That is holiness. Therefore, our holiness is *our devotion to Him alone as the only Good*.
- b. God’s holiness is *His absolute purity and ethical perfection*. In Him there is no imperfection, spot or blemish; He does not sin; He cannot sin; He cannot approve of or tolerate sin (Hab. 1:13). The Bible calls God “light” (I John 1:5).
- c. The book of Leviticus especially teaches God’s holiness, and Isaiah repeatedly calls God “*the Holy One of Israel*.”

2. Because God is holy, He responds to all that which is unholy with indignation and wrath

- a. Is wrath an attribute of God? No, because God is never wrathful in Himself. God’s wrath is not His becoming angry in an emotional sense or losing His temper. It is a settled disposition *against evil*.
- b. God’s wrath is His attitude or response to unholiness. God has no pleasure in wickedness (Psa. 5:4-5).
- c. Because God is holy, and all sin (as a personal attack on Him) is an affront unto Him, there is hell for the wicked. God loves Himself and His own honour and glory – for this reason, He hates sin and sinners.
- d. Because God is holy and God’s elect people are sinners, the cross was necessary. God’s holiness was satisfied there.

3. God’s people are holy because He is holy

- a. The most common word (especially in the New Testament) to describe believers is *saints* – holy ones.
- b. God chose us in Christ to be holy (Eph. 1:4); Christ died for us to make us holy (Eph. 5:26); the Holy Spirit indwells us to make us holy. That is why He is called the *Holy Spirit* (not the “jolly Spirit”).
- c. Holiness is both positive (a consecration, devotion *to* God) and negative (a separation *from* and hatred of sin). To be holy is our calling and our great privilege. None but the elect even begin to be holy.

C. RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. The word *righteous* in Scripture means straight, upright, level or even.

- a. The idea is that something is righteous when it conforms to a given *standard*. God, however, IS the standard, and there is no standard outside of Him to which He conforms.
- b. God IS righteous in Himself - “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness” (Psa. 11:7). Everything God does is in harmony with Himself (Deut. 32:4).
- c. Because God is righteous, all His works and ways are righteous. Because God is righteous, He gives to His creatures a righteous Law and He Himself judges righteously (Ps. 96:10).
- d. God’s righteousness means that everyone who stands in conformity with His Law (which reflects God’s perfect character) will be acquitted, found not guilty and justified, and that everyone who does not conform (but deviates and is therefore twisted and perverse) will be condemned.
- e. God’s righteousness means that He rewards men according to their works and is no respecter of persons.

2. God's people are righteous

- a. We are righteous, first, *legally*. Because Christ's righteousness (His perfect record of lifelong obedience to God's commandments) is imputed to us and our sins (our unrighteousness) were imputed to Him at the cross, God accounts or reckons us to be righteous.
- b. We are also righteous in that we begin to live in harmony with the will of God revealed in His Law.
- c. The Bible, especially the Psalms and Proverbs, calls God's people *righteous* or *just* or *upright*.

D. WISDOM

1. The difference between knowledge and wisdom: wisdom is the *right application* of knowledge.

- a. God is the only wise God – He knows all things and He is able to use that knowledge with a view to His own glory, which is the highest purpose for everything (Rom. 16:27; Jude 25).
- b. God displays His wisdom in His works, using the best means to reach the highest goal. In wisdom He created all things in all their detail so that He would be glorified (Psa. 104:24; Prov. 3:19); in wisdom He planned everything in history so that He would be glorified; in wisdom He devised the way of salvation so that He would be glorified in the highest possible way.
- c. Jesus Christ IS the wisdom of God (Prov. 8:23; I Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3). The cross is God's wisdom, although it is foolishness to men.

2. Wisdom is found in God's people

- a. The Bible calls unbelievers fools, not because they do not know but because, although they know, they do not act in accordance with their knowledge.
- b. But the Bible makes us wise unto salvation (II Tim. 3:15) and to us the preaching of the cross is wisdom, not foolishness (I Cor. 1:24)
- c. In us, wisdom is the using of knowledge to attain the highest good. For us, the highest good is not an easy life for ourselves but God's glory. The one who seeks God's glory is wise, the self-seeker is foolish.
- d. God gives wisdom through prayer (Jam. 1:5) and through instruction in the truth (Prov. 4:7); fools despise instruction.

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

A. Review

1. We complete our treatment of the attributes of God

- a. Remember: an attribute is a characteristic or quality (or more fittingly, a “perfection”) of God.
- b. God IS His attributes – He IS them, perfectly and infinitely.
- c. There are two kinds of attributes: incommunicable and communicable (the latter can be reflected in God’s children, II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:29)

2. There are six incommunicable attributes: *independence, simplicity* (oneness), *infinity* (eternity and omnipresence), *immutability, omnipotence* (sovereignty) and *omniscience*.

B. We began considering the communicable attributes

1. As such: God causes us to reflect His perfections in a creaturely way, but we will never become gods. We *grow* in these virtues.
2. The six communicable attributes of God are: *holiness, righteousness, wisdom, grace, mercy, and love*.
3. *Holiness* (God’s perfect self-consecration and aversion to all impurity; holiness *in us* is our devotion to God and separation from sin); *Righteousness* (God’s unswerving commitment to Himself as His own perfect standard; *within us*, righteousness is our conformity to God); *Wisdom* (God’s adaptation of everything to serve His own glory; *in us*, wisdom is our ability to adapt everything to serve God’s glory).

I. GOD’S COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES (OF GOODNESS)

A. ***God is good.*** In fact, our English word “God” is derived from the word good. When we speak of God’s goodness we speak of His absolute perfection (His moral or ethical goodness); we confess that He is the sum total of all perfections (all virtues being infinitely in Him) and that He is the overflowing fountain of all good (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 1). **When we speak of God’s goodness, we mean His benevolence or kindness toward creatures, specifically His elect people. God’s goodness is traditionally subdivided into grace, mercy and love.**

B. GRACE

1. The root idea of grace is beauty.

- a. We use that word in English. We speak of graceful movements such as dancing or ice-skating. The dictionary defines grace as elegance or beauty.
- b. *God is beautiful.* Grace is an attribute of God before it is shown to any creature. The Bible calls God “the God of all grace” (I Pet. 5:10); because He is the God of all grace He is infinitely beautiful - Psa. 27:4 (“to behold the beauty of the Lord”); Psa. 29:2 (“worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”); Ps. 90:17 (“Let the beauty of the Lord be upon us”). As the beautiful God, God delights in Himself as the highest good.
- c. But sinners are ugly, and the utterly gracious and beautiful God cannot fellowship with sinners.

2. From this root idea of beauty, we see what grace is when shown to creatures.

- a. Many have defined grace this way: “God giving to us what we do not deserve.” But that is an inadequate definition because God can give to someone what he does not deserve without being gracious.
- b. Grace is not in what God gives or does not give. *Grace is in God’s attitude.* Grace is a beautiful attitude of favour. Understand that and the issue of common grace becomes clearer.

- c. God gives the wicked an abundance of good things but that is not grace to them if He gives the abundance *without His favour but in His wrath*. God is gracious to His people at all times, but at all times (even when He is angry and is chastising them; even when He withholds from them good and sends upon them evil) His attitude is favourable toward them (see Psa. 73:17-19; 37:7-9, 22, 38; 92:7, etc.).
3. **God's grace is a beautiful attitude of favor toward those who are guilty.**
 - a. God's grace is never merited, never earned and never deserved. God's grace is free, sovereign, particular and efficacious. God is free to be favourable to whomever He wills, and He is free to set His face against whomever He wills. The word grace first appears in the Bible in Gen. 6:8.
 - b. God is not gracious/favorable to all men. God's grace actually saves those to whom it is directed. God's beautiful attitude of favor does not end or change into fierce wrath, nor is God's beautiful attitude of favor a general desire for the well-being of all men, but this is *God's* beautiful attitude of favor (Titus 2:11).
 4. **There is a third idea in grace (first, God's beauty; second, God's beautiful attitude of favor; and thirdly, it is a power to make us spiritually beautiful).**
 - a. We are ugly, spiritually deformed by sin, and therefore an abomination to God, but God has favor on us and will make us spiritually beautiful with His holiness.
 - b. Grace is a *power*. It works effectually in God's people (I Cor. 15:10).
 - c. Because of that work of God's grace in us, we are able to be gracious to others: to show them a beautiful attitude of favor, to will their good, etc.

C. MERCY

1. **Mercy is an attribute of God and therefore we must begin, once again, with Him.**
 - a. How is God merciful in Himself? God's mercy is that attribute according to which *He is perfectly blessed in Himself, He knows and wills Himself to be the most Blessed forever*.
 - b. The Bible speaks of God being rich in mercy; within Himself he has tenderhearted affection, but that mercy is also shown to the creature (Eph. 2:4).
 - c. Mercy is compassion, pity, tenderheartedness or loving-kindness.
2. **Mercy toward the creature is, first, "pity" or "compassion."**
 - a. Mercy is an attitude of the heart toward those who are miserable or wretched; the great biblical figure of mercy is "bowels": deep emotional response to the misery of others (I Kings 3:26; Philem. 1:20). Mercy was what the wretched asked of Christ: the lepers, the blind, etc. *They were miserable, they needed mercy*.
 - b. The Bible speaks repeatedly of God's mercy or pity and of our misery. We need mercy because we are miserable.
 - c. Is God simply merciful *because* of our misery? Is God moved with compassion toward all misery? No, in fact, our misery is self inflicted (we sinned); we deserve misery. God's mercy is free (Rom. 9:15, 18).
3. **Mercy is, second, a desire to alleviate and remove misery and to make blessed and happy.**
 - a. A common definition of mercy is inadequate: "Mercy is God's not giving us what we deserve," for this does not include the element of compassion, and

can lead to an idea of common mercy (God does not give many wicked what they deserve; He delays punishment, for example).

- b. God does more than simply feel sorry for us: He desires to bring about our blessedness by the removal of our sins (negative aspect) and by making us blessed in Him (positive aspect).
 - c. Since God's mercy is eternal, unchangeable and efficacious, God does make all those on whom He had mercy blessed.
- 4. Third, mercy is a power to make the miserable blessed.**
- a. It is not enough that God pities us, or that He has a desire to deliver us; God's mercy actually "delivers" us.
 - b. That is the difference between God and us: our hearts yearn for someone but we can do nothing; God's heart is filled with compassion and He actually delivers. However, He has no mercy on the wicked.
 - c. We are called to reflect God's mercy: we must be tenderhearted toward others.

D. LOVE

1. God loves Himself within the Trinity

- a. The Father loves the Son in the Holy Spirit, and the Son loves the Father in the Holy Spirit (John 1:18). He did so before any created being came into existence.
- b. Love is *a delighting in someone who is precious and dear*, and is a seeking after that in which one delights.
- c. Among the Biblical words for love, one word means "to breathe after", or "to pant after" with ardent desire and affection. Another word means "to cleave to" or "to cling to." A third word for love is "to take pleasure in", "to set one's affections on", "to prize and treasure above all things". That is how the Father loves the Son and the Son the Father and that is how the Triune God loves us.

2. God's love for creatures is a sovereign determination of His will.

- a. God chooses to love – He does not simply love everything and everybody, and there is nothing in the creature, especially the sinful creature, which would cause Him to love (see Deut. 7:7-8).
- b. God's love is an attribute. Therefore, God's love is unchangeable, holy, righteous, almighty and eternal.
- c. God loves only in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 5:8; 8:38-39).
- d. God's love is *foundational* to His mercy and grace. Why is God moved in pity at the misery of some sinners? Because He *loves* them (Eph. 2:4-7).

Introduction & Review

A. Review

1. In Theology proper we have seen the five divisions: Essence, Names, Attributes, Persons, and Works.
2. **God's "Attributes"**
 - a. *Incommunicable*: independence, simplicity, infinity, immutability, omniscience, and omnipotence
 - b. *Communicable*: holiness, righteousness, wisdom, love, mercy, and grace

B. Today we begin God's "Persons"

1. Remember: God is *personal*: He is not abstract but He is a living, thinking, willing, and conscious Being.
2. God is personal but He is also *a plurality of persons*.
3. We confess with the orthodox church of all ages the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is "one in Being, and three in Persons".

I. GOD IS FAMILY

A. The truth of the Trinity is the truth that God is family - a family which lives the highest life of fellowship and love.

1. Fellowship requires commonality

- a. Fellowship is only possible with another personal being. E.g., you cannot have fellowship with a goldfish or a tree or a rock, but you can have fellowship with another human being or a personal God.
- b. God has fellowship within His own personal being with Himself as three Persons.

2. Fellowship requires plurality

- a. You cannot have fellowship or friendship as one person in isolation from other persons. That is the dreadful reality of loneliness. "*God setteth the solitary in families*" (Psa. 68:6).
- b. The same thing is true of God: if God is only one Person in one Being, He can know Himself but He cannot have "fellowship" within Himself. He cannot know love, friendship or fellowship. He is lonely.

B. But God is not lonely; He is Triune – one in Being and three in Persons. *Only so can He be the God of love.*

1. **Unitarianism** is the teaching of one Person in the Being of God: Islam, Judaism, and Jehovah's Witnesses are Unitarian. A Unitarian God is one who exists in isolation. He never knew love or fellowship until He created someone with whom to fellowship.
2. **Polytheism** is the teaching of many gods. Mormonism and many religions such as Hinduism are polytheistic. Polytheistic religions do not know a God of love because in polytheism there is infighting and struggle for supremacy, and the gods are not equal (e.g. Zeus was the chief God of the Greeks). This is not love and fellowship.
3. **Trinitarianism**: There is one God and there are three equal Persons within the divine Being. These three Persons live within the one Being in a beautiful and blessed life of harmony, love and fellowship. Truly, the doctrine of the Trinity affords us a look into the intimate family life of God Himself. Such knowledge is only possible through revelation.

C. In revealing Himself as Triune, God determines to cause us to taste that life. This is the wonder of the covenant, a bond of friendship which God establishes with us through Jesus Christ.

1. **The life of the Trinity is blessed.** The Father loves the Son in the Spirit, etc. The Son is “in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18). God, therefore, did not need us, and even if He had damned us all to hell He would still be infinitely blessed.
2. **Because of our sins, we have no right to be united to God in friendship.** Jesus came to establish friendship with us by reconciling us to Himself through the cross. In this way, we enjoy God’s love and perfect fellowship.
3. **Because God is a family God of perfect harmony, He puts us in families.** Our calling is to live, as far as lies in us, in harmony with our families. All sins against friendship in marriage, family, and among friends are sins against the Trinity.

II. GOD IS ONE IN BEING AND THREE IN PERSONS *(a concise definition of the Trinity)*

A. First, there is only one God

1. **The Trinity is NOT the teaching that there are three gods.**
 - a. “Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me” (Isa. 43:10).
“Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isa. 44:8).
 - b. What is a Being? We saw that “being” (or essence or substance) is what makes something what it is, and distinguishes it from everything else.
 - c. A human is a being, a human being. We are human beings. Angels are a certain kind of being different from humans. Other creatures are different beings. God is the only “*divine*” being. He alone possesses the being of God, and no creature can share in the being of God. That being is spiritual, personal, transcendent, and immanent (attributes of God which we have previously discussed).
2. **We see the oneness of being in the oneness of *name*. The Trinity has only one name. The Trinity shares the one name in the baptismal formula. Remember that the “name”, according to Scripture, reveals what or who someone is.**
 - a. Matt. 28:19, “baptizing in the *name* (not “names”) of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”
 - b. All three Persons of the Trinity have the name of God.
 - c. The Father is called God, the Son is called God, the Spirit is called God; the Father is called Jehovah, the Son is called Jehovah, the Spirit is called Jehovah; the Father is called Lord, the Son is called Lord, the Spirit is called Lord. Yet, there is only one God, only one Jehovah, and only one Lord (Deut. 6:4).

B. Second, within the one Being of God are three Persons

1. **What is a Person?**
 - a. A person is that which, in an individual, says, “I.” The person is the subject (the one doing) of all the activity of an individual. From the beginning of your life to the end and into eternity, you will have the same person. Much may change, but your person does not. Also, a person is self-conscious and conscious of that which is outside of himself.
 - b. Thus, human beings are also human *persons*. You “think” and you are “aware” of yourself and others around you. But a dog is not a person, a cow is not a person, a fish is not a person, a tree is not a person, and neither is a rock a person.
2. **We are one being and one person, but God is one being and three persons. There are, within the being of God, three distinct individuals who say, “I” –**

three who know themselves and know others; three active, living, willing, and thinking individual Persons.

- a. The Father knows Himself, and He knows the Son and the Spirit, and He says, “I.”
 - b. The Son knows Himself, and He knows the Father and the Spirit, and He says, “I.”
 - c. The Spirit knows Himself, and He knows the Son and the Father, and He says, “I.”
 - d. These three Persons know and love one another and live together in perfect harmony as a blessed family within the one Being of God (Matt. 11:27; I Cor. 2:10-11).
- 3. But, remember, these are THREE *distinct* persons, each with His own will and His own personality.**
- a. The Father is not the Son, and He is not the Spirit.
 - b. The Son is not the Father, and He is not the Spirit.
 - c. The Spirit is not the Father, and He is not the Son.
 - d. And yet, they can never be without one another or separated from one another.
 - e. This is contrary to the teaching of modalism: Modalism teaches that there is one Person in the Godhead who manifests Himself in different modes at different times. Sometimes, God is Father; sometimes, God is Son; sometimes, God is Spirit, but there is only One Person, not three.
- 4. How would you prove the Trinity from Scripture?**
- a. First, there is no verse that proves the Trinity by itself. Matt. 28:19 and II Cor. 13:14, however, come close.
 - b. Second, prove it along these lines: The Bible ascribes the names, attributes, worship and works of God to each of the three Persons.

Introduction & Review

A. Review

1. The doctrine of the Trinity concerns God's Persons.

- a. **God is one in Being** – there is one divine (personal, spiritual, transcendent, immanent) essence or substance unique to God. All three Persons share this divine essence.
- b. **God is three in Persons** – there are, in the Being of God, three distinct living, willing, thinking, conscious and self-conscious individuals (Persons who say "I").

2. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals that God is family

B. The Trinity

1. **God is One:** He has one Name (shared by the three persons – Matt. 28:19)
2. **God is Three:** three distinct persons who dwell in love, harmony and fellowship.
3. **Proof of the Trinity:** the Bible ascribes the names, attributes, works and worship to the three Persons.

I. THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PERSONS

A. The Three Persons are co-equal

1. There is no rank

- a. Our use of the terms "first, second, third" Persons does not mean that the Father is higher, more glorious, more exalted, or more powerful than the Son or the Holy Spirit (see John 5:23 - "that all men honor the Son ...").
 - b. Because the Trinity is the perfect family of love, there is no rivalry for supremacy.
- #### 2. Therefore, we are to understand that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are equally God and are equally to be worshipped.
- a. *How, then, do we pray?* To the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit, or to Christ? We pray to the Triune God (the Father) through Jesus Christ (the only Mediator).
 - b. Thus we reject all subordinationism within the Godhead. None is "above" another, or "under" another.

B. The Three Persons are co-eternal

1. There is no temporal sequence

- a. In our families, the father is older than the son, and the grandson is younger than the son, but the Trinity is not like that.
- b. Our use of the terms "first, second, third" Persons does not mean that the Father was *before* the Son, or the Son was *before* the Holy Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are, always have been, and always will be.

2. All three Persons, then, are eternal, and co-eternal

- a. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Spirit is eternal. None are created; none have a beginning.
- b. This must be the case if God, as Holy Family, is "love" (I John 4:8): the Father was Father eternally; He never was without His Son, and He always loved His Son in the Holy Spirit.

C. The Three Persons are co-essential or con-substantial

1. This means that the Three Persons are *of the same essence, being or substance*

- a. It is not true that the Father is of the divine essence, but the Son and Holy Spirit are of a different, although similar, essence.
- b. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, true, eternal and Almighty God.

2. **This means that they possess the entire being or essence of God together**
 - a. They share equally the divine being so that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are “in” one another (John 14:11), and are inseparable from one another.
 - b. It is false to say that the Father is a third part God, the Son is third part God, and the Holy Spirit is third part God.

II. THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (the personal properties of Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

A. The Persons are co-equal, co-eternal and co-essential or con-substantial, but how do they relate within the Godhead or Holy Family?

1. The Father begets or generates the Son

a. **Begetting is a father’s action: “X begat Y and Y begat Z, etc.” The Father is not begotten - He begets.**

- 1) Begetting is not the same as “creating.” The Father does not “create” the Son. He “begets” Him. That is why the Bible calls Jesus the “*only begotten* Son” (John 3:16) – He stands in a unique relationship to the Father.
- 2) Begetting is an act of love whereby the Father brings forth one who is *of the same essence* as the Father but is *personally distinct* from Him.

b. **The begetting of the Father is eternal**

- 1) This is different from our begetting: a human father begets a son who comes “after” him and is “younger” than he is – such a human father exists “before” his son – but the Father and the Son always existed together (Prov. 8:22).
- 2) The Father can never be without the Son (John 1:1)

2. The Son is begotten of the Father

- a. The Son is begotten – not made, not created. He always was in the Father’s bosom (John 1:1, 18; 8:58)
- b. The Son does not beget, for He is not the Father. He is begotten!

3. The Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son

- a. The word “Spirit” means breath. The Holy Spirit is the breath of God, which the Father breathes forth in love to the Son, and the Son breathes forth in love to the Father. This breathing forth is called “procession.” The Spirit “proceeds.” *The Spirit is the bond of perfect love between the Father and the Son.*
- b. The Spirit does not beget, for He is not Father. He is not begotten, for He is not the Son. He is not made or created, for He is not a creature. He proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (see John 15:26).
- c. What is the difference between being *begotten* and *proceeding*? Who can tell? The Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father and the Son in a different way in which the Son comes forth from the Father.
- d. This procession is eternal. The Father *eternally* begets the Son, the Son is *eternally* begotten of the Father, and the Father and the Son together *eternally* breathe forth the Spirit so that the Holy Spirit *eternally* proceeds.

B. This begetting, being begotten, proceeding and breathing forth is the family life of God

1. The three Persons dwell in close, intimate fellowship and communion of love

- a. The Father loves the Son in the Holy Spirit, and the Son loves the Father in the Holy Spirit.

- b. The Father breathes forth the Spirit to the Son, and the Son breathes forth the Spirit to the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Holy Breath of love between the Father and the Son.
 - c. The Father is *in* the Son and the Son is *in* the Father by the Holy Spirit (John 10:37-38; 14:10-11).
 - d. The Father seeks after, delights in, and gives Himself to the Son in the Holy Spirit, and the Son seeks after, delights in and gives Himself to the Father in the Holy Spirit.
- 2. All three Persons are active in the works of God**
- a. All three created (Gen. 1:1, 26).
 - b. All three purposed and effected salvation of the elect: they elected a people, they purposed that the Son would become incarnate, and that the Holy Spirit would apply the merits of Christ's work to His people. Each of the Persons, however, has a distinct role in salvation – the Father sends the Son, the Son becomes incarnate, and the Holy Spirit is poured out. The Son died for the elect and the Holy Spirit applies salvation to those whom God elected and for whom the Son died.
 - c. For the work of salvation, God must be Triune – no mere creature can save. The Son and Holy Spirit must be God.

C. A brief history of the Trinity

- 1. The early church believed the Deity of Christ, but found difficulty expressing the relationships between God the Father and Jesus Christ. As is often the case, God used heresy to goad the church into studying the Word.**
- a. Arius (d. 336) taught that the Son is a creature who is "like" God, but is not God. The favourite saying of Arius was, "*There was when He was not.*" "The Son had a beginning," said Arius.
 - b. In response to this the Church insisted that the Son has no beginning. Their saying was, "*There was not when He was not.*" He perfectly knows the Father - *which is true of no creature.*
- 2. To condemn Arius, the Council of Nicaea met in AD 325.**
- a. It defined that the Son is, "begotten before all worlds, not created," and it used the word *homoousion*, which means, "of the *same* essence as the Father."
 - b. Arius could not subscribe to homoousion – he could only subscribe to homoiousion, which means, "of a *similar* essence."
 - c. Notice that the difference between the truth and heresy is one letter (one iota!). Arianism almost destroyed the church. Athanasius suffered greatly in his defense of the truth. Eventually, in 381 AD, the truth won.

INTRODUCTION:

Throughout this study we have looked at various aspects of Theology: God’s essence, His names, His attributes, and His persons. Now we will look at His works.

A. God’s works are divided into His works in two parts: His works in “eternity” and His works in “time.”

1. God’s works in eternity

- a. God’s work in eternity is His eternal counsel: In eternity God planned every detail of history so that everything would serve *one great goal*: His own glory in the salvation of His elect Church in Jesus Christ.
- b. God’s eternal counsel consists of *His decrees*. They are His eternal thoughts – what He has purposed to do and to be done. They are also called His *will*, His *good pleasure*, His *counsel*, and His *purpose*.

2. God’s works in time

- a. God’s works which occur in time are the outworking of His eternal decree, so that nothing occurs in time which He did not plan in eternity.
- b. God’s three great works in time are *creation, providence and salvation*.

B. Errors

1. **Deism**: the teaching that God, or the “divine Watchmaker,” is no longer active – He made the world and then leaves it to run by itself.
2. **Fate**: the idea that the world is governed by blind, impersonal force, and that all things happen by necessity (hence the phrase, “Que sera, sera” - “What will be will be”).
3. **Chance, luck or fortune**: the idea that there is no purpose, and that all things happen at random. There is no such thing as chance.
4. In response to these, we believe that all things are under the control and purpose of our Father, who planned, and now governs, all things for His own glory and our salvation (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11).

I. GOD’S COUNSEL

A. God’s counsel is the purpose and sovereign will of God. It is *God Himself willing and purposing* – you cannot separate God from His counsel.

1. God’s counsel is eternal and therefore unchangeable (Heb. 6:17; Acts 15:18).

- a. Everything God willed and planned, He willed and planned *from eternity*. God therefore did not wait until He had created and until some of history had occurred before He decided what to do.
- b. He never changes to adapt to what men do – for all the actions of men were in His plan from eternity.
- c. When the Bible speaks of God’s “repentance,” it only speaks of what appears to be a change from our perspective: in reality God never changes.

2. God’s counsel is sovereignly free, independent and efficacious (Rom. 11:33-36; Dan. 4:35; Isa. 46:10).

- a. God’s plan was something He alone determined *by Himself*. No one gave Him advice on what He could do, and no one told Him what He should do.
- b. God was completely free: He could choose to create or not create. In His mind were an infinite number of possibilities and He chose to do what pleased Him.
- c. *What God plans to do He actually does*. Nobody can stop Him, and He is not disappointed or thwarted in anything He does (Psa. 115:3; 135:6; Isa. 46:10).

3. God's counsel is wise and good.

- a. Because God is wise, He uses the best possible means to accomplish the highest goal. The goal to which He aims all things is His own glory in the salvation of His Church by Jesus Christ.
- b. God has so determined everything that His purpose will be realized. Our comfort is that the whole of history has been planned by our good and wise God who loves us and who aims *at our good*.

4. God's counsel is all-comprehensive (Eph. 1:11).

- a. Absolutely everything is included in God's counsel: every moment of history has been eternally and unchangeably planned down to the smallest detail.
- b. This includes the rise and fall of nations, the birth and death (and every aspect of the life) of every human being (Acts 17:26), the decisions of men and angels, the death of the lowliest sparrow, and even the falling of the hairs of our heads (Matt. 10:29).

B. GOD'S COUNSEL AND SIN

1. Sin did not take God by surprise when it entered God's creation. God did not need to devise a Plan B after Adam and Eve fell.

- a. God's plan was not that Adam and Eve should live forever on Paradise earth, but His plan was *Christ crucified* from the very beginning (I Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8).
- b. Since the cross was planned from the foundation of the world, *sin itself* must have been planned because there would be no need for the cross if there was no sin. In fact, without sin, the cross would be impossible. Why? There needed to be a sinful world to crucify the sinless Son of God.
- c. But why would God plan the difficult way of sin and grace? We answer: because *God determined* that this way would be the best and wisest way for Him to show His own glory, both in His amazing grace and in His strict justice and wrath (Rom. 9:22-23).

2. Nevertheless, although God planned sin and included it in His unchangeable counsel God cannot be called the author of sin which is blasphemy.

- a. If God were the author of sin that would mean that God *approves* of sin, that God *delights* in sin, that God is the one actually *doing* the sin; but the Reformed Faith has always abhorred such a notion.
- b. God never approves of sin; God never delights in sin; even when He ordained sin He ordained it as something which He hates and as something for which man alone is responsible.
- c. God never tempts a man to sin; He never tries to make man imagine sin is good; He never forces a man to sin. Man sins because he wants to. Yet, God includes sin in His counsel.

3. God included sin in His eternal counsel and He uses the sin of men and devils to accomplish His purposes in such a way that the sinner alone remains responsible and is, himself, guilty of the sin (Isa. 10:5-16)

- a. Joseph understood this (Gen. 45:4-5, "God did send me;" Gen. 50:20, "Ye thought evil against me but God meant it unto good"). The wicked deed of Joseph's brothers was planned by God as a means to preserve Israel during the famine. God planned it, but the 10 brothers were personally responsible for the sin.
- b. The book of Ruth is another example. Elimelech and Naomi left Israel to dwell in Moab. This was sin for them, but God planned it so that Ruth would

be converted, brought into the nation of Israel and even become part of the line of Christ.

- c. The greatest example is *the cross*: God planned the death of His Son at the hands of wicked men. Every detail was planned and yet the hands which killed Christ were “wicked” (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).

4. The Bible and Reformed Theology make an important distinction between God’s will of *decree* and God’s will of *command*.

- a. *God’s will of decree is what God has purposed shall happen.* This includes even the sinful deeds of men. That will is irresistible and sovereign. For example, God’s will of decree included the refusal of Pharaoh to let Israel go so that God could show His power in the 10 Plagues. That will of decree included the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot and all of the sinful deeds which are associated with the cross. God’s decree always happens.
- b. *God’s will of command is His Law which He reveals for us.* God’s will of command is not what He has purposed shall be done but what is the *duty* of men to do regardless of what God might have purposed. God’s will of command is often disobeyed. For example, God’s will of command to Pharaoh was “Let my people go!” and that was Pharaoh’s duty to obey. God’s will of command to Judas and the others around the cross was, “Honour my Son,” and that was their duty to obey. God’s will of command rarely happens because of sin.
- c. Man is responsible for his sin because he refuses to obey God’s will of command. God’s commandments are the only rule for a man’s life. A man cannot say, “Well, God purposed in His will of decree for me to sin, and therefore I am right to sin.” It is always wrong for a man to sin and God punishes a man for his sins even though all of a man’s sins are included in God’s eternal decree.

INTRODUCTION:

In our study of Theology, we looked at God’s essence, His names, His attributes, His persons, and also His works.

A. We distinguished between God’s works *in eternity* and His works *in time*

1. God’s works in time are *creation, providence* and *salvation*.
2. God’s works in eternity are His *counsel* and *decrees*.
3. God’s decree is His eternal purpose or good pleasure for all things, which determines everything which happens in history. History is the unfolding of God’s eternal decree.

B. God’s counsel has various attributes (see Q&A5)

1. We saw too that God’s counsel includes sin
2. But God is not the author of sin – He does not approve of, delight in or actually perform sin; His creatures do willingly and therefore they are guilty and accountable to Him for so doing.

I. PREDESTINATION

A. Predestination is the eternal decree of God determining the eternal destiny (heaven/hell) of all rational creatures (men and angels).

Some definitions:

1. “Predestination is one decree with two aspects – election and reprobation”

- a. To predestinate means *to determine or appoint beforehand* (Rom 8:29-30; Eph. 1:5, 11).
- b. To “elect” means *to choose out for oneself* (II Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:4).
- c. To “reprobate” means *to reject or to appoint to destruction* (I Pet. 2:8; Rom. 9:22).

2. “Predestination is a decision made by God about the eternal destiny of men and angels”

- a. Predestination is not simply a choice of God that all those who believe in Jesus Christ (whoever they might be) will go to heaven, and all those who die in unbelief (whoever they might be) will go to hell, but it is a choice that certain individuals will go to heaven or hell according to God’s appointment.
- b. But, predestination also includes the “means” to the end. God elects some to be saved *in the way of* hearing and believing the gospel and *in the way of* persevering in holiness to the end (Eph. 1:4); and He reprobates others to be damned *in the way of* their sin, unbelief and final impenitence.
- c. Here was John Wesley’s caricature: “*The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate will be damned, do what they can.*”

3. “Predestination is a decision made by God about the salvation of individuals”

- a. *Some are happy to believe that God chooses nations*, but they deny that God chooses individuals. But, a nation is made up of individuals. If God rejected the Edomites and the Philistines, in the OT, He necessarily also rejected *individuals* within those nations. Within Israel, the chosen nation, there were elect and reprobate people (see Rom. 9:6).
- b. *Some are happy to believe that God chooses people to service or to some earthly privileges, but not to salvation.* But the Bible teaches election to salvation (Acts 13:48. II Thess. 2:13).

4. “Predestination is eternal, unchangeable, sovereign and unconditional”

- a. Romans 9:10-13 and Ephesians 1:3-6 teach this. The answer of some is that God chose us *in Christ*, which means that He chose us *after* we made a choice for Christ, or that He chose us in Christ by *foreseeing* that we would choose Christ. But Ephesians 1 speaks of “*before the foundation of the world*” (v.4).
- b. Freewill and absolute “freedom of choice” belong to God. He was perfectly free to choose to save some, save none, or save all. No one influenced His choice. He was sovereign, acting like the King.
- c. This is difficult for us to understand because we do not really have free choice. Every choice we make is based on something in the things we choose or some quality in them. Every choice we make is conditional.
- d. But God’s choice of the elect is unconditional as is His rejection of the reprobate. *It happened “before the children had done any good or evil”* (Rom.9:11). It was not based on anything in the elect or reprobate, or even on anything *potentially* in the elect or reprobate (i.e. foreseen faith or unbelief).

B. Election and reprobation determine everything

1. Election and reprobation determine the end and the means

- a. The reprobate perish forever in hell, not because God reprobated them or rejected them from salvation before they were born, but *because of their sins*. No man perishes in hell unjustly – he perishes *because he sinned*, and he sinned because he wanted to, and therefore God IS just in punishing him.
- b. God chooses the elect to salvation. Therefore in time God sends Christ to die for His elect. He causes the elect to hear and to believe the Gospel. He gives them His Holy Spirit and He causes them to persevere in holiness to the end (Rom. 8:29-30).
- c. God rejects the reprobate from salvation. Therefore in time God does not send Christ to die for the reprobate – He either does not cause the reprobate to hear the gospel or He hardens them under it. He does not give the reprobate the Holy Spirit. They never do anything good and they perish in their sins.
- d. Do not imagine that the reprobate “want” salvation, or that they “want” to repent and believe, or that they “come to Jesus Christ and He turns them away.” Not so! Read John 6:37 and 10:26.

2. Election and reprobation have their source in the love or hatred of God

- a. God loves the elect, and therefore He chooses them in Christ graciously. No one deserves to be elected. Christ is first in the decree of God – He chooses Christ and the elect in Him. He chooses the elect as the body and bride of Christ – not as a hodgepodge of individuals. Therefore, election is not a cold, abstract dogma, but a warm, comforting truth.
- b. God hates the reprobate and therefore He rejects them from salvation. He never desires their salvation and He is never gracious to them. His attitude to them in time and eternity is wrath (John 3:36; Rom. 9:22).
- c. Election *comes from the love and foreknowledge of God*. Foreknowledge does not mean that God “foresees what we do,” but He foreknows *us* as His people (Rom. 8:29; Amos 3:2; Matt. 7:23).
- d. Election is *humbling*. Therefore to say that Calvinists are proud members of an elitist club is slander. A proud and arrogant Calvinist is an abomination (I Cor. 4:7).
- e. Election is *unto holiness*. Election is the fountain of salvation, and God’s ultimate purpose in electing us is *that we be holy* (Eph. 1:4) and *that we be conformed to the image of Christ* (Rom. 8:29).

C. Objections to Predestination

1. **“Predestination is not fair!”**
 - a. The Apostle Paul responds to this objection in Romans 9:14, “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!”
 - b. God can no more be unrighteous than He can be without wisdom. God is the standard of righteousness.
 - c. God saves some undeserving sinners and punishes others who deserve punishment. What is unjust about this?
2. **“Predestination makes God a cruel monster and turns men into mere robots or puppets!”**
 - a. This objection is responded to in Romans 9:20, “Who art thou that repliest against God ...?”
 - b. God is not a cruel monster, but a just judge and a sovereign king, who can do with His creatures as He pleases. He is the potter and we are clay pots.
 - c. Besides, man is a rational, moral creature, accountable to God, and man *willingly* rebels against God.
3. **“Predestination makes God a respecter of persons, because He chooses His favourites!”**
 - a. In order for God to be a “respecter of persons,” He would have to make choices and would have to treat men *according to some quality in them*, such as their wealth, physical beauty, etc. A judge who favours the rich and neglects the poor is such.
 - b. But God’s choice is *unconditional*. Therefore, He cannot be a respecter of persons (I Cor. 1:26-29).
4. **“Predestination makes missions and evangelism unnecessary!”**
 - a. God determined to bring His elect to salvation *through the means of the preaching of the Gospel*. The elect are not saved without it (Rom. 10:13-15, 17).
 - b. We preach, not because we think God *will* save all men or *desires* to save all men, but because *God commands us* to preach and this is the very means of saving the elect (II Thess. 2:13-14).
5. **“Predestination makes prayer unnecessary! God has already chosen whom He will save, so why pray for the salvation of anyone?”**
 - a. God uses our prayers in order to save His people.
 - b. The objection can be turned back: “If God is already doing everything He can to save all men, then why pray? After all, God cannot violate man’s freewill. What shall we pray? ‘Please, knock harder!’?”
6. **“Predestination makes holy living unnecessary!”**
 - a. Other say, “If a man knows that he is unconditionally elected, will he not lead a wicked life?”
 - b. The answer is that God saves His people *to make them holy*. Good works are the *fruit* – but never the cause – of election (Eph. 1:4, 2:10).

SUMMARY OF THEOLOGY

(The Essence, Names, Attributes, Persons and Works of God)

A. God is only knowable because He reveals Himself

1. We know God in two ways: through General Revelation and Special Revelation

- a. General Revelation: through creation and history.
- b. Special Revelation: through Jesus Christ and His Word, the inspired Scriptures.

2. Special revelation involves two works of God: **Inspiration** and **Illumination**

- a. **INSPIRATION**: God inspired men to write His Word. Inspiration is God's work of *moving, illumining* and infallibly *directing* certain men to write His Word (II Peter 1:19-21).
- b. **ILLUMINATION**: God gives His people understanding of the inspired Scriptures.
- c. We use four words to describe inspiration:
 - (1) **graphic** (writing),
 - (2) **verbal** (words),
 - (3) **plenary** (completely and entirely inspired), and
 - (4) **organic** (as opposed to the "typewriter" or "mechanical dictation theory").

3. Because the Bible is divinely inspired it has certain qualities:

- a. Scripture has **infallibility** (it cannot err).
- b. Scripture has **inerrancy** (it contains no errors).
- c. Scripture has **authority** (it alone determines what we believe and how we behave – when Scripture speaks, God speaks).
- d. Scripture has **unity** (one Author and one message).
- e. Scripture has **sufficiency** (nothing may be added from human tradition or new revelations, and
- f. Scripture has **perspicuity** (clarity – every child of God can understand it).

B. Specifically, we know God in His Essence, Names, Attributes, Persons and Works

1. God's essence is who or what He is, in distinction from all else

- a. God is uniquely God – we cannot define Him, or limit Him by classifying Him with something else.
- b. His essence is:
 - 1) **personal** (rational, moral, willing, and thinking),
 - 2) **spiritual** (immaterial, not made of "stuff" [solid, liquid or gas], and not limited by space),
 - 3) **transcendent** (infinitely exalted above all created reality), and
 - 4) **immanent** (fully present with and in His creation).

2. God's Names are *the revelation to us of who God is so that we can know Him, address Him and worship Him.*

- a. Our names are meaningless labels, but not so with God's names.
- b. God's names are unknowable unless He reveals them to us. He gives Himself names. We do not name Him. One can only name someone if he has authority over it. God is THE authority.
- c. His main names are:
 - 1) **God** (The Mighty One),
 - 2) **Lord** (the Owner, Ruler, Master, and one with authority),

- 3) **Jehovah** (the “I AM,” the unchanging, independent, self sufficient, faithful one).
- 3. God’s Attributes are the qualities, characteristics, or perfections of God’s divine being**
- a. God *IS* His attributes - they are essential to Him. He is infinitely His attributes. God’s attributes are either **incommunicable** (they cannot be shared with or reflected in His creatures) or **communicable** (they can and are, to a limited degree, shared with and reflected in God’s saved children).
- b. God’s six incommunicable attributes are:
- (1) **Independence,**
 - (2) **Simplicity,**
 - (3) **Infinity,**
 - (4) **Omnipotence,**
 - (5) **Omniscience, and**
 - (6) **Immutability.**
- c. God’s six communicable attributes are:
- (1) **Holiness,**
 - (2) **Righteousness,**
 - (3) **Wisdom,**
 - (4) **Love,**
 - (5) **Mercy, and**
 - (6) **Grace.**
- 4. God’s Persons are the three living, willing, intelligent individuals who are the Trinity – the Triune God.**
- a. These three Persons are distinct: the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, etc.
- b. These three Persons are one essence: there is one God, not three gods.
- c. These three Persons live in personal relationships within the Godhead in a life of perfect bliss and fellowship:
- 1) **the Father begets** the Son,
 - 2) **the Son is begotten** (not made, not created) of the Father, and
 - 3) **the Spirit proceeds** (not made, not created, nor begotten) from the Father and the Son.
- d. The three persons are: co-equal, co-eternal and co-essential (consubstantial).
- 5. God’s Works are His ceaseless activity as the ever-blessed living God (works in time and in eternity)**
- a. Theology is concerned with God’s works *in eternity*: God’s eternal, unchangeable will and plan, also called His “counsel” or His “good pleasure.” These can be distinguished into *decrees*.
- b. God’s counsel includes His eternal decree to elect (choose) and reprobate (reject) men and angels.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In this lesson we begin with Anthropology, the second of the six sections (or “Loci”) of dogmatics.**
 - 1. The first thing we learn in Scripture concerning man is that he is a *created* being.
 - 2. Therefore, the doctrine of creation is first in Anthropology—the order being creation, providence, man as created, and man as fallen.
- B. Creation is the first of God’s works in time. Others include providence and redemption.**

I. THE DOCTRINE AS SUCH

- A. First, creation has its source in the eternal counsel or will of God.**
 - 1. It is not the case that God decided one day to create. Rather, God willed and planned creation in all its details *in eternity*.
 - 2. Creation itself is not eternal, but God’s *decree* is eternal—in creating, God gave existence in time to what only existed in His mind in eternity. Indeed, in creating, God created time, space, and matter.
 - 3. Therefore, creation is a free act of God, something He was pleased to do, not something He had to do (Rev. 4:11).
- B. Second, creation gave existence to something in distinction from God.**
 - 1. *Creation is not God, or even a part of God.* It does not flow out of the being of God, as an emanation. For example, creation is not like light flowing out of the sun, or like droplets of water flowing out of a vast ocean. (Those are the ideas of paganism or pantheism—i.e., *God is the universe and the universe is God*).
 - 2. God existed without creation. In eternity, God alone existed. Only when God created did something begin to exist which before did not exist.
 - 3. Creation, then, exists in distinction from God, and is therefore always dependent upon Him.
- C. There is and always will be an absolute distinction between Creator and creature.**
 - 1. No other being apart from God can create. The angels cannot create, the devil cannot create, and no being “helped” God create or advised Him in the work of creation (Is. 44:24; Jer. 10:12; Job 9:8).
 - 2. Indeed, this is God’s claim to deity: *I created. No other so-called god created. Worship me!* This is because creation is a work of almighty power and matchless wisdom. None but God has such attributes.
 - 3. Since the Bible teaches that the Father creates, the Son creates, and the Spirit creates, we know that all three must be eternal and almighty God. It will not do to say that the Son “helped” God create (John 1:3).
- D. God created by His Word.**
 - 1. God did not *think* the universe into being. He thought of the universe in eternity, but only when He spoke, “Let there be light,” did He create (Ps. 33:6). This indicates that God is the living God who *speaks*. He delights to reveal Himself.
 - 2. In speaking the universe into existence, God did not have any preexisting matter. When we make something we need ingredients, but God had nothing and needed nothing. He commanded non-being to become being, and it was so (Heb. 11:3; Rom. 4:17).
 - 3. The Word of God is our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14).
- E. God created for His glory.**

1. The Bible tells us that God is the Creator *so that we will worship Him*. His power and wisdom, seen in all the details of His creative work, must lead us to fall before God in humble adoration. Creation may never be a mere intellectual detail (Neh. 9:6).
2. The Bible tells us that God is the Creator *for our comfort*. As we say at the beginning of our worship services, “Our help is in the name of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 124:8).
3. God created the universe to be the place where man would live in fellowship with his Maker, and where the great work of redemption would be carried out. The world was created *for Christ* (Col. 1:16).
4. Therefore, we know that the material creation is *good*.

II. THE CREATION WEEK

A. Scripture tells us not only *that* God created, but *how* He created.

1. The work of creation did not happen in the twinkling of an eye, but in a week.
2. The work of creation was orderly, and shows progression. It shows that God is preparing the universe for man, and ultimately for Christ Himself. Heb. 11:3 tells us the universe was “framed”—*but this is not the same as the progression of evolution*.
3. The Scriptures show this by detailing God’s work over six days. Notice, however, that *only the Scriptures* tell us this—men cannot know this in any other way than by the Bible, for the simple reason that only God was there.

B. The days of the week:

Note that Gen. 1:1 is a kind of “heading” to the entire chapter. Some interpret this to mean that God first created a formless mass (“the deep, formless and void,” 1:2) and then rearranged it over six days.

1. **Day 1:** Light. What is light? Light consists of waves and particles of energy, and light is necessary for all life on the earth. Light is also a symbol of joy, knowledge, and purity, and is necessary for fellowship. It is the antithesis (opposite) of darkness, from which God immediately separates it.
2. **Day 2:** Firmament. The word “firmament” means an expanse, something stretched out, and it divided the waters above and below. The idea is our atmosphere, but heaven includes outer space and even the heaven of heavens where God dwells. The focus is on the earth as a home for mankind. (Possibly includes creation of angels)
3. **Day 3:** Seas, land. God causes the waters under the firmament to be gathered into one place. The dry land (not mud, but dry land) appears, and great changes occur to form the depths of the earth [crust, core, etc.]. God names the land “earth” and the water “seas.” Then He decorates or adorns the land with plants of all kinds (with seeds).
4. **Day 4:** Light bearers. God adorns the heavens with light bearers (the sun, the moon, and the stars) and the other heavenly bodies (planets, etc.; these are for signs and seasons). By this time, the heavens are adorned, the sea is ready, the land is covered, but no living creature exists. No birds, no fish, no animals. It must have been eerily silent.
5. **Day 5:** Fish and birds. God speaks, and the seas and the sky spring into life. Many different kinds of creatures spring from the waters. “Let the waters bring forth abundantly...”. Birds singing, fish splashing, and God is pleased. Each animal is so designed by God as to reproduce after its kind.

6. **Day 6:** Animals and man. God speaks, and animals appear. “Let the earth bring forth...” All during this sixth day, God creates man, brings the animals to him, and then creates woman.

C. Man is the crown of the creation.

1. Everything to this point has been preparing for man. The light, the land, the plants, and the seas exist so that man can have a beautiful and comfortable home in which to dwell as God’s friend.
2. God takes extra special care in making man. He does not simply speak, but He crafts man carefully out of the dust, places man in a garden, creates man in His image, and gives man authority over the whole creation.
3. In the creation of man, God reveals Himself to be a God of fellowship. Only when it comes to man does He say, “Let us...” And because God is the God of fellowship, He desires that man be a being of fellowship. He fellowships with God, and he fellowships with other humans, especially in marriage, which God ordains immediately after the creation.

D. The Bible makes clear that the creation week is not myth or legend, but history.

1. The word *day* is used in Genesis 1 with the expression “evening and morning,” and the numbers “first, second, third,” etc.
2. The chapter is written in the language of historical narrative. In Hebrew, the historical narrative is shown by the expression, “And [plus a verb].” “And God said...” “And God called...” “And God saw...” “And the earth brought forth...”
3. The chapter has no hint of poetic features. The greatest of all Hebrew poetic features is missing: Hebrew parallelism. Read the Psalms and read Genesis 1, and you will see the difference.
4. The rest of Scripture teaches that the events in Genesis are history. To deny this has serious consequences for the inspiration of Scripture. Look up Ex. 20:11; Matt. 19:4-5; Rom. 5:12; I Cor. 15:21-22; II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:13-14; Jude 14.
5. Next time, D.V., we will look at and refute the main theories which compromise the doctrine of creation..

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Last week we began with Anthropology, the doctrine of man. (The divisions are creation, providence, man in original righteousness, and man as sinner.)** We started with creation.
1. Creation is the realization of God’s eternal counsel. First, He purposed and planned creation, then He created.
 2. Creation gives existence to something in distinction from God; this distinction must be upheld (against emanations, pantheism, etc.).
 3. Creation is a uniquely divine work. No creature, no matter how mighty, can co-create with God. This is because God created *ex nihilo*, without any preexistent matter, by His Word.
 4. Creation has as its goal the glory of God through Jesus Christ.
 5. Creation is an orderly work: in creating in six days in a definite order, God’s goal is man and ultimately Christ.
- B. We ended by beginning to look at the creation week, and we said that the Bible tells us *that* God created and how or *in what way* He created.**

I. EVOLUTION

- A. Evolution is unbelief’s attempt to explain the origin and development of the universe.**
- 1. Evolution rejects the Bible’s explanation and seeks to find the answers in nature itself. This is a fundamental error, because only special revelation can explain general revelation.**
 - a. Evolution begins with eternal matter (or at least without an explanation for the origin of matter). This matter reacted in an explosion a very long time ago. Eventually, the sun and other planets formed, and on one planet, Earth, the process of life began.
 - b. Life began on Earth through random, unplanned, ultimately meaningless chemical reactions.
 - c. As time went on, this life became more developed until higher life forms formed (single-celled creatures to multi-celled creatures; fish to amphibians; amphibians to reptiles, birds, etc.).
 - d. The process through which this is supposed to have happened is natural selection. Certain life forms acquired advantages, and these forms had a better survival rate and passed on their advantages to the next generation.
 - e. Evolutionists are confident that, given enough time, such changes can occur, and life develops. Moreover, they are confident that the fossil record has left traces of such development.
 - 2. The problems with evolution as an explanation are many.**
 - a. No scientist was there in the past. Science is an investigation of the present. So, for example, science cannot tell us what was there at the beginning. The Big Bang cannot be proved.
 - b. No scientist can tell us how life began. For example, the common idea is that water plus methane plus some other chemicals existed, lightning struck, and that could have caused the first life form. Also, the simplest life form (a single cell) is staggeringly complex.
 - c. There is no mechanism for one life form to develop into a higher one. For a reptile to become a bird, for example, requires the addition of a huge amount

of genetic information and the basic restructuring of the animal. How could that happen? The only answer evolution has is mutations. But a mutation has never been shown to increase information. A mutation is like a typo. A million typos do not produce the works of Shakespeare.

- d. The dating methods used by evolutionists are based on assumptions, and the fossil record has proved disappointing to the evolutionist.

B. The biblical problems with evolution are these.

1. Evolution is an attack on the glory of God and an attempt to expel God from His own universe.
2. Evolution teaches death before sin, whereas the Bible teaches that death is God's judgment on sin.
3. Evolution teaches that a lower kind of life form develops into a higher form of life, whereas the Bible teaches that creatures reproduce *after their kind* (a kind is wider than a "species"); development within kinds is possible (microevolution). That creationism is the idea that God made all species of animal and plant exactly as we have them today is a caricature. There were no poodles in the Garden of Eden.
4. Evolution is a denial that God created all things very good, and that there was a fall and flood.
5. Evolution is based on an unbiblical uniformitarianism.

II. THEISTIC EVOLUTION

A. As such

1. Theistic evolution (God + evolution) is the attempt to harmonize the so-called scientific facts about evolution with the Bible.
2. Most theistic evolutionists believe that evolution occurred basically as Darwin said it did, but that *God has a role*. The Pope, for example, says that biological evolution is compatible with religion, as long as God created the soul.
3. The problem for the theistic evolutionist is: how do we get the Genesis account to harmonize with what science teaches? The greatest obstacle for the theistic evolutionist is the amount of time. The Bible seems to teach a young earth, but....?

B. The Gap Theory

1. The Gap Theory is not very popular today. It was promoted by the Scofield Bible.
2. Between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 the Gap Theorist (GT) inserts a first creation and a catastrophe. The GT says that God first made the universe, and there were even human-like beings in it, but they were not truly human. But God's first creation was destroyed with the fall of Satan. This first world was very old, and the rock layers containing fossils are from that world. After the fall of Satan, God destroyed the world, leaving it "without form and void" (they understand "became" here). Later, God commanded Adam and Eve to "replenish" the earth.
3. After the billions of years of the first world, God made a new world like what Gen. 1 says. Thus, GT tend to be quite conservative about the historicity of Genesis 1.
4. Problems: There is no biblical evidence for a catastrophe. If the world had been left formless and void, there would be no evidence of rock layers and fossils. The words "become" and "replenish" are not good arguments. There is still death before sin, and it downplays the role of the Noah Flood. Also, it simply accounts for an old earth.

5. The Gap Theory wants to keep Genesis 1, but to insert a gap between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2. Into this gap belong the billions of years of evolutionary development and all the layers of rocks in the earth.

C. The Day-Age Theory

1. To account for evolutionary time, this theory inserts it into Gen. 1 by reinterpreting the days: one day is a long period of time, possibly billions of years. But we have seen the problems with that (evening and morning; 1st, 2nd, 3rd; the alteration of light and darkness; absence of poetry; historical narrative style; Ex. 20:11, etc.).
2. The days are in the wrong order for a harmony with evolution to work: the sun is formed way too late, and birds are formed in the same period as fish but before reptiles, etc.
3. Plus, the Gospel is undermined. Death before sin; no historical fall, no need for Christ.

D. Framework Hypothesis (FH)

1. The FH teaches that the six days of Gen. 1 are not meant to teach history at all, but are simply a literary device. This view arises from liberal scholars and has made some headway in conservative colleges.
2. But the FH is too complex to be true. The Bible is clear to the child of God, not simply to scholars. The Genesis account reads as history because it is history.

III. CONCLUSION

- A.** God is our glorious Creator. Therefore He has the right to determine for us how we live. If there is no God and no Creator, and we are the product of randomness and chance, there is no meaning to anything, and we can do whatever we want. It is a dog eat dog world.
- B.** The truth that we are created humbles us before God. We came from dust, and we return to dust. We are before God as nothing, less than nothing and vanity, and yet God cares for us.
- C.** God alone can tell us in Scripture what He did in creation. It therefore behooves us to listen when He speaks.
- D.** All compromised theories are simply attempts to make unbelieving science harmonize with God's Word. But God's Word has authority. Unbelieving science must be viewed in the light of God's Word (see, for example, II Peter 3:4-7).

INTRODUCTION:

- A. [Biblical] Anthropology has four divisions: creation, providence, man in original righteousness, fall.**
- B. Creation: a uniquely divine work; the execution in time of what God conceived in eternity; the giving existence to something in distinction from Himself; an orderly work; a work with man (in Christ) as goal.**

I. PROVIDENCE (God’s hand in the creation, God’s fatherly hand, Ps. 104:28; Dan. 4:35)

- A. [Preservation] Providence is God’s work of preserving all things which He has made.**

1. When God created, He created nothing which is independent of Him, but everything depends on Him for its continued existence.

