

Theology for LIFE



LESSON #4: THEOLOGY PROPER

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THEOLOGY PROPER

— Lesson #4 —

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“The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in His creation. The Bible is the story of God’s involvement with His creation, and particularly the people in it” -- Wayne Grudem

–INTRODUCTION

THE WORD *THEOLOGY* comes from the Greek word *theos*, meaning "God," and *logos*, meaning "word" or "discourse"; hence, *theology* is a discourse about God.

Theology is generally taken as a broad term covering the entire field of Christian belief.

Hence, the designation given to the study of God the Father is _____
_____.

1A: Existence of God

1B. Cosmological argument

This argument for the existence of God is based on the fact that a *cosmos* (the Greek word for "world") _____.

Because something cannot come from nothing, there must be an original cause that is the reason for the world's existence.

2B. Teleological argument

Teleological comes from the Greek word *telos*, meaning "end."

The teleological argument states that _____ and useful arrangement in a system imply intelligence and purpose in the organizing cause.

The universe is characterized by order and useful arrangement. A logical conclusion is that God, the Master Designer, has created this magnificent universe.

3B. Anthropological argument

The anthropological argument for the existence of God is based on the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning “man.”

Contrary to the secular humanist who sees man simply as a biological being, the Biblicist sees man as created in the _____ (Gen. 1:26–28; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

Man is not simply a physical being, but also a moral being with a conscience, intellect, emotion, and will.

Quote:

“There are philosophical and moral features in man’s constitution which may be traced back to find their origin in God.... A blind force...could never produce a man with intellect, sensibility, will, conscience, and inherent belief in a Creator” – Lewis Sperry Chafer

4B. Moral argument

The moral argument for the existence of God is related to the anthropological argument. The moral argument focuses specifically on man’s awareness of _____ and _____, his inborn sense of morality, and recognizes that God has placed a sense of moral justice within the human race (Romans 2:14–15).

5B. Ontological argument

The term *ontological* comes from the Greek present participle *ontos* and means “being” or “existence.”

The ontological argument for the existence of God is a philosophical one resting on the fact that all men have an awareness of God.

Because the concept of God is _____, God must have placed that idea within man.

2A: Anti-theistic Theories



1B. Atheistic view

The term *atheist* comes from the Greek word *theos*, meaning “God,” and the prefix *a* (Gk. *alpha*), which in Greek negates the following statement.

Therefore, it means a nonbeliever in God.

Ephesians 2:12 uses the term (translated “*without God*”) to explain the status of unsaved Gentiles in their relationship toward God.

Atheists can be classified into three categories:

- the _____ atheist who lives as if there is no God;
- the _____ atheist who openly repudiates God;
- the _____ atheist who rejects God by his terminology; this classification would include those who deny a personal God.

2B. Agnostic view

The term *agnostic* comes from the Greek *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge,” accompanied by the *a* prefix. Hence, an agnostic is one who says we cannot _____ whether God exists.

3B. Evolution

Evolution begins with the premise that there is no God and then seeks to explain _____ apart from any involvement by God.

The implications are serious: IF God created man, then man is a morally responsible being; BUT IF man is the product of evolution, then he is only biological and is not morally responsible to any god.

4B. Polytheism

The term polytheism comes from the Greek words poly, meaning "many," and theos, meaning "God"; hence, it involves a belief in a plurality of _____.

Historically, many societies have been polytheistic, and polytheism continues to this day in several cultures around the world.

5B. Pantheism

Pantheism believes that "God is _____ and _____ is God."

Seneca, a Stoic philosopher of ancient Rome, said, "What is God? ... He is all that you see and all that you do not see."

6B. Deism

Deists believe there is no personal God to Whom man can relate.

An _____ God created the world and afterward divorced Himself from the human race and left man alone in his created world.

3A: Revelation of God



Revelation (Gk. *apokalupsis*) means “unveiling” or “disclosure.”

So revelation is God’s disclosure to man, in which He reveals _____ about Himself that man would not otherwise know.

1B. General revelation

General revelation, which is preliminary to salvation, reveals aspects about God and His nature to all mankind.

