

Theology – Discovering Doctrine

- We have made our Foundations booklet the guide for our time together in this study
 - It makes a series of "we believe" statements on the areas of doctrine we are covering
 - Tonight we address the study of God or theology
 - There are six statements on theology that our church makes in its foundations class
 - We want to discuss each of them in this session...
1. We believe that there is only one true God.
 2. We believe that God is an infinite, intelligent Spirit.
 3. We believe that God is the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth.
 4. We believe that God is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor and love.
 5. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 6. We believe that each person of the Godhead is equal within their own distinct purposes.
- I want to read and discuss 19 passages of scripture that give us reason to believe these things
 - We won't have time for the many others that are available to us
 - There is a vast collection that describe our God
 - They touch on His existence, His attributes, His deeds, His Persons, and His interactions with mankind
- We begin with claim there is one true God
 - Which puts us at odds with a sizeable portion of the world's religious population
 - There is a classic passage about this, which is important in the history of Israel...

Deuteronomy 6:1-5

1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

- We see this God referred to as Jehovah (LORD) and Elohim (God) in the first sentence
 - LORD is "the self-existent" and God is "mighty" or "supreme God"
 - He has other names in the Bible, but these are two of the most common
- This is the God of Israel

- And He is one
- Literally, it could be said "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah"
- You'll notice verse 5 contributes to our understanding that He is "worthy of all possible honor and love"
- As this passage, and its corresponding quotations in the New Testament, command that we love Him with all that we are
- We may also address...

Isaiah 46:9-10

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

- In this case, God speaking through the prophet Isaiah and declares "there is none else"
- We could also say "there is no other"
- The God we serve is singular
- He is also an infinite, intelligent Spirit...

John 4:21-24

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

- This passage begins speaking of the Father - God the Father
- The last verse, which is our focus, calls Him Theos, which in this context means the true God
- And it says He is a Spirit
- One commentary writes elegantly on the topic...

"God, as a spirit, is immaterial, immortal, invisible, and an intelligent, willing, and active being; but differs from other spirits, in that he is not created, but an immense and infinite spirit, and an eternal one, which has neither beginning nor end: he is therefore a spirit by way of eminency, as well as effectively, he being the author and former of all spirits: whatever excellence is in them, must be ascribed to God in the highest manner; and whatever is imperfect in them, must be removed from him:"

- Another says it more simply...

"The phrase 'God is a Spirit' tells us that God is not confined to a physical form or a specific location. Instead, He transcends our understanding and experience of the physical world. When we think about this, we realize that God exists beyond our limitations."

- Infinite intelligence is addressed next...

Psalm 147:5

5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

- One restatement says God's "understanding is beyond measure"
- Or we could say "there is no limit to what he knows"
- There is a vivid description in the New Testament...

Romans 11:33

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

- We find God rich in two categories here: wisdom and knowledge
- What do these words mean and what do they tell us about Him?
- First, this wisdom is broad and full of intelligence
- It is used in regard to knowledge of very diverse matters
- In the case of God, there is no end to the diversity or breadth of His knowledge
- It is supreme intelligence, specifically, the kind that can only belong to God
- An intelligence above all intelligence
- Second, this knowledge usually references a general intelligence and understanding of the Christian religion
- It can be used in regard to moral wisdom
- It is not opinion, because it is certain
- It is something known, because it can be known - not just inferred or assumed
- For God, all that is capable of being known, He knows
- But it is not just that God possesses this wisdom and understanding, they have a depth and He is rich in them
- What do these words tell us?
- The depth is that of "the deep" sea
- That as of the deep things of God
- And these riches denote abundance, fulness, plenitude - wealth

- If we were to rephrase the first sentence based on what we know now, it may read...

"O the bottomless, endlessly abundant, limitless intelligence, and infinite understanding of God!"