- a. Things do not simply continue to exist: God’s Word commanding them to exist preserves them.
- b. So, for example, why does the sun continue to shine? Because every moment God commands the sun, “Shine!” His Word (“The word of His power,” Heb. 1:3) upholds the sun. The same is true for every creature.
- c. Because all creatures depend on God for their existence, they depend on Him for their life, and for everything they need to live. Acts 17:25 (“he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things”); Ps. 104:10-15, 24-29; Matt. 10:29-31; Neh. 9:6.

2. The idea here is of *God’s hand* holding up the creation from falling back into nothingness and His hand opening wide to give unto His creatures everything which they need. But God’s preservation is especially seen in preserving His people.

- a. It is because we believe in God’s providence that we pray to God for our daily bread. We believe that ultimately the bread we have on our tables is from God, and that God feeds us by that bread by His providence.
- b. It is because we believe in God’s providence that we trust that God will preserve His Church from destruction. Ps. 37:28; Ps. 124 (all).
- c. Ultimately, our comfort is that the hand which upholds the universe and all things is *our Father’s hand*.

3. This, of course, is the opposite of the unbelieving view of the world.

- a. Deism is the idea that the world is a machine which God constructed and then leaves to its own devices. Occasionally, He might intervene if the need arises, but such intervention is rare.
- b. Atheism is the idea that there is no God; the world came about by chance, and eventually the world will end in a bang or a whimper. No one upholds the world, then.
- c. But the Bible teaches that God, the Creator, is personally and directly involved in upholding His world.

- B. [Government] Providence is also God’s work of direct rule in all creation, directing it to its goal.**

1. We would expect there to be providence, because we believe that God is almighty and sovereign.

- a. That God is sovereign means that He is the absolute Ruler and King over all: life and death, time and eternity, and all things are in His hands, and He can do with all things as He pleases.
 - b. God's sovereignty is His control of and rule over all things. It is His authority (or right to rule).
 - c. God's almightiness or omnipotence is His possession of all power or might and His power to rule.
- 2. The Bible teaches clearly that God rules over and controls all things by His sovereign will.**
- a. Here are some examples: Ps. 115:3; Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11.
 - b. Notice that these verses teach, not only that God can do whatever He pleases, but that He actually *does do* whatever He pleases.
- 3. God's government is all comprehensive. (It includes ALL things.)**
- a. God governs the world of nature: He rules in the mountains and in the valleys; He rules in the seas and the deepest oceans; He controls the weather (the rain, wind, sun, snow, etc.). Ps. 135:6 again.
 - b. God governs the world of animals: the life and death of every creature from the most insignificant bug to the great whales of the ocean. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of our Father.
 - c. God governs history generally so that all the major events of history--the rise and fall of nations, the rise and fall of leaders, etc.--are governed by Him.
 - d. God governs the lives of every human being, down to the details. Acts 17:26 (He determines when each man will be born, where he will live, and when and how he will die).

II. PROVIDENCE, EVIL(S), AND SIN

A. It is a common teaching today among Christians that God's providence does not include evils (that is, disasters).

1. This is a form of dualism.

- a. Dualism is the idea that there are two powers in the universe, an evil and a good, and that the good power (God) sends the good things and the evil power (the devil) sends the evil things. This is very common among evangelicals.
- b. So, for example, you become sick. The devil sent sickness. You have a car accident. The devil did that. There is a storm and your house is destroyed. The devil did that. There is a famine and people starve to death. The devil did that. There is an earthquake. The devil sent it. Your loved one dies. The devil killed him. God, they say, did not want these terrible things to happen; God had little or no control over them. Or God had nothing to do with them. God only sends prosperity, riches, health, etc.

2. But, on the very face of it, the idea is totally unbiblical. There are not two powers in the universe. There is ONLY one power. God is in complete control, including in control of the devil.

- a. The reason this belief is so common among Christians today is their idea that God loves all men, and therefore He could never want to send disasters into their lives.
- b. But the Bible teaches that men are sinners and deserve whatever evils God sends upon them.

- c. God does not stand idly by as a helpless observer to the famines, earthquakes, floods, or fires.
- d. Look up Amos 3:6 (“Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”); Job 1:21, 2:10; the Bible is full of examples of God sending famine, pestilence, and storms.

B. If some Christians are reluctant to confess God’s providential hand in *evils*, they usually deny God’s providence in evil.

1. First, we must confess that God rules the actions of men, all men, including evil men.

- a. This does not mean that God uses men as pawns on a gigantic chess board, but God controls men *as men*.
- b. Two things we can say about the men whom God governs. First, men are *dependent creatures*. No matter how much they boast about independence and free will, they are under God. They cannot move into an area where they are no longer under God’s control (Prov. 16:1, 21:1). Second, men are rational, moral creatures who are not blocks of wood, and therefore are “thinking, willing, and active agents” (Q&A 7 of Essentials, Lesson 9).
- c. Therefore, whatever a man does, he does so because he wants to. God does not compel a man to act in a certain way. And because of this, man is accountable to God for what he does. Always!

2. God governs sin, and includes it in providence because He has a purpose with sin.

- a. The presence of sin and sinners in the world is necessary background so that the glory of God’s grace and holiness shines all the brighter.
- b. God ordained sin (that is included in the “all things”) for the sake of Jesus Christ: it never was God’s purpose that Adam remain innocent in the Garden, but sin came into the world so that Adam could make room for Christ. Christ is God’s ultimate goal, and all other things serve Him.
- c. Put it this way: the development of the world in sin is necessary for the cross. The cross did not happen out of the blue: the nation of Israel had to apostatize, the Romans had to develop in a certain way, and all of that involved billions of sinful actions (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). There are other examples, Gen. 50:20.

3. But does this make God the author of sin?

- a. What does it mean that God is the author of sin, something Christians have always denied?
- b. It means that God is the one doing the sinful action. Never the case. The sinner always sins willingly.
- c. It means that God takes pleasure in the sinful action. That is never the case. God always hates sin, and although He ordains it, controls it, governs it, and directs it, He always does so as something He hates.

C. This is for the Christian’s comfort.

1. If God were not in control of evils, how could we have any hope?

- a. Then we would be at the “mercy” of powers outside of God’s control, or even at the “mercy” of the devil.
- b. Then we would have to believe that all things do not work out for good to those who love God.
- c. Then we would have to imagine a God who is doing the best He can, but whose hands are tied!

- 2. Our attitude to providence must be patience in adversity and thankfulness in prosperity (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 10, Q&A 28). That's practical providence, not that I can state the doctrine, but that I do not complain when things seem to go wrong.**

INTRODUCTION:

- A. [Biblical] Anthropology has four divisions: creation, providence, man in original righteousness, fallen man.**
- B. Last week we started looking at providence, the second of the three major works of God in time. (The others are creation and redemption [salvation].)**
 - 1. We saw that providence consists of two main works: preservation and government.**
 - a. God directs and controls all creatures, the inanimate, animals, men, and angels, and all events.
 - b. God’s ultimate purpose in providence is His own glory in Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Although God governs and controls sin, He is not the author of sin. (He does not perform the sin, He does not compel sinners to perform sin, and He never approves of or delights in sin, Acts 2:23, 4:27-28).**

I. PROVIDENCE AND COMMON GRACE

- A. There are some who confuse God’s providence with a false teaching called common grace.**
 - 1. Common grace has three aspects, all of which are false:**
 - a. God, in giving good things to the reprobate, shows favor and love to them; thus good things are “grace”.
 - b. God restrains the wicked in this life by working common grace in them so that they do not break into all possible evil. This explains why we are not living in a kind of hell on earth.
 - c. God works in men by common grace to enable them to do civil (but not saving) good and thus to please God and produce a culture which pleases God.
 - 2. Common grace really means that God has two purposes in providence.**
 - a. One is the preservation and salvation of His elect church in Jesus Christ to the glory of His name.
 - b. The other is the development of man’s potential (art, science, morality, religion) in a godly culture.
- B. Before we address the individual ideas about common grace, we need to remember definitions.**
 - 1. Grace is three things:**
 - a. Grace is firstly that attribute of God according to which He is the perfection of all beauty. God’s grace therefore is unchangeable, almighty, eternal, etc. It cannot be common.
 - b. Grace is a beautiful attitude of favor shown to His people in Christ. *Does God thus favor the wicked?*
 - c. Grace is the power of God so to work for and in His people to beautify them spiritually with the blessings of salvation.
 - 2. To bless or to curse**
 - a. First, the word bless/curse is *barach* and it means a formal announcement by God over someone, whether a pronouncement of good or evil (Job 1:5, 11; I Kings 21:13).
 - b. Second, when God blesses, He speaks well upon someone. That is, it is the effectual word of God’s favor causing a person to be blessed, bestowing

blessedness on someone. *Bless* might seem like a rather bland word, but that is what it means: “the effectual word of God’s favor” (Eph. 1:3).

- c. Third, when God curses, He speaks evil upon someone. That is, it is the effectual word of God’s wrath causing a person to be unspeakably miserable, inflicting misery upon someone. Having seen that, read Prov. 3:33 and Psalm 37:22. *There is no middle between bless and curse. God is indifferent to none.*
3. **The basic teaching of common grace is that in giving good things to the reprobate ungodly, God blesses them and shows favor to them.**
 - a. Now it is true that God gives good things to the wicked. Look at the wicked men of this world. They drive fancy cars, they enjoy expensive holidays, they enjoy good health, they have an abundance.
 - b. But the question is, *Why?* Now, the doctrine of providence teaches us that they do not have those things by chance: God gave riches to the wicked in His providence; God so ruled all things that the wicked come into possession of many good gifts.
 - c. Not only this, often the wicked receive *more* of this earth’s goods than God’s children. It is the lot of God’s children to suffer, while the wicked prosper. It is the lot of God’s children to travel the narrow, difficult road to eternal life, while the wicked travel the wide, broad, spacious, and pleasant road which leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14).
 - d. The fact of the prosperity of the wicked is the occasion of two temptations (and these temptations are exacerbated by the teaching of common grace): *envy* and *fretting to do evil*. Look at Ps. 73:3 and 37:1.

II. GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH THE WICKED IN THIS LIFE

A. All the good things which God gives to the ungodly come to them not in grace, but in wrath.

1. **Grace is not found in things, but in *the attitude of God* by which He gives things. God gives good things to the ungodly, but with them He does not give His blessing.**
 - a. Num. 11:33 and Ps. 106:15 show that God can give good things *in His wrath*.
 - b. Examine these verses: Ps. 73:18; Ps. 37:8-9, 13, 17, 20, 22, 28, 34-40 (notice the contrast between the wicked and righteous, esp. v. 22); Ps. 92:7 (“it is that” [purpose]); Ps. 145:20.
 - c. If grace is found in things, and things are tokens of God’s love, what are sickness, poverty, etc., a token of to God’s people? Does God curse and hate His people when they are afflicted? (No, Rom. 8:28.)
2. **God gives good things to the wicked in His providence for several reasons.**
 - a. *The wicked serve the elect*. The wicked do not deserve to breathe God’s air or smell God’s flowers or eat God’s food; they are unwelcome in God’s house. *But undeserved gifts are not grace*. The wicked deserve to be plunged into hell from birth, but then God’s purpose in providence would not be fulfilled. The wicked are necessary. The Bible uses the figure of wheat and chaff. The chaff cannot be destroyed until the wheat has grown and matured. Rom. 9:17. (Why did God give Pharaoh so many good things?)
 - b. *The wicked must develop in sin*. The wicked are so from birth. They are born totally depraved, but that wickedness must be seen. God wills it so. God wills that the wicked fill the cup of iniquity, and they do so while God gives

good gifts to them, so that God's justice can be magnified in punishing them. Gen.15:16.

- c. *The wicked must have no excuse.* God gives so much good to the wicked. He does not leave Himself without a witness. But what do the wicked do with their millions of dollars, their cars, their abundance of food, their good health, their art, their culture, etc.? They are not thankful. They do not use it for His glory. *They use it all to sin against God.* And God will demand an account from them. Rom. 1:21.

3. But what about proof texts for common grace?

- a. Matthew 5:44-45. There are four things ("love, bless, do good, and pray for" your enemies). The advocates of common grace say that we must love our enemies, because God loves His enemies by making the sun to shine on the evil and the good and upon the just and the unjust. But God does not love, bless, do good, and pray for all men. He does not love the wicked. He hates them, and He wills their destruction (Ps. 5:5, 11:5). He does love His enemies, those He reconciles to Himself by Christ (Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:21). God's goodness, love, mercy, and grace are particular and effectual to the saving of His people.
- b. Psalm 145:9: The "all" and "all his works" refers to His saints (v. 10). This is demanded by the Hebrew parallelism. Verse 20 shows God's attitude to the wicked.
- c. Remember that common grace means that God has a favorable disposition to the wicked which is not eternal, which is not effectual, and which changes at death. Such is not the grace of God, Ps. 136.

B. Briefly, the other two points of common grace

1. Does common grace restrain sin?

- a. No, common grace does not restrain sin, and God never shows favor to the wicked in restraining sin.
- b. God's restraint of sin is like putting a muzzle on a rabid dog. The muzzle does not improve the dog, but prevents it from biting, which it would do if not muzzled.
- c. How does God restrain sin? Why are all unbelievers not Hitler? Men do not have all possible opportunities to sin in time and space. God in His providence withholds some of the means. But they sin with the means they have. And when God gives them over to sin, they sin all the more. The fear of punishment restrains men from sin. God has given the civil government (I Tim. 2:2, Rom. 13:3). Sin takes time to develop in a man and in a society.
- d. Some say that without common grace we would all be beasts and devils. But in that case, God must give common grace to the damned in hell, because they are not beasts and devils. They remain men, totally depraved men.

2. Does common grace give men the ability to do good (civil good)?

- a. The wicked cannot do anything good in any sense, because a good work must be done out of faith, for the glory of God, and in obedience to God's law.
- b. All the supposed "good works" of the wicked are sins. They are done for various reasons (selfishness, vainglory, etc.) and therefore cannot please God. Rom. 14:23, Rom. 3:10ff, Rom. 8:7-8, Eph. 2:1-3, etc.

INTRODUCTION (Biblical Anthropology: creation, providence, man as created, man as sinner)

A. Remember providence: 1) God preserves His creation, 2) God governs His creation.

B. Remember the three points of common grace.

1. As such: 1) God shows favour to the reprobate wicked in giving good things to them in His providence, 2) God restrains the wicked by working common grace in them, 3) God’s common grace enables the wicked to do (civil) good.
2. Answers: 1) God gives good gifts to the reprobate, but only in His wrath (Ps. 73:18, Ps. 92:7), 2) God’s restraint of the wicked is not grace, 3) The wicked cannot do good; all their “goodness” is sin.
3. Grace is not found in *things*, but in God’s attitude. God never blesses the wicked, and never curses the just.

I. MAN, THE CROWN OF GOD’S CREATION (Ps. 8:4-8)

A. Man’s creation was different.

1. God had made the universe – He had made the sun, moon, and stars; He had made the earth and seas and filled them with life. And we read in Gen. 1:25, “and God saw that it was good.”

- a. But God was making these things, preparing a beautiful home, for His greatest creation, man.
- b. And before He made man, He paused. This was going to be more significant than the rest.
- c. And then He did something which He had never done to this point in the history: He consulted within Himself: “And God said, Let us make...” (Gen. 1:26).

2. Having consulted within Himself, God created man, but again the work was different.

- a. God did not say, “Let there be man,” and there was man.
- b. Instead, God “formed” man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7) and breathed into him.
- c. And He made (literally, “built”) a woman for the man from the rib of the man.
- d. And after He had made man, male and female, we read, “And, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

B. By virtue of his creation, man has two aspects to his existence which make him unique.

1. First, he is earthy. He is from the earth, and he depends on the earth for his existence. The very name “Adam” means “red,” and the word for “soil” or “earth” is derived from the name Adam. Paul writes, “The first man is of the earth, earthy...” (I Cor. 15:47). Dust he is, and unto dust he shall return. *Implications: man’s appetites are normal and good: hunger, thirst, the sexual urge are all normal, wholesome things (earthy).*
2. Second, he is spiritual. God breathed into him the breath of life, and *he became a living soul*. There is a spiritual aspect of man. Man is different from the animals. Animals live on instinct. Man has intelligence, reason, desires, affections, and a will; man can appreciate beauty, music, art. Man is a person.

These spiritual aspects of man's nature originate in his soul, which is that immaterial aspect of man which continues to exist after death. Because man is a spiritual being, he is capable of fellowship with other humans and with God. And because man is a spiritual being, he is able to be an image bearer. *All of this is a far cry from evolution.*

II. MAN IN GOD'S IMAGE

A. We need to distinguish between man as *image bearer* and man in the image of God.

1. Some say that man's rationality, his ability to reason and make moral choices, is the image of God.

- a. This is not the image of God. This is merely his ability to be an image bearer. If man was not a moral, rational creature, he could not be an image bearer and bear God's image.
- b. God made man as a moral, rational creature with a view to his being God's image bearer.
- c. If rationality were the image of God, the devil and the damned in hell would be in God's image.

2. It is possible for man to lose the image of God without ceasing to be an image bearer.

- a. Man was created in the image of God with the ability to bear that image, but also with the ability to lose that image without losing his humanity.
- b. Having lost the image of God in the fall, man retains his image-bearing ability, and bears the devil's image ("Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" [John 8:44]).
- c. But God can restore the image of God to man through the power of Jesus Christ. So, whether originally righteous, fallen and totally depraved, or saved, man is and always will be an image bearer.

B. If we understand that distinction, we will better understand what the image of God is.

1. First, the Bible uses two words, image and likeness.

- a. These two words are not different things, but are two aspects of the same thing. The idea of image is a shadow (the idea is that the reality casts the "shadow"), and the idea of likeness is a pattern.
- b. But theologians in the past have tried to say the image is one thing, and the likeness is something else. Scripture uses the terms interchangeably.

Gen. 1:27 says (only) "image";

Gen. 5:1 says (only) "likeness";

Gen. 9:6 says (only) "image";

Col. 3:10 uses (only) "image";

James 3:9 uses (only) "similitude" (likeness).

The idea is that God made man to be a shadow or representation of Himself *which was like Himself* in a certain way. The question is, in what way is man like God? Here, theologians have given different answers. *And they have forgotten the distinction: man as image bearer and man in the image of God.*

2. The distinction between image and likeness led the medieval church astray and gave us Rome's view.

- a. Rome's view: the image is reason and free will; the likeness is an extra gift of righteousness and holiness. Man as created was naturally good and

morally *neutral*. God gave him this extra gift (the likeness) so that he could be positively righteous and holy.

- b. With the fall man lost the likeness (the extra gift of righteousness), but kept the image: his rationality, his morality, and his free will, as well as much of his original goodness. Man is seriously wounded, has been deprived of the gift of righteousness, and struggles with concupiscence (Rom. 7:8). “Human nature has not been completely corrupted; it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin, an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 405).
- c. This view, of course, means that even after the fall man is basically good (he has the image, and especially freewill), although he must struggle with the weaknesses of his nature.

C. The Bible teaches that the image of God consisted in three things.

1. Original knowledge

- a. As soon as man opened his eyes on the creation, he knew God. He did not have to search for God; he did not have a blank mind. God has stamped on man’s mind and heart the knowledge of His own name.
- b. Man had the natural knowledge of the Creator written on his heart, man had an innate knowledge of God and His works (that was how he was able to name the animals), and man had the law of God written in his heart so that he knew from the moment of his creation who God was and what God required of him.
- c. And man knew his Creator with the knowledge of love and intimate fellowship. He delighted in the knowledge of God; he delighted in the creation which revealed God.
- d. As one who had knowledge of God, he was a *prophet*, whose calling was to confess God.

2. Original holiness

- a. You remember that holiness is devotion to God in love. Man was good, very good (Gen. 1:31). He was morally perfect, pure in his affections, and free from any disorder.
- b. There was in man no struggle within concerning whether he loved God or the creation. He loved God with his whole heart. Everything he did, he devoted to the service of God. Man’s desires were to serve his Creator, and he did so with joy.
- c. As one created in holiness, man was a *priest*, whose calling was to devote himself and all things to God.

3. Original righteousness

- a. “God hath made man upright...” (Eccl. 7:29). Upright, righteous, just: all these mean the same. Righteous means in conformity with God as the absolute standard, not veering to the right or to the left.
- b. This means that as man was originally created, all his faculties, his heart, his mind, his soul, his activity, the members of his body were all in harmony with God.
- c. Man was not morally neutral, but he was *positively good*. His will was in harmony with the will of God.
- d. As one created in righteousness, man was a *king*, whose calling was to serve God and rule under God and for God.

4. As God’s image bearer with God’s image, man was holy and happy.

- a. Next time, we will look at the different relationships in which man stood: with relationship to God and to the human race.
- b. And in Lesson 11 we will see that Adam and Eve lost the image of God when man fell into sin, and we lost that image too, but it is restored by Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God.

INTRODUCTION (Biblical Anthropology: creation, providence, man as created, man as sinner)

- A. How is man’s creation unique? 1) Made after consultation within the Godhead, 2) Made by a direct work of God, 3) Made body and soul, earthy and spiritual, 4) Made as the crown of God’s creation.**
- B. What is the image of God? Answer: A reflection of some of God’s perfections, a creaturely resemblance.**
- C. Is rationality the image of God? Explain. Answer: No, it is man’s capacity to be an image bearer.**
 - 1. Is there a difference between image and likeness? No. The Bible uses the terms interchangeably.
 - 2. What is Rome’s view? The image is rationality and free will; the likeness is an extra gift of holiness.
 - 3. What are the three aspects of the image of God? Knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

I. ADAM’S RELATION TO GOD

A. Adam was created in a covenant relationship.

1. The covenant is a bond of friendship with God.

- a. The covenant consists of knowing and serving God in love. What is the covenant formula? “I will be your God, and ye will be my people.”
 - b. It was with a view to the covenant that God made man as an image bearer (rational, moral creature) and in His image – Adam knew God, Adam was devoted to God (holy), Adam’s whole being was in conformity to the will of God (righteous).
 - c. We see this relationship as Adam walking with God, a walking which was ruined by the fall (Gen. 3:8, 5:22, 6:9).
- #### **2. But the friendship is not between equals. Always God remains God, and always Adam remains creature.**
- a. Adam had a calling to serve God. Adam had to work for God. Work is not a curse in itself. Adam had three *positive* commandments: “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28), “subdue the earth and have dominion over [it]” (1:28), and “dress the garden and keep it” (2:15).
 - b. This meant that Adam was God’s officebearer in the creation – Adam had a role, an official position under God as head of the earthly creation, as prophet, priest, and king. He was to use the creation, seek out its secrets, and use everything in the creation to serve God.
 - c. With this calling, which was not drudgery, but a great privilege, Adam had blessings: he enjoyed life with God, he enjoyed fellowship with Eve, and he could eat all the fruits (including the tree of life, Gen. 1:29-30, 2:16).
 - d. But Adam also had a *negative* calling: he had to show his love also by not disobeying God, so God gave one command, Gen. 3:17, with a warning of the consequences for disobedience.

B. This covenant relationship was NOT a covenant of works.

- #### **1. The covenant of works is the teaching that shortly after the creation God entered into a covenant with man.**

- a. This covenant of works is not so much a bond of friendship, but a conditional agreement or bargain.
 - b. The elements of an agreement are 1) Two contracting parties (God and man), 2) The statement of conditions (here, perfect obedience is the condition), 3) The promise of a reward for fulfilling the conditions (here, everlasting life is the promised reward), 4) The penalty for disobedience (death).
 - c. The view is simply this: God put Adam on probation by giving him a command. If he obeys, he merits everlasting life for himself and all mankind; if he disobeys, he incurs death and brings death on all mankind.
- 2. We reject the covenant of works.**
- a. First, Gen. 2:16-17 cannot bear the weight put upon it. 1) In those verses nothing is said about an agreement (it is a commandment, sovereignly given by God). 2) In those verses nothing is said about a reward for obedience (“Thou shalt surely die” is the penalty for disobedience, but all one can infer from that is that if you do not disobey, you will not die. You will continue to live).
 - b. Second, the idea that Adam could merit everlasting life for himself and his posterity simply by not eating a piece of fruit is false. Man, as a mere creature, cannot merit. To merit one would have to go beyond (Luke 17:10).
 - c. Third, Christ came to do what Adam could never have done (I Cor. 15:45-47). 1) Adam was of the earth, earthy. Therefore, he could never have attained to the heavenly. Even if he had lived perfectly, he would never have been able to enjoy heavenly life. He would simply have lived on paradise earth. To elevate us to heaven, it required the Lord of heaven to merit for us eternal life of body and soul. 2) If Adam could have done by not eating what Christ did by His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, it all seems pointless. Fact is, God always had the second Adam in mind. Adam had to fail to make way for Christ.

II. ADAM’S RELATIONSHIP TO EVE

A. God made man male and female (Gen. 1:27, Matt. 19:4).

- 1. After God made Adam, He declared that it was not good for Adam (the man) to be alone (Gen. 2:18).**
 - a. Therefore, God first caused Adam to realize his need for a partner, one suited to him; He brought to him all the animals, but “there was not found an help meet for him” (2:20).
 - b. Then God put Adam to sleep, removed a rib from Adam, and made (literally “built”) a woman. (Q: Do men have one rib less than women?)
- 2. God brought Eve to Adam (Gen. 2:22).**
 - a. The truth is that God brings to every man his wife in His providence; God has instituted marriage. We see its main purposes: 1) Companionship. It is to be a bond of fellowship, a covenant relationship (not an agreement). We see that in the words “cleave” (2:24) and “one flesh” (2:24). It is the closest earthly relationship between humans, closer even than the parent-child relationship. 2) Bringing forth children (Gen. 1:28; Mal. 2:14-16), 3) The avoidance of fornication (I Cor. 7:2). Sexual relationships outside of marriage are sin, are fornication.
 - b. Therefore, marriage is NOT a human invention, and man cannot do with it as he will.

- c. Notice, too, that the authority in the marriage is the man. 1) He is the head. To him comes the command in Gen. 2:17. 2) Adam was formed first, then Eve (I Tim. 2:13). 3) Adam names Eve, his wife.

B. Divorce and remarriage

1. God designed marriage to be a one flesh union for life.

- a. The commandment of God is that a man “shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Jesus reaffirms that teaching in Matt. 19:4-6.
- b. Marriage ends, therefore, only when one or both of the marriage partners dies. That is, physical death.
- c. Marriage does not end when a man’s love for his wife grows cold or a man sees a prettier girl or a man sues for divorce. In the eyes of God, two people who are married are married until death.
- d. Marriage for Christians must be *in the Lord* (I Cor. 7:39).

2. There is only one ground for divorce and no ground for remarriage while one’s spouse still lives.

- a. That is the teaching of Jesus Christ in Matt. 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; I Cor. 7:11, 39.
- b. Only the act of sexual unfaithfulness can violate the marriage so that divorce is permitted. Incompatibility, financial reasons, loss of interest, emotional or physical abuse, shift in priorities, failed expectations, etc. are NOT reasons for divorce. Q: If a spouse is abusive and even threatens the children, what can be done?
- c. To be married to another while one’s original spouse is living is adultery (ongoing adultery). Christ demands repentance: repentance means you must end the adulterous relationship even if it is a second, third, or fourth marriage. See Matt. 14:3-4 (John the Baptist) and see especially Matt. 19:10 (and Jesus’ response).

III. ADAM’S RELATION TO MANKIND AND THE CREATION

A. Adam was the king of the creation and was the head of mankind.

- 1. Adam was not simply a highly evolved ape: he is superior to all the animals. The animals exist for his benefit.
- 2. He was the organic head, the source of life. All of mankind can be traced back to Adam and Eve. God did not make different races of men at separate times and places, but one human couple (Gen. 3:20, Acts 17:26).
- 3. Therefore, human beings are all related to one another. This is the end of racism. Darwinism is inherently racist: one race is a higher evolution than another (modern Darwinians downplay this). The church has been guilty of racism, but the Bible is not racist.

B. Adam was the legal representative (federal head) of all mankind.

- 1. Eve was not; Adam was: therefore the devil sought to come to Adam via Eve. Adam did not volunteer to be the head; God made him the head. His actions had consequences for himself and for all he represented.
- 2. Because Adam was the legal head, he acted on our behalf when he disobeyed. We sinned *in him* (Romans 5:12, 19). But we cannot complain, because he was the perfect representative (God’s righteous friend-servant).

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW (Biblical Anthropology: creation, providence, man as created, man as sinner)

A. There are four states of man:

1. These are: 1) Man as created in original righteousness, 2) Man as fallen, 3) Man as redeemed, 4) Man as glorified in heaven.
2. We have seen the first state of man, man as he came forth from the hand of God. Today we look at his fall.
3. About man’s creation we have seen the following truths: 1) God made man as a unique creature, as the crown of creation, on the 6th day of creation week. He did not evolve from the animal world. 2) God made man, body and soul, from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life; he has a physical and earthly, as well as a spiritual and heavenly, aspect to his existence. 3) God made man, not only as an image bearer (a rational, moral creature), but in His own image and after His own likeness in true knowledge, perfect righteousness, and pure holiness. 4) God made man in a covenant relationship of friendship with his Creator, and in covenant with other human beings (especially Eve). 5) God made man to be His officebearer, prophet, priest, and king, to rule under Him and for Him, and He made Adam the head of the human race.

B. But man did not remain in that state for long. He committed sin and fell. Augustine (who died in AD 430) best summarized the four states of man with respect to sin. 1) The first man (Adam): he was able to sin (*posse peccare*). 2) Fallen man: he is not able not to sin (*non posse non peccare*). 3) Redeemed man: he is able not to sin (*posse non peccare*). 4) Glorified man (in heaven): he is not able to sin (*non posse peccare*).

I. THE FALL OF MAN

A. What brought about the fall of man?

1. First, God cannot be blamed for the fall. He was sovereign over it. He was in control of it. But God did not bring it about. God did not cause it. God was not the author of it. Read James 1:13-14.

- a. God created the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But God did not force Adam and Eve to eat the fruit. What was the tree exactly? The best explanation is that in eating the fruit, Adam was acting as if he could determine good and evil for himself instead of trusting the good God to do so for him. Adam’s sin was a grasp after independence, an attempt to free himself from the restrictions of serving God.
- b. God did not lure Adam with the tree and its fruit. To lure someone to sin, you have to present sin as something good, something advantageous. That is what Satan always does. But God never does that. God commanded Adam. He may not eat. God’s word is law. And God warned Adam of the bitter consequences. You will die, Adam, if you eat. Now, trust me; trust my goodness; love me and obey me.
- c. Besides, for Adam to eat of the tree was ingratitude. Had God not been generous already? Why want what God had forbidden?

2. Second, the devil had a role in the fall.

- a. Prior to this, the devil had fallen. The devil’s fall is a greater mystery than the fall of Adam. Eve was tempted; Adam followed Eve; but how did the devil fall? We do not know. The origin of his fall seems to have been pride, a

desire to have the glory of God, equality with God, even to be above God (Is. 14:12-15, Ezek. 28:13-15, I Tim. 3:6). But Calvin says it best: *“Some persons grumble that Scripture does not in numerous passages set forth systematically and clearly that fall of the devils, its cause, manner, time and character. But because this has nothing to do with us, it was better not to say anything, or at least to touch upon it lightly, because it did not befit the Holy Spirit to feed our curiosity with empty histories to no effect. And we see that the Lord's purpose was to teach nothing in his sacred oracles except what we should learn to our edification. Therefore, lest we ourselves linger over superfluous matters, let us be content with this brief summary of the nature of devils: they were when first created angels of God, but by degeneration they ruined themselves, and became the instruments of ruin for others.”*

- b. The devil tempted or lured Eve. In tempting Eve, the devil portrayed good as evil and evil as good. He presented disobedience to God to be advantageous. He denied the evil consequences of sin. Notice his approach. First, he sowed doubt concerning God’s Word: “Yea, hath God said...?” (Gen. 3:1). Second, he modified God’s Word: “Ye shall not eat of every tree” (Gen. 3:1). God had only exempted one tree. God’s generosity in giving an abundance of good trees with excellent fruit was denied. Third, he flatly contradicted the Word of God: “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Fourth, he attributed evil motives to God. He said that God was trying to withhold some great good from His children, and that He was not the generous and good friend He claimed to be.
- c. The devil has not changed his tactics. God did not really say that, did He? Did God really mean that? Surely you must have misheard or misunderstood Him. God is unreasonable, restrictive, unfair. There are no consequences for sin. God would never inflict death on you for a little sin like that. God just wants to spoil your fun. After all, everybody else does it, and they are not punished, are they? If God really loved you, He would let you do this. It all begins with a denial of the Word of God.

3. Third, Eve has a role in the fall.

- a. Eve was the devil’s target for several reasons. First, Eve had not received the commandment directly from God. She could be more easily beguiled. Second, Eve was not the head; Adam was. Therefore, he needed to approach Adam in an indirect fashion. Third, Adam loved Eve and trusted her. If he could get Eve, Adam would most likely follow. The devil tempts today through family and friends. That way he makes the temptation seem less dangerous.
- b. Eve was very foolish in her dealings with the devil. First, it would appear that Eve was standing near, or at least in sight of, the forbidden tree when the devil appeared (v. 6). Second, she conversed with the devil. She tried to discuss this issue with the devil. But there was nothing to discuss. She should have fled from the devil. She should have gone to her husband. She acted independently of her head, Adam. Third, she listened to the devil. She allowed the devil to cast doubts into her mind concerning God’s word. She listened to the devil slander her Friend-sovereign, God. Fourth, she agreed with the devil. She became infatuated by the fruit. She saw that it looked good; she saw that it was good for food; she desired what the devil said she could have, the ability to know good and evil and to be like God (I John

2:15-16, II Cor. 11:3, I Tim. 2:14). Compare this to Christ's being tempted. He refused to discuss. He said, "It is written" (Matt. 4:1-10).

- c. Although Eve was deceived, she was still responsible. The devil could only make suggestions to her. He could not make her eat. "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

4. Fourth, Adam fell.

- a. So far, the devil had succeeded in only bringing down Eve. Had sin ended there, Eve would have died and perished. But the devil wanted to ruin the whole human race, so he needed to bring down Adam. Adam is the first father and the representative head of humanity. Eve is not.
- b. The account in Scripture is brief. Eve ate the fruit. Adam appeared not to have been there. Adam arrived. Eve gave the fruit to Adam, and Adam ate. Adam ate without being deceived. Adam ate with his eyes wide open. Adam's sin was willful disobedience. Adam chose to follow Eve instead of trusting God.
- c. The effect of sin was shame and fear (v. 7, 10). Before this, Adam and Eve loved God. Now they fled from God. Also, the result was a loss of fellowship. The covenant was broken. The friendship had been destroyed. Adam had betrayed his Friend, and he had become friends with the devil. He had changed masters from God to the devil. This is implied in Gen. 3:15. Also, the friendship between Adam and Eve was spoiled.

II. PUNISHMENT

A. The fall brought judgment. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and they did.

1. When God demanded that Adam give account of himself, the blame shifting began. God first cursed the serpent, who was the instrument of temptation used by the devil. The serpent must have been different before the fall – perhaps with legs. He also pronounced judgment on the devil. His head would be bruised (crushed).
2. Then God judged the woman. Childbirth and childrearing will become difficult and painful for women. And because Eve acted independently of her husband, she must be subject to him ("thy desire [literally, "longing"] shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"). But male headship is a creation ordinance.
3. Then God judged the man. First, God cursed the creation. He was the king of the creation. The king fell. Creation fell with him. Rom. 8:19-22 ("subject to vanity [emptiness, futility, frustration]"). There is a curse upon the ground on which man depends for his sustenance. Work becomes toil.
4. But in the midst of judgment, there was mercy: the mother promise (Gen. 3:15) and the covering.

B. The consequences for us are briefly these: 1) Original guilt. Adam acted as our representative. We are guilty of his sin. 2) Original pollution. All of us are born with corrupt sinful natures. 3) Loss of the image of God, 4) Loss of friendship with God, and 5) Death: spiritual, physical, and eternal death under God's curse, but for Christ.

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. Last time we saw man’s fall into sin – it is a historical event; it was not the fault of God, but the devil; Eve and Adam played a role.
- B. The consequences: sin came into the world, and death (in all its forms) by sin; certain temporal judgments upon the serpent, the creation, woman and man; man lost the image of God and friendship with God. Man lost the knowledge of God, became unrighteous and unholy.

I. ADAM AND CHRIST (To understand why Adam’s sin affected all mankind, turn to Romans 5.)

- A. Adam and Christ are unique in the human race. Rom. 5:14 calls Adam “the figure of him [Christ] that was to come,” and I Cor. 15:45 calls Christ the “last Adam.”

1. This means that, in a certain way, Adam was a type of Christ, similar to Him.

- a. In many ways Adam and Christ are opposites, but Rom. 5 makes it clear that Adam and Christ are two representative heads of two peoples. Adam represented a group of people as head of the human race, and Christ represented a group as head of His people, the elect.
- b. This is clear in Rom. 5 by the repetition of “one man” (vv. 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). In Rom. 5, there are two called “one man”: ADAM who sinned and CHRIST who obeyed. This is also clear from the language “as by...” “even so...” (vv. 12, 18, 19, 21). There is a parallel made between Adam and Christ.

2. Adam and Christ are representatives in that what they did while acting as heads affected those they represented.

- a. Adam was head of the human race while he stood in Eden. As soon as he sinned, Adam was dethroned and deposed as king and officebearer, and ceased to be head. *That is why the rest of his deeds are not ours.*
- b. Christ was appointed to be Head of the elect church in eternity. He stood as the righteous Head. He obeyed where Adam failed to obey. He has been exalted to the highest heavens as King and Head forever.
- c. Adam disobeyed in eating the forbidden fruit, and in so doing [the] many were made sinners (v. 19); Christ obeyed the entire law even unto the death of the cross (one great act of obedience), and in so doing [the] many were made righteous. *But in what sense were we made sinners? In the same sense in which many were made righteous. Legally sinners! Legally righteous!*

- B. Rom. 5 describes the relationship of Adam as head of the human race and Christ as head of the elect as *a legal relationship*. Adam and Christ are legal heads and representatives.

1. When Adam was faced with the choice in Eden, he was acting not only for himself, but for all men.

- a. That makes Adam’s sin so serious – Adam was created as the king of creation, in a covenant relationship with God, with true knowledge of God and a perfectly upright and holy nature, but he “deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts” (L.D. 4, Q&A 9).
- b. God gave Adam the power of attorney to act on our behalf, and he squandered everything and lost it all, and we must now live with the

consequences. We sinned in Adam. His sin is our sin. It is accounted our sin. V. 12, “for that all have sinned” and v. 19, “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”

- c. That is original guilt – God holds us accountable for that first sin, and on the basis of that first sin, He punishes us by causing us to be born into the world with a corrupt nature. *Otherwise, how can it be just for God to propagate a sinful nature to innocent children?*
 - d. Adam sinned and we sinned in him, but God’s demands have not changed
- 2. This parallel between Adam and Christ is vitally important for a correct understanding of salvation.**
- a. Some say that we are not guilty of Adam’s sin, but that we are born sinful because Adam is our first father and he passes sin to us. They reject original guilt, but accept original pollution or corruption.
 - b. Rom. 5 does not say that by the disobedience of one many *became sinful* but many were *made sinners*. The phrase “made sinners” means to be constituted legally as sinners, to be placed into the class of guilty sinners.
 - c. Both original guilt (from Adam) and the righteousness of God (in Christ) become ours by imputation. We are sinners before God (even before we sin personally) because God imputes to us the sin of Adam. We are righteous before God (not because we become good but) because God imputes to us the righteousness and obedience of Christ.

II. TOTAL DEPRAVITY

A. On the basis of original guilt, we also are punished with the corruption of our natures, called original sin and total depravity (Belgic Confession Art. 15).

1. This corruption of our nature is the source of all other sins (“this woeful source”).

- a. We are corrupt from conception and birth. All babies are conceived in sin and therefore subject to and worthy of punishment. The one great proof of that is that *children die* (Ps. 51:5, 58:3; Rom. 5:14).
- b. Therefore, we do not teach that babies are born innocent. The idea of an age of accountability might seem nice, but has no Scriptural basis. Children are accountable even if they do not understand.

2. We should be aware of some false views concerning the effect that Adam’s first sin had on mankind.

- a. Pelagius (d. 418) taught that the sin of Adam had no effect whatsoever on his posterity. Man, even after the fall, is naturally good. Sin is passed on only by way of example, and because of man’s poor environment (bad examples around him) does he sin. There is no corruption of his nature.
- b. Semi-Pelagianism modified Pelagianism. Man was affected by the fall, very badly affected, but man is not dead, not totally corrupt, just very far gone from the original goodness of his nature, and very sick.
- c. Arminianism modified Semi-Pelagianism. Man is corrupt, but man retains a free will, and if he does not resist the grace of God, he can attain to salvation.
- d. The Bible teaches that man is DEAD in sin, cannot do anything good, and is wholly inclined to all evil.

B. Total depravity

1. Total depravity is universal depravity.

- a. *All men without exception* under the headship of Adam (i.e., all men except Christ) have sinned in Adam, are guilty of Adam's sin, and are totally depraved in their nature.
 - b. All men are totally depraved *in every part of their nature*. Sin has corrupted every part: the body of man is corrupted by sin, the mind of man is corrupted by sin, the heart of man has been corrupted by sin, the affections and will of man have been corrupted by sin. All the apples in the barrel are rotten, and every one of the apples is completely rotten. There is no intact apple, and no part of any apple is intact.
 - c. All men are totally depraved in every part of their nature *totally*. Sin has totally corrupted the body, totally corrupted the mind, totally corrupted the heart, the affections, and the will of man (see Canons III/IV, A, 1).
 - d. Does that mean that all sinners are as wicked as they could be? Yes! Does that mean that all sinners act at all times like Hitler? No! All sins lurk within the bosom, but not all can come to full expression.
- 2. Total depravity is an inability to do anything good.**
- a. What a dreadful fall! Adam was upright and holy. Adam and his descendants became unable to do anything good! This does not mean that sinners want to do good but cannot, but this is a corruption of the nature so that their hearts, minds, and wills are opposed to good.
 - b. Remember what goodness is: something is "good" and pleasing to God only when it is done in obedience to God's commandments, out of faith, and to the glory of God. No totally depraved sinner does that.
 - c. This means that all the splendid actions of unbelievers are sins, splendid and dazzling, but sins!
- 3. But total depravity is also the inclination to all evil.**
- a. Total depravity is not merely that one does not have the ability to do good, but it is an active doing of evil.
 - b. Sinners love evil: all their heart, affections, desires, and will are set on evil, only evil, always evil.
 - c. The problem is that it does not always seem that way. But we do not judge according to appearances, but God's Word. Part of our sin is blindness. We must submit to God's diagnosis of our condition.
 - d. Read Rom. 3:10-18, Eph. 2:1-3, Tit. 3:3, Gen. 6:5, Rom. 8:7-8. Explain: sin, transgression, iniquity.
- 4. Total depravity means free will is a lie.**
- a. Man has a will. He can choose to get up or to stay in bed; he can choose to eat toast or cereal for breakfast, etc. Also, man has a will in that he is not compelled to do something by God. God does not force a man to do something and then punish him for it.
 - b. But man's will is not free. Man's will is always subject to God's providence. We will many things which in God's providence are impossible.
 - c. But, worse, man's will because of sin is enslaved. Man wills, he wills actively, he wills without compulsion, but his will is determined by his heart and his nature, and they are sinful. He cannot will good. And a will that can will what it wants but can never will good is not free. Man cannot choose Christ.

SUMMARY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

(Creation, providence, man as originally righteous, and man as fallen)

A. CREATION

1. Creation is God's first great work in time.

- a. By creation God brought into being that which existed only in His eternal counsel, plan, and will.
- b. By creation God brought into being reality which now exists in distinction from Himself.
- c. By creation God created time, space, and matter.
- d. By creation God brought into being reality which depends entirely upon Him.

2. Only the Triune God creates.

- a. There is an absolute distinction between Creator and creation.
- b. The work of creation requires almighty power and unsearchable wisdom.
- c. God's work of creation was orderly and purposeful, not random, haphazard, or chaotic.
- d. God created with a view to Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16) and for His own glory.

3. God's orderly act of creation occurred in six twenty-four hour days of evening and morning.

- a. Genesis 1 clearly teaches this, and the rest of the Bible confirms it.
- b. Genesis 1 is straightforward, plain, simple history. It is not myth, not poetry, but historical fact.
- c. The word day (Hebrew: "Yom") with "evening and morning" and the numbers "1st, 2nd, 3rd," etc. always mean a normal 24-hour day. Even liberal scholars admit that that is what the word means.
- d. Genesis 1 is not poetry. Compare the parallelism of the Psalms and Proverbs to the historical narrative of Genesis, I-II Kings, or I-II Chronicles, and you will see that Genesis lacks the outstanding characteristic of Hebrew poetry (parallelism) and has the outstanding characteristic of Hebrew narrative ("And" + verb).
- e. Evolution in all its forms must be rejected: 1) It is an attack on the authority of Scripture, 2) It denies that death is the direct consequence of sin, and really denies the historical Adam and Eve and the fall, 3) Genesis and evolution cannot be made to fit, 4) Evolution is an attack on Christ Himself: Christ the Creator, Christ upholds the authority of Genesis (Matt. 19:4), and Christ is the second Adam who died for the sin committed by the first Adam.

B. PROVIDENCE

1. Providence is God's power by which He **upholds** all things which He has made ("by His hand").
2. Providence is God's power by which He **governs** all things which He has made.
3. God's providence must not be confused with His grace. God gives good things to His people (and even afflicts them) in grace (His favour is upon them; He always aims at their good), but God gives good things to the wicked in His wrath, not in grace (Ps. 73:18, 92:6-7, etc.). God does not show grace to the wicked.

C. MAN CREATED AND FALLEN

1. Man created in a state of original righteousness:

- a. God's creation of man was unique: 1) Consultation within the Trinity ("Let us ..."). 2) Man is a physical-spiritual being with body and soul, able to have fellowship with God and bear God's image.

- b. God created man in His own image. We distinguish between man as image bearer (as a rational, moral being, man can be an image bearer, but his rationality is not the image of God) and having God's image.
- c. The *image* of God is not reason plus free will, with the *likeness* of God a super-added gift of righteousness (Rome's view). *Image* and *likeness* are the same thing. The image of God is **knowledge, righteousness, and holiness** (Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10).
- d. As God's image bearer, man (Adam) served God in love. Adam was created in relationships with God and the creation: God was Adam's Friend-sovereign, and Adam was God's Friend-servant. Adam was God's prophet, priest, and king, and Adam was the organic and federal (representative) head of mankind.

2. Fallen man

- a. The devil brought about the fall of man, but God was sovereign over it. The fall is part of God's counsel.
- b. The devil targeted Eve because he wanted to reach Adam, through whom the human race is plunged into ruin.
- c. The results: 1) **Death** (physical, spiritual, eternal), 2) **Estrangement** from God (loss of fellowship) and servitude to the devil, 3) **Deposition** as God's officebearer, 4) **Loss** of God's image (completely lost and turned into the image of Satan), 5) **Original guilt, original pollution, and total depravity**. Total depravity means wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil (Gen. 6:5, Rom. 3:10, Eph. 2:1, etc.).

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. A reminder of the main divisions of the Knowledge of God: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology.

1. Today we begin Christology, the doctrine of Christ. It brings together Theology (God) and Anthropology (Man), because it teaches us how God and man are reconciled by Christ, God in our flesh.
2. The main divisions of Christology are the 1) Names, 2) Natures, 3) Offices, and 4) States of the Mediator.

B. We begin today with an introduction to the Mediator, who He is, and why He is necessary.

I. THE MEDIATOR (I Tim. 2:5, Heb. 8:6, 9:15, 12:24)

A. A mediator is someone who brings together two parties who are at variance with one another.

1. The most common human example is a marriage counselor: he/she is usually a third (neutral) party whose goal is to help the couple overcome their differences. But such an illustration is severely limited.

- a. Jesus Christ is not that kind of mediator, because He is not a third party. He represents God and is man.
- b. Jesus Christ is not that kind of mediator, because in this case God is the offended party (man has sinned against Him and violated His friendship) and man is the guilty party, the offender.
- c. In order for mediation to occur, the barrier which prevents friendship must be removed. This brings about reconciliation.

2. The variance which exists between God and men is infinitely greater than a “marriage on the rocks.”

- a. God is offended because of man’s sin. Remember that God is holy, and God created man to be holy, to be devoted to Him in love. Because man has sinned, he is under the just wrath of God (Eph. 2:3).
- b. Man has become the enemy of God. His heart is filled with hatred against God. This hatred is expressed in sin (Rom. 8:7-8).
- c. Man is the guilty party but has neither the ability nor the desire to be reconciled to God, and God is the offended party, but God cannot and will not forgive man without satisfaction of His justice.

B. There is nothing that man can do to bridge the gap between himself and God, a gap caused by sin (Is. 59:2).

1. To bridge that gap, man would have to satisfy God’s demands, which are two.

- a. First, man owes God perfect, lifelong obedience: his entire life must be devoted to God in love. No man since the Fall has been able to do that, because his entire nature is corrupt with total depravity.
- b. Second, man would have to pay for all his sins, all his crimes against the law of God, and man has nothing with which to pay. Even if he could begin to pay, every day he accrues more debt.

2. But is God unfair to expect man, even after the Fall, and in light of man’s total depravity, to obey Him perfectly?

- a. No, He is not unfair: God has not changed. Even when man fell, God remained holy, righteous, and true; man remains a dependent creature who owes God all things, even if he cannot pay.
 - b. Illustrate: A man is given one million dollars to build a castle for a prince, but the man squanders the money. Is the prince still legally entitled to the castle which the man was commissioned to build? Of course!
- C. Between God and man there is a mediator and only one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5).**
- 1. The idea of a mediator is God's; Christ is God's Mediator. God planned Him in eternity.**
 - a. This is because Christ *is* God – He comes from God to represent God and to maintain God's rights.
 - b. But to bring about reconciliation between God and man, the Mediator must also *be* man.
 - c. The Mediator cannot be a woman, because a woman cannot be a head. That rules out Mary (I Jn. 2:1-2).
 - 2. That God sends a mediator is an act of mercy, because man could never have provided a mediator.**
 - a. Man did not desire a mediator. Man did not have the power to produce a mediator.
 - b. The best specimens of mankind that man could produce (a philosopher such as Plato, a general such as Alexander the Great, a scientist such as Archimedes, or a religious man like Moses) could not qualify because they were all sinners.
 - c. But God desired to maintain His friendship with His people (chosen in Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman), but without denying His justice and without denying Himself. So He conceived of, planned, and provided the perfect Mediator, Jesus Christ, a real, sinless man, who is at the same time eternal God.

II. WHAT KIND OF MEDIATOR DO WE NEED?

- A. The mediator we need must be a man (I Tim. 2:5, "the *man* Christ Jesus").**
- 1. He must be man because his work is to reconcile God and man. The mediator must represent both God and man.**
 - a. It is not the mediator's work to reconcile God and fallen angels, the devils. For them, there is no mediator. God could have abandoned all men, as He did the devils (II Pet. 2:4, Jude 6).
 - b. It is not the mediator's work to reconcile God and the angels in heaven. They did not fall. They did not sin. The mediator does not become an angel (Heb. 2:16).
 - c. It is the mediator's work to reconcile God and fallen human beings. Hence he becomes a human being.
 - 2. He must be a man because his work is to bear the punishment which man deserves and thus satisfy the justice of God, but *only a man* can satisfy in the human nature for the sins committed by man.**
 - a. It would be unjust for God to punish an animal or an angel for the sins of men. God demanded animal sacrifices to teach God's people the need for satisfaction and to point them to it (Heb. 10:4).
 - b. At the same time, it is impossible for God to suffer or to be punished. God's justice must be satisfied by God *in a human nature*.

- c. If man suffers for his own sins, he can never satisfy the justice of God, but must remain under God's wrath forever. That would not bring about reconciliation.

B. The mediator we need must be eternal God.

1. The mediator has to represent both God and man, and so He must also be God.

- a. The mediator must be God because His work requires almighty power.
- b. The mediator must be God so that His work has eternal and infinite value. Christ can do something which Adam, even in sinless perfection, could never do: He can merit with God. He can give God something which He did not owe God.
- c. Adam owed God perfect, lifelong obedience. The Son of God did not. The Son of God voluntarily became man to give God that obedience, but He did not have to.
- d. The work of Christ is of eternal and infinite value because of who He is. Therefore by Christ's work He can merit for His people eternal life and everlasting blessedness.

2. The mediator must be God because only then can His sufferings accomplish eternal salvation for us.

- a. Because Christ is God, He can – in His human nature – bear the burden of God's wrath and live.
- b. On the cross, the divine nature upheld and supported the human nature through the Holy Spirit so that the man Jesus Christ was not destroyed as God's wrath fell upon Him.
- c. Also, Christ had to be God so that He could receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and so that He could pour out the Holy Spirit and apply the benefits of His death to all His people.

C. This Mediator we need was given to us in the incarnation.

1. The incarnation means "in-fleshing," becoming flesh ("The Word was made flesh ..." [John 1:14]).

- a. By the miracle of the incarnation, the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, took to Himself a real, complete, weakened, sinless human nature.
- b. The incarnation means that the Son of God became a man (with all that that entails) but remained the Son of God, retaining all His attributes.
- c. This human nature was produced by the Holy Spirit from the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary.

2. This Mediator is our willing substitute, representative, and surety.

- a. As a substitute He stands in our place, doing what we should have done but could not do, and suffering what we should have suffered. Because He suffered, we do not have to, and cannot suffer to pay for our sins.
- b. As a representative, He is our legal head. Adam represented us in the garden and fell, and we fell in Him; Jesus Christ represented us His whole life long and especially in His death and resurrection, and we died and rose again in Him.
- c. As a surety, He takes upon Himself all our legal responsibilities and obligations, and when we cannot meet those obligations He becomes legally responsible. God lays our sins upon Him, and He imputes Christ's righteousness to us (Heb. 7:22, Gen. 44:32-34, Is. 53:6, 11).

- d. And remember that the Son of God, who was equal with God, willed to do this. No man took His life from Him. He laid it down willingly (Phil. 2: 5-8, Heb. 12:2).

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. The main divisions of Christology: the Names, Natures, Offices, and States of the Mediator of the covenant

- 1. A mediator is one who brings together two parties who are at variance with one another.**
 - a. This variance was caused by man’s transgressing God’s covenant in the Garden of Eden, leading to man hating God and God being offended by man’s sin.
 - b. For fellowship to occur again between God and elect men, the barrier of man’s sin must be removed. God requires satisfaction (full payment [perfect obedience and atonement]) as a demand of His justice.
 - c. But man is unwilling and unable to do this; and God, the offended but innocent party, who could justly cast us all into hell, graciously gives a mediator.
- 2. The Mediator whom God gives is the Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - a. He is *God’s* Mediator: He represents God, He maintains the rights of God, and He glorifies God.
 - b. He is the *only* Mediator: He is perfect man and eternal God. He must be God because He needs almighty power and because only the eternal Son of God can merit eternal life for His people, and only He can bear God’s wrath. And He must be man because man must be punished for man’s sin. This happened in the incarnation.

B. Today we look at the NAMES of the Mediator.

- 1. We remember that the names of our Savior are not meaningless labels.** Each reveals something to us about the glory of His saving work. It is therefore not enough to say, “Jesus, Jesus ...” or “Christ, Christ ...” (that would be taking His name in vain), but we must know who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.
- 2. Many use the names of our Mediator, but only as magical formulas to get what they want out of God** (e.g., “I rebuke poverty in Jesus’ name”). Remember the third commandment and Acts 19:13-16!

I. JESUS

A. The name Jesus is the Savior’s personal name.

- 1. This is the name with which He grew up. His family and neighbors knew Him by this name.**
 - a. Often in the Gospels, He is called, “*Jesus* of Nazareth ...”
 - b. This name was common among the Jews and is the Greek equivalent of Joshua (Heb. 4:8).
 - c. But although many Jewish boys were called Jesus, this Jesus was the true Jesus. He was not Jesus in name only; He was Jesus indeed.
- 2. The Mediator received this name by the command of God Himself**
 - a. It was not the idea of Mary or Joseph to call this boy “Jesus.” Most likely, Joseph would have called Him after himself or after a relative. This was common, as we see in the example of Zacharias and John the Baptist (Luke 1:59-63).
 - b. God Himself by His angel announced to Joseph what the name of this child should be (Matt 1:21), and in obedience to God, that name was given to Him at His circumcision (Luke 2:21).

- B. The name Jesus comes from two words, “Jehovah” and “salvation,” and means “Jehovah saves.”**
- 1. In Scripture, God makes clear that He is the only Savior. Therefore, the name Jesus shows us that our Savior is the Savior appointed by God, and that He is God Himself.**
 - a. Is. 43:3, 11; Hos. 13:4; I Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:3, 4; 2:13; 3:4, 6.
 - b. This also explains why the name Jehovah never appears in the New Testament (not even in the Greek original): Jesus is Jehovah. He is Jehovah’s Savior, Jehovah in the flesh, come to do the saving work of Jehovah.
 - c. Man cannot save himself, and only God Himself can provide a Savior suitable for man (Acts 4:12).
 - 2. We see from the angel’s words in Matthew 1:21 the nature of salvation: salvation from sin.**
 - a. The name Jesus reminds us that we are sinners and reminds us that our greatest misery is sin and that our greatest need is salvation from sin. It reminds us that the Mediator did not come to save us from social problems, poverty, oppression, etc., but He came to save us from sin.
 - b. The church by and large has forgotten this, and all their singing about Jesus and doing things in Jesus’ name is a denial of Jesus when they do not preach salvation from sin.
 - c. Jesus came to deliver us from all the aspects of sin: its guilt and punishment, its power and bondage, its pollution and defilement, and its presence.
 - 3. We see from the angel’s words in Matthew 1:21 that Jesus came to save particular people, “His people,” and that He *shall* save them.**
 - a. Christ does not save all men. The term “His people” limits it. His people are not simply the Jews, but consist of all the elect from all nations. A people is a group of individuals under one head. The people of Jesus are the elect of God. They are a people given to Him.
 - b. Notice what Matthew 1:21 says: “He *shall* save *His people*.” We must not say about Jesus, “He wants to save...He is willing to save...He is ready to save.” We must not say about Jesus, “He has made salvation possible for all men.” Many who talk about Jesus deny that He is an effectual Savior, and thus deny Him.
 - c. In saving His people, Jesus purchases salvation (forgiveness of sins and righteousness) and applies it.
 - d. To confess the name Jesus means that you confess that Jesus is the only, complete, effectual Savior from sin. Therefore, Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, and the health and wealth gospel deny Jesus. Westminster Confession of Faith 10:4.

II. CHRIST

A. Christ is the Mediator’s official name.

- 1. In the Old Testament certain men were anointed because they had to perform specific work in God’s kingdom.**
 - a. Anointing was a ceremony in which oil was poured upon the head of a man being ordained into a position as a prophet (I Kings 19:16), priest (Ps. 133), or king (I Sam. 16). The oil was a picture of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The important thing about anointing is authority, the right to act in a certain capacity. Anointing was by the pouring of oil in the Old Testament; the New Testament equivalent is ordination, the laying on of hands. No man has any

right – and certainly no woman has any right or authority – to hold a position of authority in the church without ordination (Heb. 5:4-5; I Tim. 2:11-12, 3:1, 10, 4:14, 5:22; Tit. 1:5).

- c. With anointing also comes equipping or qualification. Whom God appoints, He equips with the necessary gifts.

2. Jesus, the Son of God, was anointed into an official position, an office with authority.

- a. In eternity, the man Christ Jesus was chosen and appointed to this work, and the whole Old Testament prepares for it.
- b. Jesus was never anointed with oil, but He received the reality – He was anointed with the Holy Spirit (John 3:34; Heb. 1:9), especially at His baptism. The Holy Spirit authorized Him and equipped Him for His grueling work.
- c. Without the anointing, not even Jesus would be permitted to do this work. He would have no authority.

B. The name Christ shows us that Jesus is the servant of the Triune God Who came to do God’s will.

1. We have to remember that when we speak of Christ, we speak of Him as the Son of God in our flesh.

- a. In Christology, we must make a careful distinction between the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, and the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5).
- b. The Father begets the Son in the Trinity, but the Triune God sends Jesus Christ into the world; the Father and the Son are coequal, coeternal, and coessential, but the Triune God is the God, the Lord of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is the servant of the Triune God.

2. Christ, then, comes to do the will of God.

- a. He comes willingly and joyfully; it is His delight to do God’s will, and He comes in the full authority of God and with all the qualifications necessary to do the work (Ps. 40:6-9, Is. 42:1, 52:13, 53:11, 61:1-3 [Luke 4:16-21]).
- b. His office or work is threefold (prophet, priest, and king).

III. OTHER NAMES

A. LORD

1. The full title of our Savior is “Lord Jesus Christ.” The name Lord refers to His rule over us as His people.
2. Christ is Lord because He has the authority to rule all things on behalf of the Triune God.
3. Christ is especially Lord of His people: He owns them because He bought them on the cross (I Cor. 6:20).

B. SON OF GOD

1. This refers to Jesus Christ in His relationship to God: He is the eternally begotten, beloved, Son.
2. As the Son, He is of the same essence as the Father (homoousion). He is the natural and eternal Son.

C. SON OF MAN

1. The term “the Son of man” was the name by which Christ most often referred to Himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13. He is the Messiah, the one to whom God will give the eternal kingdom (Matt. 26:64)

2. The name Son of man emphasizes Christ's humanity: He is the perfect man, unparalleled and unequal to all other men. He is the divinely chosen, God-ordained man.

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW (The Names, Natures, Offices, and States of the Mediator of the Covenant)

A. Paul writes, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”

1. The church has always believed that Jesus Christ is God and that He was a true man.
2. The difficulty for theologians has been: how can we explain that, especially in the light of errors?

B. The orthodox view of Christ is that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God in two distinct natures (divine and human) in one person. In this lesson we want to “unpack” that statement.

I. JESUS CHRIST IS GOD.

A. When we teach that Jesus Christ is God, we mean that the one who was born in Bethlehem, who died on Calvary and rose from Joseph’s tomb, is the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God.

1. What this does not mean

- a. This does not mean that Jesus Christ was merely a great moral teacher or an enlightened prophet.
- b. This does not mean that Jesus Christ was the man who reached the highest level of God-consciousness.
- c. This does not mean that Jesus Christ was the man who was entirely permeated by God.

2. This means that everything that can be said of God can be said of Jesus Christ.

- a. The Bible does not hesitate – despite its strict monotheism – to call Jesus Christ *God* (John 1:1, 20:28, Rom. 9:5, I Tim. 3:16, Tit. 2:13, Heb. 1:8, I John 5:20 [see 1:2]).
- b. The Bible ascribes to Jesus Christ the attributes of God: He is eternal (John 1:1, 8:58), omniscient (Rev. 2:23), immutable (Heb. 13:8), and omnipotent (raises the dead, calms the sea, etc.). The works of God are also attributed to Him (creation [John 1:3], providence [Heb. 1:3], salvation [Acts 4:12]).
- c. The Bible commands us to worship Jesus Christ as God (Matt. 14:33, John 5:23, Rev. 5:13, Heb. 1:8).

B. The importance of this truth is such that if a person denies it he is eternally condemned.

1. Without the deity of Christ there can be no salvation (John 8:24, II John 9).

- a. Only if the Mediator is God can He merit for us perfect righteousness.
- b. Only if the Mediator is God has He power over His own life so that He can lay down His life and take it up again on His own authority and thus be able to substitute Himself for us.
- c. Only if the Mediator is God can He satisfy the justice of God and bear the wrath of God so as to deliver us from it.

2. Historical and creedal references

- a. “They were wont, on a stated day, to meet together before it was light, and to sing a hymn to Christ, as to a god” (Letter from Pliny the Younger [Roman Governor] to Trajan [Emperor], 112 AD).

- b. “Our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to a dispensation of God, from the seed of David, yes, but of the Holy Spirit as well” (Ignatius of Antioch, died c. 115 AD [The Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians, chapter 18]).
- c. “He therefore is that true, eternal, and almighty God, whom we invoke, worship, and serve” (Belgic Confession Art. 10).
- d. “The person who submitted to [this death] was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Savior for us” (Canons II, A, 4).

II. JESUS CHRIST IS MAN

- A. **As God, Jesus is of the same essence as the Father and the Spirit; as man, Jesus is of the same essence as us (“coessential with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood” [Chalcedon]).**
 - 1. **This means that Christ is everything that a human being is, except He does not participate in our fallen nature. He has no sin (no original guilt, no original pollution or corruption of nature, no actual sin).**
 - a. He had a human body consisting of human flesh and blood (John 19:34), a human soul (Matt. 26:38), a human will (Luke 22:42), and human emotions (Luke 10:21, John 11:35, Mark 6:6).
 - b. As a human being, He had physical limitations [finite]: He could only be in one place at one time. He was limited by time and space. He experienced tiredness (John 4:6), hunger (Mark 11:12), and thirst (John 19:28).
 - c. As a human being, He had rational limitations [finite]: He grew in knowledge (Luke 2:52), and He was limited in His knowledge (Mark 13:32). As man He was subject to God and worshipped God as His God.
 - 2. **This manhood of Jesus Christ was necessary.**
 - a. The Mediator must represent man before God and to do so, He must be true man; He must be able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Heb. 2:14, 17-18, 4:15-16).
 - b. The Mediator must bear the wrath of God against the sins of His people in the human nature.
 - c. The Mediator must have a human nature so that He can suffer and die.
- B. **There are several things which we can say about the human nature of Christ.**
 - 1. **It was a real (true) and complete human nature.**
 - a. The human nature of Jesus Christ was as real as ours; it was not a figment, a ghost, a phantom, a pretense. It was not a supernatural body; it was not heavenly flesh (Luke 24:39; I John 1:1-3, 4:2).
 - b. The human nature of Jesus Christ lacked nothing human: He did not have a human body but divine blood, or a human body but a divine soul, or a human body but a divine mind. He had a human everything.
 - c. This means that His human nature was finite (it had a beginning [the flesh of Jesus was formed by the Holy Spirit from the human nature of Mary], and it was subject to change [same biological properties as ours]).
 - 2. **It was a weakened but sinless human nature.**
 - a. Jesus Christ took to Himself a human nature weakened by the fall, but He Himself was not sinful. The nature He took was not the pre-fallen nature of Adam, but the fallen nature of Mary (“God sending His own Son in the

- likeness of sinful flesh” [Rom. 8:3]). He could be tempted, but He could not sin.
- b. This was necessary so that Christ could suffer and die. He had a human nature subject to the curse.
 - c. But, at the same time, Jesus Christ was guilty of no personal sin, because He is the Son of God.

III. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD.

A. The person is the conscious and self-conscious subject of all of one’s activity. It is that which “stands under” everything one is and does.

1. If you take a verb – any verb – in reference to Jesus Christ, the one doing the action of the verb is always the Person of the eternal Son of God.

- a. This Person (the eternal Son of God) dwelled in perfect fellowship with the other Persons of the Godhead, coequal, coeternal, coessential with the Father and the Spirit.
- b. This Person (the eternal Son of God) took to Himself a real, complete, weakened, and sinless human nature.
- c. This Person (the eternal Son of God) suffered, died, rose again, ascended, and sits at the right hand of God.

2. This is important to understand because a nature does not perform activity and cannot be the subject of action; only a person can and does.

- a. It is not correct to say, “The human nature of Jesus Christ thirsted” or “The human nature died on the cross” or “The human nature suffered” or “The human nature of Jesus Christ ascended into heaven.”
- b. It is not correct to say, “The divine nature of Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead” or “The divine nature of Jesus Christ had the power on earth to forgive sins.”
- c. Rather, we understand it thus: The Person of the eternal Son of God unites in Himself the two natures (human and divine) so that all the activity of the one Christ is the activity of the eternal Son of God.

B. We must understand that Christ *unites* in one Person the divine and human natures but that each nature retains its *distinct properties*.

1. This is a real union of the two natures.

- a. There are not two persons in Christ, so that there is a human “I” and a divine “I,” but there is only one “I.”
- b. There is not a fusion of the two natures of Christ so that the divinity becomes humanized and the humanity becomes divinized. Then the Mediator would be neither God nor man!
- c. The human nature retains its properties and the divine its properties, yet they cannot be separated (Belgic Confession Art. 19).

2. This means (in the communication of properties) that what can be said of either nature can be properly said of the whole Christ, and may be properly said of the Person of the eternal Son of God

- a. It is proper to say, “Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe” (but this is only true with respect to His divinity; His humanity did not exist then, but the Person of the Son created the universe).
- b. It is proper to say, “They...crucified the Lord of glory” (I Cor. 2:8) or to speak of the church of God which “He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28) (but this is only true with respect to His humanity; His divinity

was not crucified and has no blood, but the Person of the Son was crucified in the human nature).

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. Last week we saw the positive teaching concerning the Person of the Son of God.

1. He is true and eternal God, coessential with the Father and the Spirit.
2. He is true, complete, and sinless man, consubstantial with us, His people.
3. These two natures are distinct from one another and united in the Person of the Son of God.

B. We saw that the subject (the one doing) of all of Christ’s activity is the eternal Son of God acting through the two distinct natures.

1. What may be properly said of either of the two natures may be properly said of the whole Christ, and may be properly said of the eternal Son of God (“I thirst,” “they crucified the Lord of glory”).
2. But, although we now have an orthodox confession of these things, the church had to struggle with false ideas about Christ before she was able to confess the truth as we have it today.

I. CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE DEITY OF CHRIST

A. The arch-heretic of the early church was Arius (d. 336), and his heresy is known as Arianism.

1. Arius believed that only the Father is truly God; the Son of God is not God. He taught four things.

- a. The Son is a creature and owes his existence to the Father’s will (Col. 1:15, Rev. 3:14).
- b. The Son had a beginning (in eternity). “*There was when he was not.*”
- c. The Son as a creature has no direct communion with or direct knowledge of the Father.
- d. The Son is liable to change. In fact, some Arians taught that the Son could have fallen, but the Father willed otherwise.

2. Arius was condemned by the local bishop, Alexander, and Alexander’s deacon Athanasius.

- a. Arius appealed to some very influential friends and persuaded them that he was no heretic. He did this by hiding what he really taught and by misrepresenting his enemies.
- b. Such was the controversy caused by Arianism that a council was called at Nicaea in 325. A creed was proposed but rejected because Arius said he could sign it. The main battleground was over the word homoousion (“of the same essence”). Arius refused to agree to that word. He favored homoiouision (“of a similar essence”). The Nicene Creed was adopted, and Arius was anathematized and banished. The Creed affirmed the following:
 - 1) The Son is eternally begotten of the substance of the Father (“begotten, not made”).
 - 2) The Son is coeternal with the Father (“begotten of the Father before all worlds”).
 - 3) The Son possesses all the attributes of God, is true God, and has a perfect knowledge of the Father (“God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God”).
 - 4) The Son is of the same essence as the Father (“being of one essence with the Father”).

B. Aftermath of Nicaea

- 1. Arius was banished, but with the help of influential friends was able to convince the emperor of his orthodoxy.**
 - a. In fact, because Athanasius would not accept Arius back into the church, the emperor banished *him*.
 - b. The emperor ordered the heretic Arius to be reinstated to full communion, but Arius died the day before.
- 2. The Arians became more radical.**
 - a. Some were teaching that the Son is of a different essence than the Father, others that the Son is unlike the Father. At the same time, the Arians attacked the Deity and the Personality of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Athanasius and other theologians were able to convince their homoiousion brethren that homoousion was the best word to use, and the issue was settled in Constantinople in 381 AD. (Read the Nicene Creed).

II. CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

A. Some Christians influenced by paganism denied the human nature of Christ.

1. Some said that matter is evil per se, and therefore the Son of God could not assume physical matter (I Tim 4:4).
2. His humanity then must have been either a figment of men's imagination or a heavenly humanity which He brought down from heaven. Either way, it was not the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary (Heb. 2:14).

B. Apollinarianism

- 1. This was the teaching that Christ had a human body ("flesh and blood") but not a human soul.**
 - a. The Logos (the Person of the Son) replaced the human soul of Christ. The human nature of Christ, then, was without human soul, spirit, mind, thought, will, or emotion. Those things in Him were divine.
 - b. But the orthodox could see that this went against Scripture. The man Christ Jesus had human psychology (Matt. 26:38-39, Mark 3:5, Luke 2:52, 23:46, John 2:17, Heb. 5:8).
 - c. This teaching was a denial of the complete humanity of Christ, and if He was not a complete man, He could not redeem us completely, *body and soul*. In addition, this endangered the true humanity of Christ, for the teaching meant that Christ's flesh became deified, and His flesh was the object of worship.
- 2. The response of the orthodox was that Christ assumed a "reasonable soul" as well as a body.**

C. Nestorianism

- 1. Nestorius separated the two natures of Christ to such a degree that he made two persons in Christ.**
 - a. His view of Christ was of a man possessed by God. God dwelled inside the man Jesus Christ, but the divine was never truly united with the human in one Person. The analogy he used was marriage: the man and woman are one flesh but are distinct persons.
 - b. His teaching, then, was that a divine Christ inhabited a human Christ.
- 2. Nestorius was condemned especially for his denial of theotokos (God bearer).**
 - a. The church called Mary theotokos (God bearer) because they confessed that the one borne by Mary was God Himself. Nestorius did not want to confess that. He would not say that Mary bore God, but only that she bore Christ

(Luke 1:35, 43). He would not say that the Son of God was crucified, but only that the man Jesus Christ was crucified (I Cor. 2:8).

- b. But this was a dangerous and heretical separation of the two natures and a denial of the real incarnation of the Son of God. If the human and divine are not united in the one Christ, Christ's sufferings have no value for our salvation. They are the sufferings of a mere man.

D. Eutychianism

1. Eutyches went to the opposite extreme. For him, Christ's human nature was absorbed into his divine nature.
2. The result was that Christ was neither human nor divine but a "third thing." Then He could not be our Mediator and Savior.

III. THE SOLUTION OF CHALCEDON (451) ("one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures ...")

A. Four phrases were used to preserve orthodoxy.

1. **Without confusion:** in the union of the two natures of Christ (human and divine), they did not blend into a third nature.
2. **Without change:** in the union of the two natures of Christ (human and divine), one nature did not change into another nature. The humanity was not divinized. The deity and the humanity retained their distinct properties. The human nature never became omnipresent or infinite or omnipotent. The divine nature never lost any of its divine attributes.
3. **Without division:** although the two natures of Christ (human and divine) can be distinguished, they cannot be divided from one another. They exist in union together.
4. **Without separation:** after the union of the two natures of Christ (human and divine), they are not separated again. Even now, the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God in our flesh.

B. The truth is the truth of the incarnation.

1. The Son of God took upon Himself our human nature. In so doing, He became what He was not before, but He lost nothing of what He was. He added to Himself a true, complete, human nature and remained very God.
2. His divinity retains all the attributes of deity, although while on earth His deity was veiled behind flesh. He remained the eternal, infinite, almighty Second Person of the Trinity.
3. His humanity is true and complete and retains all the attributes of humanity. It never becomes infinite, omnipresent, etc. ("The distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved").
4. Because of the close union between the natures, the divinity lends eternal value to the sufferings of Christ and lends power to the human nature to bear up under the wrath of God.

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. The office of the Mediator refers to His *official work* as the Mediator. What did He come to do?

1. Really, the Mediator has one office, with a threefold aspect: prophet, priest, and king.
2. In order to do this official work, Jesus Christ has an office, a position of authority. He is appointed to that office by God Himself. (The Triune God appointed the man Jesus Christ to that office.)

B. An office, then, is a position of authority to do a certain work or to act in a certain function.

1. **As such:**
 - a. In society and in the church men must have an office to do certain work. Without the office a man may desire to do the work and may even have certain gifts for that work, but *he may not do the work*.
 - b. In the Old Testament, to be put into an office a man had to be anointed. God called certain men, and then He anointed them with authority to do that work. Without anointing no man could do the work.
 - c. That anointing with oil is a picture of God’s ordaining and equipping a man by the Holy Spirit to do that work.
2. **The three main offices in the Old Testament were prophet, priest, and king. In only two men were all three offices combined: Adam and Christ.**
 - a. These three offices were conferred upon Adam by virtue of his being the head of the human race, made in the image of God. As God’s prophet, Adam had true knowledge of God and declared His praises; as God’s priest, Adam devoted himself and the whole creation to God; as God’s king, Adam ruled in righteousness over the creation to the glory of God. It was his calling to “keep” (guard) the Garden.
 - b. Adam fell. He fell from his headship. He lost the image of God – knowledge, holiness, and righteousness – and he lost the office of prophet, priest, and king. Adam and all mankind with him became ignorant, blind, and filled with error; filthy, polluted, unholy, and unfit to approach God; unrighteous and in league with the devil.
 - c. Christ came to perform the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King perfectly and to restore that threefold office to us, God’s children.
3. **These three offices are foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Before the Great Prophet, Priest, and King came, God taught the people by Old Testament pictures. Expect, said God, a Savior who will be Prophet, Priest, and King.**
 - a. The Old Testament had prophets, men who received the Word of God directly from God Himself and then communicated that word to God’s people. They were God’s authoritative spokesmen, inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The Old Testament had priests, men who were given the right – by virtue of their office – to approach God on behalf of the people, to offer sacrifices for them, to intercede for them, to obtain blessings for them, and to bless them in the name of God.
 - c. The Old Testament had kings, men who were chosen by God to rule over God’s people, to lead them, to protect and defend them, to fight for them, and

to subdue their enemies. [Notice that officebearers in the Old Testament were not elected to office, they were appointed by God Himself].

- d. But the Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were *imperfect types* of the true Prophet, Priest, and King, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. When the people saw an Old Testament officebearer, they ought to have seen something of Christ in him, but they ought more to have longed for the promised Messiah, and they did! (They were imperfect, first, because they were sinful, and indeed many were unbelievers; second, they could never hold the threefold office at once (a king could never be a priest, for example Uzziah the king who usurped the priestly role and was punished. Melchizedek is an exception and Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4)); third, they could only ever give typical blessings: the word of the prophets was incomplete, the access of the priests was incomplete, the protection and leadership of the kings were incomplete.)

I. CHRIST'S OFFICE

A. Christ's office is His position of authority which vests Him with the right to act as the Prophet, Priest, and King to the glory of God.

1. Generally

- a. Christ "needs" an office, not as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, but as the man, Christ Jesus (Heb. 5:4-5).
- b. God appointed and ordained Christ to this office, this position, in eternity. In God's counsel, eternally Christ is God's Prophet, Priest, and King.
- c. God promised such a Prophet, Priest, and King in the Old Testament by the types and shadows and by specific promises in the Word of God. See the promise of the *Servant of Jehovah*, a key title of Messiah (Is. 42:1, 52:13, 53:11).
- d. To that end, the Triune God appointed, equipped, set apart, and anointed the man Christ Jesus. Earthly prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil. Christ was anointed with the reality, the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2, 61:1, John 3:34, Acts 10:38, Heb. 1:8-9).

2. Superiority

- a. Christ unites in one person all three offices of prophet, priest, and king because he is both the Son of David (the kingly office) and He is a priest after a better order than Levi (Melchizedek, Ps. 110; Heb. 7).
- b. Christ is the true and final Prophet (Heb. 1:1-3), the great High Priest (Heb. 7), and the true eternal King (Luke 1:33). He has no betters, no successors; he never loses His offices, He never dies, and He is never deposed. (That in general; let us now look at the first of Christ's offices, that of Prophet).

B. Christ the Chief Prophet

1. Prophets received the Word of God and brought the Word of God.

- a. Christ is promised as the Chief Prophet of God, Deut. 18:15 (see also John 6:14, Acts 3:22-26).
- b. Christ not only receives the Word of God; He IS the Word of God (John 1:1), in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). He has unique, personal, perfect knowledge of His Father (Matt. 11:25) because He is the eternal Son and Word of God.
- c. Since He IS the Word of God and perfectly KNOWS God, He is uniquely qualified to teach.

2. Christ's teaching is superior to all prophets.

- a. Christ not only preached the Word of God externally. He also teaches *internally*, and His Word reaches the heart (Matt. 11:25-27). He can open blinded eyes, unstop closed ears, and soften hardened hearts.
 - b. To hear Christ's voice is to be saved (John 10:27-28).
- 3. Christ exercised the office of prophet**
- a. In the Old Testament: He is the Angel of the Lord, the Messenger of God: His Holy Spirit indwelt the prophets (I Pet. 1:10-11).
 - b. In His earthly ministry, He taught with authority (Matt. 7:28-29); He preached the Gospel (Is. 61; Luke 4:21).
 - c. He exercised His prophetic office on Calvary, where He proclaimed the holiness and love of God.
 - d. He continued that prophetic office through the apostles, in their preaching and in their writings (Acts 1:1, I Thess. 2:13, I Tim. 2:7). The apostles have the authority of Christ. What they teach, Christ teaches!
 - e. Our calling is to hear the voice of Christ in the Word of God, especially in the preached Word (John 10; Eph. 4:21), to submit to the authoritative Scriptures, and to refuse to hear or obey the voices of any other teachers (false teachers).
 - f. No one else, then, has the authority to reveal God to us. Jesus Christ alone, by virtue of His office, may and can reveal God to us. All other would-be prophets are false: Mohammed, Buddha, etc. God did not send them; He did not communicate His Word to them; we cannot receive His Word from them.
- 4. Because Christ is *the* Prophet, we are prophets.**
- a. As prophets, we receive the Word of God, not in the way the Old Testament prophets did, but through the Scriptures. As prophets, we have the right, the ability, and the privilege to read the Bible for ourselves, to interpret it, and to understand it (I John 2:27).
 - b. As prophets, we speak the Word of God. We confess Christ. We say the same thing as Christ.

I. CHRIST THE HOLY HIGH PRIEST

A. A priest is devoted to God in holiness, and by His work brings others into fellowship with God.

1. **The Old Testament priest had three main functions** (his qualifications: only from Levi; must come properly prepared).
 - a. He offered blood sacrifices for himself and for the people on the Altar of Burnt Offering.
 - b. He offered incense (with coals from the Altar of Burnt Offering) on the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place and interceded for the people.
 - c. He obtained and bestowed blessings from God upon the people. This he did for the twelve tribes of Israel, whose names were written on his breastplate.
2. **In our relationship with God, a priest is necessary.**
 - a. Priests are necessary because God is holy, and we are a sinful people. Without a priest no fellowship with God and no access to God are possible. God taught this through the Old Testament system of priests.
 - b. Priests are necessary because to obtain favor with God the priest must offer a sacrifice. The one who offers the sacrifice must be appointed by God Himself. No one can offer a sacrifice without such authorization.
 - c. Priests represent the people. God will not have all the people come to Him, but will hear a representative. That representative must be from among the people (Heb. 5:1-3).

B. Christ has a threefold function as priest: He Offers, He Intercedes, He Blesses.

1. His priesthood generally

- a. Christ has a superior priesthood because He is after the order of Melchizedek instead of Aaron (Levi).
- b. There are in Scripture only two legitimate priestly orders: Melchizedek and Aaron. Melchizedek appears in Genesis 14:18-20; and God promises to make Christ a priest after Melchizedek’s order in Psalm 110.
- c. Melchizedekian priesthood superior to Aaron: 1) Melchizedek was first; 2) Melchizedek was superior to Abraham (and therefore to Aaron and Levi) because Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes (Heb. 7:4-7, 9); 3) Melchizedek is a type of the everlasting, undying priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7:3, 8); 4) Christ became priest not by the law but by a solemn oath of God (Heb. 7:21, 28). *Only Christ has the priesthood after Melchizedek’s order* (contra Mormonism).
- d. The fact that God promises a priesthood according to Melchizedek proves the inferiority of Aaron’s priesthood: Christ is a sinless priest, an eternal priest, an unchangeable priest.

2. First, Christ, the High Priest, offers a sacrifice which is in every way superior to the Old Testament sacrifices.

- a. First, He *is* the sacrifice. That makes His sacrifice, the eternal Son of God suffering in our flesh, of infinite value, compared to the thousands of animal sacrifices of the Old Testament (Heb. 10:4)
- b. Second, unlike the priests of the Old Testament, who were sinners themselves, Christ offers no sacrifice for Himself. He is the pure, sinless, spotless Priest (Heb. 7:27).
- c. Third, Christ offered only one perfect sacrifice for all time. No further sacrifice is required by God (Heb. 10:11-12).

- d. Fourth, Christ's sacrifice actually takes away sin; it actually secures salvation and restores God's people to fellowship with Him. This is because it is 1) atonement, 2) redemption, 3) substitution, 4) reconciliation, 5) propitiation, 6) satisfaction
 - e. Because we believe in substitutionary atonement, we reject other views of the atonement. **We reject the governmental view** [Christ died merely to display God's justice], and we **reject the moral view** [Christ died as an example of sacrificial love to melt our hearts].
- 3. Second, on the basis of that sacrifice, Christ, the High Priest, makes intercession.**
- a. In the Old Testament, the priest would first offer the sacrifice, then take some of the coals from that altar and offer incense in the Holy Place. The two acts, atonement and intercession, are inseparable. And the two acts are performed for the same people.
 - b. The Intercessor we have is all-powerful and majestic, sitting at God's right hand; but lest we might be terrified by His majesty, we are reminded that He is merciful and sympathetic (Belgic Confession Art. 26; Heb. 2:17-18, 4:14-16, 5:2)
 - c. Christ's intercession is 1) continuous (Heb. 7:25); 2) authoritative (Christ does not plead as beggar but with the dignity of Son of God); 3) effectual (John 11:42); and 4) particular (the priest only interceded for the twelve tribes of Israel, and Jesus only intercedes for the elect, John 17:9). No other intercessor can be admitted because no other intercessor (e.g. Mary, the saints) has a sacrifice on which to plead (Rom. 8:34).
 - d. To intercede is to pray for someone, that God would bless and bestow the benefits of salvation upon him. To intercede is to answer the accusations lodged against us by the devil (Rom. 8:33-34). By Christ's intercession He sanctifies our prayers and services (I Pet. 2:5). By His intercession He obtains for us every blessing that we need (John 17, etc.).
- 4. Third, in His work as High Priest, Christ blesses us (to "bless" is to speak good of and upon us).**
- a. One of the qualities of a priest is mercy (Heb. 5:2). Christ is the supremely merciful Priest because He is the merciful God and especially because He knows our weaknesses by virtue of His human nature (Heb. 4:15-16).
 - b. Since Christ is such a merciful High Priest, we have every reason to come to Him.

II. CHRIST THE ETERNAL KING

A. The calling of a king in the Bible was twofold.

- 1. First, a king led God's people and was called to rule them wisely by the Word of God. Few kings did this. Kings in the Old Testament were called shepherds because of their calling to lead, guide, protect, and feed the flock.
- 2. Second, kings fought battles against the Lord's enemies (kings were warriors) and maintained discipline among the people.
- 3. Third, kings protected the people of God from their enemies and assured their safety.

B. Jesus Christ is King in a twofold sense: His rule of power and His rule of grace.

- 1. Generally: God ordained Christ to be King in eternity. He was born of the royal tribe of Judah, of the royal line of David.

2. By His rule of power, He is sovereign over all men and angels, both good and evil. His rule of power especially concerns His rule over the wicked (Ps. 2:9, Dan. 7:13-14).
3. By His rule of grace, He rules, protects, and provides for the citizens of His spiritual kingdom, and rules us by His grace and Holy Spirit through the Word.
4. Christ's kingdom is not of this world and is therefore a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36-37). It was foreshadowed by the office of patriarch, then judge, then king in the Old Testament.

C. Christ's Work as King

1. **Christ defeats God's and the church's enemies and protects His kingdom from Satan.**
 - a. He did that upon the earth by His miracles. They were a testimony to the power He had as God's appointed King. Especially His casting out demons proclaimed His Kingship.
 - b. He did that on the cross when He went to battle against the enemies of sin, death, hell, and the devil (Col. 2:15).
 - c. The battle which the Lord fought and which we are called to fight is spiritual, and the commander of the battle is a spiritual King (Acts 3:15, Heb. 2:10, Eph. 6:11-12, II Cor. 10:3-5).
2. **Christ builds the kingdom of God by destroying the kingdom of the devil.**
 - a. He does that by gathering, defending, and preserving His church and every member.
 - b. He does that by ruling in the hearts of His people, subduing them unto Himself, and causing them to obey Him out of thankfulness. Thus citizens of His kingdom obey Him, submit to Him, love Him, serve Him, are loyal to Him, and seek all good from Him.
 - c. The citizens of this kingdom are described in Matthew 5; entrance into the kingdom is by regeneration (John 3), or by being translated by God from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13, I Pet. 2:9); and the privileges of this kingdom are peace, righteousness, and joy (Rom. 14:17).
 - d. The Kingdom of God manifests itself in the earth as the church, to whom Christ gives the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16, 18). The Kingdom of Christ is not the Christianizing of the world, claiming the inner city for Christ, eradicating poverty, etc. The kingdom is built by preaching and the sacraments and the exercise of Christian discipline.

I. THE STATE OF HUMILIATION (We are on the 4th part of Christology: names, natures, offices, states.)

A. In general

- 1. We have seen that God gave the man Jesus Christ, the Son of God in our flesh, a specific task to perform – our salvation.**
 - a. In order to have the authority to perform that task, God gave Him an office – prophet, priest, and king.
 - b. In order to have the ability to perform that task, Christ has two natures – the divine and human united in the one person of the Son of God.
 - c. In performing the task of our salvation, the Son of God existed in two distinct states, the state of humiliation and the state of exaltation.
- 2. A state is a legal term. It refers to a person’s legal status or position before the law of God.**
 - a. The states of Christ therefore refer to His Person. The Person of the Son of God existed in two distinct positions before God’s law.
 - b. For a time, Christ, the Son of God, existed in a state of humiliation. He was guilty before the law of God.
 - c. Now, Christ, the Son of God, exists forever in a state of exaltation. He is innocent before the law of God.
 - d. The relationship between these two states is that the state of exaltation follows humiliation, and exaltation is a reward for humiliation (Phil. 2; Luke 24:26).
- 3. Christ guilty? Yes, that is what the state of humiliation means.**
 - a. If you stood in a court of law and the judge said of you, “You are guilty,” that would be your legal position. From that moment, you would be guilty, in a state of guilt, and then when you go to prison, you would be in a miserable condition. Your circumstances (condition) will change because of your new position (state) of guilt. So, Christ in the state of guilt was subject to the circumstances of misery.
 - b. For a time, Christ stood before the law of God, and God said of Christ, “You are guilty,” and then Christ was punished because He was legally guilty.
 - c. So while in the state of humiliation, Christ was (1) in a position of guilt, (2) subject to all the demands of the law, both positive and negative, (3) subject to the curse of the law, and (4) subject to suffering and shame. *Christ was in a miserable condition because of His state of guilt.*
- 4. How is it possible that Christ, the Son of God, the holy, spotless Son of God, could be *guilty*?**
 - a. First, it was not because of any sins of His own. He had no sin; He could not sin.
 - b. But it was because Christ became legally responsible for the sins of others. At that moment when Christ became legally responsible for our sins – at His conception – He became guilty.
 - c. This was done by the act of God in imputing (reckoning, accounting) to Christ all our sins. Christ voluntarily entered into the state of guilt because He desired the glory of God and because He loved us.
 - d. So Christ entered this world – the Son of God in our flesh – under the burden of guilt (the guilt of all the elect of all ages), and in order to save us, He had to free Himself (and us) from that guilt.

B. The Son of God entered the state of humiliation in the incarnation.

1. **Remember the Son of God existed prior to His birth in Bethlehem *as the eternal Son of God.***
 - a. In fact, the Son of God existed in a state and condition of perfect innocence and bliss. The Son of God existed in the bosom of the Father. The Son of God was “rich” (II Cor. 8:9); the Son of God was “in the form of God” (Phil. 2:6); the Son of God “thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6).
 - b. This means that the Son of God is coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit: that He is as glorious, as almighty, as holy, as eternal, as unchangeable, as worthy of worship as they are.
 - c. The Son of God did something amazing – He voluntarily entered into a state of humiliation and shame. Just imagine: we do not choose to be born, but *the Son of God chose to be born*, and He chose when to be born, where to be born, and in what circumstances He would be born.
 - d. Philippians 2:7 explains it this way: “He made *himself* of no reputation (literally, “He emptied Himself”), and took upon him the form of a servant” (literally, “a slave”). II Corinthians 8:9 says, “He became poor” (literally, “extremely, cringingly, beggarly poor”).
2. **In order to enter such a state of humiliation where it was possible for the sins of His people to be imputed to Him and where it was possible for Him to be subject to the law, He became a human being.**
 - a. God cannot be subject to His own law, and God cannot have guilt imputed to Him, and God cannot suffer the condition of misery because of sin – therefore Christ had to become human. He did these things in His human nature.
 - b. But do not imagine that in that state of humiliation Christ ceased to be God. He remained God. He did not empty Himself of His deity. A summary: *Remaining what He was, He became what He was not.*
 - c. Read Galatians 4:4-5 and Hebrews 2:9, and you will see that He became man for a specific purpose.
 - d. But as a man, as the lowest form of a slave in the state of humiliation, Christ did not use His divine powers *except insofar as His work as Mediator required it.*
3. **The incarnation happened by the virgin birth (or conception) (Is. 7:14, Matt. 1:23, Luke 1:35).**
 - a. The virgin birth is a miracle, a sign of God’s power and grace. It is the bringing of a man child into the world without the means of man. No human father was involved in the conception or birth of Christ.
 - b. By means of the virgin birth, the one born is the Son of God, not a human person, not one who is represented by Adam and therefore guilty of Adam’s sin and polluted. Also, the Holy Spirit shielded the Son of God from pollution which would have come from the human nature of Mary. Christ was born “of a woman” (Gal. 4) so that He would be born under the law. (Mary did not play any active role in the salvation plan of God.)

II. THE STATE OF HUMILIATION CONSISTS OF FIVE STEPS.

A. As such

1. **The steps of humiliation cover everything which we deserve for our sins and which Christ must suffer for us. Only when Christ has entered into all these will He have cleared Himself (and us) of guilt.**
 - a. They are a lowly birth, lifelong suffering, death, burial, and descension into hell.
 - b. The steps are not in chronological order, but they are downwards steps, each step bringing Christ deeper into shame and misery, with the lowest step being the descension (descent) into hell.
 2. **The first step is a lowly birth, but notice that becoming a human being is not in itself humiliation.**
 - a. If being a human being was humiliation for Christ, Christ would be forever (even now) be humiliated.
 - b. In fact, in becoming human, Christ's purpose was to exalt our human nature, and to become one with us in close fellowship and love.
 - c. The "humiliation" in becoming human was in the kind of human that Christ became: a human being with a weakened, mortal human nature (liable to suffer, corrupt, and die; subject to hunger, pain, fatigue, etc.). Romans 8:3 speaks of "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" – not the perfect flesh of Adam in Paradise, but the flesh of fallen man, with all the effects and weaknesses of sin. Imagine that! Christ was clothed in the likeness of our sinful flesh. He was not sinful, but He took on our flesh all the same.
- B. The lowly birth of Christ was the birth that Christ – in His condescension – chose for Himself.**
1. **Christ could have chosen to be born in lofty circumstances, to be born in a palace.**
 - a. But He chose as His mother a lowly, insignificant woman called Mary, betrothed to lower-class Joseph.
 - b. He chose to arrange circumstances so that He would be born in insignificant Bethlehem at the worst possible time, so that there was no room for Him except in a smelly, stinking, dirty stable among the beasts.
 - c. And He chose to grow up and to spend His childhood in the backwoods of Nazareth; He chose to live with sinful parents and siblings, to be surrounded by the Nazarenes, who later rejected Him.
 2. **He explains in Matthew 20:28, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (serve)."**
 - a. Christ allowed Himself to be born, to dwell in the womb of His mother for nine months, to be delivered in the normal way, to be nursed at His mother's breasts, to be helpless as all babies, in order to serve.
 - b. Christ did not say, "Okay, here I am. Now wait on me hand and foot. Carry me on a velvet cushion, feed me the finest foods, etc." No, He was content to be in a low, in the lowest, position.
 - c. And all the pain He suffered – hunger, tiredness, etc. – He suffered because He bore our sins.
 3. **Next time we will continue the state of humiliation with His lifelong suffering and death.**

I. THE STATE OF HUMILIATION (continued)

A. Review

1. **The Son of God existed/exists in two distinct states: humiliation and exaltation.**

- a. The state of humiliation is Christ’s position of guilt before the law of God, whereas the state of exaltation is Christ’s position (status) of innocence before the law of God.
- b. Associated with these two states are two conditions (or sets of circumstances): while in the state of humiliation, Christ was in the condition of misery; while in the state of exaltation, He is in the condition. of bliss and glory.
- c. Christ was in the state of humiliation on account of the guilt of our sins; Christ is in the state of exaltation because He has removed the guilt of our sins from Himself and therefore from us.

2. **In the state of humiliation the Son of God laid aside His majesty (not His deity) and made Himself low.**

- a. He, the Lawgiver, became subject to the law of God, to its demands and its curse.
- b. He, the infinitely blessed Son of God, became subject to misery, suffering, and death in the human nature.
- c. All of this is taught in passages such as Philippians 2:5-11, II Corinthians 8:9, and II Corinthians 5:21

B. **Christ’s state of humiliation began at His conception and ended with His resurrection.**

1. **It consists of five distinct steps, each one a descent lower into misery and shame.**

- a. These steps are not in chronological order (order of time), but in order of intensity.
- b. They are Christ’s lowly birth, His (lifelong) suffering, His death, His burial, and His descent into hell. During each of these steps Christ was subject to the wrath of God because of our sin.

2. **Christ entered the state of humiliation by the incarnation by means of the virgin birth.**

- a. However, becoming a human being was not *as such* humiliation for Christ. If it were, we would have to say that Christ remains forever in a state of humiliation, because He remains forever a man.
- b. Instead of humiliating Himself in becoming a man, He exalted (glorified) our human nature by uniting it to Himself.

II. THE FIVE STEPS OF CHRIST’S HUMILIATION

A. His lowly birth

1. **Christ’s incarnation was humiliation for Him *because of the kind of human nature He adopted.***

- a. If Christ had become incarnate in the Garden of Eden, before the Fall, with that human nature, He would not have entered into a state of humiliation. Adam’s “un-fallen” nature was not subject to sin or suffering.
- b. But when Christ took upon Himself the human nature of fallen man, *that* was the humiliation. That was not the human nature of a superman, a

supernatural being, but human nature affected by sin and subject to weakness, suffering, and death (Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7, Heb. 2:14-16).

2. Christ's birth was humiliation for Him because of the circumstances in which He was born.

- a. The Son of God could have ordained His birth into whatever circumstances He chose. He could have chosen to be born in a palace, but instead He chose lower class parents who were (despised), an insignificant village, a wretched place (a stable), and an inconvenient time (the king was Herod, the rulers were Romans, a census was being taken, etc.). *The Son of God did not prepare for Himself a grand entrance.*
- b. His birth was a sign of things to come: from His birth He was rejected. There was no room for Him in the inn (Luke 2:7). King Herod tried to kill Him (Matt. 2:3-6, 16), and He and His family fled to Egypt.

3. Christ's childhood and youth were humiliation also.

- a. When Mary and Joseph returned from Egypt they settled in Nazareth, so that Jesus had the stigma of being a Nazarene all His life. Nazareth was in Galilee, known as "Galilee of the Gentiles." Nazareth was a despised city even in Galilee (John 1:46, 7:52; Matt. 2:23).
- b. He did not have the advantages of an education under the great rabbis; He was a carpenter (Matt. 13:55, Mark 6:3), and He had to work to support Himself and others. He had to live with a sinful mother, adopted father (possibly with the stigma of illegitimacy), and sinful siblings.
- c. Throughout His childhood He was subject to Mary and Joseph, and obeyed them as the law demanded. And His family often misunderstood Him and were a hindrance to His ministry (Luke 2:48-52; Mark 3:21, 31; John. 7:5).

B. His (Lifelong) Suffering (To suffer means to experience pain and anguish. We usually imagine that Christ's sufferings were limited to the cross, but in fact He suffered in body and soul throughout His life. That suffering peaked on the cross.)

1. Christ suffered because He was legally guilty: therefore God inflicted suffering, making Him miserable.

- a. So long as Christ was guilty on our behalf, *He had to* and He did experience misery. It would not have been right for God to allow His Son to suffer unless He was guilty of our sins. And once He rid Himself of our guilt, no more suffering could be inflicted upon Him.
- b. First, Christ suffered those things which were common to man, but with greater intensity, and He suffered both in body and in soul. We think of hunger, thirst, fatigue, grief, sorrow, etc.
- c. Second, Christ suffered at the hands of men: He suffered physically and mentally at their hands. He suffered shame and reproach. He suffered their slander, their scorn, their hatred (Matt. 11:19, 12:24, John 9:24, Heb. 12:3).
- d. Third, Christ suffered at the hands of Satan. He was truly tempted, and temptation was suffering for Him, more than temptation is suffering for us (Heb. 2:18).

2. Christ's suffering was particularly intense because of who He is.

- a. Christ suffered deprivation. By that, we mean Christ experienced the loss of something which He once knew. Suffering was worse for Him because He had known the bliss of life in heaven. In entering the state of humiliation, He lost the glory of heaven, and He experienced that loss.

- b. Christ suffered because of His own innocence and purity. It was suffering for Christ to be placed into a sinful environment, surrounded by the wicked and their sins (cf. II Peter 2:8; Matt. 17:17).
- c. Christ's sufferings were attended by a sense of God's wrath. That was the most terrible aspect of His suffering – all the days of His life He felt in His soul the terrible burden of sin, and when He suffered and felt misery, He knew that God was angry with Him on account of sin. Terrible!

C. Those lifelong sufferings intensified near the end of His life.

1. As Christ reached the end, man's opposition to Him increased

- a. At the beginning, Christ was popular with the people, but as people began to understand Him, they rejected Him more and more, culminating in his rejection by the religious and civil authorities..
- b. Particularly painful to Christ was that Judas betrayed Him (a close friend showed such hatred that he sold Him for money), Peter denied Him, and His disciples fled from Him.
- c. It was suffering for Christ to be arrested in the middle of the night, to be mocked, spat upon, and beaten by the Sanhedrin, to be convicted of blasphemy, and to be whipped and then given over to be crucified.
- d. The purpose of God in this was that Christ must suffer *alone*. He was alone in Gethsemane (the disciples fell asleep), He was alone at His trial (no one stood with Him) and He was alone on the cross (contrast this with Rome's view of Mary being co-Redemptrix, that Mary consented to give life to Jesus the Redeemer, and offered Jesus' life willingly on the cross for us). In that way, she contributed to the salvation of the human race.

2. Near the end, His sense of the burden of God's wrath increased. This explains Gethsemane.

- a. Jesus, who was so calm and composed, came under intense stress in Gethsemane. He confessed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). He was "in an agony" (Luke 22:44). And He "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy" (Mark 14:33). *Sorrowful, sore amazed, very heavy, agony!*
- b. With the emotional distress, Christ showed physical symptoms of intense pressure. He began to sweat great drops of blood! (Luke 22:44). And He cried out to His Father in earnest prayer to turn back the sufferings He knew were coming. An angel had to come and strengthen Him (v. 43). Read Heb. 5:7-9.
- c. The reason for Christ's distress was not that He was afraid of death. He calmly faced death. It was not that He lacked the courage which martyrs have displayed. *It was the cup*. Christ knew what was in the cup.
- d. And so His prayer in Gethsemane was this: "Let there be some other way apart from my drinking the cup. Anything is preferable to the cup. But, if there is no other way, then not my will – my human will which naturally shrinks back from suffering thy wrath – but *thy* will – the perfect, righteous will of the Triune God which wills glory and salvation for the elect - be done!" (Matt. 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).
- e. And from Gethsemane, having submitted His will to the Father's, He goes forth to meet His arrest, trial, and death. And we will continue with those parts of His sufferings next time, D.V.

I. THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

A. After Christ’s suffering in Gethsemane, He was ready for His arrest and trial by the Jews and Romans.

1. The role of Judas:

- a. Jesus had dismissed Judas from the upper room; and Judas had lost no time in going to the Jewish leaders, who had secured a band of soldiers armed with swords and staves to arrest Jesus (Matt. 26:47).
- b. Judas was determined that Jesus would not escape. He had escaped before, but Judas did not understand that Jesus’ hour had come. Judas was concerned that they might take the wrong man (it was dark; one of the disciples might be arrested in the confusion), so he had a sign (Matt. 26:48-49).
- c. The kiss must have been particularly hurtful to Jesus. It was humiliating to be kissed by the traitor; Judas turned a sign of friendship into betrayal (Matt. 26:48-50, Mark 14:45, Luke 22:48).

2. Events in the Garden at the time of His arrest:

- a. First, Jesus’ arrest was unlawful: He had not been accused of a crime; He had not been indicted or charged. He was simply arrested by the Jewish authorities, who hoped to find some reason later.
- b. Second, Jesus proved by His actions that He was completely in control and that He willingly handed Himself over: He could have escaped or called upon His Father for help or used His own power (Matt. 26:53, John 18:4-12).
- c. The last act He performed before they bound Him – and just imagine the rough treatment He endured – was to heal Malchus’ ear (Luke 22:50-51). The disciples were ready to fight for Jesus (Luke 22:49), but when they saw that He would not resist, they fled (Matt. 26:56). Jesus was more concerned about the welfare of His disciples (John 18:7-9).

B. The trial of Jesus had two phases: before the Jews and then before Pilate.

1. First, we ask, why was it necessary that Jesus be *tried*?

- a. Certainly, this had *not* been the desire of the Jews. They had wanted to assassinate Him without any fuss, but Jesus forced their hand. God had two purposes in it.
- b. First, the Jews (the false church) and the Romans (the world) must both be confronted with the question: What will you do with the Son of God? In the end, the only “crime” of which Christ was guilty was that He was the Son of God, and neither the Jews nor the Romans could accept that. *It was no crime; it was true.* If the Jews had wanted, they could have examined Him on His doctrine and works, but they wanted Him dead.
- c. Second, God’s purpose was to display Christ’s personal innocence. Neither Jew nor Gentile – prejudiced as they were – could find any evil in Him. Only as the Innocent One could He die for us.
- d. Third, God Himself pronounced His verdict upon Christ: He would go to His death having been tried and with the sentence of death officially pronounced. Guilty, guilty! Guilty because of *our* sins!

2. [Ecclesiastical trial] A travesty of justice which served to display the wickedness of the leaders

- a. According to Jewish law, the trial of Jesus was full of illegalities. 1) The timing of His trial: trials could not take place in the evening or at night; not before the morning sacrifice; not on the day before the Sabbath or on the day

before the Feast Days. In addition, if a guilty verdict was likely, the verdict could not be given on the same day, so that all could have at least a night to “sleep on it,” to consider the evidence. *Christ’s trial was hurried. He was found guilty before dawn within hours of His arrest.* 2) The presumption of guilt: Jewish trials began with the assumption of innocence. Before any evidence of guilt could be mentioned, the evidence of innocence should be discussed. Jesus’ innocence was never even entertained for a moment. No one spoke in His defense. And the accused was made to incriminate Himself. In addition, guilt in a capital offence could only be proved by two witnesses, who were the ones who would accuse the prisoner. He should have had the right to face the accused in an open court. 3) The place of the trial: The trial must take place in the inner court of the temple, not in the high priest’s home.

- b. Further indignities: Jesus was interrogated by Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas. Various attempts were made to incriminate Jesus: they asked Him about His doctrine and His disciples (John 18:19-21). He answered that His doctrine was not secret, and He shielded His disciples. A servant of the high priest slapped Jesus (18:22-23). False witnesses were brought in, but they could not agree (Mark 14:56, 59).
- c. Caiaphas put Jesus under oath, and Christ confessed (Matt. 26:62-64, Mark 14:60-62). This was the basis of His condemnation, but such a religious offence would not be a capital crime under Roman law.
- d. Part of the suffering of Christ at this point was Peter’s denial (Luke 22:61).
- e. As soon as Christ made the confession that He is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt 26:63-64), they pronounced Him worthy of death. At that point, they treated Him cruelly (Matt. 26:67-68, Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63-65, Is. 50:6). This involved beating, spitting, mockery, and fun abusing the prisoner. Then they confined Him and waited for dawn to go to Pilate (6:00 a.m.).

C. Trial before Pilate.

1. [1st appearance] The Jews had secured sentence of death but couldn’t inflict the death penalty.

- a. Early in the morning, probably 6:00 a.m., Jesus, tired, hungry, thirsty, and bound, was brought to Pilate.
- b. The Jews had to find some crime which would interest the Romans. They accused Him of three – He seduced the people (was the leader of a popular rebellion), He forbade paying tribute (a barefaced lie), He said that He was a king (true, but not in the sense to be a threat to Roman rule) (Mark 15:3, Luke 23:2).
- c. Pilate was only interested in the third charge and was mindful to let Jesus go at that point (John 18:33-38).
- d. Having discovered that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate sent Him to Herod. Herod questioned Him, hoping to see a miracle, and when Jesus remained silent, Herod mocked Him (Luke 23:6-12).

2. Second appearance before Pilate [probably around 8:00 a.m.].

- a. The Jewish leaders returned, still demanding that Jesus be punished, but still unable to prove any crime.
- b. Pilate offered the people a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. He could not have given the people a greater contrast: Jesus of Nazareth and Barabbas, a thief, a murderer, an insurrectionist (Matt. 27:16, Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19, John 18:40).

- c. To the horror and surprise of Pilate, the people demanded Barabbas (Matt. 27:20-26).
- 3. Pilate still wanted to release Jesus, so he decided to scourge Jesus and let Him go.**
- a. This was a travesty of justice. To declare that someone is innocent and then to whip Him! (Luke 23:22).
 - b. The Roman soldiers who scourged Jesus made fun of Him: they stripped Him naked, they scourged Him (a punishment so horrible that many died from it), they put on His gore-covered back a scarlet robe, and they made Him a crown of thorns. Then they beat Him and mocked Him. The “whole band” [literally, a cohort] could be as many as 600 soldiers (John 19:1-3).
 - c. After He had been scourged, He stood before the people battered, covered in His own gore; and Pilate cried out, “Behold the man!” (John 19:5). The crowd still demanded His crucifixion. Pilate tried to dissuade them, but the Jews warned Pilate: 1) He made Himself the Son of God (John 19:7-8); 2) If Pilate let Him go, Pilate would be a traitor to Caesar (John 19:12). Pilate pronounced sentence (Matt. 27:24-26).

D. The way to the cross

- 1. Jesus was in a terrible state physically by now (and the burden of our sins was particularly heavy).**
- a. Likely it had been over 8 hours since His arrest. No mercies had been shown to Him: no sleep, no food.
 - b. He had been beaten by the Jews and scourged by the Romans. His back would have been ripped open and was now a congealed gory mess. From His back, His scarlet robe was torn, and a huge piece of wood was placed on His raw back and tied around His shoulders (John 19:17).
 - c. Then He was forced to walk through the streets of Jerusalem while passersby reviled Him as a criminal. Two other criminals (robbers) were led to execution with Him. It was not uncommon for such people to be spat upon by the crowds. *But our calling is not to pity Him, but to weep for ourselves* (Luke 23:27-32).
 - d. Finally, Jesus, exhausted and in great pain, was unable to carry His cross. A passerby called Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry it (Luke 23:26).
- 2. When they got to the execution site outside the city, the soldiers did their grisly work.**
- a. The three men were laid on their crosses, and great nails were hammered into their wrists and ankles. The pain must have been unbearable. And yet Christ did not scream. His recorded words are in Luke 23:34.
 - b. The superscription was attached to Christ’s cross – a mockery of Christ’s Kingship (John 19:19).
 - c. Then the crosses were hoisted up, and that must have wrenched the bones and joints horribly.
 - d. The soldiers offered a drink to the prisoners to dull the pain (Matt. 27:34) (not out of mercy, but to make them more manageable). *Christ refused because He wanted to remain conscious throughout everything.*
 - e. Crucifixion was an agonizingly painful death – slow death by asphyxiation. But the physical pain was not the worst of it. That was the pain the two thieves felt. Christ’s death was unique. But more next time.