- What does this mean for us?
- If there is something that you don't know, God knows
- If there is something the entire world doesn't know, God knows
- If something is too complex, God knows
- Too deep, God knows
- If it is something common to man, God understands
- Or something personal to you, God understands
- In the past, God understands
- In the future, God understands

- If we begin our study of God's wisdom at our first knowledge of it
- At a very young age
- And we live to be very old - even 80 or 90
- We will have only begun to grasp it
- It is as though we will have just pierced the surface of the waters above the Marianas trench
- But with the trench there would only be 36,037 feet of hard swimming to go
- With God's depth of knowledge, we never reach the bottom

- We also declare He is the Maker and supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth
- The Psalms will get us started discussing that...

Psalm 83:18

18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

- The phrase "most high" is interesting
- It refers to God as supreme and uppermost
- This is a name He is given - The Most High

- Over every earthly authority
- Over every being in spiritual realms
- The highest of the high in authority and power
- No one is close to Him
- He has no rivals

- Men, by observing His created world can see this
- As Romans describes it...

Romans 1:18-20

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

- Verse 20 can be restated this way...

"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

- Men are without excuse, it says
- His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature
- Have been clearly seen - since creation
- They are seen in the things that have been made
- We have plenty of evidence for His divine power in His word
- But the evidence goes beyond His written revelation
- The people of earth should be warned...

Jeremiah 10:10

10 But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

- I like this paraphrase...

"But the LORD is the only true God. He is the only God who is alive. He is the King who rules forever. The earth shakes when he is angry. The people of the nations cannot stop his anger."

- Those who reject Him to serve false gods should know
- Those who rebel against His authority should know
- Those who view themselves as their own final authority should know
- That He is the only God of the universe
- That He is alive
- That He is the eternal King
- And that no one can stand before Him
- We also believe He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor and love
- Let's begin talking about that in Isaiah...

Isaiah 6:1-3

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

- This holy One is sacred and set apart
- He is "thrice holy"
- This repetition may denote the magnitude and depth of His set apartness
- Or it may speak to the holiness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

- Whatever the case, His glory fills the whole earth
- As He sits upon a throne
- High and lifted up

- He is worthy of this...

Revelation 4:11

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

- How can a created being fail to give honor to their Creator
- Whatever glory, whatever, honor, whatever power we find in our hands to give, we must give
- It is only in our hands because He placed it there
- And gave us hands!

- We further declare that there are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- They are found in Jesus' words at the Great Commission...

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- Why are we being baptized?

- The Father loved us and sent the Son to die in our place
- When we have faith in the Son, we receive the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to be the Son's disciple and to please the Father
- One way we do that, is by following the Son's example to be baptized
- In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

- Make sense?

- We see their relationship here...

1 John 5:7

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

- Jesus also spoke of their unity in a way that convinced the religious Jews...

John 10:30-31

30 I and my Father are one.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

- He also gave us a glimpse of their distinct purposes...

John 15:26-27

26 But when the Comforter [Holy Spirit] is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me [God the Son]:

27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

- We have verses that declare their identity

- First the Son...

Philippians 2:5-6

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

- I like this paraphrase of the same verse...

"He was like God in every way, but he did not think that his being equal with God was something to use for his own benefit."

- Also the Spirit...

Acts 5:3-4

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

- With this in mind, we assert that each person of the Godhead is equal within their own distinct purposes
- We have already quoted from passages that help us establish this
- I want to mention three others...

John 14:19-24

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

- Jesus would die in our place and for our sins soon after these statements
- But He would also rise from the dead
- And He would return to heaven to be with His Father
- Who loved us enough to send Him
- After His departure, the Spirit would come to dwell within those who trust Him
- There is some further explanation in the next passage...

Ephesians 2:12-18

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

- People living without God in the world have been brought near
 - By God the Son
 - As He shed His own blood not just to cover, but to wash away sin
 - The Son has become our peace - peace with God the Father
 - We are reconciled to the Father
 - And the enmity that once existed between us has been eliminated
 - Because this is the case, we are given access to Him by the Holy Spirit
 - Who has been sent to dwell within us
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- I would leave you with one more thought on the matter from Paul's writings...

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.