I. CHRIST’S DEATH ON THE CROSS

A. Christ was nailed to the cross around 9:00 a.m. on Friday, and He died six hours later.

1. The time on the cross can be divided into three distinct periods.

- a. *The first three hours*, Christ especially endured physical and emotional pain and uttered many of His “cross words”: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34); “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43); “Woman, behold thy son! ... Behold thy mother!” (John 19:25-26). During this period there was much activity around the cross. Passersby mocked Him (Matt. 27:39-44).
- b. *The second three hours*, Christ *suffered spiritually, especially* as He drank the cup of God’s wrath. This was the sixth to the ninth hour (12 noon to 3 p.m.). During this period, God caused the sun to fail and brought miraculous darkness over the whole land (Matt. 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44). Darkness is a sign of God’s judgment. That put an end to the mockery and caused eerie silence to fall upon the scene. God’s judgment was upon the Christ-rejecting world, but more importantly, God’s judgment was upon Christ.
- c. *The last moments* Jesus uttered several cries in quick succession. At the ninth hour (just as the darkness was coming to an end), Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). Some thought He was calling for Elijah (Mark 15:35-36). Then He said, “I thirst” (John 19:28), and having received vinegar, He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30) and “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

2. Christ’s death on the cross was unique.

- a. Christ’s death was remarkably quick. He died slowly and agonizingly for six hours, but most victims of crucifixion took days, sometimes even weeks, to die. Death was not by blood loss, but by asphyxiation. So quick was Christ’s death that Pilate was surprised (Mark 15:44).
- b. The Jews did not want the bodies of the crucified men to hang on the crosses, because it was a holy festival. To speed up death, Pilate ordered the legs of the men to be broken. Christ was already dead, so His legs were not broken; instead a spear was thrust into His side (John 19:31-34).
- c. Christ’s death was in His own power. Christ determined the moment. Once all was finished, He cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. This was a commandment which He received from God (John 10:18).
- d. At Christ’s death there was an earthquake, the ripping of the temple curtain, the opening of the graves of the saints, and the confession of the centurion (Matt. 27:50-54).

B. After Christ’s death, He was buried.

1. Burial was not usually afforded to victims of crucifixion.

- a. Most likely, the bodies of the two thieves were thrown on the rubbish heap and eaten by birds and scavenging beasts.
- b. The Sanhedrin would have liked that to happen to the body of Jesus, but God prepared two men to provide Him with an honorable burial: Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus (Matt. 27:57-60, Mark 15:43-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42).

- c. In addition, the Jewish leaders went to Pilate and asked for soldiers to guard the tomb (Matt. 27:62-66).
- 2. Christ was buried so that He would enter into the full experience of death.**
 - a. While Christ was in the grave, His soul and body were separated. His soul was in Paradise, and His body was under the power of death (read Belgic Confession Art. 19).
 - b. If Christ had not been buried, we would lose comfort: He was buried to defeat the grave (I Cor. 15:4, 55).
 - c. We must be buried because our bodies cannot be resurrected and glorified until the last day. But when we die, it is simply a passageway into eternal life and glory. Our bodies corrupt and decay, but Christ has promised to deliver them from the power of the grave's corruption (Phil. 1:23, II Cor. 5:8, Luke 23:43).

II. CHRIST'S DESCENT (descension) INTO HELL

A. While on the cross, Christ "descended into hell."

- 1. This part of the Apostles' Creed ("He descended into hell") is controversial.**
 - a. It is impossible for us to know exactly what the early church meant by those words.
 - b. Many believe that those words were not in the original version of the Apostles' Creed.
 - c. Whatever the early church might have understood, we must follow Scripture.
- 2. Some false ideas**
 - a. Some have said that when Jesus died, He went to the place called hell – either to the place of the damned to announce His victory over death; or to the place of the damned to give people a chance to repent after death; or to the abode of the dead Old Testament saints to carry them out of that place (limbus patrum) into heaven.
 - b. Others have said that when Jesus died, He went to suffer some more in hell, to finish the work of salvation. Joyce Meyer teaches that Christ was tormented by demons until God said it was enough.
 - c. But the Bible says nothing about those things. 1) There is no limbus patrum. The Old Testament saints went to heaven to be with God in glory. 2) After death, Christ did not go to any place of torment. He went to Paradise, as He had promised the thief. 3) There is no second chance after death.
 - d. Some passages: Acts 2:27 (hell = grave); Eph. 4:8-10 (lower parts = this earth; He descended in the incarnation); I Peter 3:18-20 (Christ preached in the person of Noah to the people whose spirits were in prison. He did not preach to them after death).

B. The descension into hell refers to His hellish torments on the cross (L.D. 16, Q&A 44) (not chronological).

- 1. Christ's suffering was hellish because on the cross He personally bore in His human nature (body and soul) the wrath of God.**
 - a. God's wrath is His holy displeasure directed against sin and sinners. God's wrath was directed toward Christ, because legally Christ was guilty of all the sins of all those whom He represented.
 - b. Therefore, God poured out His fierce wrath upon Christ. Christ became the object of God's displeasure, His intense anger, His settled hatred against sin (Zech. 13:7; Is. 53:10).
- 2. Christ's suffering was hellish because on the cross He bore God's curse.**

- a. To curse means to speak against. Here is one definition of curse: "God's curse is the word of His wrath, expelling from His house those who are not His, causing them to experience Him as a consuming fire, casting them away from Him, forsaking them in utter terror of darkness and desolation, and making them unspeakably wretched" (*Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, p. 582).
 - b. God cursed Christ because He was bearing our sins. Legally, God could not curse Christ (or anyone) unless He were guilty. That is why we read that He became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13).
- 3. That explains why Christ's suffering was different from the other victims of crucifixion.**
- a. The two thieves experienced intense physical and psychological pain, but their death was not the satisfaction of God's justice. God did not impute to *them* the sins of all His people.
 - b. The two thieves were punished for crimes they had committed against the civil authorities ("We receive the due reward of our deeds" [Luke 23:41]). Christ was punished for crimes which we had committed against God.
 - c. The two thieves suffered the cruelty of men. Christ suffered the just and terrible wrath of God; He drank the cup of God's wrath; He was made a curse; the darkness of God's judgment came upon Him.
- C. What did all this suffering accomplish? (A wise God would not have put His Son through this suffering unless He had a purpose in mind.)**
- 1. This suffering – the incarnation, lifelong suffering and obedience, death and burial – was *for us*.**
- a. The word "for" is important – it means "on behalf of," "for the benefit of," and therefore "in the place of."
 - b. The idea is that Christ died in order to earn for us some good and to deliver us from some evil. The good which He earned for us is everlasting life and glory; the evil He delivered us from is sin, death, and hell.
 - c. So Christ died *for* us so that we do not die; Christ was cursed *for* us so that we are not cursed. If Christ dies for a person but he still dies, he is still punished, he is still cursed, and the word "for" has no meaning.
- 2. Christ also did something for Himself – this relates to His states.**
- a. Throughout His state of humiliation Christ stood before God's law as guilty. In order to clear Himself of that guilt, He had to satisfy God's law – perform perfect obedience and suffer punishment.
 - b. As soon as He had accomplished that and declared, "It is finished," Christ was innocent before God: innocent of our sins, cleared of our guilt, and worthy of everlasting life and glory.
 - c. Therefore, immediately after, and as a reward for His prior state of humiliation, Christ entered glorification.
 - d. And all of these were possible because of who Christ is – the eternal Son of God in our flesh, performing the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.

INTRODUCTION

- A. The state of exaltation is the legal position of Jesus Christ the Mediator as *fully acquitted* of the guilt of our sins which had been imputed to Him during the state of humiliation.**
1. The state of humiliation was guilt; the state of exaltation is innocence.
 2. Coupled with the state of humiliation was shame, suffering, and misery; the state of exaltation is life and glory.
 3. The state of exaltation is a reward to the man Jesus Christ for His work of obedience in the state of humiliation.
- B. The state of exaltation has four degrees**
1. Remember the state of humiliation: lowly birth, lifelong suffering, death, burial, descension into hell.
 2. The state of exaltation includes resurrection, ascension, session (sitting) at God’s right hand, and return as Judge.
 3. Both the states of humiliation and exaltation are necessary for our salvation. In both states Christ represents us as our Head (Eph. 1:19-23, “*to the church*” = for the good of the church); if Christ is not exalted, He did not accomplish the work which God gave Him to do, and we are still in our sins.

I. THE RESURRECTION

- A. Three days after Christ was buried, He rose again. On that historical fact rests our hope (I Cor. 15:1-3).**
1. **Acts 1:3 says that Christ “shewed Himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.”**
 - a. **First, there was the empty tomb.** Christ was buried in a new tomb, hewn from solid rock. The tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. The Jewish leaders remembered Jesus’ claims that He would rise from the dead (interesting that the disciples forgot that!) and asked Pilate for soldiers to guard the tomb (How many? Matt. 28:11). Yet the fact is that after three days the body of Jesus could not be found (Mark 16:4-5, John 20:2, Matt. 28:11-15).
 - b. **Second, there were the eyewitness accounts.** Jesus appeared to many people during the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension; eyewitness accounts are strong evidence in a court of law.
 - c. **Third, the position of the grave clothes.** Jesus’ body was wrapped in pieces of linen cloth and spices. The head was wrapped separately from the body. But when the empty tomb was found, the grave clothes were discovered by the disciples (John 20:5-8). A thief would not (could not) have done that.
 - d. **Fourth, the changed behavior of the disciples.** A few days earlier, the disciples were hiding in fear (John 20:19). Yet, not long afterwards, they were boldly preaching and willing to suffer for the truth of the resurrection. If they were lying, they would not have done so.
 2. **Unbelief has tried to contradict the resurrection with its own theories.**
 - a. **The swoon theory.** Jesus did not die; He fainted (swooned) but later revived in the cool tomb. Then He pretended that He had risen. But how could a man who had suffered crucifixion, wrapped head to toe in grave clothes inside a guarded tomb, escape and convince anyone that He had risen? Plus, Pilate

told the soldiers to make sure that Jesus was dead. They were trained executioners. They knew death.

- b. **The stolen body theory.** Someone stole the body. Who and how? The tomb had one entrance. You could not dig under it. The entrance was guarded by a group of soldiers, sealed with a Roman seal, covered by a stone. To move the stone would have meant a lot of noise. Soldiers do not sleep on the job. That would mean death. And the thieves would not have left behind the grave clothes. Jerusalem was full of people. Grave robbers would have been seen. If the Jewish or Roman authorities had moved the body, all they had to do to squash the gospel was to produce it. The disciples had no reason to steal the body: they were not expecting Him to rise; and besides, if they had stolen it, would they have died for a deliberate lie?
- c. **The hallucination theory.** The disciples imagined a risen Lord. It was wishful thinking on their part. Hallucinations can happen, but to so many people, on different occasions? Jesus appeared ten different times. The idea that they all happened to hallucinate the same thing is absurd. Besides, the disciples took some convincing. They were not gullible at all (Mark 16:14, John 20:25).

B. The resurrection is a miracle which no one saw. Many saw the risen Lord, but no one saw Him rise.

1. The events at the tomb

- a. Deep inside Joseph's tomb, Christ's body was revived and transformed; the soul of Christ was called out of heaven and reunited with Christ's body, and Christ's body was glorified and passed through the grave clothes. Most likely, He then left the tomb and appeared to the women.
- b. Around the same time, the earth shook, and the angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb and sat on it (Matt. 28:2). *Why move the stone? Not to let Jesus out, but to show the visitors to the tomb that it was empty.*
- c. The angel was so glorious that the Roman soldiers seeing him, fainted with fear (Matt. 28:4) and ran away.

2. In what sense did Jesus rise?

- a. He rose in the body. **The same body** which was crucified rose. It was not a spiritual resurrection. It was not a newly created body, but the same body. It bore the nail prints. *Who denies the bodily resurrection?* Liberals, Jehovah's Witnesses. *Why was the bodily resurrection offensive to the Greek mind?* The bodily resurrection was an essentially Jewish (and therefore Christian) hope.
- b. The body was **glorified**. It was the same body, but different. When Lazarus rose from the dead, he went back to his previous life. He had a weak, mortal body. Christ entered a new, heavenly, higher, glorious life. His body became spiritual (not immaterial, but adapted to heavenly life). He had immortality (2 Tim. 1:10).
- c. The resurrection was a wonder performed by the Triune God (Gal. 1:1, John 2:19-21, 10:17-18, Rom. 8:11).

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

A. The resurrection is glory for Jesus Christ.

- 1. The resurrection is a vindication of everything Christ claimed to be.**

- a. He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God; the Jews rejected Him. The Jews said He was a blasphemer, a deceiver of men, but Christ has been proven to be true! (Rom. 1:4).
 - b. The resurrection is the glorification of the human nature of Christ; Christ according to the human nature is now glorified with the highest possible glory of which a human nature is capable. In the glory of the resurrection, Christ accomplished something Adam could never have achieved.
- 2. Because the resurrection is glory for Christ, it is glory for us.**
- a. Christ always acted as Mediator: He never acted for Himself. When He suffered, He did it for us; when He was raised, He was raised for us (Eph. 2:5-6).
 - b. The life which Christ possesses as the risen Lord is the life He gives to us: He is the source of any life which we possess, and He can only make us partakers of such life if He is alive Himself (I Pet. 1:3).
 - c. And because Christ was raised from the dead in the body, we shall also be raised in the body (I Cor. 15:20, Phil. 3:21, Rom. 8:11).
- B. Jesus Christ was raised for our salvation. If Jesus Christ did not rise, we have no hope (I Cor. 15:14-19).**
- 1. Remember that Jesus Christ went to the cross laden with our sins, bearing that terrible burden.**
- a. Christ died because death had a legal claim on Him; the law said that the sinner must die, and Christ stood before the law with our sins on His account.
 - b. The only way in which Christ can remove death's legal claim on Him is by removing sin. So long as our sins are imputed to Him, death can say of Christ and of us, "He is mine!"
 - c. If Christ is still in the grave, if His body lies in the dust, Christ did not conquer death and did not remove sin, and we are still in our sins.
- 2. But the gospel proclaims triumphantly: Christ is risen!**
- a. The resurrection is God's public declaration, His seal of approval, on the work of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The resurrection is proof that death has no power over Christ (Acts 2:24, Rom. 6:9).
 - c. The resurrection is proof that Christ has satisfied the justice of God, that no more need be paid.
 - d. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:55-57).

INTRODUCTION

A. Remember that in the two states, the *Person of the Son of God* is the *subject*.

1. **It is not that the divine nature is humbled or exalted, but that the *Person* is humbled and exalted according to His human nature.**
 - a. Remember the states are legal positions: the Person of the Son was accounted guilty because of our sins imputed to Him; and the Person of the Son is acquitted and declared righteous because He satisfied God's justice.
 - b. The Person of the Son of God suffered in the flesh according to the human nature; and the Person of the Son of God has been exalted according to the human nature. The divine nature cannot be humiliated or exalted.
 - c. Therefore the Person of the Son of God experienced shame and misery according to the human nature, and now experiences glory and bliss. Christ has been glorified in answer to His prayer (John 17:5).
2. **The humiliation and then exaltation of the Person of the Son of God consisted in distinct steps:**
 - a. These are lowly birth, lifelong suffering, death, burial, and descension into hell; then resurrection, ascension, session, and return.
 - b. And remember that in undergoing both humiliation and now exaltation **He did so as our Head**.

B. We looked last week at His resurrection.

1. **In His resurrection He not only came back to life** after three days in the grave, but He entered into a higher, more glorious life of immortality, a life fitted for heavenly glory (different from Lazarus, etc.). The body is essentially the same, but glorified, a spiritual body (I Cor. 15).
2. **The proofs for His bodily resurrection are:** a) the empty tomb, b) the position of the grave clothes, c) the eyewitness accounts, and d) the behavior of the disciples.
3. **The significance of the resurrection:** a) glory for Jesus, b) proof that Jesus had performed to God's satisfaction the work of salvation, c) proof that Jesus has conquered death and acquired righteousness for us, d) the source of our new life, and e) the promise (pledge) of our future (bodily) resurrection.

I. THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

A. Forty days after His resurrection Jesus Christ “ascended into heaven” (Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9).

1. **The ascension is a change of place for the Son of God according to His human nature.**
 - a. Between the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus was physically present on earth in the body, teaching His disciples, making various appearances to them, and preparing them for His ascension.
 - b. But at the end of the 40 days, Jesus took them to a specific location, and He went up to heaven. His disciples saw Him going up; He was taken from them; a cloud covered Him, and He was seen no more.
 - c. Jesus Christ will remain in heaven until the Last Day; then He will return again in the body in the same manner in which He ascended (Acts 1:11, 3:21).

2. The Lutherans do not see the ascension as a *change of place*, but as a change in quality, so that the human nature of Christ took some (if not all) of the qualities of deity (especially omnipotence & omnipresence).

- a. Thus, say the Lutherans, the human nature of Jesus Christ is now omnipresent, ubiquitous or immense.
- b. Therefore, say the Lutherans, Christ, according to His human nature, can be (and is) still with us.
- c. The Lutherans insist on the ubiquity of the human nature because of their view of the Lord's Supper.

3. The significance of the ascension is that our flesh is in heaven.

- a. *The divine nature did not ascend*, because the divine nature is everywhere present, and even when Christ was on earth the divine nature of Christ filled heaven and earth. But the human nature (the flesh) of Christ *did* ascend from one place, earth, to another place, heaven.
- b. Christ's human nature must be limited to one place because it is a real human nature, even after its exaltation. If it is not a real human nature, it is not *our* nature, and if it is not our nature, Christ is not related to us and He cannot save us. *And besides, we must become like Him* (Phil. 3:21).
- c. The objection of the Lutherans: if Christ's human nature is not present where His Godhead is, then the natures are separated or divided. This is not true, because the divine nature and the human nature are distinct (see Belgic Confession Art. 19).
- d. The wonder is that Christ never lays aside our flesh. He laid aside the weakness of our flesh and His lowly position, and He exalted our flesh, *but it remains our flesh*. He, our Head, is united to our flesh forever!

B. Christ's ascension is necessary for our salvation.

1. Jesus Christ said repeatedly that *it is expedient for us that He go away*. Sometimes we might wonder at that and want Him to be with us physically, but it is better for us that He has ascended (John 16:7).

- a. Christ, as physically on earth, could only be in one place at once; if Christ were only present physically, we would have to be in one location. The church could not spread (Matt. 18:20, 28:20).
- b. But if Christ is present spiritually, by His grace and Holy Spirit, He can be with us wherever we meet, and He can be with His people in every circumstance of life (bereavement, sickness, persecution, etc.).
- c. Thus, Christ keeps His promise: He comes to us and He remains with us, but in a deep, spiritual way.

2. His exalted position means that as ascended Lord, He pours out upon us all the blessings of salvation.

- a. Ten days after His ascension, He poured out the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:33).
- b. From His position as ascended Lord, He makes us partakers of His life, and He gives gifts to His church (Ps. 68:18-19, Eph. 4:7-12).
- c. And from His position as ascended Lord, He intercedes for us as our Advocate (I John 2:1-2).

II. THE SESSION AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND AND RETURN TO JUDGE

A. It is one thing to ascend into heaven, but the session at God's right hand tells us Christ's position in heaven.

1. **The right hand of God is the highest possible position of power and glory.**

- a. The angels and the archangels and the saints have a position in heaven, but Christ's position is the highest (Ps. 110:1, Acts 7:56, Eph. 1:20-23, Phil. 2:9-11, I Pet. 3:22).
 - b. The right hand of God is not a physical location, because God does not have a right hand in that sense, but it is a figurative expression. The Lutherans say (rightly) that God's right hand is everywhere present, but conclude (wrongly) that Christ's humanity is everywhere present.
 - c. Who or what is at the right hand of God? Not the divine nature. That's everywhere present. Not the human nature. But the Person of the Son of God: He is exalted to the highest position in the human nature.
- 2. The session at the right hand of God is significant for Christ and for us.**
- a. It is great glory for Christ: it is His public coronation as King of Heaven; it is the receiving of the power and glory promised to Him.
 - b. It is significant that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God: this indicates that His work of redemption is finished. That was finished when He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). We know that He has completely accomplished our salvation because we see Him by faith sitting at God's right hand.
 - c. The significance for us is mainly this: the one who is at the right hand of God ruling all things is our Savior, and therefore He rules wisely, and for our good.
 - d. Christ rules, says Psalm 110:2, with a view to subduing all His enemies under His feet. The devil, the demons, hell, death, and all the wicked must serve Him, and He will destroy them. In the meantime, He is exercising power to gather, protect, defend, and preserve the church from her enemies.
- B. One last step in Christ's exaltation is future: His second coming to judge (explained more in Eschatology).**
- 1. To be judge is a very glorious position. In the courtroom, the judge is the figure of authority.**
- a. Christ comes to judge in great power and glory (Matt. 25:31). The glory is seen in His judgment of all men and nations and even angels. No one shall escape His judgment. He will pronounce judgment upon all.
 - b. This will be a turning of the tables: Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas who judged Him will be judged. Even Satan!
 - c. His judgment will be the final judgment – there will be no miscarriages of justice, no corruption of the judge, and no appeals to a different jurisdiction.
- 2. The judgment will include believers. We will all be judged, but believers must not fear the judgment (Matt. 25:34, 46, Romans 14:10, II Cor. 5:10).**
- a. The verdict against us has already been made: we were found guilty in Christ, and Christ has acquitted us.
 - b. We must not fear the judgment, therefore. Christ will display to all the world that we are sinners, sinners utterly undeserving of salvation, but sinners washed in the blood of Christ.
 - c. Therefore we believe the Reformed Creeds, Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 19, Q&A 52; Belgic Confession Art. 37.

SUMMARY OF CHRISTOLOGY

(The names, natures, offices and states of the Mediator)

A. THE MEDIATOR AND HIS NAMES

1. **A mediator brings together two parties at variance with one another. The two “parties” are God and man.**
 - a. God, who created His people in covenant relationship with Himself, is justly offended by man’s sin.
 - b. Man, who has lost the image of God and become allied to the devil, hates God and is the enemy of God.
 - c. Man, the offending party, can do nothing to effect reconciliation, nor does he will to do anything.
 - d. God’s just demands remain: 1) perfect lifelong obedience out of love, and 2) satisfaction for all sins. However, because of man’s sin, he cannot fulfill these demands and needs a mediator to represent him.
2. **The Mediator is God’s, planned by God, sent by God, acting for God, and fulfilling the will of Triune God.**
 - a. The Mediator is substitute-surety, standing in place of sinners, assuming their legal obligations as His own.
 - b. The Mediator stands at the center of God’s eternal counsel, coming in a voluntary act of the Son of God.
 - c. The qualifications of the Mediator are: 1) that He be a true man, so that He suffer and bear the wrath of God in the nature which sinned, and 2) that He be true God, so that He have almighty power, so that His work is of infinite value, so that He is able to endure (bear up under) the wrath of God, so that He can offer to God what He does not already owe. *God mercifully gave such a Mediator, divine and human, in the incarnation through the virgin birth.*
3. **The names of the Mediator reveal who He is (not mere labels as are our names).**
 - a. **Jesus:** Jehovah-Salvation, Jehovah Saviour; the only, divine, effectual, particular Saviour from sin.
 - b. **Christ:** Anointed One, the divinely appointed and equipped Servant, performing the will of God.
 - c. **Lord:** the Ruler, Master of all things; the owner (by blood-purchase) of His obedient people.
 - d. **Son of God:** only begotten (not created or adopted) Son.
 - e. **Son of man:** the divinely chosen & ordained man.

B. THE NATURES OF THE MEDIATOR

1. **Jesus Christ is both God and man in the perfect, personal (“hypostatic”) union of the Son of God.**
 - a. **Jesus Christ is God:** the one who was born in Bethlehem, walked the streets of Galilee, died on the cross, and rose again from Joseph’s tomb *is the eternal Son of God*, the Second Person of the Trinity, of one essence (homoousion) with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As God, He has the being (essence) of God and the attributes of God, performs the works of God, and receives the honour (worship) of God.
 - b. **Jesus Christ is true, complete man with a weakened, sinless human nature:** He has human flesh and blood, human soul, spirit, mind, and will, and a full human psychology. His real human nature has the same essential (physical, emotional, rational) limitations as ours, and as a man, Jesus Christ is

subject to the Triune God, who is His God and His Father, of whom He is the perfectly obedient Servant.

- c. **These two natures, human and divine, are united to one another in the one person of the Son of God** (called the hypostatic union from the Greek “hypostasis”).
2. **The hypostatic union is key to understanding how Jesus Christ is both true man and very God.**
 - a. **The Person of the Son of God is the subject (“the one doing”) of all the activity of Jesus Christ:** the Person of the Son of God suffered, thirsted, raised Lazarus from death, rose from the dead, etc.
 - b. **The Person of the Son of God acts according to one of His two natures:** it is not correct to say, “The human nature of Christ thirsted,” but “Christ (the Son of God) thirsted according to His human nature; therefore, it is not correct to say, “The divine nature of Christ forgave sins,” but “Christ (the Son of God) forgave according to His divine nature. A nature (whether human or divine) does not act, but the person acts.
 - c. **These two natures are truly united, but they remain distinct, with their own distinct properties:** the human nature is never “divinized” (becoming infinite, omnipresent, etc.), and the divine nature is never “humanized” (becoming weakened, limited, etc.). But there is only one divine person (not a human person, and not two persons).
 - d. **Because of the close (“hypostatic”) union there is a communication of properties:** what can be properly said of either of the two natures can be said of the whole Christ (I Cor. 2:8; Acts 20:28).
3. **The final definition was only settled after much controversy in the church.**
 - a. Various heresies were rejected: some denied the deity of Christ; some denied the humanity of Christ (Gnosticism); some confused the relationship. **Chalcedon (AD 451):** We confess one Christ in two natures, **without confusion** (no blending), **without change** (natures not changing into one another), **without division** (not unrelated), **without separation** (union cannot be dissolved).
 - b. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, became what He was not (man) without ceasing to be what He was (God).

C. THE OFFICES OF THE MEDIATOR

1. **The Triune God appointed Christ in eternity to an office (an “official” position of authority, wherein He is authorized and equipped to serve God).**
 - a. Only Christ is appointed to function in this office, and has been equipped and anointed by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. In the Old Testament, God prepared His people for Christ by giving them three offices of prophet, priest, and king, each foreshadowing an aspect of Christ’s work.
 - c. Christ fulfills and perfects *in one person* the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king.
2. **Christ is our Chief Prophet, only High Priest, and eternal King.**
 - a. **A prophet** receives revelation from God and makes it known to God’s people. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son and Word of God, who has perfect knowledge of the Father. He teaches this effectually to His people.
 - b. **A priest** acts as the representative of God’s people and brings them into fellowship with God. Jesus Christ is our priest by 1) offering one, final, perfect, complete, effectual, particular sacrifice, by which He effects

atonement, expiation, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, and satisfaction as the perfect Substitute, 2) making continuous, authoritative, effectual, particular intercession, thus obtaining for us and applying to us the favour of God, and 3) bestowing upon us all the blessings of salvation purchased on the cross.

- c. **A king** rules over God's people. Jesus Christ is our King, who rules us by His grace and Holy Spirit, subdues our rebellious hearts to Himself, makes us thankful, obedient citizens in the kingdom and in the (visible) church of God, defends us from all His and our enemies, and thus preserves us to the end.

D. THE STATES OF THE MEDIATOR

1. **A state is a legal position or status in which Christ stands or stood in relationship to the law of God.**
 - a. **The state of humiliation:** Christ, the Son of God, stood before God's law as guilty and subject to all the law's demands, willingly representing His elect people, in whose guilt He stood. In this status of guilty, Christ existed in a condition of misery and shame (miserable circumstances). Such a guilty position before the law was only possible for Christ because God imputed to Him our sin.
 - b. **The state of exaltation (follows and is a reward for enduring the state of humiliation):** Christ, the Son of God, stood before the law of God as innocent, having cleared Himself and all whom He represented of the guilt in which He had stood in the state of humiliation. In this status of innocence, Christ exists in a condition of glory and bliss (exalted circumstances).
2. **The steps of Christ's humiliation are five:**
 - a. **Lowly birth:** Christ took on Himself, not the flesh of Adam in innocence, but the human nature cursed in the Fall. He was born into humble circumstances and grew up in obscurity in Nazareth.
 - b. **Lifelong suffering:** Christ's sufferings were deprivation, exacerbated by His innocence, inflicted by sinners and by a just God, and accompanied by a sense of God's wrath and the ever-increasing burden of sin.
 - c. **Death:** Christ died as a criminal, tried by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, yet wholly innocent; it was a cruel, painful, shameful death, under God's curse, bearing God's wrath (and effected our salvation).
 - d. **Burial:** Christ must enter into the full experience of death and prove that He really died.
 - e. **Descension into hell:** this did not happen after death in the place called "hell," but refers to His "hellish agonies" on the cross.
3. **The steps of Christ's exaltation are four:**
 - a. **Resurrection:** Christ rose in the same body in which He died, but the human nature of Christ is glorified and adapted to heavenly existence. The resurrection is proof that God is satisfied with Christ's work.
 - b. **Ascension:** a real change of place for the human nature of Christ; our flesh (our "Head") is in heaven.
 - c. **Session at God's right hand:** Christ rules as the Mediator on behalf of the Triune God and for our salvation.
 - d. **Return as Judge:** Christ will resurrect all men, summon them before Himself, pronounce judgment on all men, send the reprobate into everlasting punishment, and call His own to enjoy heavenly glory with Himself.

INTRODUCTION

A. With the covenant we begin Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation.

1. **The main sections of Soteriology are the covenant, regeneration, calling, saving faith, justification, and sanctification.**
 - a. The doctrine of salvation is the study of the *application* of the benefits or blessings of salvation. In Christology, we learn how Christ purchased them; in Soteriology we learn how He makes us partakers of them by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. This application of salvation, like the purchase of salvation, is the work of God alone. God does not make salvation merely possible. He saves. We do not apply salvation to ourselves. God does it.
 - c. But in salvation God, as the God of order, adopts a certain order. He applies the benefits of salvation in logical sequence, beginning with regeneration and ending with glorification (Rom. 8:30).
2. **We begin Soteriology with the covenant. The doctrine of the covenant is the starting point of Soteriology, as well as the goal of Christology.**
 - a. There is some debate: should the covenant be treated in Christology or in Soteriology?
 - b. The covenant really could be treated in all parts of Reformed doctrine: 1) God is the covenant God, within Himself living in perfect fellowship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; 2) God created man in a covenant relationship as God’s son and in God’s image, but man violated that covenant and is estranged from God; 3) Christ unites in one Person the divine and human natures, and His work is to restore God’s people to friendship as the Mediator.

B. We begin Soteriology with the covenant because salvation is covenant life with God in Christ, and the work of Christ brings us into that covenant fellowship with God by removing the barrier of our sin.

1. **Negatively, salvation is deliverance *from* the guilt, power, pollution, misery, and presence of sin.**
 - a. Those who are saved are not poor, unfortunate victims, but guilty, damnable sinners (Rom. 5:8). They are sinners who have declared themselves by their actions and their very nature to be God’s enemies (Rom. 5:10; 8:7), although God Himself loves them with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3).
 - b. It is because God loves them that He purposed in eternity to save them, elected them, sent Christ to redeem them, and now in salvation applies to them all the blessings which Christ purchased for them.
2. **But salvation is *so much more* than a mere deliverance from sin and death, as wonderful as that is.**
 - a. There is more to salvation than not going to hell, than escaping punishment, than being delivered from spiritual slavery, etc. We are saved *from* something bad and saved *unto* something good.
 - b. It is one thing to say, “God does not treat me as a guilty sinner.” But it is more to say, “God adopts me as His son or His daughter; God lavishes on me His love; God makes me live with Him.”
 - c. Illustrate: A peasant commits a crime against the king and is about to be hanged. The king pardons the peasant. The peasant, overwhelmed by the king’s mercy, prepares to go home to his hovel. But the king stops him: “No,

you don't go home! I have made arrangements to have you adopted into my family. You will be heir of all my goods. You will sit at my table. I will love you freely. You will live with me." *God has greater benefits in mind when He saves His people than mere escape from hell. He gives us Himself.*

I. THE ESSENCE OF THE COVENANT: FRIENDSHIP OR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

A. The Bible describes salvation in terms of friendship, fellowship, and communion with God: "covenant."

1. Many teach that the covenant is an agreement, a contract or a bargain between God and certain human beings.

- a. Thus a covenant has three main components: a *promise* of some great good, a *condition* which man must fulfill to receive what is promised, and a threat of punishment if the condition is not fulfilled. And this reflects human contracts: "I will give you this if ... but if not ... penalties!"
- b. The "covenant as contract" theologians generally see a "covenant of works" with Adam: God promises to give to Adam and all Adam's posterity eternal life on condition of perfect obedience, and threatens death upon disobedience. The Bible does not teach the "covenant of works."

2. But the word covenant does not mean agreement; God does not enter into conditional agreements with us.

- a. God's covenant with us is a *reflection* of God's own covenant life within Himself. How does the Bible describe life within God? Not as three partners in a business agreement, but as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwelling in intimate fellowship, communion, friendship, and love.
- b. Besides, God does not make agreements with His creatures. God and man can never be parties in an agreement. One is the sovereign Creator, the other is a dependent (and sinful) creature.
- c. Rather, God created man in covenant relationship with Himself, man fell from that blessedness, and Jesus Christ restores that fellowship and develops it and perfects it so that what we receive in Christ far surpasses what we lost in Adam.

B. Instead of an agreement or bargain, the covenant is a *bond of friendship* which God establishes, preserves, and perfects in Jesus Christ.

1. Basically, the covenant is seen in the covenant formula, "I will be your God, and ye will be my people."

- a. This covenant formula is a declaration of friendship. It is *friendship*. Friendship has three elements: deep affection or love, intimate knowledge, and a sharing of life. Business partnerships are not friendships.
- b. But it is a declaration of friendship. God does not say, "Would you like to be my friend? You can be if you do this and that." God says, "I shall be your God" or "I shall be your Friend."
- c. By virtue of that declaration of friendship, God draws near to us and draws us into His own life, causes us to taste His goodness, reveals Himself to us, and makes us His own.

2. Because the covenant is *God's* covenant it is unilateral, unconditional, and everlasting.

- a. *Unilateral* means one-sided: this means that the covenant was *God's idea*. It was not something which Adam and God, Noah and God, Moses and God, or David and God decided together. No man had any input into what the

covenant is. God conceived of and planned the covenant in eternity within Himself as the Triune God. That is why God always says, “This is my covenant”; “I will establish my covenant.”

- b. *Unconditional* means that the covenant does not depend on man. God never says to us, “I will be your God, if you do this.” God says, “I will establish my covenant.” That means I will cause it to stand. If the covenant depended on us, on our faith, on our works, on our faithfulness, it would fail; it would not stand.
 - c. *Everlasting* means that the covenant remains forever. God never cancels His covenant, even when we are unfaithful to Him. God never breaks His promise. God never casts off or “un-friends” His people, and His covenant is perfected in the new heavens & new earth (Gen. 17:7, Ps. 89:34, Rev. 21:3).
3. **Proof that the covenant is friendship, not an agreement, is abundant in Scripture.**
- a. First, we see it in the covenant formula itself: “I will be your God...” This means I will be everything a God is to His people and do everything a God does for His people: salvation, protection, blessings, etc. This promise is given, as we have seen, unilaterally and unconditionally. Remember what a promise is: a declaration of some future good (Heb. 6:13-18).
 - b. Second, we see it in all the ways in which the relationship between God and His people is described: God is our Friend and we are His friend-servants (James 2:23); God is our Father and we are His children (II Cor. 6:18); God is our Husband and we are His bride (Jer. 3:14); God is our God and we are His people, His beloved sheep, His precious people (Deut. 7:6-7). *This is not the terminology of a mutually agreed business contract.*
 - c. Third, we see it in the fact that God *dwells* with His people. Business partners do not dwell together in love, but husbands and wives, fathers and children, and friends do. Adam and Eve dwelled with God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8); God’s people walked with God (Gen. 5:24, 6:9); God dwelled in the midst of His people in the tabernacle and then the temple (Lev. 26:11); the land of Canaan was the land in which God dwelled with His people. In the New Testament the dwelling of God with His people is even closer: the thick curtain of the temple is torn because Christ opens the way into the very presence of God. Jesus comes as our Immanuel (“God with us”); Jesus unites God and man in one Person; God dwells in our hearts by the Spirit and dwells in the midst of His church; and finally God dwells with us in heaven (Rev. 21:1).
4. **The covenant is in and through Jesus Christ.**
- a. Christ is the *Head* of the covenant, the legal representative of all His people, and the source of all of our life. United to Him, we receive all the blessings of covenantal life. Separated from Him, we have nothing.
 - b. Christ is the Mediator of the covenant. He came to restore fallen, estranged, alienated sinners to the God whom they had offended by their sins. *Next time we will look at who is included in this covenant.*

I. WITH WHOM IS THE COVENANT MADE?

A. The covenant is made with Christ as the Head of the covenant and with all those who are “in Christ.”

1. Remember that God makes the covenant with Christ as the Head, which means two things:

- a. First, Christ is the legal or representative Head. Christ is a “public person,” representing all the elect. He takes upon Himself our sins, and He earns for us all the blessings of salvation.
- b. Second, as Head, Christ is the source of life for all of His members. The eternal life, earned on the cross and acquired by the resurrection, flows from the Head to the whole body and each member.
- c. Christ is the Elect of God, the Servant of God, the object of God’s delight, the one in whom all fullness dwells. God establishes His covenant centrally with Christ (Ps. 89:3; Is. 42:1; Gal. 3:16, 29).

2. Because Christ is the Friend of God, and all the elect are “in Christ,” God is the Friend of all the elect.

- a. The friends of God, then, the members of the covenant, are believers, those chosen in Christ, redeemed by Christ, called by Christ, and united to Christ by a true faith.
- b. By nature we are not such friends of God, but His enemies, but He reconciles us to Himself, and makes us His friends by creating enmity between us and the devil (Gen. 3:15). Thus Romans 8:7 becomes James 4:4!
- c. The reprobate ungodly remain God’s enemies. God sets His face against them; His wrath remains on them; they never taste of His friendship, His blessing, His salvation. They only know His just curse.

3. Third, it is an important aspect of God’s covenant that it always includes the children of believers.

- a. In every revelation of the covenant, God says, “I will be your God and the God of your seed,” and God always mentions “generations.” Generations means children and grandchildren.
- b. God could have decreed to save His people differently, but He is pleased to gather His people in the line of continued generations. Ordinarily, where father and mother believe and are the friends of God, the children also believe and are the friends of God *as children*.
- c. This is true in every age: Genesis 6:18, 17:7; Acts 2:39. Israel circumcised their children; we baptize ours.

B. Therefore, election governs the covenant. Election determines the membership of the covenant.

1. Only the elect are in the covenant; only the elect belong to or are members of the covenant.

- a. This is true because Christ is the Head of the covenant, and Christ is Head only of the elect. He represents only the elect. He died for only the elect. He is the source of life for only the elect.
- b. That election governs the covenant means that even *in the visible church* only the elect are members of the covenant. This is true of both Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church.

- c. This means that God declares Himself to be the God of Israel as a body, and the God of the church as a body, but not of every member of physical, national Israel, and not of every member of the visible church.
- 2. Others live in close proximity to the covenant community (as members of national Israel or members of the visible church) but are not saved. These are not “in the covenant” or “members of the covenant.”**
- a. Romans 9:6-8 makes this distinction – some are “Israel,” and others are merely “of Israel.” Some are “children of the flesh,” while others are “children of the promise.” Only the children of the promise are the children of God and counted for the seed. Some Israelites are “Jews outwardly,” but not inwardly (Rom. 2:28-29).
 - b. The theological distinction we make is “in the covenant” vs. “in the sphere of the covenant.” Of David’s children, Absalom was in the sphere of the covenant. He belonged to that nation known as God’s people; he enjoyed many of the outward benefits; he was circumcised; but he was not “in the covenant.” He was reprobate and revealed that by his ungodliness. Solomon was “in the covenant.”
 - c. The Bible addresses Israel and the church “organically,” as one living organism. Sometimes God addresses them from the perspective of the reprobate shell or husk (the chaff); sometimes God addresses them from the perspective of the elect kernel or remnant (the wheat). *But God always addresses the whole church.*
- 3. This means that God does not promise to all physical descendants of Abraham, to all Jews, or to all the children of believing parents that He will be their God and their Friend in Jesus Christ.**
- a. Many have taught that all the physical children of believers are in the covenant conditionally. So, for example, God promised to be Absalom’s God and Friend *if* Absalom believed, repented, and remained faithful, and threatened him if he did not. Some have even said that God does more than promise: He actually befriends all the children of believers, but some do not fulfill the conditions of friendship and thus lose the friendship which they once had.
 - b. But the Bible is clear that not all the children of believers are in the covenant. Some are not, and never were, friends of God. They are, and always remain, God’s enemies. God never gives such children any blessings, but He curses and hardens them even through circumcision, baptism, and other external privileges.
 - c. This does not invalidate God’s covenant promise. Godly parents view their children from the perspective of the promise. And they must treat them as children of God: they teach them, they admonish them, they correct them, they discipline them as children of God. If their children manifest themselves to be wicked and unbelieving, they bring them to the elders to be excommunicated. Election and reprobation cut through even the lines of generations, to the grief of parents and the church. *But God’s promise never fails.*

II. HOW DOES THE COVENANT DEVELOP?

- A. **There is one covenant which God reveals over time; with each new revelation of the one covenant God adds a new element to the one covenant.**
 - 1. **This covenant theology is the opposite of “Dispensationalism.”**

- a. Dispensationalism divides the history into seven distinct periods called “dispensations.” In each dispensation God deals with man in a new way, man having failed the test of the previous dispensation.
 - b. Some Dispensationalists even teach seven different ways of salvation by these dispensations, so that in the Old Testament salvation was by the works of the law, but now we are in the dispensation of grace.
 - c. The seven dispensations are 1) innocence [Adam], 2) conscience [Noah], 3) human government [post-Noah], 4) promise [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.], 5) law [Moses, Israel], 6) grace [Christian], 7) millennium [future]. *One of the great characteristics of Dispensationalism is the idea of two distinct peoples of God.*
- 2. We reject Dispensationalism. We see one covenant unfolded and developed over time and history.**
- a. It was always God’s purpose to reveal His own covenant life to His elect people, to take them into that life, and to make them share in it through Jesus Christ. Paradise in Eden was never God’s original purpose.
 - b. In the Reformed faith, therefore, there is never a Plan B with God, always the same Plan A. Man’s sin never makes God tear up His previous covenant and start anew.
 - c. With each new revelation of the one covenant, God adds something new, always with Christ in mind. This is why we read of God “establishing” His covenant or “remembering” His covenant (Ex. 2:24).

B. Briefly, how did the covenant develop? How did God reveal His own central promise of Christ over time?

- 1. **The covenant with Adam (“of creation”):** Many theologians wrongly call this covenant a “covenant of works.” But Adam could not merit a higher, spiritual, eternal life with God. He was earthly (I Cor. 15:47). Adam was made in the image of God, able to fellowship with God as God’s friend and son (Gen. 3:8, 15).
- 2. **The covenant with Noah (“cosmic”):** In Genesis 6:18 the word “covenant” appears for the first time. Notice the inclusion of children. Notice that it is not a new covenant (“establish”). The new aspect here is that the covenant includes the creation (Gen. 9:8-17). And the sign of that covenant is the rainbow.
- 3. **The covenant with Abraham:** In Genesis 17:7, etc., God speaks of “establish,” of “my covenant,” of an “everlasting” covenant, and of the inclusion of children. God adds the promise of the land of Canaan as a place where God’s people will dwell with Him (a picture of heaven, Heb. 11:13-16), and the sign of circumcision.
- 4. **The covenant with Israel:** This covenant was made at Mt. Sinai. To the promise given to Abraham, God adds the law. But the law does not cancel the promise (Gal. 3:17, 19). The law was added because of the immaturity of the people. They needed to be hemmed in with strict rules (Gal. 4:1, etc.).
- 5. **The covenant with David:** In II Samuel 7:8-16 God establishes the covenant with David and his line. The covenant will have a king. And that king will be Christ (Luke 1:32-33).
- 6. **The “new covenant”:** This covenant is promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Notice that Jeremiah speaks of “the house of Israel,” but Hebrews 8 applies this to the New Testament church. The “new” covenant is confirmed in Christ’s blood (Matt. 26:28). The “new” covenant is not new in the sense of “brand new,” but a

renewal, a fulfillment with better promises, better (spiritual) blessings, richer fellowship with God (“they shall all know me”).

7. **The covenant in heaven:** When salvation is completed, God does not cast away His covenant. It is not a means to an end. It is the end, the goal. Thus, heaven is dwelling with God forever (John 17:24; Rev. 21:3).

C. Next time: we begin the *Ordo Salutis*: regeneration, calling, saving faith, justification, sanctification.

INTRODUCTION AND THE *ORDO SALUTIS*

A. The *Ordo Salutis* is the “order of salvation.”

1. By it we distinguish the benefits which make up salvation.

- a. The Bible speaks of *tenses* of salvation: we have been saved; we are being saved; we shall be saved (e.g. Rom. 5:9, 13:11). Our sins *have been* forgiven; we are *being made* holy; we *shall be* glorified.
- b. Each of the benefits of salvation is purchased by Jesus Christ and then applied to the church and every member of the church.
- c. We neither *purchase* salvation (Christ did that on the cross), nor do we *apply* salvation to ourselves (Christ does that by the Holy Spirit).

2. The *Ordo Salutis* means that Christ by His Spirit applies certain distinct benefits in a distinct logical order. This order is not strictly according to time, although some benefits are received before others.

- a. Glorification (of body and soul in heaven) logically and temporally occurs last in the “golden chain” of salvation. Glorification is the perfection of sanctification.
- b. Regeneration occurs before faith, because faith is the fruit, never the cause, of regeneration.
- c. Justification is distinct from and occurs before sanctification.

B. Lesson 19 deals with REGENERATION, or as it is popularly called, THE NEW BIRTH.

1. Regeneration is *first*, because before regeneration the sinner is dead and cannot receive any of the other benefits of salvation.
2. All spiritual activity of the saved sinner flows out of regeneration; and all spiritual experience of salvation flows out of regeneration.

I. THE NATURE OF REGENERATION

A. The Bible describes this work of God using several important metaphors.

1. The new birth, or a spiritual begetting

- a. Jesus famously told Nicodemus in John 3 that he “must be born again.” This means that all men, to be saved, must receive life from God.
- b. By nature we have physical life, but not spiritual life. By nature we are only flesh. We must be born of the Spirit of God (John 3:3, 6-8). See also Romans 8:7-8.
- c. Paul and James speak of the new birth: Titus 3:5 (“the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”) and James 1:18 (“Of his own will begat he us...” [literally, “he brought us forth out of the womb”]).

2. A spiritual resurrection (a bringing to life again from the dead)

- a. Ezekiel the prophet speaks most about this truth. God, by His Spirit, breathes new life into the dead.
- b. In Ezekiel 16:6 God breathes life into a dead child (“I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live”).
- c. In Ezekiel 37:5 God says to a valley of dry bones, “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.” *So regeneration is the breathing of new life into the spiritually dead sinner so that he lives.*

3. A spiritual heart-transplant

- a. Again, Ezekiel speaks about this reality: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart

out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ..." (36:26-27).

- b. By nature (because of our fall into sin) we have hearts as hard as rocks, opposed to God and filled with hatred of God, and in regeneration God takes away that hardness of heart and gives us soft, responsive hearts of flesh.
- c. Jeremiah speaks this way about it: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (31:33).

4. Circumcision of the heart

- a. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant in the Old Testament, the sign that God was Israel's God and Israel was God's people in their generations. Part of the male member was cut off in the physical act of circumcision. This taught the people that they were spiritually unclean and that God was cutting off their sinful flesh. Colossians 2:11 speaks of "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh."
- b. But physical circumcision does not do anything. Paul writes, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15).
- c. The reality behind physical circumcision is spiritual circumcision or circumcision of the heart, promised in Deuteronomy 30:6 ("And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live"). See Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3.

5. A new creature

- a. The new birth is as much a work of almighty power as was the creation of all things by God from nothing in the beginning.
- b. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). "For we are His [God's] workmanship [handiwork], created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

B. [Regeneration in the broader and the narrower sense] When we speak of "regeneration," we usually mean regeneration in the narrower sense. But it is also possible to speak of regeneration in the broader sense. Then it means something very similar to conversion. We should not confuse regeneration and conversion.

1. Regeneration (in the narrower sense) is the first work of God. God imparts, implants, or breathes into the sinner new life.

- a. Regeneration happens once. The book of I John calls it the *planting of a seed* (I John 3:9).
- b. Regeneration is instantaneous. One moment a person is spiritually dead, the next he is born again.
- c. Regeneration is subconscious, and the sinner is passive. A person does not feel or experience the new birth when it is happening. It is like the mysterious blowing of the wind. We cannot see it coming or going, but we know its effects.
- d. And in that sense, regeneration occurs before faith. First we are born again; then, out of that, we believe.

2. **Conversion (or “regeneration in the wider sense”) is a subsequent work of God. Conversion is a spiritual turning. Conversion consists of repentance and faith.**

- a. Conversion happens more than once. In fact, it happens daily as God turns us from sin toward Himself and as we turn from sin toward Him. If regeneration is the initial planting of a seed, conversion is the development and growth of that seed.
- b. Conversion is a gradual process. We are constantly being converted.
- c. In conversion we are active and conscious. We actively and consciously hate our sins and turn from them; we actively and consciously love God and serve Him. He works in us so that we do this (Phil. 2:12-13).
- d. In that sense, regeneration in the broader sense happens after faith. That is how the word “regeneration” is used in Belgic Confession Art. 24: “We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin.” Calvin uses regeneration the same way in his *Institutes*.

C. What are the effects of regeneration? It is important to understand what regeneration does and does not do so that we are not confused. If we expect too much too quickly, we will doubt our own regeneration.

1. **[What regeneration does not do]**

- a. Regeneration does not change our nature or our personality. Many of our character traits will be unaffected by the miracle of regeneration. It is a spiritual change.
- b. Regeneration does not remove or even improve our sinful nature. Within us there is a sinful nature called “the old man” or “the flesh.” When we are regenerated, the flesh is not regenerated. The flesh remains, as potent, as sinful, as wicked, as opposed to God as ever.
- c. Regeneration does not bring about sinless perfection in this life. The child of God still sins.

2. **[What regeneration does do] Regeneration brings a change *in principle*, plants a seed in the heart.**

- a. In regeneration God plants a principle of life in the heart of a sinner. This produces bitter, lifelong struggle between the old man (the sinful nature, the flesh) and the new man (the seed of new life in Christ). In the unregenerate there is no struggle. This struggle is a sign of life (Gal. 5:17, Rom. 7:18-25).
- b. Regeneration opens the blinded eyes, unstops deaf ears, renews the will, enlightens the mind, changes the affections. The infallible signs of regeneration are 1) sorrow for sin, 2) love for God, and 3) faith in Christ.

I. REGENERATION IS THE WORK OF GOD ALONE.

A. Regeneration is a miracle of God which God performs upon the sinner, who is passive.

1. The Bible is very clear that the sinner is not able to regenerate himself, to contribute to his regeneration, to cooperate with (or even resist) his regeneration, or to prepare himself for regeneration.

- a. That is clear from what regeneration *is*: a new birth (a begetting, a bringing forth from the womb, etc.), a spiritual resurrection, a spiritual heart transplant, circumcision of the heart, a new creation.
- b. In none of the activities listed above does a person perform the action on himself, contribute to it, cooperate with it, or prepare himself for it (birth, resurrection, heart transplant, creation, etc.).
- c. The Bible always uses the active voice with God (God regenerates) and the passive voice with man (man is *regenerated*; he does not regenerate himself) when the subject is regeneration.

2. This must be true because *the sinner is dead*. A dead sinner cannot perform any positive spiritual activity.

- a. The absolute necessity of regeneration comes from man’s total depravity (Eph. 2:1, Rom. 3:10ff., etc.).
- b. No amount of self-improvement, turning over a new leaf, or forsaking certain grossly sinful habits will bring about the new birth by man’s efforts.
- c. Similarly, a sinner cannot, by arguments, by appeals, by pleas, etc., be persuaded to be born again.

B. Man, who is fundamentally proud, desires to steal some of the glory of salvation for himself, and he starts at the very root. He says that regeneration is at least in part the work of man.

1. This is the view of Liberalism, which really teaches that regeneration in the biblical sense is unnecessary.

- a. Liberal theologians, who really deny the miraculous (in creation, providence, and Scripture), teach that regeneration is simply man’s moral self-improvement. Men working together can bring about improvement of society, thus “regenerating” society. Regeneration occurs through education, etc.
- b. Other liberals, such as Robert Schuler, teach that a man is born again by developing a healthy self-esteem, in which he denies his own sin.
- c. This view is a revival of *Pelagius*. Pelagianism teaches that man is basically good, and does not need God for self-improvement. Grace helps, but is not necessary. This is a denial of salvation itself.

2. This is the view of Roman Catholicism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, and much of Evangelicalism.

- a. Semi-Pelagianism is modified Pelagianism. The sinner does need grace because he is only spiritually sick, but the sinner has the ability to cooperate with or resist God’s regenerating grace.
- b. Roman Catholicism adopted Semi-Pelagianism. Man is not totally depraved. With the help of grace, man can merit with God. God gives “helping” grace to all men, especially in the preaching and through the sacraments. Man can prepare himself to receive grace. *Grace plus free will produces regeneration.*

- c. Arminianism is basically the same. God desires to regenerate all men; God works in all men to produce regeneration (or at least in all men who hear the preaching); but man can resist God's work and thwart regeneration. Only by the free will cooperating with grace does regeneration occur.
- d. Most Evangelicals today believe that regeneration is the work of God *in response to the work of man*. "First, you believe," they say. "Then God gives you the new birth." They appeal to John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." But "power to become the sons of God" is not the new birth; it is adoption! And we must read verse 13: "Which were born [that's regeneration], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The order in John 1:12-13 is 1) regeneration, 2) faith, 3) adoption (and justification).
- e. The Evangelical view is impossible because faith is impossible without spiritual life, and there is no spiritual life without regeneration. *Regeneration must come first* as a sovereign, monergistic act of God.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE LIFE OF REGENERATION IS JESUS CHRIST.

A. We have said that regeneration is the implanting of life into the heart of a dead sinner so that he lives. That begs the questions: What life? Whose life? What is the source of this life?

1. This is not natural life. What we receive from our parents (our first father Adam and our biological parents) is natural, biological life, but not spiritual life, not eternal life.

- a. Jesus makes that clear in John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Flesh produces flesh; flesh cannot produce spirit.
- b. Paul also teaches this in I Corinthians 15, "The first man is of the earth, earthy ..." (v. 47); "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy ..." (v. 48); "as we have borne the image of the earthy ..." (v. 49); "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (v. 50).
- c. In addition, Paul speaks of the natural and the spiritual man elsewhere: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14); see also Romans 8:5-8.

2. Therefore, not only *can no* sinner of himself be born again because he is dead, powerless to produce life in and of himself, but *no sinner has of himself the right* to be born again. No sinner has the "right to life." In fact, all sinners deserve death: physical, spiritual, and eternal death.

- a. That is why the cross is necessary. The cross is the judicial ground or basis, the basis *in law*, for God's granting to us life. God could not grant us life and remain just or righteous *without the cross*.
- b. So when Christ died on the cross He paid for our sins, and in so doing He purchased for us the right to life. He did not simply purchase for us the possibility of life, but life itself.
- c. He certainly did not purchase for all men the possibility of life (if they do something to merit it, apply it to themselves, etc.). That would be to say to a corpse, "I will give you life if you start breathing"; or "I will give you life if you cause your heart to beat."

- d. Christ died for some, and to them, and them only, He gives the life which He purchased. He gives that life first in regeneration, and regeneration produces lifelong, progressive spiritual activity.
- B. The source of this regeneration and the power of this regeneration are the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
1. **If Jesus had not risen from the dead, we could never be regenerated or “born again.”**
 - a. If Jesus Christ is still dead, He did not satisfy God’s justice against our sins.
 - b. If Jesus Christ is still dead, He did not conquer death, and death still has some claim on Him; and if on Him, also on us, since He represents us in His death and in His life.
 - c. If Jesus Christ is still dead, He cannot bestow upon us life, because He never earned it and has not the power to give it. Only a living, resurrected, reigning Christ at the right hand of God can and does pour out His Spirit and make us partakers of eternal life.
 2. **The life which Jesus Christ imparts to us, implants into us, gives to us in regeneration is *His own life*.**
 - a. The life which we receive in regeneration is not ordinary, biological, earthly life, but heavenly, spiritual, eternal life, the same life which Jesus Christ lives in heaven.
 - b. Eternal life is not simply endless existence, nor does it begin in heaven, so that we receive it at some point in the future. Eternal life is what we have *now!*
 - c. Eternal life is abundant life (John 10:10). All Christians at the point of regeneration have abundant life. There is no second blessing for only certain Christians; eternal life is fellowship with and knowledge of God (John 17:3); eternal life is “immortality” (II Tim. 1:10), the abolishing of death, never-ending bliss.
 - d. And all of this comes from *union* with Christ. His life flows to us as life from the Head flows to all the members of the body. It was purchased on the cross by the sufferings and death of Christ; it comes to us by the power of the resurrection, and we receive it by the Holy Spirit. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Pet. 1:3).

C. Summary

1. **Regeneration is the implanting into the heart** of the totally depraved sinner the life of Jesus Christ.
2. **Regeneration is the first of the steps** in the *Ordo Salutis*, where God applies the various benefits of salvation.
3. **Regeneration (in the narrower sense)** happens once, happens instantaneously, happens without the will or cooperation of the sinner, and the sinner is passive. It is the sovereign, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Regeneration becomes ours because Christ died and rose again to give it.** It is the beginning of eternal life as a seed which sprouts forth and grows unto everlasting glory in heaven.
5. **Canons III/IV, Article 12:** “And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead, a making alive...evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same

time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead.”

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. We saw that the *first* act of God in applying the benefits of salvation is regeneration.**
- 1. Regeneration is the first act because *before regeneration the sinner is dead.***
 - a. Regeneration is the implanting of the life of Jesus Christ into the heart of the elect sinner.
 - b. Regeneration happens without the work, will, cooperation, or preparation of the sinner.
 - 2. Once the sinner is alive, God calls the regenerated sinner to active faith.**
 - a. This happens through the calling, the second step in the *Ordo Salutis*. In that call, God *addresses* the sinner and brings him to Jesus Christ, where the sinner finds salvation and blessing.
 - b. The calling, therefore, is the powerful voice of God, by the Holy Spirit, in the heart of the elect, now regenerated sinner. “Come to Jesus Christ.” And being called, the sinner comes; he cannot but come.
 - c. We see, then, why Reformed theology logically places calling *after* regeneration. First God gives life; then He calls that life to activity.
- B. There are two aspects of the calling: an external and an internal calling.**
- 1. The external calling is the preaching of the gospel, wherein God commands all the hearers, “Come, turn from your sins, and believe in Jesus Christ.”**
 - a. The external call comes to many sinners who are never saved. Everyone who hears the gospel is called in that sense. Everyone must, upon pain of eternal damnation, repent and believe in Christ presented in the gospel.
 - b. In the gospel God seriously commands all men to repent, promises to all believers eternal life, and threatens eternal death to all unbelievers (read Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 31, Q&A 84; Canons III/IV, Article 8).
 - c. This external call is the means whereby God calls the elect unto Himself (it sweetly but irresistibly draws the elect), and the means whereby God hardens and leaves inexcusable the reprobate wicked (II Cor. 2:15-16).
 - 2. But the external calling is not enough to bring anyone to salvation. The external calling strikes the ears, but it cannot open the heart, move the will, or bring a person to faith. Therefore, there is with the external calling the internal calling, sometimes called “effectual calling” or “irresistible grace.”**
 - a. The internal calling is the work of the Holy Spirit, entering the heart, powerfully moving the will, and bringing the elect sinner to Jesus Christ.
 - b. The internal calling of the Holy Spirit is effectual; that is, whom God calls, *actually come*.
 - c. But at the same time, the Holy Spirit does not drag some kicking and screaming against their will. The calling power of the Spirit makes the called willing to come, and they do come (Ps. 110:3).
- C. The calling, therefore, happens by means of the preaching of the gospel. We call it “mediate” (by means).**
- 1. In this, calling differs from regeneration. Regeneration happens immediately (without means).**
 - a. In regeneration God simply breathes life into a dead sinner, without the means of the preaching of the Word or any other means.

- b. In addition, regeneration is a work of God of which the sinner is not conscious or aware. He is dead and receives life without feeling it, knowing it, or realizing it.
 - c. However, God regenerates always in close connection with His Word (e.g., God does not regenerate heathens who will never have any access to the gospel).
2. **But since calling is God's voice addressing the heart of the sinner, it presupposes that a person can hear.**
- a. God calls His own people by giving them ears to hear; by removing their spiritual blindness and giving them spiritual understanding. We call that "illumination" (II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; Heb. 10:32).
 - b. That is why Christ so often says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The calling presupposes regeneration.

I. THE CALLING IS THE WORK OF GOD.

A. It is the work of God because it is the call *of the voice of God*.

1. **The voice of God is powerful and authoritative. How could it be otherwise when it is the voice of God?**
 - a. The voice which called the creation into being, which thundered on Mt. Sinai, the voice which breaks the cedars in pieces, is the same voice which calls (Rom. 4:17; II Cor. 4:6; Heb. 12:25-26; Ps. 29:5).
 - b. The voice is the voice *of Jesus Christ*. That was the voice which called Lazarus forth out of the tomb, the voice which will awaken the dead on the Last Day, the voice by which He performed miracles ("Be clean," "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," etc.). See John 5:25, 28-29.
 - c. Since the calling is the voice of Almighty God, we know that the calling will accomplish God's purpose: it does not depend on man. It also underlines the seriousness of it.
2. **When we say that the calling is the work of God, we mean that *God calls*.**
 - a. It is not that the sinner *calls himself*. Just as we cannot regenerate ourselves, so we cannot call ourselves.
 - b. The truth is that God *calls*. God does not suggest, God does not beg; God calls, summons, commands.
 - c. This must be the case because only God could call sinners from darkness into light, from sin unto holiness, from the kingdom of the devil into the kingdom of Christ (I Pet. 2:9; I Thess. 4:7; Col. 1:13; Eph. 4:1).
 - d. This explains the language of Scripture: we are always passive in the calling (we are "the called").
3. **But, at the same time, we understand that *God does not answer the call; He enables us to answer it*.**
 - a. God calls certain sinners to Himself, and they certainly come. God does not come; *we come*.
 - b. But we only come because God first called us. If He had not called us, we could not have come.
 - c. So here is the relationship: It is not that God calls us, and then we decide whether we would like to come or not; rather, God calls, and we come, necessarily, irresistibly, and willingly. John 6:44.

B. The calling of God is particular and gracious.

1. **First, the calling is particular: God only calls some, not all. He calls only the elect (Rom. 8:30, 9:11; II Tim. 1:9).**

- a. When we say that the calling is particular to the elect, *we mean the internal call*. The external call comes to many who are not elect, because many hear the preaching who are not inwardly called (Matt. 22:14).
 - b. The elect are identified in the calling of God by their spiritual characteristics: they are the thirsty, they are the hungry, they are the weary, the heavy laden, the willing (Is. 55:1; Matt. 11:28; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17).
 - c. None are *by nature* hungry, thirsty, weary, willing. By nature we have no spiritual appetite for the things of God; they are not in the least attractive to us. We do not hunger and thirst after God, and we are not wearied by our sins. We should be; it is our sin that we are not, but we are not, and God must create in us by His powerful work such a hunger, thirst, weariness, and will before we will come (Canons III/IV, Rejection of Errors, 4).
- 2. Second, the calling is gracious: God calls some because He loves them and has favour on them. Since calling is one of the steps in the order of salvation, it must be gracious, because salvation is all of grace.**
- a. Salvation is gracious; the calling is one of the steps in salvation; therefore, it is gracious.
 - b. The source of the calling is election, which is gracious election (“according to His ... grace” [II Tim. 1:9]).
 - c. The calling ushers the elect sinner into great blessings, so that it is not only gracious in its origin (source), but gracious in its issue. It is a call in grace *to grace*: to what are we called? Eternal life (I Tim. 6:12); liberty (Gal. 5:13); peace (Col. 3:15); rest (Matt. 11:28); God’s kingdom and glory (I Thess. 2:12); holiness (I Thess. 4:7); and light (I Peter 2:9).
 - d. Therefore it is a great privilege to be called. God could have, had He so decreed, left us in the filth of our sins, but because He loved us He called us to Himself. Our calling is a reason for humility, not boasting (I Cor. 1:26-29).
 - e. Next time, we will look at the question of the well-meant offer of the gospel (WMO). Is the external call which goes out to the reprobate wicked grace to them, an expression of God’s favor to them, an expression of God’s desire (even His earnest desire) to save them? *That is what the advocates of the WMO teach.*

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. We saw that the second step in salvation is God’s calling of the elect sinner.**
1. The calling is the address of God’s voice to the regenerated sinner, bringing him to conscious faith.
 2. The calling has two aspects: the external call (through the preaching) and the internal call (the Holy Spirit).
 3. The calling is particular (only the elect are called) and gracious.
- B. But some have said that in the external call God makes an “offer” of salvation to all hearers.**
1. **This is the teaching of the well-meant offer (WMO) or the free offer of the gospel (FO).**
 - a. That, in the preaching, God expresses a sincere, well-meant, and passionate desire for the salvation of all hearers.
 - b. That, in the preaching, God sincerely offers salvation to all hearers with the desire that they accept it.
 - c. That, in the preaching, God invites all the hearers to come to Christ for salvation.
 - d. That the preaching of the gospel itself *is* grace to all who hear it, an expression of God’s love and favor.
 2. **The WMO means that the external preaching is *more than* a serious call to repentance and faith.**
 - a. We believe, as do WMO people, that the gospel must be preached indiscriminately (Canons II, Article 5; III/IV, Article 8).
 - b. We believe, as do WMO people, that in the indiscriminate preaching, all must be called upon to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. We call that “duty faith” or “the serious call.”
 - c. But we do not believe, unlike the WMO people, that God promises in the gospel to save all hearers *if they believe*. We believe, instead, that God promises to save *all believers* [Do you see the distinction?]. *Preaching is the promiscuous proclamation of a particular promise* (Canons II, Article 5; III/IV, Article 8).
 - d. Nor do we believe, unlike the WMO people, that the gospel is good news and grace to the reprobate: the gospel is only good news to the elect; the reprobate are hardened by the gospel (II Cor. 2:16).

I. INVITATION OR OFFER VS. COMMAND

- A. Many today teach that the preaching of the gospel is an offer; in extreme cases, the preaching becomes a time for the preacher to beg, plead, and implore sinners to be saved, *as if God were doing that*.**
1. **When I offer you something, I give something with the expectation, hope, and desire that you receive it.**
 - a. “Would you like a cup of tea?” “You are invited to my birthday party” – those are offers.
 - b. Often salvation is presented that way: God has a gift, and He offers it to you. He really, passionately wants you to have it, but whether you have it or not depends on you!

- c. And so, say both the Arminians and the WMO-Calvinists, God, in the preaching of the gospel, says to you, “I have prepared salvation in my Son, and I really want you to have it, so come!”
2. **But the Bible does not use “offer” language: it uses “serious command” language.**
 - a. God does not come to the sinner with an offer: “Would you like salvation? It’s available if you’d like it; but if you don’t want it, that’s fine too.” That’s the “offer” of a cup of tea; not the “offer” of Christ.
 - b. Think rather of a summons to a court case. The bailiff of the court comes with a document from the judge. It does not say, “You are cordially invited to attend my courtroom.” The summons says, “Come!” and the bailiff has the power of arrest should you refuse, and you *will* go to jail if you say no.
 - c. Or think of the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22. The king said, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner ... come unto the marriage” (v. 4). What happened to those who refused? He killed them! (v. 7). Those who refuse to come to Christ for salvation *will* go to hell.
 3. **And if God sincerely offers salvation to all men in the preaching, He must have something to give!**
 - a. If I invited 100 people to my house for a party, but I had bought only enough food for 10 people, you could rightly question my sincerity. God has salvation only for the elect; Christ died only for the elect. How then could God sincerely offer salvation to all?
 - b. This fact has led some WMO men to teach that there is some sense in which Christ died for all men; but the only sense in which Christ died for any sinners is in redeeming them, satisfying God’s justice, etc.
 - c. Thus, the WMO makes God hypocritical in His offer of salvation: He has already determined in His decree of reprobation that some will never have salvation, yet He “offers” it.
- B. However, say the WMO advocates, do not the creeds speak of God “offering” salvation?**
1. **Does the word “offer” not have a rich heritage in the Reformed tradition?**
 - a. The word “offer” is used in both the Three Forms of Unity (Canons III/IV, Article 9) and the Westminster Standards, and by many theologians, but we must understand that the word “offer” has evolved in its meaning.
 - b. The word “offer” used to mean “to present,” “to display,” “to set forth.” Today, “offer” means “to present for acceptance or refusal with the desire that the person to whom it is offered will accept it.”
 - c. There is a world of difference between those two ideas.
 2. **But does that mean that we teach that God presents Christ to unbelievers, but does not really mind whether they believe in Him or not? Do we mean by denying the “offer” that the issue is not serious?**
 - a. God commands, upon pain of eternal damnation, that all who hear the gospel of His Son repent and believe. It angers God that sinners would despise His Son and refuse to believe in Him (Acts 17:30).
 - b. God has declared in Scripture that He is pleased by obedience, repentance, and faith; and that He is displeased by disobedience, impenitence, and unbelief (Mark 16:16).
 - c. That means that anyone who hears the gospel, whether elect or reprobate, believer or unbeliever, *must* hear with the utmost seriousness. That the reprobate never believe is *their own fault* (Canons III/IV, Article 9).

II. GOD'S SUPPOSED DESIRE TO SAVE ALL MEN

A. Arminianism and the WMO have in common that they believe that God desires (earnestly) the salvation of all men.

1. The difference between Arminianism and WMO-Calvinism: Arminianism is consistent.

- a. Arminianism denies unconditional predestination; it denies limited atonement; it denies irresistible grace; it affirms free will: a WMO offer "fits" with Arminianism.
- b. Calvinism teaches unconditional election and reprobation; teaches limited atonement and irresistible grace; denies free will: a WMO does not fit.
- c. The answer of the WMO-Calvinist is that we must not impose our human logic on the gospel: we cannot know how God can eternally reject some from salvation but still sincerely long for and invite them to salvation, but we must accept both.

2. But we reject that in the preaching of the gospel God has in mind the salvation of the reprobate.

- a. Why must the reprobate hear the gospel? Is it to give them a chance to be saved; is it to declare to them that God desires their salvation; is it an expression of God's love and grace for them? No!
- b. God has the reprobate hear the gospel to leave them inexcusable; to harden them; to display before all the world their stubbornness and rebellion; and to make their condemnation heavier (Is. 6:8-11).
- c. That is because the gospel is no powerless offer, but the power of God, a power which has a twofold effect: it draws some men to salvation, and hardens others in their sin. None are unaffected. That's why the gospel is serious, deadly serious! (Prov. 1:20-26; Rom. 1:16, 9:18; I Cor. 1:23-24; II Cor. 2:15-16).

B. The WMO-Calvinist has his proof texts, which are the same texts to which the Arminians appeal.

1. Matthew 23:37: "How often would I have gathered thy children ... and ye would not!"

- a. In this passage, Christ has just pronounced a series of "woes" on the Pharisees. The context is, therefore, anger, not compassion. He is angry with "Jerusalem," that is, the leaders of Jerusalem.
- b. He is angry because Christ willed to gather the children of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem ("ye") would not.
- c. The passage does not teach that Christ willed this, but could not; He *did* gather Jerusalem's children (John 11:52), but Jerusalem (the leaders) sought to prevent it. That was their terrible sin.

2. II Peter 3:9: "... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

- a. This phrase has been taken out of context. Who are the "all" and who are the "any" of the text?
- b. The all are the "all" of "us" (the "us" toward whom God is longsuffering, see v. 15), and thus the text means that Christ has not yet returned (the subject of the context!) because of His longsuffering toward the elect, not willing that any of us should perish but that all of us should come to repentance.
- c. If a teacher says to his class, "Now study hard, because I want everybody to pass and nobody to fail," he has in mind only his immediate audience, only a certain class of people. Plus, if Peter meant what the Arminians and WMO-

people believe, then Christ could never come, because many perish every day!

3. I Timothy 2:4: “[God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”.

- a. Again, the context proves that “all men” must mean all kinds of men (see v. 1, 6).
- b. The Bible is full of examples where “all men” does not mean “everybody head for head.”

4. Ezekiel’s trilogy of “no pleasure” texts (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11).

- a. The whole book of Ezekiel militates against the notion that God sincerely desires the salvation of all.
- b. The meaning is 1) God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked *who turn*; 2) God gives them life.

I. FAITH IS KNOWLEDGE.

A. Faith receives as truth all things which God has revealed in His Word, the Bible (L.D. 7, Q&A 21).

1. Faith, therefore, has content.

- a. Faith is not ignorance. Rome teaches “implicit” faith: common people know nothing, but believe that whatever the church says is true. This is common: people rely on the minister to know “for” them. Some even say that the more ignorant you are, the greater your faith. Mysticism is not faith, but the idea that you can believe in a God you do not know; you simply have a religious experience (read Rom. 10:17).
- b. Faith is not nonsense. R. Dawkins: “Faith is belief without evidence, or even belief against evidence.” Faith is not fantasy, wishful thinking, leap in the dark, belief in goblins, fairies, etc. (not gullibility).

2. The object of faith is the Word of God, in particular the central revelation of the Word, Jesus Christ.

- a. Faith believes the Word of God on the authority of God Himself. Faith says, “God has spoken; God has promised; that is enough for me; I believe.”
- b. Faith can be distinguished from hope and presumption. Hope is confidence in something promised for the future; and presumption is belief in something not promised by God, which one has no warrant to believe.
- c. Faith believes everything revealed in the Word of God – the history, the miracles, the doctrines, the commands, the promises. And faith rejects everything contrary to the Word of God.
- d. Therefore, faith is informed by, strengthened by, and increased by the Word of God, especially the preaching. Those who do not spend time reading the Bible and hearing it preached will have, at best, weak faith.

3. Faith is to be distinguished from “sight.” “We walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor. 5:7, Heb. 11:1).

- a. That which faith believes cannot be experienced by the senses: it cannot be seen with physical eyes.
- b. We have not seen God, Christ, heaven, angels, hell, or devils, but we believe that they are (Heb. 11:6).
- c. We have not seen the historical acts recorded in the Bible, and no man can verify them scientifically: the act of creation, the fall, the flood, the parting of the Red Sea, the walking on water, the Resurrection, etc. (Heb. 11:3, John 20:29).
- d. But we do not need to see them with the eyes; we “see” them by faith. Faith is the substance of these things; faith makes them real to us; faith causes us to see them so that we embrace them and rejoice in them (Heb. 11:13).

B. The knowledge which faith has of the Word of God is a certain, sure, utterly convincing knowledge.

1. Faith itself is its own evidence (Heb. 11:1, “the evidence of things not seen”).

- a. Faith is not convinced by extra evidence. If scientists found Noah’s ark, this would not convince faith. Faith believes on the basis of the Bible, and faith, informed by the Bible, needs no further evidence.
- b. No “evidence” from unbelieving man could convince faith that God’s Word is wrong. The object of faith cannot be disproved by empirical evidence. Faith says, “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4).

- c. Because faith itself is evidence, no believer can convince an unbeliever to believe. No evidence apart from Scripture itself could convince the unbeliever: not science, not experience (Luke 16:31). Unbelievers are unbelievers not for lack of evidence (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20-21; I Cor. 2:14), but because *they are blind*.
- 2. **Faith is a “certain knowledge,” that is, not only a particular kind of knowledge, but knowledge of which the believer is convinced.**
 - a. Faith is not doubt. Doubt is always sin and contrary to faith (Matt. 14:31; Heb. 10:23; James 1:6). It is sin, not praiseworthy, not enlightenment, not spiritual maturity, to doubt or disbelieve anything which God has revealed in His Word. To say, "I am *not sure* if God created as He says in Genesis 1," is sin (Heb. 11:3).
 - b. But faith is more than mere intellectual assent to facts about God. It is that, but it is more than that.
 - c. True faith needs to be distinguished from three false “faiths”: historical faith (James 2:19), temporary faith (Matt. 13:20-21), and miraculous faith (Matt. 7:22).
- 3. **True faith is the knowledge of love, the knowledge of personal relationship, the knowledge of the covenant.**
 - a. It has been well put, “Faith is the knowledge of a personal interview, not a resume (Curriculum Vitae);” “Faith receives the Bible not as an interesting textbook about God, but as a personal love letter from God.”
 - b. Faith is the personal, heartfelt knowledge of friendship. One who has faith takes the Bible and seeks to know as much about the God he loves as he can. Faith is a spiritual knowledge of the heart (II Tim. 1:12).

II. FAITH IS CONFIDENCE

A. Faith *trusts* in the God revealed in the Bible through His Son Jesus Christ.

- 1. **Thus we often speak of faith as trusting, leaning upon, or relying on God.**
 - a. You know that a chair is good for sitting, but only when you sit in it, lean your weight on it, and trust that it will hold you up, do you exercise “faith” in the chair. Of course that analogy is very limited.
 - b. Faith in the Bible is seen in believers looking to God for all things; confidently expecting salvation from God; believing that God will provide whatever we need.
 - c. Faith also clings to God when trials come, and believes that all things do work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. That is not just a nice verse, but something faith believes (Job 13:15, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”).
- 2. **We trust in God because we know Him: and trust increases as knowledge increases.**
 - a. Why does a child trust his father and yet behave differently around strangers? Because he *knows* his father: he knows his character, and above all he knows his love.
 - b. This trust leads to confidence in the presence of God. The wicked stand afar off and are afraid to approach God. The believer with faith is confident, prays confidently, knows the forgiveness of sins, and is confident that his prayers are heard. Why? Because God has promised in His Word, and the believer has faith (Rom. 8:28, 31-33; Heb. 4:16, 10:22-23).

- c. If you have little or no confidence in God, it is because you have weak faith, and probably because you do not know God as you should: you do not know His great attributes, His works, etc. The solution: take time to learn who God is, study the Scriptures, listen to good preaching.
- 3. This trust in God is exclusive.**
- a. The one who has faith trusts in God *alone* as Father, and in Christ *alone* as Savior and Lord.
 - b. Faith never says, “I believe in Jehovah God *and* Baal; I believe in Jesus Christ *and* Mohammed; I believe in the Creator *and* in Darwin’s evolution; I believe in grace *and* works; I trust God *and* man.”
 - c. And insofar as a person does say those things, he or she is guilty of unbelief and idolatry.
- B. Faith is also personal assurance of salvation. All believers are assured of salvation.**
- 1. Assurance of salvation means we believe that salvation is not only for others, but also for us personally.**
- a. The Heidelberg Catechism expresses it beautifully in L.D. 7, Q&A 21.
 - b. Faith means the confident assurance that I am saved *now* from all my sins only by the work of Jesus Christ. (Any other ground of salvation is presumption, not faith.)
 - c. But faith also means that I am sure that I shall be saved in the future and in the day of Jesus Christ. (Faith does not believe that the believer will fall away and perish; Rom. 8:38-39; Phil. 1:6; II Tim. 1:12; Heb. 6:9; I John 5:13).
- 2. Does this mean that a believer never has doubts, and that all who lack assurance are unbelievers?**
- a. No, because the believer has a sinful nature which fights against faith. The exercise of faith can sometimes be a struggle because of temptation, the lusts of the flesh, or the believer’s own negligence. These are factors in a weak faith (Canons V, Articles 4, 11).
 - b. Assurance of salvation does not come through special revelation, through good works, or through prayer, but through faith in God’s Word.
 - c. The Holy Spirit is pleased to work faith, to strengthen it, and to give assurance through the hearing of the true gospel. Thus the very worst thing to do if you are suffering from doubt or struggling with assurance is to neglect the reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word, or to attend a false church.
- 3. Next time we shall look at *where* this faith comes from, and how it is truly one of the steps in salvation.**

I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH

A. Faith is not natural to man, but is worked in the elect sinner by the Holy Spirit.

1. Some have imagined that faith is natural to man because man has “faith” in all kinds of everyday things. But that is not faith: that is more a weighing up of probabilities.

- a. People get on an airplane not because they trust the airline or the pilot, but because statistically the likelihood of something awful happening is low. That is not the same as faith in God: faith *knows* that God is trustworthy and reliable and will not disappoint.
- b. An unbeliever *cannot* believe, because he does not have the faculty of faith: he can no more work up in himself the ability to believe than a blind man can work up in himself the ability to see.
- c. Some have appealed to Romans 12:3, “according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” They teach that God has given every person a “measure of faith” which he can improve and use by the exercise of free will. Paul is talking about every member *in the church!* (II Thess. 3:2).

2. Faith is not man’s “part” in or “contribution” to salvation.

- a. That is how Arminianism portrays it. Many gospel tracts present God as having done everything to prepare salvation. The sinner must exercise free will to believe in Jesus and make Him his Savior.
- b. This is what Arminianism means when it says that salvation is a gift: something God would like to give sinners, but they must accept it.
- c. But that is not the meaning of “gift.” A gift is something *given*, that is, it is bestowed upon someone, so that he really does have it (see Canons III/IV, Article 14).

3. Faith is not a condition which man must perform in order to receive or even merit salvation.

- a. A condition is something without which another thing cannot take place. The idea is a *prerequisite, something required beforehand*. Often a condition is introduced by “if.” e.g., “A prerequisite to entering the USA is a travel visa. If you do not have a visa, you will not be allowed into the USA.”
- b. Faith is not a condition or prerequisite for salvation. Faith *is* necessary for salvation, but that is not the same thing as a “condition.”
- c. Sometimes, in the past, theologians have said that faith is a conditional, meaning “the necessary means.” It is best, however, to avoid the word altogether (see Canons I, Rejection of Errors, 3; II, Rejection of Errors, 3; V, Rejection of Errors, 1).
- d. It is incorrect to say that faith is the condition of salvation, but God fulfills that condition. Faith cannot be a *condition* of salvation, because faith *is* (a part of) salvation. In saving us, He *gives* us faith.

B. Against all notions of contribution, part, or condition, the Bible teaches that faith is *the gift of God*.

1. Faith is the gift of God in that God gives it, bestows it, and works it in the hearts of God’s people.

- a. Ephesians 2:8, “By grace are ye saved through faith; *and that not of yourselves*: it is the gift of God.” You did not believe by yourselves, out of yourselves; nor did you believe by some power of yourselves in cooperation with the work of God. Faith is not of you; it is the gift of God.

- b. The objection of the Arminian is: but the word “that” refers not to faith, but to grace or to salvation. Grace and salvation are not of yourselves, but faith is! Not so: salvation, grace, and faith (the whole package) is not of yourselves. It is not “of works” (any activity of man) but “of God.”
 - c. Philippians 1:29 is, if anything, clearer: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” The very act of believing on Christ has been given to you. You cannot make that a conditional gift: God will give it to you if you accept it. Then the text would teach absurdity: “It has been given to you to believe if you believe.” I will give you sight, if you see! Nonsense!
- 2. The source of this gift of God, faith, is in election and in the cross.**
- a. Why is it that only some, and not all, believe? Why is it that God only gives this gift of faith to some? The answer is election: Acts 13:48; Titus 1:1. Why would Paul thank God for the faith of believers unless God had given them that faith (e.g. Col. 1:3-4; I Thess. 2:13)?
 - b. That faith is a gift of God purchased for us on the cross. Christ died so that we might have that faith. (Phil. 1:29, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ.” “In the behalf of Christ” means the cross!)
 - c. That, too, is what the Canons of Dordt teach (II, Article 8, “that He should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death”).

II. THE BOND OF FAITH (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 7; Belgic Confession Art. 22)

A. Faith is that bond which unites us to Jesus Christ so that we live out of Him.

- 1. What Christ did for us (objectively) on Calvary must become ours by our being united to Him.**
- a. We are *not* united to Jesus Christ by nature. By nature we are dead and united to Adam. We are both federally related to Adam (Adam represented us legally) and organically related to Adam (Adam’s natural life flows to us. We are born “flesh” and must become spiritual).
 - b. We cannot unite ourselves to Jesus Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit Himself.
 - c. The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus Christ by creating a spiritual bond between Christ and us.
- 2. We call that spiritual bond “faith.” By “faith” we mean both an activity and a bond.**
- a. But the relationship between these two aspects of faith is important to understand. Arminianism has little interest in the bond, because Arminianism teaches that man must choose to believe; then God will save him.
 - b. But the Bible teaches that first we are implanted into Christ or joined to Christ in a vital, living bond, and then out of that bond we believe. The activity depends on the bond.
 - c. Before there are visible signs of life, there is life itself. e.g. Before you see the first green shoots of a sapling, there are roots growing under the ground.
 - d. The bond of faith could be likened to the power of sight. A person who is not blind has the power of sight, whether he exercises that power or not. He might close his eyes, but he still has the power of sight. But a blind man can open or close his eyes all day, and he still won’t see.

B. The Bible speaks about the believer living *out of* Christ, and Christ living *in* the believer.

1. The Bible uses two main figures to explain this.

- a. There is the union of a branch to the main stem (trunk, vine, etc.) of the plant. The sap flows to each branch, and the branch depends entirely on the main vine for life. But the branch in question is not natural to the vine, but has been grafted by the farmer (John 15:5; Rom. 11:17). The graft (that which joins the branch to the vine) is faith.
- b. There is the union of the members of the body to the head of the body. The blood supply flows to all the members who are attached to the body. Again the spiritual, living union is faith (Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18).
- c. Proof that the bond is faith is found in the expression “by faith” (literally “out of [Greek: *ek*] faith”) found throughout the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 5:1) or the expression “believe in (literally “into [Greek: *eis*]) Christ.”
- d. You will notice that the figures which illustrate the bond of faith are living, not lifeless. It is better to avoid lifeless examples: faith is not a lifeless pipe bringing water or a lifeless socket connecting one to the power supply.

2. Out of this vital bond of faith – a living, intimate, spiritual, mysterious bond – the believer lives, and Christ lives in the believer. You can call this the “mystical union.”

- a. Some theologians have even placed the mystical union first in the *Ordo Salutis*. Faith comes third in the *Ordo Salutis* (regeneration, calling, faith) *only in terms of the activity of faith*.
- b. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love...” (Eph. 3:17).
- c. Therefore, since faith is a vital connection to Jesus, we can grow in Him and into Him (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:6-7, 19). *Only if faith is a vital bond is all possibility of faith as a work or a condition ruled out, because no one can join himself or herself to Jesus Christ as a condition of salvation.*

I. THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION (4th in the *Ordo Salutis* [regeneration, calling, faith, justification])

A. Justification is a legal declaration of righteousness.

1. First, justification is legal.

- a. When God justifies, God acts in His capacity as Judge (“It is God that justifieth” [Rom. 8:33]; “That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” [Rom. 3:26]).
- b. The word “legal” means that which pertains to law. Synonyms are judicial or forensic.

2. Second, justification is a declaration.

- a. By “declaration” we mean a statement, judgment, pronouncement, verdict.
- b. The declaration by which we are justified is one single, decisive act of God; it does not admit of any appeal; it cannot be changed, increased, decreased, or lost. A person is either justified or he is not, and if God justifies, no man can condemn (“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” [Rom. 8:33-34a]).

3. Third, justification is a declaration of righteousness.

- a. Righteous means straight, level, or even. Righteous is the opposite of crooked, twisted, or perverse.
- b. Righteous means to be straight with respect to a standard. God is the perfect standard, and that perfect standard is revealed in God’s law.
- c. In justification God makes a positive declaration that we whom He justifies are in harmony with the perfect standard of God’s law, that we are righteous before God.
- d. This means, first, that no sin is laid to our charge (Rom. 8:33a). That aspect of justification is the forgiveness of sins. Second, all the positive requirements of God’s law are perfectly met. God looks upon us as those who “never had had nor committed any sin: yea, as if [we] had fully accomplished all that obedience” (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 23, Q&A 60). “...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21).

4. Proof that justification is a legal concept

- a. The verb “justify” always has the legal, judicial, forensic meaning in Scripture. It is used in connection with judges, legal transactions, courts, judgments, and the law.
- b. The verb “justify” is the opposite of condemn: Deuteronomy 25:1; Proverbs 17:15; Job 40:8; Romans 8:33-34. To condemn is to declare judicially and legally that a person is guilty and therefore not in harmony with the law, and to punish accordingly. Therefore to justify is to declare judicially and legally that a person is innocent as to his status before the law.
- c. The verb “justify” is used in passages where it cannot mean anything else than to declare or pronounce to be righteous – Luke 7:29; I Timothy 3:16.

B. Since justification is God’s legal, judicial, forensic declaration that we are righteous and in harmony with the law before Him, it is *not* an ethical, moral work in us which makes us inwardly good.

1. Roman Catholicism sees justification as a moral inner work in the sinner, making him good.

- a. We have seen that justification is a legal, judicial, federal act; Rome teaches that justification is an ethical, moral work. The difference is between God as

a judge and God as a surgeon. One delivers a verdict; the other takes a scalpel to cut out the cancerous growth, etc.

- b. Rome teaches that to justify is to make righteous (not simply to declare righteous); Rome teaches that justification is a moral, cleansing work which brings about a change in the person justified and an improvement in his character (not simply a declaration the person's legal status).
- c. Here are a few quotes from Rome's *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (publ. 1994): "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man" (par. 1989); "Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin" (par. 1990); "With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts" (par. 1991); Justification "conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy" (par. 1992).

2. The key word in justification for Roman Catholicism is "infuse."

- a. To infuse is to pour, fill, steep, soak, or impart. e.g. Infuse tea bags in hot water to produce tea.
- b. In justification, says Rome, God infuses the soul with grace, or God pours grace into the soul. By "grace" Rome means a spiritual virtue and power which makes the soul pleasing to God and worthy of God's favour. Infusion of grace, therefore, leads to a moral improvement.
- c. Infusion of grace (and therefore justification itself) is a process. No sinner can merit (deserve or earn) that initial grace which is usually received in baptism; but a sinner *can merit* additional grace, and therefore a sinner can merit an increase in justification before God. By the process of becoming holier by performing good works and partaking of the sacraments, a sinner is progressively justified. On the other hand, sin can "kill" grace in the soul, and by sin a person can forfeit and lose the grace of justification. Final justification in the Roman Catholic system depends on the state of one's soul at the point of death. Unjustified souls are damned; and justified souls are further purified in purgatory after death. "No one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life" (par. 2010)
- d. So, justification in Rome is God's work of making a soul holy, and then God declares on Judgment Day that those whom He has made holy by infusing virtue (grace) into them, which they have merited, are holy (after a process of purification in purgatory). Romish justification can be increased, decreased, or lost at any time; and nobody can know whether he is righteous enough to merit heaven. *We will see that the key word in Reformed justification is "impute."*

II. THE BASIS OF JUSTIFICATION

A. Rome teaches God justifies those *whom He has made holy*; the Bible teaches that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*").

1. This means that God makes a legal declaration that the ungodly (but believing) sinner is:

- a. Innocent of all sin so that no one (not the devil, the world, etc.) can lay anything to his charge.
 - b. As far as his legal standing before God is concerned, in perfect harmony with the law of God.
 - c. So far from guilty and worthy of condemnation and punishment that he is worthy of eternal life.
- 2. And remember, God says this of one who has broken all of God's commandments, kept none of them, and is still inclined to all wickedness according to the sinful flesh.**
- a. Some would accuse the Reformed faith of teaching that God is guilty of a terrible injustice. *He justifies the wicked; He clears the guilty* (Prov. 17:15). Is that not a "legal fiction"?
 - b. That would be, they say, for God to cover up a dirty man with a white cloak and pretend that he is clean. Does God "pretend" that the justified, believing sinner is righteous when he is not?
- B. Justification is not a "legal fiction" because God has a righteous ground (or basis) for His declaration.**
- 1. God declares us legally righteous before Him because we possess God's own righteousness.**
- a. That righteousness which we possess is not a partial, imperfect righteousness, but a perfect righteousness which answers all of the claims of the law of God so that, first, all sins against the law are paid for, and, second, all positive requirements of the law are met.
 - b. That righteousness is not performed by us or worked by us, but it is the righteousness of another. That's why Luther called it an "alien righteousness."
 - c. That righteousness consists of the perfect work of Jesus Christ for us in living for us and dying for us. The Bible calls everything Christ did for us His "obedience." Romans 5:19, "As by one man's disobedience many were made (constituted, placed in the category of) sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted, placed in the category of) righteous."
- 2. That righteousness which is Christ's, and therefore God's, is His active and passive obedience.**
- a. Christ's active obedience consists in His perfect work of keeping the law and thus answering the positive demands of the law for us.
 - b. Christ's passive obedience consists in His work of bearing the punishment we deserved.
 - c. These two aspects of Christ's obedience become ours in justification (Rom. 3:22; Phil. 3:9).
 - d. Next time: how do we come into possession of this perfect righteousness? Imputation!

I. THE IMPUTATION OF CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. The question we need to ask is *how* do we come to possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ?

1. Let me begin with an illustration.

- a. Before the judge stands Mr. A. He is a criminal, a lawbreaker, a man who has never obeyed any laws, but has broken every law and now stands before the judge to be sentenced. The judge, to be just, *must* declare Mr. A guilty and punish him accordingly.
- b. In the next courtroom stands Mr. B. He is a law-abiding citizen. He has never committed any crime, has never had so much as a parking ticket; and he has performed many virtuous deeds, all recognized by the judge. He has been wrongly arrested. The judge must declare Mr. B innocent and in perfect harmony with the law.
- c. But in justification God takes the sinner’s record of crime and replaces it with the record of innocence and virtue performed by another. *Mr. B’s record becomes Mr. A’s record.*

2. The act of God making the record of one the record of another is *imputation*.

- a. To impute is to place on the account or record of another; to count as legally belonging to someone; to reckon to the account of someone (Philemon 18).
- b. For justification to take place there must be a double imputation: our sins to Christ, His righteousness (obedience) to us.
- c. God imputed our sins to Christ. That is what the cross was all about. II Corinthians 5:21, “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ...” God “made” Christ sin, not by infusing sin into Him and making Him morally impure, depraved, and defiled, but by imputing the guilt of our sins to Him so that Christ became legally guilty of our sins (while Christ remained personally holy).
- d. God could only do that because Christ, the Second Person, willingly undertook to do that: Christ willingly assumed legal responsibility for our sins, willingly assumed our obligations, and willingly took our punishment. *Based on that, God imputes to us everything that Christ did for us.*

B. Notice on what righteous basis God justifies (“that he might be *just*, and the justifier” [Rom. 3:26]).

1. Negatively

- a. God does not justify us on the basis of our personal moral character. We are sinners!
- b. God does not justify us on the basis of imperfect obedience to the law. He demands perfection.
- c. God does not justify us on the basis of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, because that is never perfect or complete in this life.
- d. God does not first infuse goodness into us to make us inwardly holy and then on *that* basis justify us. God justifies the ungodly, not those He has made godly.

2. Positively

- a. God justifies us on the basis of what Christ has done living *for* us (active obedience) and dying *for* us (passive obedience). That is “the righteousness of God which is...unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22).

- b. In justification we remain personally sinful, but we are declared legally righteous, in harmony with the law, because everything Christ did is legally ours by imputation.
- c. Everything Christ did is reckoned to be ours, laid to our account (II Cor. 5:21b).

II. THE MEANS (OR INSTRUMENT) OF OUR JUSTIFICATION

A. Faith alone is the means or instrument, but not the ground or basis, of justification.

1. Faith is *not the ground* of justification.

- a. God can only justify us on the basis of perfect righteousness. Our faith, or even our faithfulness, is not perfect righteousness. Arminianism taught that God accepted “faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, *as* the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace” (Canons II, Rejection of Errors, 4).
- b. Arminianism argues that God has lowered His standards and accepts imperfection in the place of perfection. He does this, they say, to accommodate Himself to our inability, so that He accepts faith or a life lived in faith as righteousness. But God will not and cannot do that. He is just.
- c. Besides, our faith is a very poor foundation on which to base salvation and justification. Our faith is weak, imperfect, changeable, unstable, and faltering.
- d. Thus the Bible teaches that we are justified “*through*,” “*by*” or “*out of*” faith, but never “*on account of*” or “*because of*” faith.

2. Faith alone is the instrument of justification.

- a. By faith alone the righteousness of Christ becomes legally ours and is imputed or reckoned to us, so that God blesses us on account of that righteousness.
- b. By faith alone we lay hold of the righteousness of Christ, and it becomes ours in our experience.
- c. By faith alone we know ourselves to be justified; we know peace and joy which come from justification (Rom. 5:1; Luke 18:14). Remember that faith is God’s gift, not our contribution.

3. Arminianism appeals to Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3, 5; and Galatians 3:6 (which quote Gen. 15:6).

- a. These texts say that “his faith is counted for righteousness.” Does that mean his faith is counted instead of perfect righteousness, or his faith is counted as if it were righteousness?
- b. This does not mean that Abraham’s act of faith was Abraham’s righteousness before God. Abraham’s faith was weak and faltering, as is our faith.
- c. Throughout Romans 4 Paul emphasizes the non-imputation of sin (v. 8) and the imputation of righteousness (not faith) (vv. 6, 11).
- d. Faith here stands for the *object* of faith – Jesus Christ and His righteousness which He would perform and which Abraham believed. God reckoned to Abraham not his faith (as if that were something meritorious), but that which Abraham embraced by faith (Jesus Christ and His righteousness). See Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 23, Q&A 61; Belgic Confession Art. 22 (“However to speak more clearly ...”).

B. Since faith alone is the instrument of justification, all works of man are excluded (Rom. 3:28).

1. **Justification excludes all our works and is only by the works of another, namely Jesus Christ.**
 - a. Justification is not by any work of man, nor by the deeds of obedience to the law.
 - b. Justification is not even by any work of man performed by the power of grace, worked in man by the Holy Spirit, or worked by the power of faith.
 - c. No work of man – no matter how small – contributes to the justification of a sinner before God.
2. **Against this, all proponents of justification by faith *and works* appeal to James 2 (esp. v. 24).**
 - a. Those who appeal to James assume that James must be used to interpret Paul, and not vice versa. In fact, Paul must interpret James. Or, to be precise, infallible Scripture must interpret itself according to proper interpretative rules.
 - b. Paul is the theologian, the penman of the Holy Spirit, who systematically deals with the subject of justification in the epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, and elsewhere. James mentions justification once, in an entirely different context. Romans 3:20 (“by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified”); Romans 3:24 (“being justified freely by his grace”); Romans 3:28 (“a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”).
 - c. James is addressing the subject not of a legal declaration of God, but of the demonstration of justification to one another in the church. He addresses those who “say” they have faith, but who “show” no evidence (James 2:14, 17, 18).
 - d. James concludes that Abraham and Rahab demonstrated their faith by their works, and that a “faith” which produces no works as evidence is dead, non-saving faith (vv. 14, 17).
3. **Thus we can see the relationship between faith and works.**
 - a. In Paul’s writings, justification is before God; in James, it is before other men (who cannot see faith).
 - b. Justification is God’s gracious act, based only on the righteousness of Christ, declaring a sinner to be righteous, received by the instrument of faith alone. But that faith always produces the fruit of good works. The reformers often said: *We are justified by faith alone, but that faith is never alone!* (see Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 24, Q&A 64). That is sanctification, the next step in the *Ordo Salutis*.

I. THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION (5th in the *Ordo Salutis* [regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification]). *The final benefit purchased by Christ, applied by the Holy Spirit to elect sinners.*

A. Sanctification is God’s work of making elect, justified sinners *holy*.

1. First, sanctification is the work of *God*, especially of the Holy Spirit (He is the *Holy Spirit*).

- a. Remember that every step in the *Ordo Salutis* is the work of God. Salvation, as we understand it in Soteriology, is the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the benefits of salvation purchased by Jesus on the cross. Christ purchased holiness for us on the cross; the Spirit works that holiness in us (I Thess. 5:23; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; I Thess. 4:3; II Thess. 2:13; Tit. 2:14).
- b. Sanctification is *not the work of man*. We can no more sanctify ourselves than we can justify ourselves, regenerate ourselves, call ourselves, or work faith in ourselves (Job 14:4).
- c. Sanctification is not even a cooperative work between God and the sinner. It is true that the sinner is active in sanctification, but his activity is only a fruit of God’s activity (Phil. 2:12-13).

2. Second, sanctification is the *work* of God of making elect, justified sinners *holy*.

- a. God does not say, “Let him be sanctified,” and immediately the sinner is perfectly, completely sanctified, delivered from every stain of sin. Sanctification takes a lifetime.
- b. The work of sanctification is progressive: the sanctified sinner is making progress in holiness, but even the holiest Christian falls far short of the ideal (“small beginning of this obedience” [Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 44, Q&A 114]).

3. Third, sanctification is the work of God of making elect, justified sinners *holy*.

- a. Holiness is a separation from the defilement, uncleanness, and filth of sin; and holiness is a positive consecration, dedication, or devotion to God in love.
- b. Sanctification is not merely some kind of outward setting someone apart for God: various things and people were “sanctified” in that sense in the Bible (especially in the Old Testament); but sanctification is a making holy with an *inward, in-worked, spiritual holiness*.
- c. Sanctification is the spiritual cleansing of a justified sinner, freeing him from sin’s defilement, pollution, and enslavement so that sin is dethroned and Christ is enthroned.
- d. But sanctification is not the eradication of sin, or the complete removal of sin. That awaits final glorification of the soul upon physical death and of the body at the second coming of Christ.

B. Sanctification needs to be carefully contrasted with justification.

1. Sanctification is different in nature from justification.

- a. Justification is a judicial (legal) act; sanctification is an ethical, moral work.
- b. Justification is external (outside of us), affecting our legal state (status) before God; sanctification is internal (inside of us), affecting our moral condition.

- c. Justification is a declaration about our state; sanctification is a cleansing work changing our condition.
 - d. Justification delivers us from the guilt of sin; sanctification delivers us from the pollution and power (dominion, slavery, bondage, etc.) of sin.
 - e. Justification is complete and cannot increase or decrease (a completed, once-for-all act [declaration] of God); sanctification is progressive, a process (an ongoing work of God).
- 2. Justification and sanctification are related in a very specific way.**
- a. Justification is always first; sanctification always follows justification (John 8:11; Tit. 3:8; II Cor. 7:1; I John 3:3, etc.).
 - b. Justification is the legal basis or ground for sanctification. No unjustified person has the right to be sanctified, to be delivered from the bondage and pollution of sin; sanctification can never be the legal basis or ground for justification (because sanctification in this life is never complete).
 - c. Sanctification is the inevitable fruit of justification.

II. WHAT DOES SANCTIFICATION DO?

A. Sanctification delivers from the power (bondage, dominion, slavery) and pollution (defilement) of sin.

- 1. God sanctifies us by dethroning sin which creates a spiritual struggle in our hearts.**
- a. This spiritual struggle is between the flesh and the Spirit; between the old man and the new man; between the sinful nature and the new nature in Christ (implanted in regeneration).
 - b. Sanctification is not the eradication (removal or destruction) or even the improvement of the old man (the flesh), but only its dethronement so that sin no longer rules in us (Rom. 6:12-14).
 - c. The old man of sin remains totally depraved (Rom. 7:18); but now the old man of sin has a rival, the new man, the life of Jesus Christ, the Spirit.
 - d. These two spiritual principles – the old man, the flesh, and the new man, the Spirit – cannot coexist at peace, but are engaged in a bitter, deadly struggle (Gal. 5:17).
- 2. The believer becomes active in this struggle: he is called to fight against that sin which remains in his life. This is called “mortification of the flesh.”**
- a. To mortify is to kill, to put to death. The old man of sin has been crucified already, but he is still “alive and kicking.” We kill him by “putting him off” (Eph. 4:22), by “denying” him his lusts (Tit. 2:12), by hating our sins (Col. 3:5, 8).
 - b. Fundamentally, mortification of the flesh is a heartfelt sorrow over sin and a turning from sin, but it is called mortification *because it is painful*. It is the putting to death of *our* old man; it is the denial of our own lusts. And we cannot do it except by the power of God.
 - c. We increase in sanctification by becoming more aware of our own depravity, by an increased sorrow over sin and a more intense desire to be free from sin; this is a painful, humbling knowledge (II Cor. 7:10). That knowledge drives us more and more to seek cleansing from Christ.
- 3. But sanctification is not all negative – it also includes the quickening of the new man, that is, a making alive, a reviving of the spiritual principle of the life of Jesus Christ.**

- a. Instead of killing the new man, we put him on (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10, 14); we walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16); we work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12).
 - b. Quickening the new man is to love God increasingly, to trust Christ increasingly, to rejoice in God's grace increasingly, to increase in one's desire to please God, to be increasingly thankful to God, increasingly to seek God. Notice the "increasingly," the "more and more" aspect (progressive).
 - c. Thus in sanctification God not only increasingly breaks our love of sin, but He increasingly devotes us to Himself.
- B. Sanctification produces in the child of God a life of good works. Remember, good works are not part of justification (because, although they are genuinely good, they are not perfect and cannot stand the scrutiny of God the Judge), but they are the fruit of justification and part of the life of sanctification.**
- 1. Good works are threefold, according to the Scripture.**
 - a. Good works are works performed in obedience to God's commandments. They are not works invented by man; nor can a sincere work of man excuse the breaking of God's law.
 - b. Good works are works performed out of the principle of faith. Therefore no unbeliever can perform a genuinely good work (Rom. 14:23).
 - c. Good works are works performed to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31).
 - 2. The means of sanctification are given us in the Word of God.**
 - a. The fundamental means of sanctification is the Word of God itself (John 17:17; Eph. 5:26). If you desire sanctification, be in the Word and especially hear the preaching of the Word.
 - b. The other means of sanctification is prayer. Sanctification is God's will for us, and when we pray, "Father, sanctify me. Cause me to hate and to be sorry for my sins. Work a true love for Thee in my heart," God will surely answer such a prayer (John 17:17).
 - 3. Next time, we will look at some errors concerning sanctification; and then at perseverance and at glorification, which are the perfection of sanctification.**

I. ANTINOMIANISM

A. Antinomianism denies sanctification by *making holiness unnecessary* for Christians (Heb. 12:14).

1. Antinomianism is the denial of the place of the law in the Christian life (it means “anti-law”).

- a. Antinomianism says that we are dead to the law, not under law, etc.
- b. But Antinomianism fails to appreciate that *we are not free from the law in every sense*.
- c. Antinomianism says that we are either free to break the law, or that we are free to live unto God without the law guiding us.

2. Antinomianism comes in different forms.

- a. Some Antinomians teach that the Christian is still totally depraved; the Christian cannot do any good works; and we must not expect good works from the Christian or preach good works. Such Antinomians do not like to hear the preaching of the law or moral exhortations.
- b. Other Antinomians teach that there are different kinds of Christians: spiritual Christians who live according to the Spirit and are holy, and carnal Christians who live according to the flesh and who are unholy in life; but they are both Christians. *This is easy believism or carnal Christianity*.
- c. These kinds of Antinomians are a plague on Christianity: they teach that a person can have Jesus as Saviour without having Jesus as Lord; that a person who makes a commitment to Jesus will go to heaven no matter how he lives thereafter (I John 2:4).

B. Antinomianism is a heresy which the Reformed faith has always opposed.

1. The Bible teaches that the law, summarized by the Ten Commandments, is the guide for our life.

- a. It is true that the law is no longer a condemning judge, nor is the law a cruel taskmaster to enslave us. In that sense we “are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).
- b. But we *are* under the law as a guide to regulate our thankfulness. We need the law to determine *how* we are to show our gratitude to God (John 14:15).
- c. We should remember the threefold role of the law: it reveals our sin and misery to humble us (Rom. 3:20); it leads us to Christ to be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24); it guides us in our gratitude (Rom. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:25-28, 6:1-3; etc.).

2. The Bible sharply condemns the view that Christians may sin because they are saved by grace.

- a. Such a view is a denial of God’s grace, which never promotes sin, but delivers us from sin and promotes godliness (Rom. 3:8, 6:1; Gal. 5:13; Tit. 2:12; Jude 4; Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 32, Q&A 87).
- b. The Bible insists that God’s work of grace will always produce fruit, and that those without fruit, who lead wicked and ungrateful lives, are not saved at all. There are not two kinds of Christians; there are carnal (Rom. 8:7-8, 13; I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21, 6:7-8; etc.) and there are the saints.
- c. The believers Paul calls “carnal” in I Corinthians 3:1-4 are not living in gross wickedness; they are immature, and too influenced by the sinful nature. But they are “saints,” “brethren,” “babes in Christ.” Paul calls them to live in godliness, and he commands them in chapter 5 to expel a sinner.

II. PERFECTIONISM

A. Perfectionism is the teaching that entire sanctification can be and is reached in this life.

1. The most famous advocate of “Christian perfection” was John Wesley.

- a. John Wesley’s teachings live on in Methodism, the Church of the Nazarene, and some Pentecostal groups (such as the “Holiness” Pentecostals).
- b. Perfectionism teaching appeals to many because it offers a way of salvation which quickly and easily ends the struggles of the believer with sin; it promises a victorious Christian life; and it appeals to the sinner’s pride (he can elevate himself above others).
- c. Perfectionism leads to two-tier Christianity: some in the church are “ordinary Christians” and others are “entirely sanctified.” The practical effect is either despair, hypocrisy, or pride.

2. Perfectionism is difficult to define or describe.

- a. Perfectionism is *not* the teaching that the believer is perfectly without sin in the sense that he has the innocence of Adam or the holiness of angels or of glorified saints. Writes Wesley, “By perfection ... I do not contend for the term sinless, though I do not object to it.”
- b. Wesley defined sin as a “voluntary transgression of a known law.” Wesley denied that sin is the corruption of the nature. Christians can live for days, weeks, years in such a “sinless” state.
- c. This “entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement [devotion] to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect” (Nazarene Article of Faith, 10).

B. Perfectionism is a heresy.

1. The texts to which the perfectionist appeal do not teach this error.

- a. The Bible speaks of “perfect” believers (Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1; Ps. 37:37; I Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15; James 3:2), but the word perfect means mature or one who is godly in every part of his life (complete). See also Philippians. 3:12.
- b. The Bible calls us to be perfect, but this does not mean that we can be perfect (Matt. 5:48; Heb. 6:1; II Cor. 7:1; I Thess. 5:23). I Thessalonians 5:23 teaches that we *will be* perfect at Christ’s coming.
- c. I John 3:9. This verse would prove too much for the Perfectionist. It teaches that all Christians are sinless, not just some. The “sinlessness” here means that no regenerated person continues in the daily walk of practicing sin. It does not exclude frequent falls into sin (Canons V, Articles 1-4).

2. Perfectionism is a proud heresy.

- a. How does one become perfect? God gives entire sanctification in a second blessing. But God gives it only to those who fulfill the conditions for it: “waiting on the Lord,” “yielding to the Spirit,” and spiritual preparation are required. Thus the “entirely sanctified” has reason to boast.
- b. The heresy of perfectionism leads to spiritual elitism in the “perfect” and despair in others. Some have no more struggle with sin, they say; the rest struggle on; but spiritual struggle is the normal Christian life (the experience of sorrow over sin and joy in forgiveness) (Romans 7).
- c. I John 1:8-10 is the definitive answer to all forms of Perfectionism.

III. PRESERVATION (PERSEVERANCE)

A. An important aspect of salvation is that the sanctified believer perseveres in sanctification.

1. This is the “P” of TULIP, the last of the “Five Points of Calvinism.”

- a. The “P” stands for perseverance of the saints: the teaching that all believers who have been made saints (holy ones) shall persevere and continue in holiness unto final salvation.
- b. The “P” also stands for preservation of the saints: the teaching that God will preserve His people in the salvation that He has given them so that no true saint can fall away into perdition.
- c. Another term is “eternal security” or “once saved, always saved” (OSAS). These terms are less helpful because they fail to emphasize the truth that God preserves saints who persevere in holiness.

2. The reason for the perseverance of the saints is God’s faithfulness.

- a. Left to ourselves we are liable to fall into any and all sins, and we would certainly perish because our enemies (the devil, world, and flesh) are stronger than we.
- b. But God does not permit saints to perish (John 6:39, 10:28; Phil. 1:6; I Peter 1:5). Canons V, Article 8 gives at least five reasons why a falling away of saints is from God’s perspective *impossible*.
- c. This doctrine never makes us careless, because God preserves us *through means*: through warnings, admonitions, threatenings, chastisements, etc. (Canons V, Article 14).

B. The perseverance of the saints is denied by Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, and the Federal Vision.

1. Such heretics appeal to the passages which seem to teach a falling away of true believers.

- a. Such passages teach a falling away *from a false profession*: Hebrews 6:4-6 (vv. 7-9, I John 2:19).
- b. There are many examples of apostasy in the Bible (Saul, Judas, etc.), but these were never saved.

2. The final stage of sanctification is glorification.

- a. Glorification of the soul takes place at the point of death (Heb. 12:23).
- b. Final glorification of the body takes place at the second coming (I John 3:2; Jude 24-25).
- c. Our glory will be perfect holiness, freedom from all sin, and the enjoyment of God forever.

SUMMARY OF SOTERIOLOGY

(The covenant and *Ordo Salutis* [regeneration, calling, faith, justification, and sanctification])

A. SOTERIOLOGY IS THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION.

1. **Soteriology is the study of the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the benefits purchased by Christ on the cross.**
 - a. Thus, all of salvation is the work of God: God does not make salvation merely possible for man, but God plans salvation, God works salvation, and God applies salvation (God is the Saviour).
 - b. Salvation has two aspects: deliverance from sin, and making partakers of blessedness.
 - c. The essence of salvation is covenant fellowship with God in Jesus Christ.
2. **In salvation God applies the benefits purchased by Christ in a certain, definite, logical order.**
 - a. The order is regeneration, calling, saving faith, justification, and sanctification (Rom. 8:30).
 - b. These benefits can be distinguished from one another.
 - c. All of these benefits together make up the one gift of salvation. When we teach that salvation is a gift, we mean that God *actually bestows it* freely upon His people out of His abundant grace.

B. THE COVENANT OF GRACE

1. **We begin with the covenant of grace because salvation is covenantal.**
 - a. God is the covenant God; man was created as God's covenant friend; Christ's work consists in restoring God's people to covenant fellowship; salvation is the enjoyment of covenant blessings; the church is the covenant community; and the final goal of all things is the perfection of God's covenant with His people.
 - b. The covenant is *friendship with God*. We know this for several reasons: the covenant is a reflection of God's life within Himself; God uses the covenant formula ("I will be your God and ye will be my people"); God describes that relationship in terms of "God-people," "Father-son," "Husband-wife," and "Shepherd-sheep"; God describes that relationship as a dwelling together in love (Eden, walking with God, the land of Canaan, the tabernacle, the temple, the indwelling Spirit, the new Jerusalem, etc.).
 - c. The Head of the covenant is Jesus Christ Himself. *By "Head" we mean both legal representative and source of life*. God makes His covenant with Christ and all those "in Christ" (Gal. 3:16, 29).
2. **We reject the conditional covenant view.**
 - a. This is the view that the covenant is an agreement (with promises, conditions, and threats).
 - b. This is the view that the covenant is bilateral. (We teach a unilateral covenant: God makes His covenant. "I will make MY covenant...") This is the view that the covenant is conditional. (We teach an unconditional covenant. It does not depend on man for its fulfillment or continuance: "I will establish...") This is the view that the covenant is temporary and breakable. (We teach an everlasting covenant, which man cannot break and which God will not break. Gen. 17:13; Ps. 89:34).

- c. We reject the notion of multiple covenants. There is one covenant which unfolds through various administrations in history (creation, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David, new covenant, heaven).
- d. God makes His covenant with believers and their elect seed in the line of generations (Gen. 17:7).

C. REGENERATION

1. Regeneration is the implantation of spiritual life into the heart of the elect sinner (John 3:3, 6-8).

- a. We see this in the various descriptions of regeneration in Scripture: new birth, a spiritual begetting, spiritual resurrection, spiritual heart transplant, circumcision of the heart, new creation.
- b. Regeneration is the first act of God planting life into the heart of a dead sinner.
- c. Regeneration is a once-off, instantaneous work of God, in which the sinner is passive.

2. Regeneration is entirely the work of God.

- a. A dead sinner cannot make himself alive. Regeneration does not happen in response to what man does.
- b. All ideas of man cooperating with grace, preparing himself, or contributing to regeneration must be rejected.
- c. The life of regeneration is the resurrection life of Christ, purchased on the cross, worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit (I Peter 1:3).

D. CALLING

1. Calling is the address of God's voice to the regenerated sinner, bringing him to conscious faith.

- a. The call of God has two aspects: the external call (the preaching) and the internal (Holy Spirit).
- b. The external call is heard by many who do not believe, but the internal call is effectual (Matt. 22:14).
- c. God calls by means of the preaching of the gospel. The preaching is the voice of God.
- d. In the calling, God calls; man does not call himself. But God does not answer the call; He enables man to answer the call.
- e. God only calls the elect savingly to Jesus Christ, and that call to them is gracious (Rom. 8:30; II Tim 1:9).

2. The external call is not a well-meant gospel offer.

- a. The gospel is never an offer, but a call, a command to repent and believe. In the gospel God does not express a sincere desire for the salvation of all hearers (Matt. 22:4, 7)
- b. The gospel is not an expression of God's grace (His favour) on all hearers.
- c. God is serious in the preaching of the gospel: He sets forth His Son, He makes known what is pleasing to Him, and He commands upon pain of damnation that all hearers believe. *This is not an offer.*
- d. God's purpose is not to save all, but to gather the elect and to leave the reprobate without excuse.

E. SAVING FAITH

1. Faith is knowledge and confidence.

- a. Faith has an object: everything which God has revealed in His Word (centrally Jesus Christ).
- b. Faith is not ignorance, nonsense, fantasy, or blind acceptance. Faith believes God's Word on God's authority (Heb. 11:1).

- c. Faith does not need “evidence,” because faith itself is conviction. Unbelief is essentially a spiritual problem: unbelievers are blind; when God opens their eyes they will be able to see.
- d. Therefore faith is opposed to doubt, presumption, and fear. Every believer has the confidence and assurance of faith, although often mixed with weakness and sin. Faith is strengthened by the Word of God.

2. Faith is a saving bond.

- a. Faith is not man’s contribution, a condition man must fulfill. Faith is not man’s “part.” Faith is the gift of God, which God works in our hearts by the Spirit (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29).
- b. Faith unites us to Jesus Christ (the bond), and we live out of that bond (activity) (John 15:5).

F. JUSTIFICATION

1. Justification is God’s legal declaration that His people are righteous.

- a. Justification is a legal pronouncement concerning the legal status of someone. It is therefore not a process, not an incomplete work (Rom. 8:33).
- b. When God declares a sinner righteous, He means the sinner is in conformity or in harmony with the law.
- c. This is the opposite of Roman Catholic justification: they teach that God justifies by making righteous, by working goodness and virtue into the soul and then declaring the person to be righteous.

2. Justification happens by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness by faith.

- a. To impute is to reckon to the account of someone (our sins imputed to Him; His righteousness imputed to us). This is the opposite of infusion.
- b. The righteousness of Christ consists of His active and passive obedience (all the demands of the law).
- c. The basis of justification is not faith, but Christ’s perfect righteousness. Therefore all our works (and even God’s works in us) are excluded from the basis of justification.
- d. The only instrument or means of justification is faith (Rom. 3:28).

G. SANCTIFICATION

1. Sanctification and justification are distinct.

- a. Sanctification is an *ethical* work, justification is *legal*; justification concerns the *legal status*, sanctification concerns the *moral condition*. Justification is *external*, sanctification is *internal*.
- b. Justification is *one complete act*; sanctification is *a process*. That process is never complete in this life.
- c. Justification concerns *guilt*; sanctification concerns *pollution*.
- d. The relationship: justification is before sanctification; the basis of sanctification is justification; sanctification is the fruit of justification.

2. Sanctification is the work of God to make us holy.

- a. Holiness is, negatively, to deliver from the pollution of sin; and positively, to consecrate to God.
- b. Sanctification delivers us from the power of sin, but not from the presence of sin in this life.
- c. Sanctification produces a struggle between the old man (flesh) and the new man (Spirit) and produces a life of good works. God sanctifies everyone whom He justifies.
- d. Sanctification necessarily means preservation (or perseverance in holiness) and leads to final glorification.

I. ECCLESIOLOGY IS THE STUDY OF THE CHURCH (her nature, her attributes, her marks, her government, and her work [the means of grace]).

A. The nature of the church

1. The church is a living organism.

- a. Organic means “living.” We call the church an organism to emphasize the truth that the church is one unified, living whole, possessing one spiritual life. Thus the church is not a collection of unrelated individuals, or a pile of bricks, or even a machine, but a living body, or a tree, or even a temple made up of living stones.
- b. The church’s life is the life of Jesus Christ, which flows from the head to the body and to each individual member. The church lives out of Christ by faith through the Holy Spirit.
- c. Salvation entails elect sinners being called out of darkness and placed into the organism of the church. Outside of the organism of the church no member has life, and there is no salvation.
- d. The church’s organic nature is primary; only secondarily is the church an organization. This is the opposite of Rome’s conception: she sees the church as that organization in union with Peter and the pope.

2. The church is the body of Christ.

- a. The church has one head, Christ, who governs her and is her source of life. There are not two heads, one in heaven, and one on earth (the pope, the king/queen, etc.) (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18).
- b. The church consists of many members. Each member is different, has his/her own place in the body, and fulfills a vital function as part of the whole. The Lord places the members, a definite, unchangeable number of members, into the body as it pleases Him (I Cor. 10:17, I Cor. 12:12-20).
- c. All the members are united spiritually to Christ and to one another; and all grow up together into Him (Eph. 4:4, 15-16; Col. 2:18-19).

3. The church is the bride of Christ.

- a. The church as a whole is the object of Christ’s love. He gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:25).
- b. The church is subject to Christ in all things, as the body is to the head and the wife to the husband (Eph. 5:22-24).
- c. The church is espoused to Christ: it is her calling to remain pure, holy, and faithful to Him as she waits for His coming, when He shall consummate the marriage (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:2, 9; 19:9).

4. The church is the temple of God.

- a. This figure emphasizes more the order or beauty of the church. She is not a haphazard pile of bricks with no structure, but the temple of God built on the foundation of Christ. The foundation determines the size, the shape, and the overall structure of the building.
- b. But even with this figure, the organic nature of the church is not denied, because the members are *living* stones (I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; I Pet. 2:5; Rev. 3:12).

B. The church is that living organism chosen in Christ and gathered by Christ by His Spirit.

1. The Triune God chose Jesus Christ as the head of the church.

- a. Therefore Christ can never be separated from His church; and the church can never be separated from Christ. The head cannot be without the body (or even be lacking the least member of the body), and the body cannot exist without the head.
 - b. Election determines who the members of the church are. God does not choose all to be members of the body of Christ, and then leave it up to man to decide whether he wants to be part of the church or not. Then we would have to say that part of Christ's body is forever missing; that some of the stones prepared for the temple are never used.
 - c. God does not choose a multitude of unrelated individuals: He chooses a church, one unified whole, with Christ as head.
 - d. For teaching that the church is "the company of the predestinated," Jan Hus was burned at the stake in 1415 at the Council of Constance. This is creedal (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 21).
- 2. Therefore, we must understand salvation in close connection with the church.**
- a. This aspect of salvation is seriously neglected today by Evangelicalism: God does not save His people merely as individuals; He saves them as part of the church (Acts 2:47, I Cor. 12:12-13).
 - b. The idea that a person could be a Christian but not a "church Christian" is unknown in the Bible.
 - c. Therefore, it must be the goal of evangelism not simply to bring someone to Christ, but to bring him into the church, where he and his children become active members.
 - d. The Lord gathers His elect into the church from the children of believers and from the world. The church is the *ecclesia*, which means the "called out" (out of the world, unto Christ and God).
 - e. The church does not gather herself: her members are not those of a voluntary society.

II. SOME IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

A. There is one church, but that church can be seen from various aspects.

1. There is the church militant, triumphant, and latent.

- a. The church militant is that part of the church universal which is now on the earth actively fighting the forces of darkness. The church's enemies are sin, the world, the false church, and the devil (Eph. 6:12, II Cor. 10:3-5, Rev. 12:17). The militancy of the church is *only* spiritual.
- b. The church triumphant is that part of the church universal which is enjoying conscious rest in heaven after having fought faithfully on the earth (II Tim. 4:7-8; Rev. 6:9-11, 7:14, 14:13).
- c. The church latent is that part of the church universal which has not yet been gathered; such are the elect, but they have not yet been born, or they have not yet been converted (II Pet. 3:9).
- d. These distinctions do justice to the fact that the church is the company of the predestinated.

2. There is the church visible and the church invisible.

- a. This is closely connected to the distinction between the church organism and the church institute.

- b. The church invisible is the church considered from its inner, spiritual life: her life of faith, her union with Christ. We confess, “I believe (not “I see”) an holy catholic church.”
- c. The church visible is the manifestation of that spiritual life in the world in its worship, preaching, sacraments, etc. Hypocrites can be (and are) members of the visible church, but never of the invisible church.

B. The spiritual organism of the church manifests itself in the church institute.

1. The church universal consists of many local congregations.

- a. The church institute is the local manifestation of the body and bride of Christ in a particular location at a particular time in history (I Cor. 1:2, 12:27; II Cor. 11:2).
- b. Since each church is one whole, it is possible to speak of “churches” (plural) as manifestations of the one, universal church (Acts 16:5, I Cor. 14:33, Gal. 1:2).
- c. But what is a church? It is not simply a gathering of a few believers. For example, a few believers meeting at home to study the Bible is not a church. A church requires something more.

2. The church institute must have officebearers to rule it under the headship of Christ.

- a. This is what distinguishes a church from a mere fellowship. A fellowship is an informal gathering of Christians. A fellowship must strive to become a church by reaching a point of maturity (based on doctrinal unity, spiritual maturity, and size, etc.) where it can call its own officebearers. This is the slow, difficult work of missions which requires patience and diligence.
- b. Officebearers are essential to the church (Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1; I Tim. 3:1, 15; Tit. 1:5).
- c. It is the calling of every Christian to become and remain a member of a true church, and thus to submit to the doctrine, worship, and oversight of the local congregation (Heb. 13:17).

3. The institution of the true church has three “marks” or distinguishing features.

- a. The greatest of all the marks is the preaching of the true gospel. The mark is not that the minister is nice or friendly, or even that he has an interesting message. The issue is sound doctrine.
- b. The second mark is the right administration of the two sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. A group of Christians without sacraments is not a church.
- c. The third mark is the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. Lose this mark, and the church is doomed to fall into sin. *Next time, the attributes of the church and the government of the church.*

I. THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH. Because the church is the body and bride of Christ, she has spiritual characteristics and glories of Christ: “I believe one holy, catholic (and apostolic) church.”

A. The unity of the church

1. The church universal

- a. There is only one church, and that one church has one life, one Spirit, and fellowship with God in one head. There can be only one church because there can be only one Christ (Eph. 4:4-6).
- b. The unity of the church is created by the Holy Spirit, who unites the whole body and every member to Christ the head by a true faith and who unites every member to the other members.
- c. The unity of the church is spiritual, not organizational. Rome contends that she alone has unity because she has one unified organization with one visible head at Rome (but see John 17:21-23).

2. This unity necessarily manifests itself in the local congregations.

- a. It is not the calling of the church to create the unity of the church (the Holy Spirit does that), but to manifest it, to endeavour to keep it (Eph. 4:3).
- b. The unity of the church manifests itself in the common doctrinal confession of the members. Thus, the unity of the church is promoted by creeds and confessions (Acts 2:42, I Cor. 1:10-13).
- c. The unity of the church is not threatened by the diversity among the members. This enhances the unity, as long as the differences are not doctrinal. The Lord creates a body of different parts with different functions, but one body working together (I Cor. 12:12, 14, 18).
- d. The unity of the church is promoted when like-minded congregations federate into denominations: they work together for a common cause (missions, mutual financial support, training of ministers, mutual help in disputes, etc.; see II Cor. 8-9, Acts 15, etc.).

3. There are threats to (and denials of) the unity of the church.

- a. The greatest threat to church unity is false doctrine. Compromise with error is always harmful.
- b. There is danger of schism, a tearing of the church by a member who divides the church over a non-doctrinal issue. The schismatic is motivated by pride (I Cor. 12:25, III John 9-10).
- c. There is the error of Dispensationalism: the division of the Old Testament and New Testament church. Dispensationalism teaches two peoples of God with different futures (Eph. 2:19, Gal. 3-4, Heb. 11:40). Pentecostalism teaches two kinds of Christians (two baptisms, etc.), and Baptists exclude the children of believers.

B. The holiness of the church

1. The church universal

- a. The church is holy because Christ is holy. The holy Son of God will not have a filthy body or a defiled bride. He therefore cleanses her to make her like Himself, fit to dwell with Him.
- b. The holiness of the church is Christ’s own holiness; it is the church’s beauty and the church’s glory to be holy. The holiness of the church pertains to the whole body, to each member.

- c. The holiness of the church is decreed for her (Eph. 1:4); purchased for her on the cross (Eph. 5:26-27); and that to which she is called (I Pet. 2:9).
- d. That holiness is a real, spiritual holiness; she is cleansed from sin and consecrated to God.

2. The holiness of the church is seen in the local congregation.

- a. The church is holy *in doctrine*. To believe and teach false doctrine is to go after another Christ and commit spiritual fornication (II Cor. 11:2-4). False doctrine, therefore, is the greatest threat to the church's holiness. The church must not be seduced away from Christ by alliance with the false church.
- b. The church is holy *in life*. The church as a body and all her members are godly in their conduct, obedient to Christ, the head. The church's holiness is threatened by ungodliness among her members and by conformity to the ungodly world. We are called to be saints (I Cor. 1:2).
- c. The church is holy *in worship*. The church, as the bride of Christ, is devoted to Christ and meets to worship the Triune God through Him. The church must resist the temptation to worship other gods or to worship her Lord in an idolatrous manner.
- d. The church is holy *in discipline*. By discipline the church preserves holiness in her midst, promotes the holiness of her own members, and keeps unholiness out of the church (I Cor. 5:6, 13). A church lax in discipline will become unholy. However, no church on earth is perfect.

C. The catholicity of the church

1. The church universal

- a. Catholic does not mean Roman Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church believes that she is the catholic church because she is a worldwide organization with a centre in Rome.
- b. The catholicity of the church is not dependent on Rome; it flows from the church's union with Christ. The church is catholic because Christ is catholic. Christ is the second Adam, the head of the new, elect humanity, embracing all believers and their elect children.
- c. Catholicity means universality: the church is made up of members from all nations, both genders, all ages, all social classes, etc. In fact, the church transcends all earthly differences.
- d. The catholicity of the church was promised and foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Gen. 12:3, Is. 2:2, etc., and the salvation of some Gentiles); but it is fully revealed in the New Testament age (Eph. 2:13-16, 3:5-6).
- e. The catholicity of the church is seen in the history-long gathering of the church (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 21; Belgic Confession Art. 27).

2. The catholicity of the church is seen in the local church.

- a. No one church institute can claim to be the only church, for the church is worldwide.
- b. No church may make restrictions of membership based on any earthly differences (race, age, social standing, sex, etc.).
- c. The church is not a collection of clones, but a gathering of diverse individuals, each contributing something important to the overall body of the church. The church should not strive for uniformity, especially in her mission work.
- d. The denials of catholicity: Romanism, Dispensationalism, Baptists

D. The apostolicity of the church

1. The church universal

- a. Rome and Episcopalians claim apostolicity because of apostolic succession of persons. They claim that their pope and bishops have an unbroken line from the apostles. Even if that were historically demonstrable (it is not), it would prove nothing (Gal. 1:8).
 - b. The apostolicity of the church is not succession of persons, but doctrine. An apostolic church preaches apostolic doctrine set forth in Scripture alone (Acts 2:42, Eph. 2:20, Rev. 21:14).
 - c. The church depends upon the truth: she is built upon the truth and must confess the truth.
- 2. The apostolicity of the church is seen in the local church.**
- a. The local church is called to be the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15).
 - b. Without the truth a local congregation ceases to be the church of Christ; Christ comes in judgment and removes the candlestick, and only an empty shell (void of the Spirit and filled with the lying spirit of Antichrist) remains.
 - c. The local church must strive to proclaim, defend, and preserve the truth by preaching it to her own members, teaching her own children, and proclaiming it to the world.
 - d. Without the truth there is no unity, no holiness, and no catholicity. Without the truth the church does not have the marks of the church, and Christ is not present to bless.
 - e. The great threat to the apostolicity of the church is apostasy, which begins when the people no longer love the truth (II Thess. 2:10-13).

II. SUMMARY

A. The church is a spiritual, living organism.

- 1. The church is the body and bride of Christ, a spiritual temple of living stones.
- 2. The church has one life (Jesus Christ) by one Spirit and is united to Christ by the bond of faith.
- 3. The church manifests herself on earth in local, instituted congregations.

B. The church has certain perfections (attributes) because she is united to Jesus Christ.

- 1. The church is one (essential spiritual unity in faith) and holy (purified by Christ, devoted to Him).
- 2. The church is catholic (worldwide, transcending all earthly differences) and apostolic (in doctrine).

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. The church is both a spiritual organism and an institution (institute).

1. The spiritual organism of the church is one, unified whole with one principle of life.
2. Many Christians belong to the church organism, but they neglect the church institute.

B. Christ has set forth in His Word how the church is to conduct herself: how she is to be ruled and how the members are to behave. We call this aspect of ecclesiology “church polity.”

1. Church polity teaches us what the work of the church is, and what power or authority the church has.
2. This is an area greatly misunderstood and neglected by modern evangelical Christianity, but large parts of Scripture are devoted to it, especially Acts and the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus).

I. THE POWER OF THE CHURCH

A. Jesus Christ is the only King and head of the church: He rules from heaven in the institute.

1. **It is important that we confess that, because in history there have been errors about church power.**
 - a. Some despise the power of the church, refuse her authority, and live aloof from the church.
 - b. At times the civil powers have tried to usurp power over the church (e.g. by the state church).
 - c. At times the church has usurped the right of the state (e.g. medieval papacy; modern liberal churches’ involvement in social, political, and economic affairs).
2. **Jesus Christ has given spiritual power and authority only to the church.**
 - a. Christ has not given the power of the sword to the church, but to the state. The church has no power to impose civil penalties, imprisonment, death, etc. (Rom. 13:1-6, I Cor. 5:5, I Tim. 1:20).
 - b. Christ has not given power to the individual believer or to the individual minister, elder, or deacon; He has not given power to the denomination; but He has given power *to the local congregation*; and this power is administered through the officebearers (I Cor. 5:4).
 - c. The power of the church is not tyranny; it is the power of edification (II Cor. 10:8, 13:10).
3. **The power of the church is strictly limited to spiritual things.**
 - a. The power of teaching: no other body has the right to teach the Word of God (I Tim. 3:15).
 - b. The power of ruling, judging, and church discipline (even excommunication): the church has the right to rule herself and her members by the Word of God (Belgic Confession Art. 30-32).
 - c. The power of dispensing the mercy of Christ through the office of deacon.
 - d. These powers are given to the local church: the local church preaches (through the pastor); the local church rules (through the elders); and the local church dispenses mercy (through the deacons). *And when the church does this faithfully by the Word of God, Christ Himself does it.*

B. The power which Christ gives the church is especially the power of the keys of the kingdom.

- 1. The keys of the kingdom are the means by which the kingdom is opened to believers and closed to unbelievers (Matt. 18:18-19).**
 - a. This is the power to declare someone inside or outside of the kingdom and of salvation.
 - b. The keys of the kingdom are preaching and discipline. By these two keys believers are brought into and kept in the kingdom of God (the church), and unbelievers are thrust out and kept out of the kingdom of God (the church) (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 31).
 - c. Christ gives the keys *to the church*, not to an individual believer (not to Peter alone), not even to an individual officebearer (to all the disciples as representatives of the church), but to the church, which exercises “key power” through officebearers.
- 2. The first key is the preaching of the gospel.**
 - a. Preaching opens the kingdom of God to believers by *declaring* to them that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47, Acts 13:38-39).
 - b. Preaching closes the kingdom against unbelievers by declaring to them that as long as they remain unbelieving and impenitent, they are under God’s wrath and liable to eternal punishment.
 - c. Good preaching protects God’s people from wandering into the world; and it keeps unbelievers out of the church. Unbelievers do not belong in the church; and believers do not belong outside the church. *God determines* through the preaching who will be saved and who will be damned; and preaching is God’s means of giving and strengthening faith or hardening sinners in sin (II Cor. 2:16).
 - d. The preaching therefore is powerful: not a powerless offer or invitation, but the means of opening and closing the very kingdom of God (Rom. 1:16).
- 3. The second key is church discipline.**
 - a. Christian discipline is the work of the church to deal with the sinful, disobedient members.
 - b. The goals of discipline are three: 1) the salvation of the sinning member; 2) the protection of the church’s purity (I Cor. 5:6); 3) the glory of God.
 - c. The process of discipline occurs according to the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17, except for gross, public sins, which must be dealt with publicly (I Tim. 5:20). *By discipline the kingdom is opened and shut.*
- 4. If we understand this, we will see what great power the church has.**
 - a. The state has great power, the power of the sword, but the church’s power is greater: it has the spiritual power of salvation and damnation. Christ saves and damns through the church.
 - b. The church does not have the power to save and damn *whom she wishes*, but the power to wield the spiritual weapon of the Word of God on behalf of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-6).
 - c. This is the power to build the kingdom of God and destroy and tear down the kingdom of Satan

II. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

A. The Bible teaches that Christ has ordained a certain kind of government for the church.

1. The principles of church government are these:

- a. Christ is the only King and head of the church, and He rules the church by His Word and Spirit.
- b. Christ rules the church through officebearers in local congregations, called by Christ and chosen by the members of the congregation, not imposed on the church from the outside.
- c. Each local congregation is autonomous, which means *it rules itself* through its own officebearers. No other congregation or group of congregations has the right to interfere in its government. And the state does not have the right to rule or interfere in the government of the church.

2. Some forms of church government are contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

- a. **Roman Catholicism:** The pope is the visible head of the church, and he has supreme authority. Under him are various levels of authority (like a pyramid) (“the clergy”). These rule over the common members (“the laity”). The pope appoints bishops; the bishops appoint priests. The laity have virtually no say at all and depend on the church for everything. This is hierarchy at its most developed (Matt. 23:9-12, Luke 22:24-26, I Pet. 5:1-4).
- b. **Episcopalianism:** This is still hierarchical, but without the office of pope. The basic teaching and practice of Episcopalianism is that the bishop has a higher rank than an elder. The Bible teaches that bishops and elders have the same office (Tit. 1:5-7). Bishop means overseer.
- c. **Congregationalism (Independence):** Congregationalism does not do justice to the office of elder, because the power to make decisions (to rule) does not ultimately rest with elders, but with the congregation. This means that every major decision (even discipline) is made by majority vote, not by the consistory, session, or council. The church is not a democracy: the members elect officebearers and *then these officebearers must rule* (I Thess. 5:12-13; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24). Independence is a danger because a local church is “on its own” if a problem occurs which cannot be resolved at the local church level. Churches must federate and cooperate in order to do the work of the churches in common and to have the right of appeal and protest.
- d. **Anarchy (traditional brethrenism, megachurches, etc.):** Under this category we place all churches which have no officebearers at all. There is no leadership. Often there is no oversight, there is no membership list, there is lay preaching, there is unsupervised administration of the sacraments, and there is no discipline. This leads to either tyranny (one man or a few men will naturally take over) or chaos. The Bible insists that Christ rules through officebearers.

B. Next time: how Christ governs Reformed churches through officebearers: ministers, elders, and deacons.

INTRODUCTION TO REFORMED CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. The church is neither a democracy nor a tyranny. Christ is the head, and He rules through officebearers.

1. The church, as it is instituted on earth, has a leadership structure made up of officebearers.

- a. An officebearer is a man called by Christ to occupy a position of authority (an office).
- b. As an officebearer, this man is an official representative of Christ (who is the Officebearer [prophet, priest, and king] in the church). The minister represents Christ as prophet; the elder represents Christ as king; the deacon represents Christ as merciful priest (but there is overlap).
- c. An officebearer is not a mere functionary, but a man with real spiritual authority to rule in the congregation (I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17). Elders, pastors, and deacons differ in function, but there is no hierarchy in the church. Together they make up the “council.” The elders with the pastor make up the “consistory” (or “session”).
- d. Officebearers are given to the church by Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 20:28, Eph. 4:11), but Christ uses the means of a lawful call through the church, examination of the officebearers, and election by the members (Acts 6:3, 13:2-4, 14:23, 16:2-3; Rom. 10:15; I Tim. 3:10, 4:14; Tit. 1:5). *No man may impose officebearers (pastors, elders, deacons) upon a church without the church’s will.*

2. Officebearers are not “lords” or “tyrants” or “little popes” imposing their will on the congregation, but servants who represent the rule of Jesus Christ and are accountable to Him (I Pet. 5:3).

- a. There is a danger in one man dominating in the church, so the Lord has determined that there be a plurality of officebearers. Reformed churches require a minimum of two elders and one deacon to form a council. There is no such thing in biblical church government as a senior pastor.
- b. Officebearers must not rule out of selfish ambition, love of money, or vainglory, but for the good of the congregation and to the glory of God (II Cor. 10:8, 13:10; I Pet. 5:2).
- c. Officebearers must rule in the consciousness that the Lord has made them rulers in His church, that the church is not theirs but Christ’s, and that they must give an account to Him as to how they treat His sheep (Acts 20:28, I Cor. 4:1-2, I Pet. 5:3-4, Heb. 13:17).

B. The general function of officebearers

1. Since officebearers have real authority, they must rule, and the members must submit to that rule.

- a. **Officebearers**, especially elders, are overseers (they “oversee” everything in the church). Their calling is to “watch for the souls” of God’s people, to “feed (shepherd)” God’s people, to protect and warn God’s people, and to “take the oversight” of God’s people. It is also their responsibility to make decisions for the congregation so that everything is done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40). But remember Belgic Confession Art. 32!
- b. **Officebearers** must never be tyrannical, ruling over God’s people with rigour, fleecing the sheep for their own evil, selfish ends. Those are the

characteristics of false shepherds (Jer. 5:31, 23:1-2; Is. 56:10-12; Ezek. 34:1-6; John 10:1, 13; II Pet. 2:3).

- c. Instead a true **officebearer** loves God's people as the sheep of Jesus Christ and treats them as Christ would treat them (I Thess. 2:1-12).
- d. The presence of **officebearers** in the church in no way denies the office of believer. Each believer is a prophet, priest, and king. Therefore, all believers have the right to question and even disagree with **officebearers** if their decisions are not biblical. Church members have the right to question (and even protest) the preaching or other matters in the church (but only in an ecclesiastical manner using the right channels) (Belgic Confession Art. 31-32).

2. Officebearers have authority only over spiritual things.

- a. Officebearers oversee the doctrine and life of all the members, including the preacher himself. They also have the right to put disobedient members (and the minister) under discipline.
- b. But **officebearers** do not have authority in carnal things: they cannot dictate to members what they eat, what they wear, what they buy, for whom they vote, etc.
- c. Officebearers have authority only in their local congregation: a minister does not even have the right to preach in another church's pulpit without the permission of his or their consistory; a member must seek permission of the local consistory to take the Lord's Supper. No elder may dictate to another church. *We call this the autonomy of the local church.*

I. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, CHRIST HAS GIVEN HIS CHURCH THREE PERMANENT TYPES OF OFFICEBEARERS.

A. We say "permanent" because there were temporary officebearers in the New Testament: apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

1. Apostles

- a. Christ chose 12 apostles, and the 11 apostles chose Matthias to replace Judas in Acts 1:23-26; and Christ directly called Paul to be an apostle in Acts 9:15 (see also Acts 26:15-18).
- b. The apostles were eyewitnesses of the risen Lord (Acts 1:22; I Cor. 9:1).
- c. The apostles were qualified for their work by miracles (II Cor. 12:12); and they had authority over all the churches (I Cor. 7:17, II Cor. 11:28). *No man today can claim that he has been directly commissioned by the risen Lord; that he has seen the resurrected Christ; and that he has authority over all the churches. There are no apostles today.*
- d. Apostles were necessary for the New Testament church to build the foundation. Since the New Testament is completed and the foundation has been laid, there are no new apostles (Eph. 2:20).

2. Prophets and evangelists

- a. During the apostolic age God gave new revelation for the edification of the churches until the New Testament was completed. This was a temporary office (also part of the foundation, Eph. 2:20).
- b. Evangelists such as Timothy, Titus, and Philip were apostolic assistants (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11), and since apostles have passed away, so have evangelists. The minister does the work of an evangelist, which is the work of preaching the gospel (II Tim. 4:5).

B. Christ has left three permanent types of officebearers: ministers, elders, and deacons.

1. Minister or pastor (teaching elder)

- a. The minister is called by Christ to preach the gospel full-time. Through the minister the church officially preaches the Word of God. This office is called pastor-teacher. No man has the right to preach unless called by Christ *through the church* (Rom. 10:14-15, Acts 13:2-4).
- b. The Bible makes a distinction between elders who rule and those who labour in the word and doctrine (I Tim. 5:17). The latter are worthy of double honour (for their work's sake); must give themselves wholly to the work of preaching and teaching; and ought to be supported by the church (I Tim. 4:15, II Tim. 4:2, I Tim. 5:18, I Cor. 9:4-15).
- c. The work of training and preparing men to preach is that of qualified ministers. Paul trained Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), and the principle of training is found in II Timothy 2:2.

2. Elder, overseer, or "bishop"

- a. A plurality of elders rules over the local congregation with the minister, who is also an elder. The words elder, overseer, or bishop all refer to the same office (Tit. 1:5-7). There is no hierarchy; and the elders are taken from the local congregation (I Pet. 5:1).
- b. The qualifications of an elder are carefully laid down in Scripture: they are not the richest, most powerful, most popular men, but godly men (I Tim. 3:2-7, Tit. 1:6-9). Together, as a body, they have spiritual oversight over the whole congregation.

3. Deacon

- a. The deacons are called to collect and distribute the alms (mercies for the poor); they have authority in the church as the official representatives of the merciful Christ (Acts 6:1-6, I Tim. 3:8-13, Phil. 1:1).
- b. Deacons must use their wisdom to encourage God's people to give (and to manage their money) and wisely to distribute the same to the deserving poor (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:7; I Tim. 5:3-16).

C. There is also the authority of the broader assemblies of the churches: classis and synod.

1. Every congregation is autonomous, but churches willingly federate to cooperate mutually with one another. The two broader (not higher) assemblies are classis and synod.
2. Such assemblies have authority to deal with matters the churches have in common (Acts 15).

I. THE MEANS OF GRACE (GENERALLY)

A. The meaning of “means of grace” or “means of faith”

1. Remember what “grace” is.

- a. Grace in God, as an attribute of God, is God’s beauty.
- b. Grace as extended to us is God’s beautiful attitude of favour.
- c. But now we mean by grace the power of God spiritually to make us beautiful with the beauty of Christ. When God is said to work in us, that is the operation of grace (I Cor. 15:10, Eph. 3:20, Phil. 2:13, Col. 1:29, I Thess. 2:13, etc.).

2. Remember, too, what “faith” is.

- a. Faith is that spiritual bond which unites the elect to Jesus Christ their head. By faith we hold for truth everything which God reveals in His Word; we have confidence that salvation is ours.
- b. But the question is: where does this faith come from? It does not come from man’s free will, but from God the Holy Spirit.
- c. And the Holy Spirit *uses means* to work faith in God’s people: those are the means of grace.

3. God does not simply “zap” people with faith and grace.

- a. He uses means to work faith and to strengthen that faith in us. The two means which the Holy Spirit uses are the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments.
- b. God is pleased to use means: He takes elements from everyday life to work His purposes. God could dispense with means. For example, He could feed us without bread, but He does not. A person who expects to live physically must eat food.
- c. Similarly, if we expect to live spiritually, and if we expect to grow spiritually in grace, we must use the means of grace. God can keep His children alive in exceptional circumstances, but He does not bless those who *neglect and despise* the means He has ordained.

B. The means of grace are means to work spiritual life and strengthen that spiritual life in His people.

1. The means of grace are not mechanical.

- a. That is Rome’s view. Rome teaches that sacraments give grace simply by being used. The phrase Rome uses is *ex opere operato* (from the work worked). For Rome the sacraments are *the* means.
- b. That is also the view of many “Protestants” who are superstitious, especially about the sacraments.
- c. But the preaching and sacraments do nothing without the work of the Holy Spirit.
- d. In addition, the preaching and sacraments must be received by faith: if we sit under a sermon or take the Lord’s Supper without exercising faith, we will never benefit from the means of grace.

2. The means of grace are official.

- a. There are some elements which God uses (such as Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship) which are not official means of grace. They are “informal” means.
- b. “Official” comes from the idea of “office.” These are means tied to the offices of the church. Officebearers administer the means of grace:

officebearers preach; officebearers baptize; officebearers administer the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28:19).

- c. Therefore the means of grace are given to be used *only* by the church institute; para-church organizations and ministries do not have the right to preach, baptize, or administer the Lord's Supper.

3. Since these are the means of grace, if we want to grow in grace we must use them in the true, instituted church (II Pet. 3:18; I Tim. 4:16).

- a. One who cuts himself off from the means of grace, especially one who absents himself from the preaching, will not grow spiritually, just as a person who deliberately refuses to eat or who eats badly will not grow well physically.
- b. There will also be no healthy growth for the one who attends the false church. There are really three kinds of preaching: false preaching (that is poison); weak preaching (that is lacking in nutrition and will lead to stunted growth); and faithful preaching (sound, health-giving) (I Pet. 2:2).

C. These means of grace are grace only to God's people.

1. Some believe that God is gracious to all and that the preaching and sacraments are grace to all.

- a. This is the view of the Federal Vision heresy: they believe that God gives grace to all who are baptized, but that grace is conditional and can be lost through unfaithfulness.
- b. This is the view of the well-meant gospel offer: they teach that God is favorably inclined toward all who hear the preaching and that the preaching *itself* declares to all hearers that God loves everybody and desires to save everybody, or being under the preaching gives them a "chance."
- c. But we must not think that just because someone is under the preaching, God is favorable to him.
- d. The preaching is not automatically grace: if God does not apply the Word to a man's heart with His blessing, the preaching will not do any good.

2. The preaching and sacraments, which are grace to the elect, are means to *harden* the reprobate.

- a. Therefore no one ought to trifle with the preaching or sacraments: it is the most serious thing in the world to hear preaching and use sacraments without faith.
- b. When the reprobate hear the gospel, it provokes their hatred against God and reveals their stubborn opposition against God so that God is seen as just in punishing them. Think of Pharaoh: God preached to him through Moses, but Pharaoh was hardened by it (Rom. 9:18, II Cor. 2:15-16).
- c. This is also true of the sacraments: a reprobate who is baptized is hardened by his baptism; a reprobate who partakes of the Lord's Supper is hardened in sin and brings judgment upon himself.

II. THE MEANS OF GRACE (SPECIFICALLY)

A. The means of grace are the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments.

1. Of these two, the preaching is the chief means of grace.

- a. This is so because preaching works faith in God's elect, and the sacraments confirm faith which God has already given. The sacraments are *not* converting ordinances (Rom. 10:17, I Tim. 4:16).
- b. The preaching of the gospel is necessary for salvation. No man who has never heard the gospel can believe, and therefore no man who has never

heard can be saved (Rom. 10:14). A person can be saved without water baptism or partaking of the Lord's Supper. Rome teaches otherwise: "The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation" (*Catholic Catechism*, para. 1129).

- c. The sacraments cannot stand alone. They must have the preaching of the gospel to explain them. This is why Reformed churches have baptism and the Lord's Supper during the worship service, with a sermon and the reading of the form.

2. The sacraments are a "secondary" means of grace. This is not to despise or neglect sacraments.

- a. Sacraments are means of strengthening faith and increasing assurance. They are given by Christ to help us in the weakness of our faith. They must be used and greatly valued by the church.
- b. Sacraments are holy, visible signs and seals instituted by Christ for use in His church.
- c. There are only two sacraments because only two were instituted by Christ. Rome has seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, penance (confession), Eucharist, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction (last rites). *Rome offers "cradle to grave" sacramental salvation.*

B. The importance of the means of grace (the preaching and the sacraments)

1. They are marks of the true church (the third mark is faithful Christian discipline).

- a. When a church corrupts these means of grace, it is moving toward the false church.
- b. These means are necessary for the nourishment of spiritual life and therefore salvation.

2. They are the presence of Christ in the church institute.

- a. Christ is present spiritually in the preaching: His voice is heard.
- b. Christ is present spiritually in baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- c. Christ is also present spiritually through the offices of elder, pastor, and deacon.
- d. When a church despises the means of grace, the Spirit is grieved, and Christ withdraws His gracious presence. When a church loses the means, Christ has departed, and the spirit of falsehood prevails. To remain there is to endanger your salvation and that of your children.

I. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL [Last time, we looked at the means of grace generally; now we look at them more in detail. The preaching of the gospel is three things in Reformed Ecclesiology: a key of the kingdom of heaven, a mark of the true church, and the chief means of grace.]

A. Preaching defined: “the authoritative declaration of the gospel by Christ through the church”

1. Preaching is a declaration or an announcement of what God has done.

- a. Preaching is not a well-meant offer in which God expresses what He would like to do.
- b. Preaching is not some interesting insights about religious matters or a learned (or not so learned) discourse about the Bible.
- c. Preaching is God’s message proclaimed by a herald. The word preacher means “herald,” a man sent by the king with the king’s official message. To despise true preaching is to despise God.

2. Therefore, true preaching must have various characteristics.

- a. The content of true preaching must be the Word of God. Preaching must be the faithful exposition of the Bible. It must not be the minister’s opinions or suggestions; it must not be mixed with social commentary, political harangues, mere moralistic lessons, or entertaining tales.
- b. The content of true preaching must be Christ, and Him crucified. Every sermon must present that central truth; only then is it good news (the “evangel”) (I Cor. 1:18, 23; I Cor. 2:2; Gal. 3:1).
- c. True preaching must be done by a man authorized by Christ to preach. Women may not preach—and their sermons, which might have reasonable content, are not means of grace (I Tim. 2:12); a layman (who is not ordained) may not preach. Why? To preach, a man must be called by Christ *and sent through the church* (Rom. 10:14-15, Acts 13:1-4). A man may not say that he has great gifts and he believes the Lord wants him to preach unless he submits to be examined by the church (I Tim. 3:10, 4:14-15; II Tim. 1:6). Ideally, he should be trained (II Tim. 2:2).

B. Preaching is the Word of God and the voice of Jesus Christ. The Reformed faith teaches that “the preaching of the Word of God *is* the Word of God.”

1. That gives preaching its unique authority.

- a. When a lawfully called and ordained man preaches, God Himself speaks from heaven. Therefore that preaching is to be heard, honored, and obeyed (Is. 66:2; Jer. 23:29; Heb. 2:3-4, 12:25).
- b. Paul commends the Thessalonians for their esteem of the preaching as the Word of God (I Thess. 2:13).
- c. The authority of preaching therefore does not come from the preacher (he is a vessel of clay [II Cor. 4:7], and he comes in weakness [I Cor. 2:3-5, II Cor. 10:10]), but from God Himself, whose word the preacher brings.
- d. Since the preaching is the Word of God, it has power. No preacher’s voice has power, but the Word of God has awesome power (Rom. 1:16; II Cor. 2:15-16, 10:3-5; Heb. 4:12).

2. Preaching has power to build up and save God’s people and to harden and destroy the reprobate.

- a. The voice of no man works faith in our hearts or strengthens it. Preaching saves both the preacher and the believing hearers of the preaching (I Tim. 4:16). It is the savour of life unto life.
 - b. But preaching has also the power to expose sin and to harden men in their sins in preparation for their final destruction. That is why it is a fearful thing to hear preaching and not believe.
 - c. The knowledge that preaching is the power of God gives the preacher a sense of his responsibility and gives the preacher confidence to preach, knowing that preaching is not in vain.
- 3. Preaching has this power in the church because it is the voice of Christ. That is why preaching is central in the worship of the church. That is why God's people want to hear preaching. They do not come to have their ears tickled, but to hear the voice of Christ from heaven.**
- a. This is clearly taught in Scripture (Luke 10:16; John 10:27; Rom. 10:14; Eph. 2:17, 4:20-21).
 - b. Only the voice of Christ has the power to raise the dead; work faith in God's people; and comfort, admonish, strengthen, and edify the saints. And since preaching is the voice of Christ, we must be eager to hear it, and we must pay careful attention to it.
 - c. A church which believes that preaching is the voice of Christ will not substitute other things for it. A church which treasures preaching will not tolerate the crowding out of the voice of Christ. And the believer who believes the preaching will be comforted by Christ, assured by Christ, and instructed by Christ, and will learn at the feet of Christ. And a minister who believes this about preaching will work diligently and carefully at his sermons.

II. THE SACRAMENTS

A. The second (and secondary, but by no means *unimportant*) means is the sacraments.

1. There is much confusion about sacraments in the church.

- a. In fact, at the time of the Reformation, not even the reformers could agree on the sacraments. Rome had a view; the Lutherans had a different view; the Reformed (Calvinists) had a third view.
- b. Even today there is confusion on the sacraments: Rome teaches that the sacraments are essential to salvation and that the sacraments automatically work grace in all who use them; others are simply superstitious about the sacraments; and others neglect the sacraments and, although they use them, do not understand what they mean.
- c. The common evangelical view is that they are mere symbols, but there is no presence of Christ in them. "[T]he signs are not in vain or insignificant, so as to deceive us. For Jesus Christ is the true object presented by them, without whom they would be of no moment" (Belgic Confession Art. 33).

2. A sacrament is a holy ceremony instituted by Christ for use in the church.

- a. A sacrament must be instituted by Christ. A sacrament does not derive its authority from man, nor from the church, but from Christ Himself (Matt. 28:19, I Cor. 11:26).
- b. We reject any man-made sacrament, such as the additional sacraments of Rome: to baptism and the Lord's Supper Rome adds confirmation, penance, marriage, holy orders, and extreme unction.

- c. Sacraments are given to the church for use by the church in the church. Sacraments may not be administered by unbelievers or by para-church ministries (Matt. 28:19).
 - d. Sacraments are holy: this does not mean that the water is “holy” or the bread and wine are “holy,” except in the sense that they are set apart from common use for God’s worship.
3. **Sacraments are means of grace.**
- a. This does not mean “vehicles of grace”: that is the Roman Catholic view.
 - b. Instead, sacraments strengthen and nourish faith, because when they are used with faith they give to elect believers what they signify and promise: they give Jesus Christ.
 - c. The sacraments are added to the preaching; they are not a replacement for preaching, and they do not teach anything that the preaching does not teach. They are a visible word of God.
- B. Sacraments are signs and seals.**
1. **Signs**
- a. A sign is a visible representation of an invisible reality: something you can see which points to something you cannot see. The water is a picture of the washing away of sins; the bread and wine are a picture of feeding on Jesus Christ.
 - b. But the sacrament is not the same thing as that of which it is a sign.
2. **Seals**
- a. A seal is a mark of authenticity: a mark that something is not a fake, but genuine (e.g. a diploma).
 - b. The sacraments are seals because they assure us of the promises of God. God joins them to the promise of the gospel to confirm the truth better to us.
 - c. The Belgic Confession says, “[T]o seal unto us His promises, and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith” (Art. 33).
 - d. Romans 4 teaches us that circumcision was an Old Testament sacrament, a sign and seal (v. 11).
3. **Sacramental union**
- a. The Bible teaches a very close connection between the sign and the thing signified, so that it speaks of one in terms of the other. For example, it calls baptism “the washing of regeneration” (Tit. 3:5). We call that the sacramental union.
 - b. But we must not make the mistake of *equating* the two things. More about that next time, DV.

I. WE LOOK NOW AT THE TWO SACRAMENTS CHRIST HAS GIVEN TO HIS CHURCH.

A. Sacraments are signs and seals of God’s grace to us.

1. A sign is something visible which points to a higher, spiritual, invisible reality.
2. A seal is a mark of authenticity, a guarantee that something is genuine.

B. Sacraments are designed by God to strengthen faith: a person must have faith before he can profitably use the sacraments.

II. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

A. Remember that the Bible speaks of baptism in two ways: baptism as the spiritual reality of salvation and baptism as water baptism. Often it speaks of one in terms of the other.

1. Washing

- a. Washing is the most significant meaning of baptism. That is why it is *water* baptism.
- b. Water washes away the dirt of the body; so the blood and Holy Spirit of Christ wash away sin. Water baptism is the sign of what the blood and Holy Spirit of Christ do (Acts 22:16).
- c. But we must be careful to note that water baptism does not itself wash away sins.
- d. Also, only baptism is a sign and seal of the washing of sins. Having a shower at home is not a sign and seal of the washing of sins. The Spirit is pleased to use baptism to strengthen faith.

2. Regeneration

- a. Here especially the work of the Holy Spirit is in view. Baptism is a picture of the renewal of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47, I Cor. 12:13, Tit. 3:5).
- b. But we must be careful to reject baptismal regeneration, the idea that water baptism regenerates.

3. Union with Christ

- a. The elect are united to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. This reality is signified in baptism especially by the prepositions “in” and “into.”
- b. We are baptised into Christ, into the name of Christ, in the name of Christ; thus baptism identifies us with Christ (Gal. 3:27).
- c. We are baptised into Christ, into the power of His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4).

4. Entering into fellowship with the Triune God

- a. The baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 says “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” The Greek is “into” -- baptism brings us into fellowship with God.
- b. By “baptism” we do not mean “water baptism,” but the real, spiritual baptism by the Spirit.
- c. Since Jesus is the revelation of the Triune God, to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ is the equivalent of being baptised in the name of the Trinity, and since Christ is the head of the covenant, we enter into fellowship with God through Him (Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5).

5. Entrance into the church

- a. Baptism does not make one a Christian (it is not a “christening”) or a member of the church, but it is a symbol of God’s making us members of Christ by engrafting us into Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 12:13).
 - b. It is also the way in which a person (either an adult convert or a child of believing parents) officially becomes a member of the church institute.
- 6. It is a mark that we belong to Jesus Christ and are separated from the world. Baptism means consecration or dedication to Christ.**
- a. We see that especially in the two great types (foreshadowing pictures), the passage through the Red Sea and the Flood (I Cor. 10:2, I Pet. 3:21).
 - b. Baptism is the sign which distinguishes Christians from unbelievers. Just as in the Old Testament there were the circumcised and the uncircumcised, so there are today the baptised and the non-baptised.
 - c. The Belgic Confession is especially clear: “baptism ... by which we are received into the church of God and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to Him whose ensign and banner we bear ...” (Art. 34). *Baptism obliges us to new obedience.*

B. Baptism is a sign of what God does.

- 1. We mention this because of the error of many evangelicals that baptism is a sign of what we do.**
 - a. Baptism is not a sign of a person’s decision to follow Christ or a sign of repentance and faith.
 - b. Baptism, as a sacrament, points to the work of Christ.
 - c. That’s why the Bible says “baptised” (passive voice), never ‘baptised yourself’ (reflexive).
- 2. Baptism can only be a seal if it seals what God does.**
 - a. The sacraments are “pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us” (Belgic Confession Art. 33).
 - b. Therefore, baptism seals, or confirms, God’s promise to us.
 - c. As surely as water washes away dirt from the body, so surely do the blood and Holy Spirit of Christ wash away sins. *That is the assurance we need; and by that the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith.*
- 3. We must not be deceived by the Roman Catholic view, which is baptismal regeneration.**
 - a. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1263 (“By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin”). After baptism a person is free from sin; only concupiscence remains, which is a weakness of the human nature, a tendency toward sin against which the sinner can fight with the help of grace.
 - b. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1266 (“The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*”). Baptism does not only remove sin, it gives something. And notice how Rome confounds justification and sanctification.
 - c. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1215 (“This sacrament is also called ‘*the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit*,’ for it signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit”). And 1213 (“Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God”). According to Rome, baptism actually regenerates.
- 4. Rome appeals to various texts to prove baptismal regeneration.**
 - a. John 3:5, “born of water and of the Spirit.” But there is nothing in the context about baptism. The meaning is that the new birth is a cleansing work

of God. If water baptism was the meaning, no person not baptised (no exceptions) could be saved.

- b. Titus 3:5, “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Again, no mention of baptism. The text is speaking of the gracious salvation of God (“not by works”) which is by the renewing work of the Spirit and by regeneration, which is a cleansing work (“washing”).
- c. I Peter 3:21, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” This is a difficult passage, but it is not speaking about baptismal salvation (“not the putting away of the filth of the flesh”).
- d. Acts 22:16, “be baptized, and wash away thy sins.” There is a definite relationship between baptism and the washing away of sins, but it is not a causal relationship. Baptism does not cause or bring about the forgiveness of sins. It is a sign of the washing away of sins. Remember the sacramental union: the reality is often described in terms of the thing signified.

C. So there are three views of the sacrament of baptism.

1. Rome

- a. Rome confounds the sign and the reality.
- b. This is baptismal regeneration, part of Rome’s sacramental salvation.

2. Evangelicalism

- a. Baptism is a mere sign, nothing but a testimony to what the convert has done.
- b. But baptism cannot be a means of grace.

3. Reformed

- a. Baptism is a sign of the spiritual work of God in saving His people by washing away their sins, engrafting and incorporating them into Christ, and bringing them into fellowship with Himself.
- b. But water baptism *does not do these things*: it points to what God has done.
- c. At the same time baptism is a powerful seal: it assures us that God does wash away our sins.

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. **Baptism is the first of the two sacraments.**

1. **We must distinguish between spiritual baptism (reality) and water baptism (sign).**
 - a. Failure to do this will lead to confusion: not all who receive the sign (water) receive the reality.
 - b. Yet the Bible speaks of the sign *in terms of the reality*. We call that the “sacramental union.”
2. **Baptism is a sign of the work of God in delivering us from sin by the work of Christ.**
 - a. (Water) baptism itself does not deliver us from sin. That is the error of baptismal regeneration.
 - b. But neither is (water) baptism empty, so that it becomes a mere profession of faith (Baptist).
 - c. Because it is a sign and seal of what God does, it is a real means of grace.

B. **In this lesson we want to ask the question, who may be baptised, and how does baptism occur?**

1. **(Water) baptism is administered in the church to adult converts and their children.**
 - a. Since baptism is a sign of entering the church and kingdom of God, adult converts are baptised. Adult baptism is much more common on the mission field than in the established church.
 - b. Reformed churches baptise the children of adult believers, because they belong to the church and kingdom of God. *Reformed churches do not baptise all children, such as unbelievers’ children.*
2. **The mode of (water) baptism is less important (sprinkling, pouring, full immersion).**
 - a. Baptists make an issue out of the mode by insisting that total immersion is the only valid mode.
 - b. Reformed churches have always taught that the mode is less important. They have preferred sprinkling for various reasons (several texts where baptise cannot mean immerse [Mark 7:4; Heb. 9:10]; the reality is by sprinkling, so it fits better [Ezek. 36:25; Heb. 10:22, 12:24; I Pet. 1:2]; the impossibility of immersing in various New Testament accounts; Christ was not “buried” in the modern sense; and in the Old Testament types the godly were sprinkled and the wicked immersed, etc.).
 - c. The three requirements for a valid baptism: it be done by an ordained man, with water, in the name of the Triune God. The amount of water, I repeat, is not so significant.

I. INFANT BAPTISM

A. **To prove that infant baptism is biblical, we need to prove that the children of believers are in the covenant of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the church of Christ.**

1. **The argument is really very simple. Children have the reality, therefore they have the sign.**

- a. This is why the argument of the Baptists is so wrongheaded: they demand a proof text for infant baptism. “Find one place in the New Testament where children were baptised,” they say.
 - b. Their other argument is just as irrelevant: “Repent and be baptised.” No-one denies that believers should be baptised, and therefore the command to them is, “Repent and be baptised.” But the same command cannot be addressed to children in the same manner.
 - c. The controversy with Baptists is not over water; it is over who the members of the church, kingdom, and covenant of God are; God’s promises and the status of our children.
- 2. Remember the covenant of God is His relationship of friendship with His people in Christ.**
- a. In the covenant God declares, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” The Bible teaches that God makes *that* promise to believers and their children, not just to adults. This does not mean that God will be their God when they become adults, but will be their God *already as children*.
 - b. This is the case with every manifestation of the covenant: Noah (Gen. 9:9); Abraham (Gen. 17:7); David (Ps. 89:28-29); and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33, 32:38-40).
 - c. Thus the Bible is filled with promises that God will work spiritual salvation in the hearts of the children of believers (Deut. 30:6; Is. 59:21).
 - d. And here is the key: *God did not reverse that promise in the New Testament: Acts 2:39.*
- 3. Children are citizens of the kingdom of God as children.**
- a. The kingdom of Christ is the spiritual rule of Christ by His Word and Holy Spirit.
 - b. Christ gives for the reason of His reception and blessing of the children of believers that they are already citizens of the Kingdom of which He is King (Mark 10:13-14, Luke 18:16).
 - c. We do not baptise children *to make them citizens*. We baptise them *because they are citizens*. They are citizens *already as children*. We do not wait for them to grow before they are citizens.
- 4. Children are members of the church of Jesus Christ as children.**
- a. The church is the spiritual body and bride of Christ, consisting of the elect who are gathered throughout history from all nations and are united to Jesus Christ the head.
 - b. The issue with Baptists is this: Are Christians’ children members of the church as children, or do we wait for them to grow up before we can call them members and treat them as such?
 - c. Paul addresses the children of the congregation as living members of Christ (Eph. 6:1-4, Col. 3:20). You cannot *nurture* spiritually dead children; and the children are “in the Lord.” Moreover, the children of believers are holy (I Cor. 7:14).
- B. We have proved that the children of believers have the reality; therefore they must have the sign.**
- 1. In the Old Testament the sign of the covenant was circumcision, and it was applied to children.**
- a. Baptists contend that circumcision was a sign of physical descent from Abraham or of membership in the nation of Israel. They see it as essentially

Jewish. But this is false: circumcision was a sign of an invisible, spiritual reality. That is what a sign is!

- b. (Physical) circumcision (of the flesh) was a sign of spiritual circumcision of the heart (Deut. 30:6). Not all who were circumcised in the flesh (sign) had circumcision of the heart (reality) (Jer. 9:26, Acts 7:51, Rom. 2:28-29).
 - c. Genesis 17:11 tells us that circumcision was a token (sign) of God's covenant; Romans 4:11 explains that it was a sign of the righteousness of faith; and Colossians 2:11 says that it was a sign of the cutting away of the sins of the flesh. *Therefore, it is essentially a sign of cleansing.*
- 2. In the New Testament, circumcision is no longer the sign of the covenant for three reasons.**
- a. Circumcision was a bloody sign. But the New Testament has no more shedding of blood. There is further need of a sign and seal, but a bloodless one.
 - b. Circumcision was only applied to males, but in Christ there is "neither male nor female." A sign which can also be applied to females is demanded in the New Testament.
 - c. Circumcision separated the Jews from other nations. Christ, by gathering a catholic church, unites Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:16). Thus circumcision makes way for a new sign.
- 3. The new sign, of course, is baptism.**
- a. Baptism is bloodless, is applied to males and females, and carries no Jewish baggage with it.
 - b. Baptism has essentially the same meaning as circumcision: that is why the New Testament describes baptised members of the church as spiritually circumcised (Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:11-13).
 - c. Thus circumcision gradually passes away, being replaced (better: "fulfilled" or "completed") by baptism. *If believers' children were circumcised in the Old Testament, they must be baptised in the New Testament.*

C. Objections by Baptists

- 1. But not all baptised children grow up to be the children of God in truth!**
 - a. This is true, because God's promises are only made to the elect children, but this was no barrier to circumcision in the Old Testament, so it should not be a barrier to infant baptism.
 - b. God did not tell the Old Testament parents to delay circumcision until their children made a "credible profession of faith." He commanded circumcision on the 8th day. We do not delay baptism.
- 2. There is no command to baptise children in the New Testament!**
 - a. That is not the point. There is no command to *exclude* the children from the covenant, kingdom, and church of God. That would have been a major change (and impoverishment) of the New Testament.
 - b. Besides, there is the practice of household baptisms (Acts 16:15, 31-33; I Cor. 1:16).
 - c. And children were baptised in the Old Testament type of baptism (I Cor. 10:2).
 - d. Conclusion: *God promises to our children (our seed) the reality; we gladly apply to them the sign.* Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 27, Q&A 74; Belgic Confession Art. 34; Canons I, Article 17.

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. Remember that in addition to the preaching the Lord has given sacraments to His church.

1. Sacraments are signs and seals of God’s covenant in Jesus Christ.

- a. Sacraments therefore are visible representations of an invisible reality (signs).
- b. And sacraments are marks of genuineness (authenticity) to assure us of God’s goodness (seals).

2. Baptism is a sign and seal of the washing away of our sins in the blood of Christ.

- a. By baptism God gives us a beautiful picture of what Christ’s blood does in washing us from sin.
- b. And by baptism God assures us that He as surely washes us from sin as water washes away dirt.

B. The Lord’s Supper is the second of the sacraments (remember: only two were instituted by Christ).

1. The Lord’s Supper differs from baptism.

- a. First, a person is only baptised *once*, because the one washing of Christ avails forever. The Lord’s Supper gives ongoing spiritual nourishment and is used often by the believer.
- b. Second, only a mature Christian may partake of the Lord’s Supper because self examination and spiritual discernment are required, whereas children of believers are also baptized.

2. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper has been the subject of controversy. Four main views:

- a. The Roman Catholic view: transubstantiation and the Mass
- b. The Lutheran view: consubstantiation
- c. The Zwinglian (and majority evangelical) view: a memorial meal
- d. The Reformed view: spiritual partaking of Christ’s crucified body and shed blood

I. THE SIGN AND SEAL OF THE LORD’S SUPPER (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:15-20; John 6:32-35, 48-58; I Cor. 10:15-21, 11:20-30)

A. In the Lord’s Supper there is important symbolism.

1. The elements of the Lord’s Supper are not water (baptism), but bread and wine. We use these elements because the Lord Jesus used them when He instituted the Supper.

- a. Bread is the basic foodstuff of life; that is why Christ is called the Bread of Life. As bread is essential to physical life, so Christ is essential to spiritual life (Ps. 104:15, John 6:48-50).
- b. Wine is the drink consumed on festive occasions of great joy (weddings, etc.; Ps. 104:15, John 2). The symbolism of wine tells us that the shed blood of Christ brings us great joy in forgiveness.
- c. The bread and wine are consumed at the Lord’s table in a communal meal where the idea is fellowship with the Lord of the banquet and with one another (no private partaking).

2. There are symbolic actions in the Lord’s Supper too.

- a. There is the action of Christ (now of the minister) in breaking the bread (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; I Cor. 10:16, 11:24). Often in the book of Acts, the Supper is called “the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42, 20:7, etc.). This symbolizes Christ’s sufferings on the cross.
- b. There is the action of eating and drinking the bread and wine. Christ commanded all His disciples to eat and to drink, not simply to look at the food and drink or to smell them. The idea of eating and drinking is to receive Christ as true nourishment so that we become one with Him.

B. But the Lord’s Supper is more than mere symbolism. It is a seal to confirm our faith.

1. The language of the sacraments is “as certainly... so certainly ...” (see Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 28-29; Belgic Confession Art. 35).

- a. “His body was offered and broken on the cross for me...as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me” (Q&A 75).
- b. “He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ” (Q&A 75).
- c. “As bread and wine support this temporal life, so His crucified body and shed blood are the true meat and drink whereby our souls are fed to eternal life” (Q&A 79)
- d. “We are as really partakers of His true body and blood (by the operation of the Holy Ghost) as we receive by the mouths of our bodies these holy signs in remembrance of Him; and that all His sufferings and obedience are as certainly ours as if we had in our own persons suffered and made satisfaction for our sins to God” (Q&A 79).
- e. “As certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life” (Belgic Confession Art. 35).
- f. “As often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall thereby, as by a sure remembrance and pledge, be admonished and assured of this My hearty love and faithfulness towards you ... [that I] as certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty souls with My crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life, as this bread is broken before your eyes, and this cup is given to you, and you eat and drink the same with your mouth in remembrance of Me” (*Form for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper*).

2. The Lord’s Supper as a seal *strengthens the faith of believers*.

- a. The gospel tells us that Jesus is the Bread of Life and that we receive spiritual nourishment from Him by faith; and when we eat the Lord’s Supper Christ strengthens that faith.
- b. The gospel tells us that Christ’s body was broken and His blood was shed for our sins, but when we eat the Supper we receive a further confirmation of this truth, and we are greatly comforted.
- c. The Belgic Confession expresses it beautifully: “[Christ] gives us there to enjoy both Himself and the merits of His sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of

His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood” (Article 35).

- d. The Lord’s Supper only does this in believers who come in true faith and in connection with the preaching of the gospel. *Without the Word of Christ to explain the Supper, it is meaningless.* The Reformed never separate the sacraments from the Word.
- 3. This can only be the case, however, if we actually partake of (receive) Christ by faith. Therefore the Reformed view of the Lord’s Supper must do justice to the truth that the Lord’s Supper is a true partaking of and communion with Christ.**
- a. If all we do in the Supper is think about Christ’s death and symbolically eat crackers and drink grape juice, we do not partake of Christ. This is what many evangelicals do.
 - b. If all we do is remember Christ, we do not actually feed on Him by faith. And then how can we be nourished and strengthened by His crucified body and shed blood?
 - c. The Reformed faith, therefore, seeks to do justice to I Corinthians 10:16-17: “The cup of blessing which we bless, *is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?* The bread which we break, *is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The word communion means fellowship, partaking.
 - d. The Reformed creeds explain this communion: “to become more and more united to His sacred body by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us ...” (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 28, Q&A 76).
- 4. The manner of our partaking of the body and blood of Christ is spiritually by faith.**
- a. The Reformed deny, against the Roman Catholics and Lutherans, that Christ is physically present in the Lord’s Supper.
 - b. But the Reformed equally insist, against the Zwinglians (and many modern evangelicals), that Christ is truly present, but in a spiritual manner.
 - c. A person can receive the crucified body and the blood of Christ in the Supper *only by faith*: “to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ” (Q&A 76); “we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ”; “the manner of our partaking...is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith” (Belgic Confession Art. 35). See John 6:35, 51-56, 63.
 - d. No unbeliever receives the reality of the sacrament, which is Christ. He has no hand and mouth!

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. The controversy at the time of the Reformation was over Christ’s presence in the Supper.**
- 1. The Zwinglians said that Christ is not present in the Lord’s Supper at all, in any sense.**
 - a. This is the common modern evangelical view. The Supper is not a sacrament, merely a sign; it is not a seal; and the primary (if not only) use of the Supper is remembrance.
 - b. But if that is true, the Supper is not a real partaking of Christ (see I Cor. 10:16)
 - 2. The Lutherans said that Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper in a physical sense.**
 - a. This teaching is called “con-substantiation” because the true, physical body and blood of Christ is present “with, in, and under” the bread and wine.
 - b. Luther insisted on this because he wanted to do justice to Christ’s words, “This is my body.”
 - c. For Luther, Christ could not be present in the Supper if He was not there with His physical body. Famously (and sadly) Luther said, “I would rather drink blood with the Papists than mere wine with the Zwinglians!” Late in life, Luther’s greatest controversies were over the Lord’s Supper.
 - 3. The Roman Catholics said that the whole substance of the bread and wine had been transformed into Jesus Christ so that in the Mass there was no bread and no wine at all.**
 - a. This view is called “trans-substantiation.” Transubstantiation was officially declared a dogma in 1215, but was widely held in the church before this.
 - b. Rome is very clear: “In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*’” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1374). And “by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation” (ibid., paragraph 1376).
 - c. This view has all kinds of implications, which we will discuss in this lesson.
- B. The Reformed position is to do full justice to the real presence of Christ in the Supper, but to deny a physical, carnal, or corporal presence of Christ’s body, which is in heaven.**
- 1. The Lutherans who taught that Christ’s physical body is present “in, with, and under” the bread err seriously in their doctrine of Christ.**
 - a. The Lutherans had to explain how it is possible for Christ to be physically present in heaven and also to be physically present in churches all over the world.
 - b. The answer the Lutherans gave was *the ubiquity or immensity of Christ’s human nature*. They taught that at Christ’s ascension Christ’s human nature was so glorified as to possess some of the divine attributes, especially omnipresence.

- c. But the Reformed insisted that such a doctrine is impossible and is really a denial of the true humanity of Christ and of the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God. A true humanity must have the attributes of a true human nature. Heidelberg Catechism: “Christ is in heaven and we on earth” (Q&A 76); “Christ, who according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshipped by us” (Q&A 80). Belgic Confession: “Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heavens, yet doth He not therefore cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith” (Article 35).
- 2. But this denial of the physical presence of Christ in the Supper in no way denies Christ’s real presence.**
- a. Christ *is* present in the Supper, but in a way which surpasses our understanding. “He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not when we say that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ” (Belgic Confession Art. 35).
 - b. Christ is present spiritually, and the fact that He is physically present in heaven is no barrier to His being spiritually present in the Supper, since according to His divine nature He is omnipresent and He can communicate His body and blood to us by the Spirit of Christ.
 - c. Because Christ is present spiritually, and not physically, we do not partake of Christ physically by literally “eating” Him (that would be of no benefit even if it were possible), but we partake of Him spiritually, by faith.
 - d. By such a spiritual partaking of Christ by faith we are nourished, strengthened, and more and more united to Jesus Christ, who is the true Bread of Life. Thus the Lord’s Supper is a real means of grace to believers. “For Jesus Christ is the true object presented by them, without whom they would be of no moment” (Belgic Confession Art. 33).

I. THE REFORMED OBJECTION TO ROME’S “MASS”

A. The Roman Catholic Mass is not what happened in the upper room.

- 1. When Jesus said, “This is my body,” He did not mean, “This has become my body.”**
 - a. When Christ said those words in the upper room He was physically present with His body. The bread in His hand did not become part of His body, an extension of His arm. And the wine in the cup did not become His blood. It remained wine, and the bread remained bread! (Matt. 26:26-29).
 - b. Clearly Jesus is speaking figuratively. The disciples did not think He meant cannibalism.
- 2. When Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” He did not mean, “Sacrifice me!”**
 - a. If someone is physically present, you do not remember him. He is there! But Christ was speaking of a time when He would not be physically there, but only spiritually present. “Until He come.”
 - b. Transubstantiation is absurd: the bread has supposedly changed, but it looks, tastes, and smells like bread. Rome’s answer: the substance has changed, but the “accidents” remain (compare John 2:9). In Roman Catholic theology, “accidents” refer to size, shape, colour, taste etc.

B. We have two fundamental objections.

1. First, the Roman Catholic Mass is a sacrifice (Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14, etc.).

- a. Rome teaches: “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again ... As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out ... The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: 'The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.' '...in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1323, 1364, 1367).
- b. Some Protestants have said that the Mass is a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross, but this is, strictly speaking, incorrect. The Mass is a perpetuation, continuation or representation of the cross, that is, it is the same sacrifice as the cross.
- c. The Mass is offered to God to make satisfaction for the sins of the living and the dead, as well as to earn for them all the graces necessary for them to receive salvation.

2. Second, the Roman Catholic Mass is idolatry.

- a. Rome teaches that by the miracle of transubstantiation the bread and wine are changed into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ, and therefore, says Rome, the Mass is to be worshipped.
- b. Vatican II says, ““There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament (the Mass) the worship that is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is the sacrament to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten. For even in the reserved sacrament he is to be adored because he is substantially present there through the conversion of bread and wine, which, as the Council of Trent tells us, is most aptly named transubstantiation” (*Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*, p. 104).
- c. Since the Mass is a mere wafer of flour and water to worship, it is idolatry!

SUMMARY OF ECCLESIOLOGY

(The nature, attributes, marks, government, and means of grace of the church)

A. THE NATURE AND MARKS OF THE CHURCH

1. **The church is essentially a living organism: the body and bride of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18).**
 - a. The church has one life, which flows to her from one head to all the members. The life of the church is the life of Jesus Christ, which comes to her by the Holy Spirit from the cross and resurrection (Eph. 4:16).
 - b. The church is the elect body of Jesus Christ, the sum total of the elect chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4).
 - c. The church is formed in time by the power of the Spirit, who calls the elect into the body of the church.
 - d. Election (not man's free will) determines that there will be a church, who is in the church, and the position of each member in the church. The Arminian conception of the church is that it consists of all who choose to believe, and theoretically there might have been no church had no one believed (Canons II, Rejection of Errors, 1).
 - e. The church is not fundamentally an organization in a visible structure. That is Rome's concept of church.
2. **We can make distinctions when speaking about the church.**
 - a. *The church organism and the church institute*: the church organism manifests itself as the church institute, which is the local church with its own membership, means of grace, and officebearers. Not all members of the church institute belong to the church organism (I Cor. 1:2, Phil. 1:1, Tit. 1:5).
 - b. *The church visible and the church invisible*: the church visible is the manifestation of the spiritual life of the church in her worship, preaching, and sacraments, etc.; the church invisible is the church's inner spiritual life.
 - c. *The church militant, triumphant, and latent*: the church militant is that part of the church on earth which is fighting (Eph. 6:12); the church triumphant is the church in heaven which has triumphed after fighting (II Tim. 4:7-8); the church latent is that part of the church which is elect, but not yet born or gathered (II Pet. 3:9).
3. **The church institute can be recognized by all believers by its marks or identifying characteristics.**
 - a. Every believer must know the marks of the true church because believers must be members of the true church. Jesus Christ saves His people by engrafting them into His body, and ordinarily that includes their addition to the church institute. A "non-church Christian" is not a biblical idea (Acts 2:47, I Cor. 12:12-13).
 - b. The marks of the true church are objective: they are not based upon feelings or personal preferences. Subjective marks are things like "love," "friendliness," "lively worship," "spirituality," etc. Some of these may be important, but they are not objective.
 - c. By the marks of the true church, Jesus Christ is present in His church: He is present in the pure preaching of the gospel, in the right administration of the sacraments, and in the faithful exercise of Christian discipline (I Tim. 3:15). Insofar as these things are absent, the Spirit is grieved, and Christ withdraws

from such a church and eventually removes the candlestick so that it is no longer a church (Rev. 2:5, 3:16).

B. THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH (The church must have these attributes because the body reflects the glory of the head). “We believe one, holy, catholic, apostolic church.”

- 1. The unity of the church (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 1:10-13, 12:12, 14, 18; Eph. 4:3-6; John 17:21-23)**
 - a. We believe one church: there is one church because there is one Christ. Christ does not have two churches, two peoples, two brides, or two bodies.
 - b. The one church consists of all the elect called out of the world from the beginning to the end of the world.
 - c. The one church has one life and is perfectly united to one head. All members are united to one another.
 - d. The unity of the church is spiritual, not organizational; and the unity is in faith or doctrine. Oneness based on anything else but the truth of God’s Word is a false unity.
 - e. The local church (institute) is called to manifest the spiritual unity of the organism. This unity is threatened by false doctrine and schism. Certain theological errors are attacks upon the church’s unity: Dispensationalism, Pentecostalism, Baptist theology.
- 2. The holiness of the church (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 11:2-4; Eph. 1:4, 5:26-27; I Thess. 4:3; I Pet. 2:9)**
 - a. We believe a holy church: the church is holy because Christ is holy. Christ does not have an unholy bride or a filthy body. Christ has a holy body and bride because He has washed her from her sins and she partakes of His holiness.
 - b. The holiness of the church is the beauty and glory of the church: it consists of a real, spiritual holiness worked in her by the Holy Spirit. It consists in a real separation from sin and a real consecration to Christ.
 - c. The local church (institute) with every member is called to manifest the spiritual holiness of the organism. Thus holiness is seen in true doctrine, holy worship, holy living by the members, and church discipline to expel unholiness. The holiness of the church is threatened by compromise with the world.
- 3. The catholicity of the church (Eph. 2:13-16, 3:5-6; Rev. 5:9)**
 - a. We believe a catholic church: the church is catholic because Christ is catholic. Christ is the second Adam, the head of the new human race, which is the world of God’s people from every nation.
 - b. By catholic we do not mean “Roman Catholic.” We mean a universality, a church which transcends all earthly differences, a worldwide church. The church of Christ is not limited to one geographical location, to one social class, or to people of a particular type.
 - c. The local church (institute) with every member is called to manifest the spiritual catholicity of the organism. There must be no division in the church over racial, socio-economic, or other reasons. The church must not strive to be uniform, a collection of identical individuals. Variety is part of the church’s beauty, and God is glorified in saving a church from every nation, tribe, and tongue.
- 4. The apostolicity of the church (Acts 2:42, Eph. 2:20, Rev. 21:14)**

- a. We believe an apostolic church: the church is apostolic because Christ is the truth.
- b. The Roman Catholic and Anglican churches claim apostolicity. They claim apostolic succession: that their bishops can be traced back to the persons of the apostles (the Pope claims succession from Peter).
- c. The church's apostolicity is her adherence to apostolic doctrine. No church can claim to be apostolic which teaches contrary to the apostles (and therefore contrary to Christ). The church is called to teach, defend, and promote the doctrines of Scripture: the church is the pillar and ground of the truth.

C. THE POWER AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

1. Christ has given His church power in the world (Matt. 18:18-19).

- a. The power of the church resides in Christ the head, but Christ exercises that power through the church.
- b. The power of the church differs from the power of the state: it is spiritual, not carnal; the power of the sword of the Spirit, not the power of the sword of steel (I Cor. 5:5, I Tim. 1:20).
- c. The spiritual power of the church is exercised by the local church through the officebearers.
- d. The power of the church is the power to teach and preach, the power to rule, and the power to show mercy. These powers are given only to the church (I Tim. 3:15).
- e. The church exercises power especially by the keys of the kingdom, the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline, by which the kingdom of God is opened and shut (Rom. 1:16).

2. The government of the church (church polity) is the way in which the church is ruled.

- a. Christ is the sole King and head of the church. Therefore, the church's government is subject to Him.
- b. Christ rules His church through officebearers, men called by Christ to occupy a position of authority as spiritual representatives of Christ. These officebearers are men (not women) chosen by the congregation.
- c. Each congregation is autonomous: no other congregation and no civil government may interfere in the government of the local congregation.

3. There are different forms of church government, but only one form is the form authorized by Christ.

- a. Roman Catholicism and Episcopalianism: the fundamental error is hierarchy, the teaching that one office (bishop) is higher in rank than another office (elder) (Tit. 1:5-7; I Pet. 5:1-4).
- b. Congregationalism and Independentism: this comes in various forms. Such church government may even have officebearers, but since all decisions are made by the congregation, the elders do not rule.
- c. Anarchy: anarchy means "no rule." Anarchic churches have no officebearers, no membership, and no rules.

4. Church government mandated by Christ is ruled by officebearers (I Thess. 5:12-13; I Tim. 3:1-16, 5:17).

- a. The officebearers are men, called and equipped by Christ and chosen by the members.
- b. The true church is neither a democracy (every member rules) nor a tyranny (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

- c. Officebearers are men with real, spiritual authority, representatives of Christ, and servants of the flock.
- d. Officebearers must rule, and members must submit to officebearers out of love for Christ who sent them.
- e. There are three offices in the New Testament church: elders, ministers, and deacons. The elders rule and take oversight of the church; the minister labours in the Word and prayer; the deacons collect and distribute the alms (Acts 20:28; Rom. 10:14-15; Eph. 4:11; I Tim. 4:15-16, 5:17-18; II Tim. 2:2, 4:2, etc.).

D. THE MEANS OF GRACE AND THE SACRAMENTS

1. The Holy Spirit uses means to work and to strengthen faith in God's elect.

- a. The means of grace or means of faith are the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments.
- b. By these means the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of God's people to nourish us spiritually.
- c. It is the calling of Christians to be members of churches where they can use these means.
- d. The means of grace are not mechanical or automatic; they do nothing without the work of the Spirit and must be used by God's people in faith.
- e. The means of grace are official: tied to the offices of the church (Matt. 28:19, I Tim. 4:16, I Pet. 2:2).

2. The means of grace are only grace to the elect; to the reprobate they are means of hardening.

- a. The teaching of the well-meant offer is that God is gracious to all who hear the gospel; but this is false, because the gospel serves the further condemnation of the reprobate (Rom. 9:18, II Cor. 2:15-16).
- b. The teaching of the Federal Vision (and others) is that God is gracious to all who are baptised or to all who partake of the Lord's Supper; but again, the sacraments serve only to harden some (I Cor. 11:29).

3. Of the means of grace, the preaching of the gospel is the chief means of grace.

- a. Preaching works faith; the sacraments merely confirm preexisting faith (Rom. 10:17).
- b. Preaching is necessary for salvation; the sacraments are not (Rom. 10:14, I Tim. 4:16).
- c. The sacraments cannot "stand alone." They need the preaching to explain them.
- d. The means of grace are vitally important for the spiritual welfare of the Christian. They are two of the three marks of the true church. To neglect the means of grace is to endanger one's spiritual health.

4. Preaching of the gospel is the authoritative declaration of the gospel by Christ through the church.

- a. The preaching is not a suggestion, a discussion, or an offer, but a declaration of what God has done. The preacher is a herald sent by the king to convey only the message of the king.
- b. The preaching has as its content the Word of God (expository) or gospel of Christ crucified.
- c. The preaching is done through the church. No one else has the authority to preach.
- d. The preaching is done by lawfully called men (Acts 13:1-4, Rom. 10:14-15).

- e. The preaching has authority because it is the voice of Jesus Christ (John 10:27; Rom. 10:14; Eph. 2:17, 4:20-21), and it has power to save and to damn (Rom. 1:16; II Cor. 2:15-16, 10:3-5; Heb. 4:12).

E. THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. Sacraments are holy ceremonies, signs and seals, instituted by Christ for the strengthening of faith.

- a. The word "sacrament" is not found in Scripture. It comes from the Latin for pledge or oath. In the sacrament God pledges or promises His good will and grace toward us, confirming the gospel promise.
- b. Sacraments must be instituted by Christ: no man and no church may invent sacraments. Thus we receive only two genuine sacraments and reject Rome's five false sacraments: confirmation, penance, marriage, holy orders, and extreme unction.
- c. Sacraments, like the preaching of the gospel, belong to the church institute (Matt. 28:19).
- d. Sacraments are signs (visible representations of invisible, spiritual realities) and seals (guarantees or stamps of authenticity, assuring us that God's promise in the gospel is true and trustworthy). God gives us sacraments because of the weakness of our faith (Rom. 4:11, Heb. 6:17).
- e. There are three main views of sacraments: Rome confounds the sign and the reality; Evangelicalism sees them as ordinances which are mere signs; Reformed use them as true signs and seals and means of grace.

2. Baptism (washing of water as a sign and seal of the washing away of sins by the blood and Holy Spirit of Christ)

- a. Baptism as a sign and seal has a rich meaning: the washing away of sin (Acts 22:16); regeneration or renewal by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13, Tit. 3:5); union with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 3:27); fellowship with the Triune God (covenant) (Matt. 28:19); entrance into the body of Christ, the church (I Cor. 12:13); mark of belonging to Christ and separation from the world (I Cor. 10:2).
- b. Baptism does not bring about that which it signifies: it is a sign of the work of God; it is a pledge that God has done and will do these works of salvation in us; but the water itself does not wash away sin.
- c. The mode of baptism is not so important: we prefer sprinkling because it better fits the reality (I Pet. 1:2).
- d. The candidates for baptism are believers and their children. We baptise the children of believers (of confessing church members in good standing: not all children) because of God's promises. We do not believe that baptism makes our children Christians, washes away their sins, or regenerates them.
- e. We baptise our children because (already as children) they are members of God's covenant (Gen. 17:7, Acts 2:39), citizens of Christ's kingdom (Luke 18:16), and members of Christ's church (Eph. 6:1-4, Col. 3:20).
- f. The argument is simple: if children as children are promised the reality (spiritual salvation in Christ), we give them as children the sign of that reality (water baptism). *Of course, the promise is only for the elect.*

3. The Lord's Supper (a symbolic meal, remembering Christ's sufferings and death, and a real partaking of Him for the strengthening and nourishing of our faith)

- a. On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and wine and instituted the Lord's Supper. In this symbolic meal there are elements (bread and wine

symbolizing the body and blood of the Lord) and actions (breaking, pouring, eating, and drinking).

- b. The Lord's Supper serves to nourish our faith. As we receive the elements of the Supper we are assured that Christ died for us and that we partake of Him (I Cor. 10:16).
- c. Christ is present in the Supper to nourish our souls, but we must know how. Rome's view is *transubstantiation* (the whole substance of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ); Luther's view is *consubstantiation* (the physical body and blood are "in, with, and under" the bread and wine); Zwingli's view is a *mere memorial* with no presence of Christ (the common evangelical view).
- d. We reject the Romish Mass for its transubstantiation, its doctrine of sacrifice, and its idolatry.
- e. Christ is spiritually present in the Supper, and we feed on Him by faith (John 6:35, 51-56, 63). That is the only way in which we can feed on Him, because since the ascension He is in heaven. To feed on physical flesh (even Christ's flesh) would do us no good, because our souls need spiritual food. The Belgic Confession summarizes it thus: "Christ, that He might represent unto us this spiritual and heavenly bread, hath instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body, and wine as a sacrament of His blood, to testify by them unto us, that, as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life" (Article 35).

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. With Lessons 28-30 we come to the final section of Essentials: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology ... and now, Eschatology (the doctrine of the last things).

1. The main parts of Eschatology are the intermediate state, the precursory signs, the millennium, the second coming of Christ, the final resurrection, the last judgment, and the eternal state.
2. About this subject there is a lot of debate among Christians, especially over the millennium and the events leading up to and including the second coming of Christ.

B. This subject is of great importance because it concerns our hope (Rom. 8:24-25).

1. Is our hope that Christ will come and secretly snatch us away into heaven?
2. Is our hope that Christ will establish an earthly kingdom of Jews in a renewed Palestine?
3. Is our hope that the world will be “Christianized” so that the majority of the world is converted?
4. Our hope is the second coming of Christ and our own resurrection so that we live body and soul with Him forever (Rom. 8:23).

I. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE (the state of the soul after physical death and before final resurrection)

A. The Bible has a lot to say about the state of man after death, but its revelation is *progressive*.

1. **For that reason the Old Testament is less clear than the New Testament.**
 - a. The Old Testament reveals that all the dead went to a place called Sheol. This word “Sheol” is translated “grave,” “hell,” or “pit.”
 - b. Examples of “grave”: Gen. 42:38; Ps. 6:5, 49:15; Is. 38:18; examples of “hell”: Deut. 32:22, Job 26:6, Ps. 9:17, Prov. 15:11, Is. 5:14; examples of pit: Num. 16:30, 33
 - c. In the Old Testament the concept of Sheol is a place removed from this earth, where all the dead are together (I Sam. 28:19).
 - d. However, there is also the expectation that the experience of Sheol will be different for the righteous and the wicked.
2. **In the New Testament the place of the dead is called “Hades.”**
 - a. The word “Hades” almost always in the New Testament refers to the place of the wicked dead and is usually translated “hell” (Matt. 11:23; Luke 16:23).
 - b. Sometimes, however, “Hades” is more general, and it refers to the grave (Rev. 6:8, 20:13-14).
 - c. The New Testament is clearer about a difference between the state of believers and unbelievers after death, but the Old Testament is not silent about this (Ps. 73:18-19, Luke 16:22-23).
 - d. The other place of the dead is “Gehenna,” which is the place of torment for the wicked. It comes from the “Valley of Hinnom” outside Jerusalem, which was a burning rubbish heap (Matt. 5:22, 29, 10:28, 23:33; Mark 9:43-48 [Is. 66:24]).

B. We call this part of Eschatology “the intermediate state” because it is temporary and imperfect.

1. **Death exists in the world as the judgment of God upon sin, which raises the question: why must believers die?**
 - a. The death of believers is not judgment for sin: Christ has been judged for sin in our place.
 - b. The death of believers is not satisfaction for sin: Christ made full satisfaction (John 11:25-26).
 - c. The death of believers is the abolishing of sin: at the moment of death the struggle with sin ceases; the flesh (which dwells in the members of the body) is destroyed.
 - d. The death of believers is the passageway into eternal life.
 - e. We do not die because Christ did not purchase for us eternal life of body and soul (He did!), but because it is God's purpose to give us the benefits of Christ's death *gradually*. We will not have full salvation of soul and body until the Last Day.
2. **Death—although transformed for the Christian—is still dreadful.**
 - a. Death is unnatural: it is the last enemy, and it will not be completely destroyed until the Last Day.
 - b. When a believer dies death has power over the body, and the “earthly house of this tabernacle” is dissolved (II Cor. 5:1-2, II Pet. 1:13-14).
 - c. Death separates the believer from everything dear to him on the earth, and it constitutes a painful parting from those he loves in this life (although from fellow believers that parting is temporary).
3. **The state of the soul between death and the resurrection is temporary.**
 - a. The state we have at death is not the *final* state, but it not the *same* state either: it is intermediate.
 - b. It is not the believer's final hope to be a disembodied soul forever: full, blessed salvation is found in *the resurrection of the body* (Job 19:25-27, II Cor. 5:4).
 - c. The believer “waits” in the intermediate state for the consummation of all things at the second coming of Christ (Rev. 6:9-11).
 - d. The believer must wait in the intermediate state because he cannot receive his full inheritance (which Christ purchased for him, and of which he already now receives a foretaste) until all the elect are saved (Heb. 11:40, Rev. 6:11).

II. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE OF THE BELIEVER AND THE UNBELIEVER

A. The intermediate state of the believer is one of blessedness for the soul.

1. **The soul of the believer is immediately taken up to Christ its head (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 22, Q&A 57).**
 - a. The soul does not simply fly away into heaven when we die: it is taken up; Christ actively receives it; in a sense He comes for us at death (John 14:3, Luke 16:22, Rev. 20:4-6).
 - b. The soul at the point of death is made holy and made fit for heaven. Our souls are of the earth, earthy, and must be transformed to live in heaven. It does not happen naturally. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* says, “The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory ...” (Q&A 37).
 - c. At this point, the sanctification of the soul is perfected (Heb. 12:23; Rev. 6:11, 21:27).
2. **The blessedness of the intermediate state is conscious glory with Jesus Christ in the soul.**

- a. The believer is *with* Jesus Christ: this is the height of the blessedness of covenant fellowship.
- b. If Christ is not in heaven, and heaven consists merely of pleasure (food, drink, relaxation, entertainment, etc.), the believer does not want to be there.
- c. The longing of the soul of the believer is fellowship with God in Jesus Christ, and the soul of the believer is satisfied in heaven (Luke 23:43; II Cor. 5:6, 8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 14:13).
- d. The believer in the intermediate state reigns with Christ and rests in Christ (Rev. 14:13, 20:4).

B. The intermediate state of the unbeliever is conscious torment in hell.

1. At death God casts the ungodly person away from Himself into a place of punishment.

- a. The unbeliever's soul and body are separated at death, but the resurrection for him is no hope.
- b. The unbeliever is separated from everything he loved on the earth: his treasure was on earth, and he loses everything he had (Matt. 6:19-21, Luke 12:20-21, I Tim. 6:7).
- c. For the unbeliever, death is punishment and is not a passageway into eternal life, but into hell.
- d. Hell is a prison for the soul which is only temporary: death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire, where the unbeliever will be punished forever in soul *and body* (I Pet. 3:19, Rev. 20:14-15).

2. The misery of the intermediate state is conscious punishment.

- a. The unbeliever will feel the full weight of the wrath of God and His curse bearing down upon him forever. The only thing worse is the lake of fire which awaits the ungodly *after the Day of Judgment* (Luke 16:23-24).
- b. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire (Heb. 10:31, 12:29).
- c. It is from *that* dreadful end that Christ has saved us. Christ experienced "inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies" on the cross (Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 16, Q&A 44; Matt. 27:46; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 5:7).
- d. How we must be thankful that for us death has no sting! And how we must live in thankfulness!

I. ERRORS CONCERNING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

A. [We must remember that the intermediate state is not our *final* hope]. The intermediate state is the state of the soul between physical death and the final resurrection at the second coming.

1. Death is not the end because we have, apart from the body, a *soul* which exists after death.

- a. Atheism is materialistic: atheism teaches that man consists only of a body *without a soul*.
- b. But the Bible teaches that humans have souls which are conscious after death and exist apart from the body (Matt. 10:28; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; Rev. 6:9-10, 20:4).
- c. This is true of believers and unbelievers, but their state (or condition) is different (Luke 16:22-23).

2. The intermediate state concerns the body as well.

- a. At the point of death the body, separated from the soul, is subject to corruption and begins to return to its dust (Gen. 3:19).
- b. In this sense, the believer “sleeps” until the final resurrection of the body (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 27:52; Acts 7:60, 13:36; I Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51; I Thess. 4:13-15; II Pet. 3:4).
- c. When we bury our believing loved ones, it is with hope that the body will one day rise again. The Bible even uses the figure of planting a seed (I Cor. 15:42-44).

B. Greek philosophy (without God’s revelation) taught the “immortality of the soul.”

1. Many Greek philosophers taught that man has a soul which can never die (“immortal”).

- a. The state of the soul after death depended on the kind of life a person lived on earth.
- b. Generally, Greeks despised the body. They saw the soul as something noble degraded by the passions of the body. The idea of the resurrection of the body was absurd and abhorrent.
- c. It was not uncommon to think of the body as a prison which hindered the soul.

2. The common conception of unbelievers who are not materialists is similar to this.

- a. Many unbelievers reject the very concept of a soul: when you are dead, that is it.
- b. But others believe in a soul and expect the state of the soul to be happy after death: the proliferation of “near death experiences” and other stories is proof of this to many.
- c. The Bible does not teach that the soul is naturally immortal or good: the soul *does* survive death, but the state of the soul of the wicked is not immortality or life. It is death! (Rev. 20:14)

II. SOUL SLEEP AND PURGATORY [These are the two major errors concerning the intermediate state.]

A. Soul sleep is the teaching of cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

1. **The teaching of soul sleep is that the soul either ceases to exist between death and the resurrection or that the soul exists in an unconscious state.**
 - a. Jehovah's Witnesses actually deny the existence of the soul: they teach that the person who dies ceases to exist, knows nothing after death, and will be brought back on the last day.
 - b. Therefore, for Jehovah's Witnesses there is no "intermediate state" as such. Concepts of heaven, hell, etc. are denied by the Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious groups.
 - c. Soul sleep was also the teaching of many Anabaptist groups in Reformation times. In fact, Calvin's first theological work was called *Psychopannychia* ("The Wakefulness of Souls").
 2. **There are various passages to which "soul sleep" advocates appeal in support of their doctrine.**
 - a. There are the many passages which speak of the believer "sleeping" in Jesus (I Thess. 4:13). To sleep, however, is not to cease to exist (as Jehovah's Witnesses imagine it), but more importantly, sleeping here pertains to the body, not the soul (Dan. 12:2).
 - b. There are passages which indicate that those who are dead have no consciousness. But all of these passages refer to having no consciousness to things *happening on the earth*, and to the inability to serve God on the earth (Ps. 6:5, 146:4; Eccl. 9:5-6).
 - c. At the point of death the soul continues to exist in a conscious state of glory or torment.
 3. **Our objection to soul sleep is that it interrupts the blessed communion we have with Christ.**
 - a. If the soul "sleeps" unconsciously after death, it no longer experiences the joy of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ. This was Calvin's objection: "These men not only intermit the work of God for a time, but even extinguish it. Those who formerly went from faith to faith, from virtue to virtue, and enjoyed a foretaste of blessedness when they exercised themselves in thinking of God, they deprive both of faith and virtue, and all thought of God, and merely place on beds, in a sluggish and lethargic state! ... do they think [Paul] wishes to fall asleep so as no longer to feel any desire of Christ? ... Where were the benefit of being with Christ were he to cease to live the life of Christ?" ("*Psychopannychia*," *Tracts*, vol. 3, p. 444).
 - b. The believer expects to live in the soul and consciously to enjoy Christ after death, which is better than the experience he has with Christ now (Luke 23:43, 46; Acts 7:59; II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).
- B. The second major error is purgatory.**
1. **Purgatory is a teaching of Roman Catholicism: a place of purification of the soul after death.**
 - a. According to Roman Catholicism there are three intermediate states: heaven, hell, and purgatory.
 - b. Purgatory is for those who die in a state of grace but are not sufficiently holy to enter heaven.
 - c. "Sin must be expiated. This may be done on this earth through the sorrows, miseries and trials of this life, and above all through death. Otherwise the expiation must be made in the next life through fire and torments and purifying punishments" (Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences, *Vatican Two*, p. 63); "All who die in God's grace and

friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (*Catholic Catechism*, para. 1030).

2. Rome appeals to various texts in support of her doctrine of purgatory.

- a. II Maccabees 12:44-45: “For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And also in that he perceived that there was great favour laid up for those that died godly it was an holy and good thought. Whereupon he made a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin.” *The Apocrypha are not Scripture, and this passage does not teach purgatory.*
- b. Matthew 5:26: Jesus holds out the possibility of release after the payment of the uttermost farthing. *But Jesus simply means here that the debtor will never be released, because he can never pay!*
- c. Matthew 12:32: Jesus denies the possibility of certain sins being forgiven in this world or in the world to come. Therefore He holds out the possibility that certain sins will be forgiven after death. *This is a huge leap, an enormous stretch.*
- d. I Corinthians 3:15: Salvation “as by fire” refers to purgatory. *This refers to a test of ministers’ work on the day of judgment. Their works (not their persons or souls) shall be burned.*
- e. Revelation 21:27: Nothing impure shall enter heaven. *Absolutely! That is why we are cleansed in the blood of Christ from all sin* (Heb. 10:14; I John 1:7, 9).

3. Purgatory is a horrible blasphemy against Christ.

- a. It denies the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement on the cross: we have nothing to pay.
- b. It removes all comfort from death, because the Roman Catholic faces the gloomy prospect of purgatory.
- c. It is a scandalous money spinner for the Romish church, because masses, indulgences, etc. are the way to expedite a loved one’s release from purgatory (see Ps. 49:6-9; II Pet. 2:3).
- d. *Calvin*: “We must cry out with the shouting not only of our voices, but of our throats and lungs, that purgatory is a deadly fiction of Satan, which nullifies the cross of Christ, inflicts unbearable contempt upon God's mercy, and overturns and destroys our faith ... the blood of Christ is the sole satisfaction for the sins of believers, the sole expiation, the sole purgation; what remains but to say that purgatory is simply a dreadful blasphemy against Christ?” (*Institutes III, V, 6*)

INTRODUCTION [We move from “personal” to “cosmic” eschatology.]

- A. There are three main “eschatological schools” (theories about the “last things”).**
1. The three schools are named after the “millennium,” which is only mentioned in Revelation 20.
 2. In the providence of God, this passage (Rev. 20) has become a major subject in Eschatology.
 3. The question is simply this: will there be a period before the end when Christ will rule *on earth* for a period of 1,000 years, more or less? The “millennial” schools answer “Yes.” We teach “No.”
- B. The three main schools are called Postmillennialism, Premillennial Dispensationalism, and Amillennialism.**
1. All of the schools agree that in the future there will be the second coming of Christ; that there will be a resurrection of the dead; and that there will be a final judgment.
 2. The eschatological schools, however, disagree on the *number* and *order* of these events.
- C. The view we will defend (called Amillennialism) has this basic scheme:**
1. The next great event will be the second, final, personal, sudden, visible coming of Jesus Christ.
 2. Leading up to that will be various signs (events in the world and church which herald that coming and show us that Christ’s coming is near. We call these “precursory signs” [running before]).
 3. There will be one future coming, one future general resurrection, and one future general judgment.
 4. The “millennium” is the (symbolic) period of time between the ascension of Christ and His second coming.

I. AMILLENNIALISM [We begin with the true view of the Millennium before we explain the others.]

- A. The word “Amillennialism” means “No millennium” (the prefix “a” means “not”).**
1. **We call our view “Amillennialism” because we reject a *literal, earthly* millennium.**
 - a. First, the 1,000 years in Revelation 20:2-5, 7 is a symbolic, not a literal number. We know this because it appears in the book of Revelation, which is filled with symbolic numbers (7; 10; 144,000; 666; etc.), and because it appears in a vision (“And I saw ...” [Rev. 20:1]).
 - b. The number 1,000 refers to an unspecified long period (10x10x10). Ten is the number of completeness (a complete period according to God’s eternal decree).
 - c. The events of Revelation 20 do *not* take place *chronologically after* the events of Revelation 19.
 2. **On earth the activities of Satan are restrained during this period (“bound for 1,000 years”).**
 - a. The binding of Satan in vv. 1-2 is figurative: an angel binds Satan (a spirit) with a chain and locks him in a bottomless pit. This is a vision!
 - b. The binding of Satan is *not* a complete incapacitation so that Satan is utterly powerless, but it is with respect to two things: he cannot deceive the nations

of Gog and Magog (vv. 3, 7-8), and he cannot prevent the preaching of the gospel (by which the church is gathered).

- c. This binding of Satan takes place at the beginning of the millennium, and its effects last until Satan is “loosed” (v. 7). This binding took place when Christ died, rose again, and ascended into heaven (Matt. 12:29; John 12:31-32; Rev. 12:9).

3. In heaven, at the same time, the saints who have died reign with Christ in glory.

- a. Verse 4 says that John saw thrones and souls sitting on those thrones. Both Pre- and Postmillennialism teach that these thrones are on the earth, *but they are in heaven*.
- b. We know this because v. 4 says that the ones who reign are *souls*. This is speaking of the intermediate state *in heaven*. The souls are of the martyrs (“beheaded”), but this includes all believers.
- c. We know this because v. 4 says that they “lived and reigned with Christ.” Christ is in heaven, and in the book of Revelation “thrones” are in heaven (Rev. 4:2, 5:1, 6:16, etc.).
- d. The “first resurrection” in v. 5 is spiritual resurrection of the soul, living in the soul in heaven.

B. All of this shows us that the millennium is the period from the ascension to shortly before the end.

1. Therefore, we are right now in the millennium. We should not expect a future millennium.

- a. During that whole period Christ has been ruling from heaven, and He has bound Satan.
- b. During that whole period the gospel is preached, the church is gathered and persecuted, and the saints rule in heaven with Christ in the soul. *The text has nothing to do with ruling on earth.*
- c. During that whole period Satan has been severely restricted in his activities: he is still active, but he cannot do what he wants to do, which is gather Gog and Magog.

2. At the end of the millennium (a period determined by God in His counsel) Satan is released.

- a. Unrestrained, he does what he sought to do: he deceives Gog and Magog (the heathen nations on the periphery of history) and brings them against the church to seek to destroy it.
- b. Christ returns suddenly, destroys Satan, and casts him with the beast and false prophet into hell.
- c. The dead are raised and the final judgment occurs (vv. 11-15).
- d. During that whole period God’s saints have been ruling in heaven with Christ in the soul.

II. POSTMILLENNIALISM

A. Postmillennialism teaches that Christ will return *after* (“post”) the millennium.

1. The millennium for Postmillennialism is not a literal 1,000 years. It may be a longer period.

- a. The period will be characterized by peace, righteousness, and prosperity *on earth*. Many Postmillennialists call this a “Golden Age.”
- b. This will be peace and prosperity *for the church* in a “Christianized” world: during that period the majority of people will be converted, governments and

other institutions will be godly, and there will be a mass conversion of the Jewish people.

- c. All of this will take place on earth before Christ returns and as a consequence of the rule of Christ: in this way Christ's kingdom will be realized on the earth.

2. For this "Golden Age" to be realized, prophecies concerning persecution, apostasy, and Antichrist must be interpreted to have already happened *in the past*.

- a. Most Postmillennialists believe that such prophecies were fulfilled in AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. For example, the Antichrist was Nero or another Roman emperor.
- b. Christians should not expect widespread persecution and the rise of an earthly worldwide Antichristian kingdom, but should expect a worldwide *Christian* kingdom. (The *danger* is that Postmillennialists risk deception by the counterfeit kingdom of Antichrist when he comes.)

B. Postmillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 (and other passages)

1. The Postmillennial interpretation expects a future fulfillment of Revelation 20. (Remember, Amillennialism says that the millennium has already begun.)

- a. The binding of Satan will happen in the future and will make future earthly prosperity possible. Therefore, the binding of Satan will be such that he will be able to do almost nothing (vv. 3, 7-8).
- b. The reigning of saints will happen during a 1,000-year period *on earth*. This overlooks the fact that the reigning ones are "souls" of those who were "beheaded" and thrones in heaven (v. 4).
- c. At the end of the 1,000 years the kingdom of darkness will rise up against the kingdom of God.

2. Almost all "proof" for the "Golden Age" of Postmillennialism comes from the Old Testament.

- a. To interpret the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament is exactly the opposite approach: the New Testament is clearer and a development of the Old Testament, not vice versa.
- b. Examples of Old Testament prophecies: Ps. 2:8-12, 72:7-8; Is. 11:6-9, 65:17-25, etc.
- c. These (and many other) prophecies describe the New Testament glory of the church and her spiritual blessings under earthly figures.
- d. The problem with Postmillennialism is that it sees the "success" of Christ's kingdom in terms of numbers and earthly power. Fundamentally, Postmillennialism looks for an earthly kingdom (contra. John 18:36-37, Romans 14:17, and Romans 8:37). *Christ is ruling victoriously now.*

3. The future events according to Postmillennialism are these:

- a. Christ's kingdom will become progressively greater, and Satan will gradually be bound until the earthly glories of the millennium on earth shall appear.
- b. Satan's final onslaught will end with his destruction at the coming of Christ.
- c. There will be one future, bodily, visible coming of Christ, with one general resurrection and one day of judgment for all men. *Next time, we look at the much more complex and wildly popular view of Premillennial Dispensationalism.*

I. PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM

A. “Premillennial Dispensationalism” is a very influential movement (*Left Behind* books, etc.).

1. Premillennial Dispensationalism is one of the three main eschatological schools.

- a. “Pre” means “before” — Christ’s coming will be *before* Christ’s literal 1,000-year reign on earth.
- b. “Millennialism” refers to a teaching of a more or less literal 1,000-year future kingdom on earth.
- c. Dispensationalism is the teaching of “dispensations.” A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the will of God (C.I. Scofield).
- d. According to Dispensationalism there are seven dispensations: innocence, conscience, civil government, promise, law, grace, and the (future) millennium. In each of these periods God deals differently with mankind and offers him salvation on different terms.

2. We are more interested in the eschatology of Dispensationalism, but we should notice several key principles of Dispensationalist belief.

- a. There is an absolute separation between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church. Israel is God’s “kingdom people.” Israel has different promises than the church, and these promises will be fulfilled in a future earthly kingdom during the millennium.
- b. The Kingdom of God was postponed because, although it was offered to Israel, it was rejected. Therefore, in the interim period (the age of grace) God saves the church, but He will return to Israel.
- c. All Old Testament prophecy must be taken literally. Thus, the promises to Abraham about the land, the rebuilding of the temple, the restoration of David’s kingdom, etc., must all be fulfilled.

B. A “timeline” of Dispensationalism (There are various forms, but this is the most popular version.)

1. The second coming of Christ is “imminent” and will not be preceded by signs (secret rapture).

- a. The signs of the times in Matthew 24, etc., are not signs for Christians, but for Israel in the future.
- b. Therefore, Christ could come any moment and will come without any warning in the *rapture*.
- c. This coming of Christ will be invisible and silent: Christ will come to take away His saints, and no one will hear or see Him, and all Christians on earth will disappear (I Thess. 4:17).
- d. All Christians who have died will be *resurrected*, and all living Christians will be glorified. Also at this point there will be the first *judgment* (the first resurrection and judgment of saints).

2. After the “rapture,” history will continue for those “left behind” (Tribulation).

- a. This period is known as the “Tribulation” and lasts seven years (and can be divided into the “Tribulation” and the “Great Tribulation,” each lasting 3 ½ years).

- b. During this time (perhaps even before it) Israel will be restored, the temple will be rebuilt, and there will be a (short) period of peace for Israel before Antichrist rises up against Israel. Antichrist will pretend to be Israel's ally and will sign a peace treaty with her, but will then break it.
 - c. During the Tribulation, Israel will suffer terribly, because the Antichrist will persecute Israel and the "Tribulation saints" (those who are converted during this 7-year period). Antichrist will sit in the temple proclaiming to be God and will destroy the temple. But notice that *the church will not suffer, because the church will not be on earth.*
- 3. At the end of the seven years of Tribulation Christ will return (this time He will do so visibly).**
- a. When Christ returns, the whole nation of Israel will see Him, accept Him, and be converted.
 - b. At the second coming (the third coming) there will be the resurrection and judgment of Old Testament believers (second resurrection and second judgment). The Old Testament saints will enter heaven.
 - c. Believers who died during the Tribulation (the "Tribulation saints") and the surviving Israelites will be judged (and resurrected).
 - d. Those accounted worthy will enter the Millennial kingdom of Christ; but the Antichrist and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire.
- 4. The millennium will be a literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.**
- a. This millennium is necessary because many of the promises to Israel in the Old Testament have not yet been (literally) fulfilled. Therefore, the millennium is the time when these promises *must* be fulfilled.
 - b. During the millennium Jesus Christ will rule from a literal throne in a literal Jerusalem, and the Jews and "Tribulation saints" will rule with Him on earth.
 - c. During the millennium there will be peace, prosperity, long life, a restored temple with animal sacrifices, the keeping of Old Testament feasts, and the subjugation of the Gentiles who remain on earth. This peace and prosperity are possible because Satan is bound and Jesus Christ rules.
 - d. At the end of the millennium Satan shall be loosed, and he shall launch one final attack on Christ and His kingdom. He shall gather a huge army at Armageddon, which Jesus shall destroy.
 - e. At the end of the millennium there shall be the resurrection and judgment of the wicked and the final damnation of the wicked and of Satan himself.

II. A CRITIQUE OF PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM [PART 1]

A. Dispensationalism errs when it separates Israel from the church and makes them "two peoples."

- 1. The Bible is very clear that God only has one people throughout history.**
- a. Galatians 3-4 teach that Old Testament Israel was the same people as the New Testament people of God, except that Old Testament Israel was under the law as a schoolmaster (3:24-4:7).
 - b. Romans 11 teaches that Israel and the New Testament church are part of one olive tree (vv. 17-24).
 - c. Many passages in the New Testament teach that New Testament Gentiles are children of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ, and that therefore Abraham (and all Old Testament believers) trusted in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7-9, 16, 29; 4:28, 31; Eph. 2:19-20).

- d. The Bible gives the New Testament church the names of Old Testament Israel (see Ex. 19:5-6 and I Pet. 2:9), and the New Testament teaches the union in one body (the church) of Jews and Gentiles (John 10:16; Eph. 2:19-20, 3:6).
- 2. Old Testament prophecy must be interpreted in light of the New Testament: the New Testament makes clear that the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in a spiritual manner to the church (of Jews and Gentiles).**
- a. This does not mean that Israel is replaced by the church, but that Israel matures into the church.
 - b. Old Testament Israel was a child, living under types and shadows. The Old Testament can be compared to a picture book for children. Spiritual realities were explained to Old Testament saints in terms of physical things, e.g. the land of Canaan, the temple, sacrifices, and earthly peace and prosperity. These now *are fulfilled spiritually*.
 - c. How would an Old Testament believer living under types and shadows understand the concept of God dwelling with His people? The temple! How would he understand the concept of Jews and Gentiles becoming one? The Gentiles keeping the Old Testament feasts and coming to the temple in Jerusalem! How would an Old Testament believer understand the riches of spiritual blessings? In terms of earthly peace, long life, abundant harvests, etc.
 - d. This is exactly how the New Testament interprets the Old Testament: Amos 9:11-15 is fulfilled (spiritually, not literally) in Acts 15:13-18. Hosea 1:10-11 is fulfilled in Romans 9:23-26 and I Peter 2:10. These are keys.
 - e. Dispensationalism says that the church was utterly unknown (a mystery) in the Old Testament, but that is not true. The church as a body of Jews and Gentiles was *only partially revealed* (Eph. 3:1-6).

B. Dispensationalism completely misunderstands the nature of God's promise and kingdom.

- 1. Dispensationalism bases its scheme on God's promise to give the land to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:18, 17:8, 24:7, 28:4, 13).**
- a. Notice, first, that the promise was to Abraham, but he did not personally receive it (Acts 7:5).
 - b. Notice, second, that the promise was to the Seed of Abraham, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16).
 - c. Notice, third, that the New Testament interprets the promise of land as Abraham inheriting the world (Rom. 4:13), that the hope of the Old Testament saints was for a heavenly land (Heb. 11:9, 13-16), and that the Jerusalem we seek is heavenly, not earthly (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2, 9-14).
- 2. Dispensationalism makes a huge mistake when it teaches the postponement of the kingdom.**
- a. The kingdom of God or of heaven is not an earthly kingdom for the Jews. The disciples and many Jews misunderstood the nature of the kingdom: it is a spiritual kingdom with spiritual blessings (John 18:36; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 15:50; Col. 1:13, 4:11; I Thess. 2:12; II Tim. 4:18).
 - b. Jesus did not *offer* the kingdom to the Jews; the opposite is true (John 6:15).
 - c. And most serious: *if* Jesus had offered the kingdom to the Jews, and they had accepted it, how would He have been crucified? *Next time, further critique of Dispensationalism.*

I. A CRITIQUE OF PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM (continued)

A. Introduction and review

- 1. Premillennial Dispensationalism teaches an absolute separation between Israel and the church.**
 - a. God makes many promises to Israel which have not been (literally) fulfilled; they will be fulfilled in a future earthly millennium.
 - b. The church is a spiritual people with heavenly promises; Israel is an earthly people with the promise of an earthly kingdom.
 - c. The church will be taken out of the way at the secret rapture.
- 2. Premillennial Dispensationalism is characterized by multiple comings, resurrections, and judgments.**
 - a. There will be two future comings of Christ: the rapture (secret) and the revelation (visible).
 - b. There will be (at least) two future resurrections: of the righteous and of the wicked.
 - c. There will be (at least) two future judgments: of the righteous and of the wicked.

B. Premillennial Dispensationalism has a distinctive interpretation of Revelation 20.

- 1. Where possible, everything is taken literally.**
 - a. At the end of chapter 19, the beast and false prophet (Antichrist) will be cast into hell (v. 20). Revelation 20 follows chronologically after Revelation 19. “And I saw” (20:1) means “then.”
 - b. Satan will literally be bound for 1,000 years, during which time he will have no influence on the earth at all. This interpretation overlooks the explanation of Satan’s binding in 20:3, 8.
 - c. With Satan absent, Christ will rule *on the earth* with the Tribulation saints. This overlooks the fact that “souls” reigned on thrones, and thrones are not said to be on earth (20:4).
- 2. The other details of the millennium are taken from Old Testament prophecy, not the New Testament.**
 - a. Revelation 20 does not say that the saints lived and reigned with Christ 1,000 years in Jerusalem.
 - b. Revelation 20 certainly does not teach that the temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt *and used for sacrifice*.
 - c. Revelation does not describe the living and reigning with Christ in terms of long life, earthly prosperity, worldwide peace, etc.

II. VARIOUS OTHER PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

A. The Rapture

- 1. The classic passage on the secret rapture is I Thessalonians 4:13-18.**
 - a. I Thessalonians 4 answers the question: what will happen to those who died before Jesus returns?
 - b. The answer is that when Christ returns He will raise His people from the dead and at the same time transform the living saints so that they all meet Him together when Christ comes.

- c. There is nothing silent in the coming of Christ here (“shout,” “voice,” and “trump”). And there is nothing here to suggest that Jesus will come halfway and turn back, and return seven years later.
 - d. In fact, verse 17 says, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” But the rapture teaching is that after seven years, Christ will leave heaven to rule on the earth (without the church).
- 2. Another passage is Matthew 24:40 (“the one shall be taken, and the other left”).**
- a. There is nothing here about a secret rapture; and this separation of believer and unbeliever happens after the Tribulation (vv. 21, 29).
 - b. And, in fact, the one taken shall be taken in judgment; the one left shall be saved. (That fits with the context of Noah’s flood, v. 39, which “took away” the wicked and “left” Noah.)
- 3. A third group of passages (such as Matt. 24:43) likens Christ to a thief in the night.**
- a. The idea is that Christ will come secretly and snatch away the Christians as a thief steals at night.
 - b. But, again, the context does not fit a secret rapture. This happens after the Tribulation (vv. 21, 29).
 - c. Compare other passages which describe Christ’s coming as a thief: it is not silent or secret (I Thess. 5:2-5; II Pet. 3:10 [“the heavens shall pass away with a great noise”]). The idea is not of secrecy, but of *sudden loss* which comes upon the wicked when Christ comes in judgment.
- 4. A fourth group of passages promises deliverance of the church from wrath.**
- a. I Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 teach that Christians are not appointed to wrath. The Dispensationalists expect, therefore, that no Christians will be on earth when God pours out His wrath during the Great Tribulation. One emotional argument: “Christ will not beat up on His bride!”
 - b. But these passages do not promise Christians an escape from tribulation, persecution, and other suffering. Why did God not rapture believers in the Roman Empire, during the Reformation, etc.? In fact, the Bible warns that tribulation will be the lot of God’s people (Acts 14:22; II Tim. 3:12).
 - c. Revelation 3:10 does not promise to remove the church from the earth. It promises preservation *in* persecution, not exemption *from* it (John 17:15).
 - d. We must not expect to avoid suffering for Christ’s sake. Instead, we must expect tribulation, be ready for tribulation, rejoice in tribulation, and be assured that tribulation will not separate us from Christ (Rom. 5:3-5, 8:35-39).
- B. The “lost week” of Daniel’s “seventy weeks”**
- 1. Daniel 9:24-27 are key to Premillennial Dispensationalism. Here is their interpretation:**
- a. First, the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24 are a literal translation of “seventy sevens” [see Deut. 16:9]. Dispensationalism views this as seventy sevens of years, i.e. 70x7, or 490 years. During a literal period of 490 years, all the things mentioned in verse 24 will happen.
 - b. Second, the period of 70 weeks (490 years) is divided into 7 weeks and 62 weeks (69 weeks). That will be measured from the restoration of Jerusalem (ruined in Daniel’s day) “unto the Messiah the Prince.” But where is the 70th week? That week is key to the whole scheme!

- c. Third, the 70th week does not occur immediately after the 69th week. There will be 7 weeks (rebuilding of Jerusalem) and 62 weeks (until the coming of Christ). That makes 483 years, but the last week has been postponed.
 - d. Fourth, because the Jews rejected Jesus Christ, the “prophetic clock” of Daniel 9 has stopped ticking, and God will restart prophetic history after the rapture. Into the “gap” between the 69th and 70th week there is the church age, which was unknown to Daniel.
 - e. Fifth, the 70th week will be a 7-year period in the future in which Antichrist will rise up, make a peace treaty with Israel, defile (a future rebuilt) temple, and end the sacrifices in that temple.
- 2. Our understanding of Daniel 9 is very different.**

- a. First, we do not take the passage literally, because it is a vision. Visions contain symbolic numbers (7, 10, 70x7, etc.). But remember that the Dispensationalists do not take this literally either. Seventy sevens is *not literally* 490 years, but 490 *days*.
- b. Second, since we do not take the passage literally, we do not try to use the numbers to calculate the years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to Christ’s coming. *That is not the point of Daniel 9!* The point of Daniel 9 is to assure Daniel that God’s covenant will be fulfilled: 7x7x10 refers to the complete period of time according to God’s eternal decree to establish God’s covenant.
- c. Third, there is nothing to suggest a gap of 2,000 years between the 69th and 70th weeks. We take the vision to mean that within the 70 weeks salvation will be completely accomplished (v. 24).
- d. Fourth, “*he shall confirm the covenant*” (v. 27) does not refer to some future Antichrist who will make a peace treaty with Israel and then break it after 3 ½ years and destroy some future temple in Jerusalem (future to Zerubbabel’s temple and Herod’s temple), but to Jesus Christ Himself. By His death and resurrection He “will cause the sacrifice to cease” (which is the teaching of the entire book of Hebrews), and by His death He shall “confirm the (existing) covenant” of God.

C. A Premillennial Dispensational view of Revelation (literalism) does not fit the purpose of the book.

- 1. **The book of Revelation is *not to be read literally*: it is a book of symbols, with “signified” in Revelation 1:1 meaning “given by signs or symbols”:** symbolic figures (the dragon, beast, lamb, woman, harlot, etc.), symbolic places (Babylon, Armageddon, Jerusalem, etc.), symbolic events (opening seals, blowing trumpets, etc.), and symbolic numbers, (144,000; 1,000; etc.).
- 2. **The events in the book of Revelation are *not to be taken in order of history*.** The events are cyclical and progressive: repeatedly, we come to the end of history, and we go over the same history again from a different perspective and with increasing intensity (seals, trumpets, vials, etc., 6:8, 8:7, 16:3).
- 3. **The point is not to give us detailed advanced history**, but to show us and the church of all ages that Christ’s Kingdom shall prevail against the kingdom of the devil. *Next, precursory signs (D.V.)*

I. THE PRECURSORY SIGNS (the “running before” signs)

A. Having looked at the different “schools” of millennial eschatology, we turn to the signs.

1. Both Premillennial Dispensationalism and Postmillennialism reject the signs.

- a. For the Postmillennialists, all the signs were fulfilled in the period around AD 70. Although there may be further events (war, famine, etc.), these are not signs *for the church*.
- b. For the Premillennial Dispensationalists, the signs promised in the Bible are for a future reconstituted Israel and the saints alive after the rapture. The rapture will happen at any moment without signs. (Premillennial Dispensationalists do like to watch political events in the Middle East though!)

2. But Christ teaches us to expect to see signs in history of His coming.

- a. These signs do not enable us to calculate the date of Christ’s coming (Matt. 24:36).
- b. These signs are *not* like road signs *measuring distance* to our destination. The signs of Christ’s coming do not merely point to Christ’s coming. They are indications of His coming, they bring about His coming, they are the way in which He comes, and they are part of His coming.
- c. The signs tell us that Christ is at the right hand of God and that He is on His way. They are encouragements to us to watch and pray, and they are warnings to the wicked of coming judgment. The best illustration is a thunderstorm: changes in atmospheric pressure, darkening of the skies, and distant rumbling of thunder all indicate the coming of a storm and are part of the storm’s coming. (Matt. 26:64 teaches that as soon as Christ ascended He started coming again.)

B. The classic passage on the signs of Christ’s coming is Matthew 24 (and parallel passages).

1. In Matthew 24 Jesus announces that the temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed.

- a. To this shocking revelation the disciples ask two questions: "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3).
- b. Jesus answers both questions, but He blends the answers into one discourse. Some aspects of His answer apply to the entire New Testament age and the second coming; some aspects of His answer apply to the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem; and some aspects of His answer apply to both.
- c. Jesus really makes the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 a type or picture of the end of the world. This is common in Scripture and especially among the prophets (prophetic foreshortening).

2. At this point both Postmillennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism go wrong.

- a. The Premillennial Dispensationalist applies everything in Matthew 24 to the destruction of a future rebuilt temple in a future restored Jerusalem by a future Antichrist after a future rapture. Then Jesus never answered the disciples’ question about the temple then standing! (vv. 2-3).

- b. The Postmillennialist applies everything (at least through v. 34) to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70; but this leads to many forced interpretations and makes Matthew 24 irrelevant to the church.
- c. We teach that the precursory signs are signs *to us*, not merely to the church of the past or the future.

II. THREE TYPES OF PRECURSORY SIGNS

A. First, there are the signs which occur in the creation (Matt. 24:6-8; Luke 21:11, 25).

1. These signs are the most “headline-grabbing,” because they are the most dramatic.

- a. The world calls these signs “natural disasters.” For the church they are signs, because they show us that Christ is at the right hand of the Father and that He is sending these (Rev. 6).
- b. These signs have been occurring throughout history, but since Christ’s ascension He has been sending them with *increasing frequency and intensity*, and we should expect more before the end.
- c. Jesus tells us that these things are only “the beginning of sorrows” and that the end is “not yet” (Matt. 24:6-8). The sorrows are “birth pangs” or “labour pains.” They are sharp, painful, and sudden, and they increase in frequency and intensity towards the end and bring about the “birth” of a new world.

2. The purpose of these signs is to bring judgment upon an increasingly wicked world.

- a. When Christ sends these signs it is to remind the world that He is judge and that this present world is not permanent (see Rom. 8:22-23 and Heb. 12:26-28).
- b. The church must see in these signs footsteps of the coming of Christ. As the signs intensify and become more frequent, the church must know that Christ is coming quickly.
- c. These “natural disasters” are good for the church, because God saves us in the way of bringing devastation upon the wicked world. But we must not expect to be unaffected by these things. We remain on the earth when these things are happening.

B. Second, there are the signs which occur in the world of nations (Matt. 24:6, 12).

1. The nations will increase in wickedness during the New Testament age (“iniquity shall abound”).

- a. Iniquity is “lawlessness”: men and societies will develop in open, flagrant, deliberate disobedience against God’s law. Man in the last days will cast off all restraint (II Tim. 3:1-4).
- b. This, too, is part of God’s purpose with the New Testament age: man must develop in wickedness until the cup of his iniquity has been filled. Then Christ shall come in judgment upon a ripened world.
- c. The fullest development of wickedness will be the worldwide kingdom of Antichrist before the end.

2. From the wicked nations of the world Christ will take away peace (Matt. 24:6, Rev. 6:4).

- a. War, unrest, and violence will characterize the nations of men in the New Testament age: the dream of earthly peace will not be realized until just before the end, when Antichrist will achieve it for a time.

- b. War is necessary so that the church can do her work of preaching the gospel. If the wicked world could live in peace and could solve all its social problems, the world would concentrate its efforts on eradicating the church from the earth, which is what the world *will do* under Antichrist.
 - c. The church is not interested in world peace, eradicating poverty, or promoting environmentalism. These things distract the church from her real calling and distract the world from destroying the church. Christ comes by these things, sending them even in answer to our prayers (Rev. 8:1-5).
- 3. The nations of the wicked world will persecute the church (Matt. 24:9-10, 21-22; Rev. 6:9-11).**
- a. Persecution has been a reality for Christians from the beginning and will continue through the New Testament age. As the end approaches, persecution will increase until the Great Tribulation under the kingdom of Antichrist.
 - b. The Postmillennialists place all the prophecies of persecution in the past, and the Premillennialists place them all in the future after the rapture.
 - c. But persecution is a sign to the church that Christ is ruling and on His way; and Revelation 20:4 assures us that the persecuted saints will reign with Christ after death in the soul.
- 4. All of these signs are the filling up of three cups in the history of the New Testament age.**
- a. The cup of man's wickedness is filled as he develops in evil so that sin can reach its full potential and be seen as exceedingly wicked (Matt. 23:32).
 - b. The cup of the sufferings of Christ's body is filled as the church endures persecution (Col. 1:24).
 - c. The cup of God's wrath is filled as the world ripens in its iniquity (Rev. 15:1).
- C. Third, there are the signs which occur in the church.**
- 1. The main sign, and the sign which determines all other signs, is the preaching of the gospel.**
- a. About the other signs Jesus says, "the end is *not yet*," but about this He says, "and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14).
 - b. Despite the turmoil and persecution which the church faces, the gospel *will be preached*.
 - c. This worldwide preaching is necessary to gather the elect and leave a testimony to all nations.
 - d. Only at the very end, when Antichrist rules, will the church be prevented from preaching.
- 2. The second sign in the church is apostasy and false teachers in the church (Matt. 24:5, 10-12, 24; II Thess. 2:3).**
- a. Apostasy is a falling away from the truth by those individuals and churches which made a profession of believing the truth. The heathen cannot apostatize; only professing Christians can.
 - b. Apostasy will be caused by a lack of love for the truth and an unwillingness to suffer for the truth and will be aided and abetted by Satan working through false teachers (II Thess. 2:10-12).
 - c. Apostasy shall culminate in the coming of Antichrist himself. *Next time, D.V., we look at the coming of Antichrist and then at the coming of Jesus Christ Himself in great power and glory.*

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. Remember the divisions of Eschatology.

1. There are six:

- a. The intermediate state (the state of the soul between death and the final resurrection)
- b. The millennium (the whole period of time between the first and second comings of Christ)
- c. The precursory signs (indications in creation, the nations, and the church of Christ’s coming)
- d. The parousia (the second coming itself in great power and glory)
- e. The events at the parousia (one general resurrection and one final general judgment)
- f. The eternal state (of everlasting heavenly glory for the elect church and everlasting conscious punishment for the reprobate wicked)

2. Last week we started looking at the “precursory signs.”

- a. We saw that both Postmillennial and Premillennial Dispensationalist eschatologies reject the signs.
- b. We saw that the signs are not mere signposts: they are the way in which Christ comes. They are indications to us that Christ is at the right hand of God and that He is “on His way.”
- c. We saw that the signs increase in frequency and intensity as the end approaches.
- d. We saw that the signs bring judgment on the wicked and are a call to us for watchfulness. The signs are in creation (earthquakes, famines, natural disasters, etc.); in the nations (war, lawlessness, and persecution); and in the church (spread of the gospel and apostasy).

B. We conclude our treatment with the Antichrist (a huge topic, of which we only give highlights).

1. Antichrist is a future reality of opposition to God in Jesus Christ and the true church.

- a. First, Antichrist is *future*, not merely someone who lived and died a long time ago (the Postmillennial view is that Antichrist was the Roman Empire and her emperors, especially Nero).
- b. Second, Antichrist is future *for the church*, not merely someone who will attack the Jews and the so-called “Tribulation saints” after the rapture of the church (Premillennial Dispensationalist view).
- c. Therefore the Antichrist is a reality *in our future* for which we must be prepared.

2. The most popular (and wacky) view of the Antichrist is that of Premillennial Dispensationalism.

- a. The Antichrist will begin to rise shortly before the rapture of the church, but he will not be revealed as *the* enemy of God until after the church is removed by the rapture.
- b. The Antichrist is, according to Premillennial Dispensationalism, the white horseman of Revelation 6:2 (he goes forth to conquer after the church has supposedly been removed in 4:1). But the man on the horse in Revelation 19:11-15 is clearly the same (Christ). The white horse is the preaching of the gospel in this age.

- c. During Antichrist's 7-year reign, God's judgments will be poured out on earth (the Tribulation, supposedly described in detail in the seals, trumpets, and vials of the book of Revelation).
- d. Antichrist will make a peace treaty with Israel (the 70th week of Daniel 9:27) which will enable Israel to rebuild their temple. But he will break his treaty with Israel after 3 ½ years (the Great Tribulation), and he will desecrate (II Thess. 2:3-4) and destroy (Matt. 24:1-2, 15-16) the temple.
- e. At the height of the Antichrist's power, Christ shall return from heaven to destroy Antichrist, restore Israel, and set up a 1,000-year kingdom of peace and prosperity on earth (the millennium).

I. THE ANTICHRIST: A BRIEF STUDY (Antichrist means "against" or "usurper of" Christ.)

A. The spirit of Antichrist has been in the world since the fall of man into sin. Antichrist is simply the pinnacle of man's alliance with Satan (I John 4:1-3, II Thess. 2:7-10).

1. In the Old Testament the devil attempted to produce a worldwide Antichristian kingdom.

- a. The devil's first attempt was at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4-9).
- b. The devil made further attempts in Egypt, but God destroyed Egypt in the ten plagues.
- c. Near the end of the Old Testament period the devil made great progress in developing the kingdom of Antichrist (Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire). Each of these kingdoms stretched across much of the globe (Est. 1:1); each of them had a personal leader who demanded worship (Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander the Great, Roman emperors); and each of them persecuted the people of God. But the devil's plans for an Antichrist were thwarted by the coming of Christ to bind him at the cross (as we saw in our treatment of Rev. 20).

2. The book of Daniel gives the most detailed prophecies about Antichrist in the Old Testament. The purpose of Daniel's prophecy is to assure God's people of the triumph of Christ over Antichrist.

- a. In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of successive kingdoms in the form of a great image.
- b. In Daniel 7 Daniel himself has a vision of successive kingdoms in the form of terrible beasts (the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the indescribably horrible beast). These beasts are Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. There is also the vision of the little horn (Dan. 7:8).
- c. The later passages of Daniel's prophecy teach about Antichrist under the type of another "little horn," who in history is called Antiochus Epiphanes. This man called himself "God manifest," demanded divine worship, slaughtered the Jews, and desecrated the temple (the so-called "abomination of desolation"). He died in 164 BC.

B. The New Testament draws on material from Daniel and other prophecies and teaches a future Antichrist.

1. Antichrist will be a composite beast exhibiting features of the four beasts of Daniel 7.

- a. Revelation teaches this in chapter 13: two beasts emerge from the sea and the land. We know from Daniel that a beast is a kingdom. These beasts are not

two separate kingdoms, but two aspects of the same kingdom: the combination of a lion, bear, and leopard (as in Dan. 7).

- b. The beast from the sea is a worldwide, devil-inspired, persecuting, political entity; and the beast from the earth is the composite of all false and apostate religion which serves the first beast.
- c. In addition, according to chapter 17, there is Babylon the harlot, the seductive power of the kingdom of Antichrist, drunk with the blood of the saints.

2. From the material in Revelation we can make some conclusions about the Antichrist.

- a. The antichristian kingdom will be a worldwide, political organization with great power, ruling over all nations, and “all that dwell upon the earth (except the elect) shall worship him” (13:8).
- b. The antichristian kingdom will be the culmination of all false religion, apostasy, and especially the false church. False religion will aid and abet the Antichrist to come to power.
- c. The antichristian kingdom will be the final deification of man and the devil (the number “666” is man to the nth degree), and the kingdom of Antichrist will be Satanic (13:4).

3. In addition, it is clear from II Thessalonians 2 that there will be a final, personal Antichrist.

- a. The worldwide political entity will have a man at the very top who will be the personal embodiment of Satan. He will demand to be worshipped (II Thess. 2:3-4, 8).
- b. This man will come to power when the church (two witnesses of Rev. 11) has finished the worldwide preaching of the gospel. Then Antichrist will make the official work of the church impossible for a short time (“abomination of desolation” [Matt. 24:15, II Thess. 2:3-4, Rev. 11:7]).
- c. II Thessalonians 2 is not speaking about the desecration of a literal temple (either the one in Jerusalem in AD 70 or some future rebuilt temple), but the temple *which is the church* (I Cor. 3:16-17, II Cor. 6:16, Eph. 2:21). The Antichrist will make Christian public worship impossible (Rev. 13:15-17).

C. Our calling with respect to Antichrist

1. We must not fear the coming of Antichrist.

- a. The Bible does not tell us about Antichrist to terrify us, but to warn us to watch and pray.
- b. He comes in the purpose of God. He has only the power which God determines (ten horns).
- c. The Antichrist will not be able to separate us from Jesus Christ. We might be killed, but our death brings us to heaven, where we live with Christ in the soul (Rom. 8:35-39, Rev. 20:4).

2. We must be encouraged by the coming of Christ to judge the Antichrist.

- a. God will destroy the beasts, the harlot of Babylon, and the devil himself. This will happen especially in the last great Battle of Armageddon, which will be the final overthrow of God’s enemies. The days of Antichrist will be shortened for the sake of the elect.
- b. The personal Antichrist will be destroyed without a fight by Christ (Dan. 8:25, II Thess. 2:8). Christ will destroy the Antichrist *with the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His Coming*.
- c. Next we look at the second coming itself.

INTRODUCTION

A. There is a lot of speculation about how this world will end.

1. The world does not know how the world began and is equally clueless about its end.

- a. The theory of evolution explains the beginning, so it must also explain the end. The prevailing theory is that the world will end “with a bang or a whimper” (a sudden explosion or some other similar catastrophe, or a slow death by cooling).
- b. But the believer knows that just as God has a purpose with the beginning (creation), so He has an end (a goal, something to which He is aiming all things).
- c. The end of all things is the glory of God in the everlasting kingdom of Christ and the perfection of the covenant of grace (Rev. 21:3).

2. The second coming is the goal of all history, the hope of the saints, and the doom of the wicked.

- a. The reason history continues is that God still has a purpose to fulfill before Christ returns: the elect must be gathered; sin must develop; the sufferings of the church must be filled.
- b. The hope of the saints is not the intermediate state of the soul in heaven; that is merely *a* hope of the saints. We are looking for the second coming (Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 1:9-10; Tit. 2:13; James 5:7-8; Rev. 22:12-13, 20).

B. The coming of Jesus Christ will be *one final coming* and will bring about the end of history.

1. This is contrary to the Premillennial Dispensational notion of *two* future comings.

- a. According to Premillennial Dispensationalism, there will be a future, secret, invisible, silent coming “for the saints” (the rapture), followed by a visible, glorious coming seven years later “with his saints” (the revelation), followed by an earthly millennium and the end of all things.
- b. However, the Bible does not teach two comings: the rapture and revelation are the same event.
- c. That Jesus comes *with His saints* means that He comes with those who have gone to heaven before His coming; often “saints” refer to angels, and we know Christ will return with angels as well as His people (I Thess. 4:16-18, II Thess. 1:7-10, Zech. 14:5, Jude 14, Rev. 19:11-14, etc.).

2. In fact, there are three main Greek words used with respect to Christ’s coming, and they are interchangeable.

- a. The most common is *parousia*, which means arrival, presence, or coming (Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; II Thess. 2:1, 8; James 5:7-8; II Pet. 3:4, 12; I John 2:28). The Dispensationalists apply this word *parousia* to the secret rapture.
- b. The word “appearing” is *epiphaneia* (epiphany) (II Thess. 2:8; I Tim. 6:14; II Tim. 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13). The Dispensationalists apply this word *epiphaneia* to Christ’s visible coming.
- c. The word “revelation” is *apocalypsis* (apocalypse) (Luke 17:30; I Cor. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7; I Pet. 1:7, 13, 4:13). The Dispensationalists also apply this word to Christ’s visible coming.

- d. In addition, there is the simple verb “to come” (Rev. 1:7, 22:7, 12, 20).
- 3. The New Testament teaches that the second coming will happen “soon” and “quickly” and that it is “at hand” (Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; James 5:8-9; I Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:3, 22:10).**
- a. Many liberal scholars think Jesus and the apostles believed that Jesus would return within a few years. Since 2,000 years have elapsed, they conclude that Jesus was wrong. *This is unbelief.*
 - b. Many Postmillennialists believe that the event “at hand” is Jesus’ coming in judgment on Jerusalem in AD 70. Thus they place most of the book of Revelation in the distant past.
 - c. But we must do justice to passages which teach the coming is near and also to passages which indicate a considerable delay (Matt. 24:48, 25:5, 14, 19; II Thess. 2:1-3; II Pet. 3:8-9).
 - d. Jesus is coming quickly, that is, as quickly as the counsel of God has determined. He is not delaying anything, but great events must be fulfilled before He can come. From our perspective He seems to be delaying His coming, and for that reason many become impatient and fall asleep (see the virgins in the parable in Matt. 25:1-13). In addition, the Old Testament speaks of “near” events which occurred centuries later (Hag. 2:6-7, Heb. 12:26-27). *God’s timing is not our timing.*

I. THE SECOND COMING WILL BE A GLORIOUS EVENT.

A. It will be the final step in the glorification of Christ: one future, personal, sudden, visible coming.

- 1. The final coming will be personal: that is, the person of the Son of God in our flesh shall return.**
 - a. Ever since Christ’s ascension He has been hidden in heaven, but He shall come again (Acts 3:21).
 - b. This will not merely be a spiritual coming: in that sense Christ “came” at Pentecost; He “comes” at the death of the believer; He is “coming” in judgment (He “came” upon Jerusalem in AD 70).
 - c. This will be the culmination of all previous comings (Acts 1:11, I Thess. 4:16).
- 2. The final coming will be visible and audible: every eye shall see Him, and He shall be heard.**
 - a. *Visible*: Matthew 24:30 (“they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”); Revelation 1:7 (“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him”).
 - b. *Audible*: Matthew 24:31 (“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet”); I Thessalonians 4:16 (“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”); I Corinthians 15:52 (“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”).
 - c. *It will be characterized by signs in the heavens*. Matthew 24:29-30 (sun shall be darkened, moon shall not give her light, the powers of the heavens shall be shaken [see also Rev. 6:12-17]).
 - d. *The Lord will come with the trappings of glory, power, and deity*. To come with clouds (thick, billowing judgment clouds) is a description of deity (Ex.

19:9; Ps. 18:11, 104:3; Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7, 14:14-16). He comes with angels (Matt. 24:31, 25:31; II Thess. 1:7-10).

3. The final coming will be sudden and will throw the wicked into disarray and panic.

- a. It will be sudden because the wicked (despite warnings) will not be expecting it. It shall overtake them with sudden destruction like a thief in the night (Matt. 24:30, 39, 43, 50; I Thess. 5:1-4; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 1:7, 6:15-17).
- b. The Premillennial Dispensationalists teach that at the second coming the Jews will be converted en masse when they see Jesus return. They find this in Revelation 1:7 ("they also which pierced him"), but the word for mourning here and in Matthew 24:30 means to beat one's breast in anguish. There will be no repentance at the second coming of Christ. Zechariah 12:10 is fulfilled throughout the New Testament age when elect Jews and Gentiles repent and believe in Jesus.

B. The second coming will be triumph for the church.

1. Circumstances on the earth will be very difficult for the church when Christ returns.

- a. The church will have finished her work of preaching the gospel and will be unable to meet for public worship. Christians will be scattered, destitute, and persecuted.
- b. Satan will have finally succeeded in gathering all nations into one confederacy of evil with his man "Antichrist" at the head.
- c. The world will be in the middle of the Battle of Armageddon, on the verge of victory.

2. Armageddon will be the final battle between the church and the Antichristian kingdom.

- a. Armageddon means "the valley of Megiddo." Premillennial Dispensationalism believes that Armageddon will be a literal battle fought between the Jews and Tribulations saints and the Antichrist. It will come to a sudden end at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Rev. 16:16-21).
- b. They believe in a second great battle (of Gog and Magog) after the millennium (Rev. 20:7-9).
- c. But there is only one Armageddon (Rev. 16 and 20 describe the same event from two different perspectives). And the battle will not be a literal battle with swords or modern weaponry. Armageddon is a symbol for any great destruction of God's enemies when the destruction of God's people seems almost certain (see Judg. 5:19-21 and notice the similar imagery in Rev. 16:21; compare Ezek. 38-39 with Rev. 20:7-9). *Wonderful symbolism in the book of Revelation!*

3. The point is that when Christ returns it will be darkest hour in the church's history.

- a. The church will be on earth (no rapture); and the world will not be Christianized.
- b. But Christ will return to snatch the church from the jaws of destruction. Next time, events at Christ's coming: the general resurrection and the day of judgment (Lesson 30), D.V.

I. EVENTS AT THE PAROUSIA: THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

A. The first great event at the second coming will be the resurrection of the dead.

1. **This will be one event which shall happen on the same day as the parousia (John 5:25-29).**
 - a. Revelation 20 does not teach otherwise. The “first resurrection” of verse 5 is not a bodily resurrection, but is the reigning of the souls of believers in heaven in the intermediate state.
 - b. On that day “all that are in the graves shall hear [Christ’s] voice” (John 5:28), whether believer or unbeliever, whether from the Old Testament or New Testament, wherever they are.
 - c. Revelation 20:13 teaches that God will find and resurrect all men from every location (the sea, etc.).
2. **The resurrection of the wicked will be a resurrection of damnation (John 5:29).**
 - a. It will not be a blessing for the wicked to be raised bodily from the grave. It will be for the purpose of judging and punishing them for the sins performed in the body.
 - b. The body with which the wicked will be raised will be the same body without glory or beauty. The bodies of the wicked will be fitted for hell, undying death, and unending shame (Dan. 12:2).
3. **The resurrection of God’s children will be a resurrection of life (John 5:29).**
 - a. The resurrection of the body is necessary because we are the members of Jesus Christ, and since He is the “firstfruits of them that slept” (I Cor. 15:20) our bodies must follow His as the final harvest. Paul makes it clear that, if there is no resurrection of the body, then Christ is not raised.
 - b. The resurrection is necessary because our bodies, in their present condition, are not fit for life in heaven. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50). This does not mean that human nature itself cannot enter heaven, but that the human nature must be glorified before it can enter heaven. Indeed, the ascension of Christ is proof that the human nature has entered heaven.

B. About our bodily resurrection the Bible tells us two things: it will be the *same* body, but *glorified*.

1. **Christ will not make us a brand new body when He raises us from the dead on the last day.**
 - a. If He did, He would not save *us*. Our body (and soul) identifies who we are.
 - b. The Bible is very clear about this (Job 19:25-27 [“this body,” “my flesh,” “mine eyes shall behold, and not another”], Ps. 16:9-10 [“my flesh also shall rest in hope”], Is. 26:19, Dan. 12:2, Luke 20:37, John 11:24, Rom. 8:11, I Cor. 15:23, Phil. 3:21).
 - c. This is necessary for the sake of justice: the one who fought the good fight must be the same one who is crowned with righteousness; the one who sinned must be the same one who is punished.
2. **But the body which we receive from Christ on the last day will be changed and glorified.**
 - a. The body we have today is four things according to I Corinthians 15:42-45: corrupt (corruptible), dishonourable (shameful), weak, and natural

- (pertaining to this world). That body is called “vile” in Philippians 3:21 (a better translation would be “the body of our humiliation”).
- b. Our humanity is under the power of sin; and even the human nature of Adam was not fit for life in heaven (“of the earth, earthy” must “bear the image of the heavenly” [I Cor. 15:47-49]).
 - c. This glorious transformation of our body (as well as our soul) was purchased on the cross, for we were redeemed body and soul from sin (I Cor. 6:20).
- 3. This means that the body which we shall have in the eternal state will be essentially the same body, but glorified, transformed, and fit for life in the new heavens and the new earth.**
- a. Paul likens this transformation to a seed. A seed is in principle everything the tree shall be, but the fully grown tree is much more glorious than the seed planted into the ground.
 - b. The resurrection body will put on incorruption, glory, power, and spirituality. We must be careful not to confuse spiritual with immaterial or non-physical. The resurrection body will be entirely filled with and governed by the Spirit of God, without the hindrances of sin.
 - c. Therefore everything glorious about your body shall remain, and all imperfections shall be removed, and your body will be truly human, but glorious like Christ’s (Phil. 3:21).

II. EVENTS AT THE PAROUSIA: THE FINAL JUDGMENT

A. The final judgment will be one public event at which Christ will judge all men and angels.

- 1. The Judge will be Christ Himself (Matt. 25:31, John 5:22, Rom. 14:10-12, II Cor. 5:10).**
 - a. The judgment will not be like a human judgment with the hearing of testimonies, the weighing of evidence, and the determination of guilt or innocence. That has already been decided.
 - b. Men and angels will not appear before the judgment to hear for the first time *whether* they are to be justified or condemned. The consciences of all men already testify of God’s judgment. Besides this, the dead will already be judged immediately after death (a preliminary judgment) and will already be in heaven or hell in the intermediate state (Heb. 9:27, Rev. 20:13).
 - c. The judgment will be for the purpose of the *theodicy* (the justification or vindication of God). Justice will be done, and *justice will be seen to be done*. All sins will be exposed and condemned.
- 2. The judgment will include believers. Many deny this because they think it is an uncomfortable thought that believers will appear in the judgment (see Heidelberg Catechism L.D. 19, Q&A 52; Belgic Confession Art. 37).**
 - a. The Bible is clear that believers will appear in the judgment (Matt. 25:34, II Cor. 5:10).
 - b. But believers will not appear in the judgment to be condemned or even to be shamed. The sins of believers will be exposed on that day in order to magnify the grace of God in covering them. On that day we shall know with greatest clarity that our salvation is by grace alone (Rom. 8:33).
 - c. Believers will be vindicated, acquitted, and rewarded; we will take part in the judgment (I Cor. 6:3).

B. The outcome of the judgment will be everlasting life for the righteous and eternal punishment in hell for the wicked. We finish by looking briefly at the subject of everlasting punishment.

1. The eternal state of the wicked is hell or the lake of fire. Strictly speaking, the “hell” of the intermediate state (“Hades”) and the “hell” of the eternal state are not the same.

- a. The “hell” of the intermediate state is punishment for wicked souls until the resurrection.
- b. The hell of the lake of fire is a place of everlasting torment of soul *and* body. Hell is the place where God’s wrath is revealed as a consuming fire, a place of undying death, the “second death.”
- c. The awfulness of hell is expressed in the imagery in Scripture: fire, worms, darkness, pit, etc.

2. Everlasting punishment, although dreadful, is perfectly just.

- a. The severity of punishment is not determined by the length of time that sinners sinned, but by the gravity of the crime and by the fact that it is a crime against the infinite majesty of God.
- b. At the same time, there will be degrees of punishment in hell: all will be punished everlastingly, but some will be beaten with fewer stripes or less severity perhaps than others (Luke 12:45-48).
- c. The punishment of hell will last as long as God has being, that is, forever (Is. 66:24; Dan. 12:2; Matt 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-48; II Thess. 1:9; Jude 7; Rev. 14:9-11, 19:3, 20:10).

3. Let us look at some of the arguments offered by some *against* the doctrine of hell.

- a. Annihilationism: God destroys the wicked so that they no longer exist (Matt. 10:28, II Thess. 1:9). But to “destroy” does not mean to cause to cease to exist; it means to ruin, to render useless, to render inoperative. It makes no sense to have everlasting fire and smoke rising from the fire if no one is burning in the fire. And notice it says “*their* worm” and “*their* torment,” etc.
- b. Everlasting punishment in Matthew 25:46 means “everlasting cutting off.” This is a favourite argument of the Jehovah’s Witnesses cult. It proves nothing, because the cutting off is not annihilation. Also, the everlasting punishment is as long as the eternal life (the Greek word is the same).
- c. Conditional immortality: God will sentence the wicked to a certain time in hell, but they will be either released into heaven or annihilated. There is no proof of this in Scripture (Luke 16:26).
- d. Emotional argument: God would not do that! Emotional arguments cannot overthrow Scripture. Our attitude towards hell must be thanksgiving that Christ suffered the pains of hell in our place.
- e. Only the righteous have eternal life: this is true, but everlasting existence under God’s wrath is not life. It is the second death (Rev. 20:14). Life is fellowship with God (John 17:3).

4. After the judgment God renews the universe in the new heavens and the new earth.

- a. The world will not be annihilated and recreated, but it will be renewed, rejuvenated, and purged from all wickedness (II Pet. 3:10-13).
- b. The new heavens and the new earth will be the eternal home of God’s people. And that will be the subject of our next, and final, lesson.

I. HEAVEN (Eschatology: The Intermediate State, the Precursory Signs, the Millennium, the Second Coming of Christ, the Final Resurrection, the Last Judgment and the Eternal State)

A. We end Essentials of Reformed Doctrine with the biblical teaching on heaven.

1. There are many misconceptions about heaven, and we know precious little about it.

- a. Some think we will be forever in a disembodied existence in an immaterial realm, a place of pure light where we will sing forever in a choir or strum on harps while sitting on clouds.
- b. Others object to heaven as an intolerably boring place: nothing to do, endless church service.
- c. But heaven will be beyond any blessedness we can imagine. God tells us enough to make us long for heaven, but not enough to satisfy our curiosity (I Cor. 2:9, but v. 10, “God hath revealed”).

2. We must also understand that there is more than one heaven.

- a. II Corinthians 12:2 speaks about “the third heaven”: the atmosphere, outer space, and heaven itself.
- b. The heaven where the saints are now (the intermediate state) is *not the same heaven* where the entire glorified church will be after the judgment (the eternal state).
- c. Heaven is a place where the *souls* of the saints dwell, but the final state will be the new heavens and the new earth for the saints' *souls and bodies*. We will only be temporarily disembodied.

B. The eternal state (the eternal home of God, Christ, the elect angels, and the elect church) will be the new heavens and the new earth.

1. These new heavens and new earth are promised in Isaiah 65:17ff, II Peter 3:10ff, and Rev. 21:1ff.

- a. The present world will pass away: it will not be annihilated as if God has to start all over again.
- b. God will cleanse or purge this present world with fire and bring forth a “new” (fresh) universe.
- c. This new universe will be a real, physical, tangible place fit for human beings to dwell with resurrected bodies, and it shall bring heaven and earth together. Never again will heaven and earth be separated by an unbridgeable gulf. Heaven shall descend upon the earth.
- d. This is the opposite of the Jehovah's Witnesses' conception. They teach two realms: a heavenly kingdom for 144,000; and an earthly kingdom for the rest of the faithful.

2. The new heavens and new earth are God's eternal purpose: a renewed and perfected universe in which God's glory in Jesus Christ is eternally displayed.

- a. The first Eden was never God's eternal purpose: Adam's sin did not spoil “Plan A” and force God to make a “Plan B.” Christ was always “Plan A,” the only plan. It pleased God to make Adam and Eve, to have them fall, and then for Christ to redeem them so that God was glorified.
- b. It was never God's purpose to permit the devil to steal creation from Him: God will not “give up” on His creation, but the entire creation will be

redeemed (with elect humanity [not every single human being] at its centre: Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20).

- c. Therefore Christ died, not only for some human beings, but to overturn the curse which lay on the entire creation because of our sin (Rom. 8:21). When we imagine the eternal state, we must think of a world like this one but infinitely more beautiful, in which God's glory shines from every blade of grass; a world of redeemed men, angels, and animals; of forests, mountains, and rivers.

II. THE GLORIFIED CHURCH: THE NEW JERUSALEM

A. In a vision the blessedness of the church is set forth in terms of a glorious city (Rev. 21-22).

1. The fact that this is a vision should make us sober in our interpretation of such passages.

- a. The "holy city, the new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2) is not the literal city of Jerusalem. First, she comes down from heaven (Gal. 4:26, Heb. 12:2); second, she is the Lamb's wife, the church (Rev. 21:9-10).
- b. New Jerusalem is a symbol of the glorified church, the church as she is ideally in God's counsel, the church as she shall be when she is perfectly sanctified (Rev. 21:2; Eph. 1:4, 5:27; Jude 24).
- c. The new Jerusalem is the church of all ages, consisting of Jews and Gentiles from the Old Testament and New Testament, the patriarchs and prophets and the apostles (Rev. 21:12-14).

2. The primary idea of the vision is of beauty or glory. Everything which is precious, valuable, and beautiful is found in this great city.

- a. What could be more beautiful than a city which has foundations garnished with no fewer than twelve different kinds of jewels (jasper to amethyst), with the names of the twelve apostles in the twelve foundations (Rev. 21:14, 19-20; see also Eph. 2:20)?
- b. What could be more awesome than a city with twelve gates, each carved in massive pearls, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them, and guarded by twelve angels (Rev. 21:12, 21)?
- c. What could be more breathtakingly magnificent than a city whose streets are made of pure gold, so bright that it looks like transparent glass (v. 21)?

3. The size and dimensions of the city are symbolic of perfection.

- a. The city is a perfect cube, and its measurements are 12,000 furlongs (1,500 miles or 2,200 km).
- b. The idea is not that we will live in a city with such dimensions, but that the city is perfect. The number 12,000 is highly significant (3x4x10x10) and indicates perfect fellowship with God.
- c. The Holy of Holies in the tabernacle/temple was also a perfect cube (I Kings 6:20, II Chron. 3:8).

4. That the glorified church is described in terms of a perfect city is significant.

- a. A city is an ordered society, a permanent dwelling place, a community. It is a city for which the Old Testament patriarchs longed to exchange their tents (Heb. 11:10, 16).
- b. The New Jerusalem is a city with walls and gates, but these are never shut, because there is neither night nor danger there: perfect security, peace, safety, and permanency (Rev. 21:25).

B. The glory and blessedness of the new heavens and the new earth will be fellowship with God.

1. That is the goal of everything that God has been doing for His people from the very beginning.

- a. God created Adam and Eve and gave them “seed” so that He could share the blessed life of the covenant which He lives within Himself with rational, moral creatures in His image.
- b. There are various manifestations of this fellowship: walking with God; the tabernacle; the land of Canaan; the temple; the incarnation; the indwelling of the Spirit; but in heaven God’s tabernacle shall be permanently, everlastingly, and perfectly with men (Rev. 21:3).

2. Because fellowship with God is the goal, the centre of heaven will be Jesus Christ.

- a. There are many carnal conceptions of heaven. If Jesus Christ is not in heaven and if He is not the centre of heaven’s blessedness, then heaven is not heaven, and we do not want to be there.
- b. Jesus is the centerpiece of heaven because Jesus is the way to heaven; it is by His blood that we will be in heaven. Without the sacrifice of Christ, there is no heaven for any sinner.
- c. Therefore we should not be surprised to find that Revelation 21-22 is filled with references to Jesus Christ. He is the “husband” (21:2), the one enthroned (21:5, 22:3); He is the temple of the new Jerusalem (21:22); He is the light (brighter than the sun, 21:23); from Him proceeds the river of life (22:1); His name shall be on our foreheads, and we shall see His face (22:4); and His coming fulfills the promise of heaven (22:12-13, 16, 20-21).

3. The activity of the saints, therefore, shall be blessed rest, blessed service, and blessed fellowship *without sin* in glorified bodies and souls in the presence of God forever.

- a. There will be no sin in the new heavens and the new earth: gone forever will be even the possibility of sin. Our sinful souls and bodies will be entirely sanctified with the holiness of Christ, and we will no longer be hindered (as we are now) in our service, worship, or fellowship.
- b. That aspect of heaven is inconceivable to us now: we cannot imagine how we could exist in a realm where our thoughts, words, and deeds will be perfectly holy, no longer tainted with pride, selfishness, envy, or lust, where everything we do is done perfectly to the glory of God.
- c. Life in heaven will be praise and worship (thankful worship without boredom); service (without drudgery, frustration, or toil [Matt. 25:23, II Tim. 2:12, Rev. 22:5: something like what Adam and Eve did before the fall, tending, exploring, developing the new heavens and earth to God's glory]); and rest (resting in God, refreshment in the waters of life, tears wiped away by God).
- d. When we open our eyes, there we will see the glory of God, and we shall be satisfied with His likeness (Ps. 17:15), and we shall say, as the Queen of Sheba exclaimed when she saw Solomon’s kingdom, “[B]ehold, the half was not told me” (I Kings 10:7). *And this is all ours by grace, flowing to us from the fountain of God’s election and purchased for us on the cross of Christ!*

SUMMARY OF ESCHATOLOGY

(intermediate state, millennium, signs, parousia, resurrection, judgment, and eternal state)

A. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE (Matt. 10:28; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; Rev. 6:9-10, 20:4)

1. The state of the soul between physical death and the final resurrection at the second coming

- a. The intermediate state is temporary and imperfect: for the believer it is better than this life, but not as good as the new heavens and the new earth (blessedness in body and soul).
- b. The state of the dead is revealed progressively: Sheol vs. Hades/Gehenna; the state of the wicked is conscious torment (Luke 16:23-24); for the believer, conscious glory (Phil. 1:23-24, II Cor. 5:6-8).
- c. Believers are immediately taken up to Christ and sanctified in soul, the “first resurrection” (Heb. 12:23, Rev. 20:4-5).

2. Errors concerning the intermediate state

- a. Soul sleep. The body “sleeps,” but the soul is conscious; no interruption of communion with Christ.
- b. Immortality of the soul. The soul of the wicked is not immortal: it experiences undying death.
- c. Purgatory. Purifying fire after death: a dreadful attack on Christian comfort and a denial of the cross.

B. THE MILLENNIUM (Rev. 20:1-8)

1. Amillennialism

- a. The “millennium” of Revelation 20 is figurative; it began at the cross/resurrection/ascension (Matt. 12:29, John 12:31-32, Rev. 12:9) and ends shortly before the second coming of Christ (Rev. 20:7-9).
- b. The binding of Satan is with respect to a specific activity: to unite all nations against the church. Satan is bound already; he will be loosed near the end to establish (for a short time) the Antichristian kingdom.
- c. During the millennium (now) the souls of the saints reign in glory in heaven with Christ (Rev. 20:4). The first resurrection of verse 5 is the spiritual resurrection of the soul, not the resurrection of the body.

2. Postmillennialism

- a. The “millennium” of Revelation 20 refers to a period (could be much longer than 1,000 years) of earthly prosperity, peace, and success for the church, and the Christianization of the world (the “Golden Age”).
- b. The binding of Satan is yet future, and all the prophecies of apostasy and persecution are past.
- c. The reigning of the saints (v. 4) will be of saints (body and soul) in this life on earth before the parousia.
- d. At the end there will be the final rebellion of Satan and then the parousia itself.

3. Premillennial Dispensationalism

- a. *Timeline.* The imminent coming of Christ (secret “rapture”) to snatch away the church; the resurrection of the saints (church taken to heaven); the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation (3 ½ and 3 ½ years = 7 years; during this time Israel will be restored, the temple will be rebuilt, and Antichrist will make and break a treaty with Israel); the visible second coming of Christ; literal millennium

with Jesus ruling in Jerusalem (Satan bound); at the end of the millennium Satan is loosed, and the final battle of Armageddon results in the victory of Christ over Satan; the resurrection and judgment of the wicked; the eternal state.

- b. Premillennial. Dispensationalism teaches at least two future comings of Christ, two future resurrections, and two future judgments (separated by 1,000 years); and there is an absolute separation between Israel and the church.

4. Critique of Premillennial Dispensationalism

- a. Dispensationalism has two “peoples of God”: Israel and the church are one people (Rom. 4:12, 11:17-24; Gal. 3:7-9, 16, 29, 4:28, 31; Gal. 3:24-4:7; Heb. 11:26; Ex. 19:5-6 [I Pet. 2:9]; John 10:16; Eph. 2:19-20, 3:6).
- b. Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in the New Testament--Amos 9:11-15 (Acts 15:13-18); Hosea 1:10-11 (Rom. 9:23-26; I Pet. 2:10)--but not literally. Much of the Old Testament prophesies the New Testament age under types and pictures.
- c. The land promise and the kingdom (postponement): the land promise is fulfilled in the heavenly Jerusalem (Acts 7:5; Gal. 3:16, 4:26; Rom. 4:13, 9:6; Heb. 11:9, 13-16; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2, 9-14).
- d. Jesus did not offer the kingdom to the Jews and postpone it at their refusal (John 6:15).

5. The rapture, etc.

- a. The passages (Matt. 24:40, 43-44; I Thess. 1:10, 4:13-18, 5:9; Rev. 3:10) do not prove a secret, silent rapture in which the saints escape persecution and tribulation. *See our exegesis in Lesson 29:3.*
- b. Seventy weeks of Dan. 9:24ff. The 70 weeks are not literal, and there is no gap between 69th & 70th week. This was fulfilled at the cross. *See our exegesis in Lesson 29:3.*
- c. Premillennialism errs in its exegesis of Revelation: it is a book of symbols, and it is not detailed, advanced history in chronological order. It presents the same history in cycles. *See outline in Lesson 29:6.*

C. THE PRECURSORY SIGNS (Matt. 24)

1. The precursory signs are events in the church and world which indicate that Christ is on His way.

- a. Millennialism denies the signs: Post (signs were for the past); Pre (the signs are for a future generation).
- b. The signs tell us that Christ is at the right hand of God: they are encouragements to watch and pray, and warnings to the ungodly. *Illustration of a coming thunderstorm* (changes in atmosphere, darkening of sky, and rumbling of distant thunder are indications of the storm and part of the storm itself).
- c. Matthew 24 is a prophecy of the end of the world using the fall of Jerusalem as an historical type.

2. The three kinds of signs: in creation, among the nations, and in the church.

- a. Creation. All “natural disasters” (Matt. 24:6-8; Luke 21:11, 25): the ascended, exalted Christ sends these (Rev. 6); they are beginning of sorrows (birth pangs) (Rom. 8:22-23, Heb. 12:26-28); they are more frequent and sharper as the coming of Christ approaches.
- b. Nations. Wars (Matt. 24:6; Rev. 6:4), wickedness (Matt. 24:12), and persecution (Matt. 24:9-10, 21-22; Rev. 6:9-11). Three cups are filled during the New Testament age: the cup of sin (Matt. 23:32), the cup of the sufferings

of the church as the body of Christ (Col. 1:24), and the cup of God's wrath (Rev. 15:1).

- c. Church. The gospel shall be preached to all nations (Matt. 24:14), and there will be apostasy (Matt. 24:5, 10-12, 24; II Thess. 2:3).

3. One of the great precursory signs is Antichrist (Rev. 13, 17; II Thess. 2).

- a. Millennialism denies that the Antichrist is a precursory sign: Post (Antichrist lived and died in the first century, probably Nero); Pre (Antichrist will appear after the rapture and will be a sign to the Jews and those "left behind," but not to the church).
- b. Antichrist is a future manifestation of opposition to God in Christ and therefore to the true church.
- c. Antichrist is the pinnacle of all previous types of Antichrist (Dan. 2, 7) and will rise when Satan is loosed.
- d. Antichrist will have three aspects: personal (one man, II Thess. 2:3-4, 8); political (one world government, Rev. 13); and religious (alliance with false religion, Rev. 17).

D. THE PAROUSIA (I Thess. 4:16, Matt. 24:29-31, II Thess. 1:7-10, II Pet. 3:10)

1. There will be one future, personal, visible, glorious coming of Christ.

- a. The three words for coming (parousia, epiphany, apocalypse) are used interchangeably in the New Testament.
- b. The future coming will be glorious (visible, audible, characterized by signs in the heavens, and with the trappings of glory); it will also be sudden, unexpected, and devastating to the wicked, bringing sudden deliverance for the church.

2. Two great events at the second coming: the resurrection of the body and the final judgment

- a. The bodies of all men will be raised on the day Christ returns (John 5:25-29, I Cor. 15).
- b. The resurrection body will be the same body (Job 19:25-27), but glorified (I Cor. 15:42-45; Phil. 3:21).

3. The judgment will be a public event (Matt. 25:31, John 5:22, Rom. 14:10-12, II Cor. 5:10).

- a. The judgment does not determine heaven or hell: it is a public vindication of God (theodicy).
- b. Believers will be acquitted, vindicated, and commended; unbelievers will be exposed and condemned.
- c. Believers will be judged, but only to magnify the grace of God in their salvation.

4. The wicked will be condemned to everlasting punishment of body and soul.

- a. This punishment is dreadful and perfectly just (Is. 66:24; Dan. 12:2; Matt 25:41, 46; Mark 9:44-48; II Thess. 1:9; Jude 7; Rev. 14:9-11, 19:3, 20:10).
- b. Everlasting punishment is the teaching of Scripture: no annihilation of the wicked, etc.

E. THE ETERNAL STATE OF THE CHURCH

1. The "eternal heaven" is not the same as the "intermediate heaven."

- a. The eternal dwelling place of the church is the new heavens and new earth (II Pet. 3:10ff, Rev. 21-22).
- b. This blessedness is depicted under the figure of a beautiful city: the city *is* the glorified church.

2. The blessedness of heaven will be perfect fellowship with God in Christ.

- a. The glory of heaven is Christ in His glorified, sinless, perfectly sanctified church.
- b. Fellowship with God is the highest bliss (Rev. 21:3).
- c. And we will remember that the blessedness is ours through grace and purchased for us by Christ!