- Psalm 19:1–6 is a primary passage emphasizing the general revelation of God in _____. The heavens speak of God’s glory, for no one apart from a majestic God could bring the vast heavens into being. The earth, in all its beauty, harmony, and intricacy, reveals the handiwork of God. Romans 1:18–21 further stresses the general revelation of God and the fact that man is accountable to God. He has revealed “*His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature so that mankind is without excuse*” (1:20).
- God has also revealed Himself to all humanity through His providential provision and control (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15–17) so that mankind should respond to the gracious God.
- Furthermore, God has revealed Himself to all humanity through the _____, all mankind having an innate knowledge of Him (Rom. 2:14–15).

2B. Special Revelation

Special revelation is narrower than general revelation.

While all mankind is the recipient of general revelation, not all are the recipients of _____ revelation.

There are many examples of special revelation.

God revealed Himself through _____ and visions to certain people.

He spoke audibly to some and through theophanies to others.

A *theophany* is a visible or auditory manifestation of God.

However, the greater emphasis of special revelation is twofold: God's revelation through _____ and through Jesus Christ.

- Scriptures: An inerrant record of God's disclosure is necessary for man to have a true understanding of God's Person and works. That's exactly what we have in the _____. The Biblical writers were carried along by the Holy Spirit in writing the Scriptures, assuring the accuracy of what was written.
- Jesus: The Scriptures reveal Jesus Christ, and Christ, in turn, has revealed the _____ to mankind. The word *exegesis* ("to draw out; to explain") is derived from the Greek word translated "explained" (*exegesato*) in John 1:18. In that text the expression stresses that through His words (teachings) and works (miracles) Christ has explained the Father to mankind. A major emphasis of John's gospel is that Jesus came to reveal the Father.

4A.

Attributes of God

1B. Definition of attribute

Quote:

"[The attributes of God are] those distinguishing _____ of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God and which constitute the basis and ground for His various manifestations to His creatures" – Paul Enns

Quote:

"God is an invisible, personal, and living Spirit, distinguished from all other spirits by several kinds of attributes: metaphysically God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging; intellectually God is omniscient, faithful, and wise; ethically God is just, merciful, and loving; emotionally God detests evil, is long-suffering, and is compassionate; existentially God is free, authentic, and omnipotent; relationally God is transcendent in being, immanent universally in providential activity, and immanent with His people in redemptive activity." – Gordon Lewis

God's attributes are usually classified under two categories: **incommunicable**, meaning that those attributes are only true of _____, and **communicable**, meaning that _____ can also display a version of those traits, though in a finite and flawed manner.

However, in the study of God's attributes it is important not to exalt one attribute over another; when that is done it presents a caricature of God.

Only when ALL of the attributes are taken together does it provide a Biblical and proper understanding of the Person and nature of God.

2B. Incommunicable attributes

- ***Spirituality***

God is spirit and does not have a physical form (John 4:24).

God as spirit is everywhere; He cannot be limited.

The prohibition of Exodus 20:4 was given because God does not have a physical form; hence, it is wrong to make any _____ of Him.

The many references to God's physical features (Gen. 3:8; 1 Kings 8:29; Psa. 34:15; Isa. 65:2) are anthropomorphisms (figurative language giving God human characteristics, used to attempt to make Him understandable).

- ***Self-existence (aseity)***

God's self-existence means that unlike everything and everyone else, God does not have a _____ or a cause. He exists in and of Himself.

In the words of Thomas Aquinas, 13th-century theologian,
"He is the first cause; Himself uncaused."

Exodus 3:14 emphasizes His self-existence in His identification, *"I AM WHO I AM."*

The *being* verb emphasizes that He has continual existence in Himself.

John 5:26 further stresses that
"the Father has life in Himself."

God is independent and existent in Himself, and thus grants _____ to all His creatures (Dan. 5:23; Acts 17:28).

- **Eternity**

God is not limited by _____.

Quote:

"With Him there is no distinction between the present, past, and future; but all things are equally and always present to Him." – Charles Hodge

His eternity is expressed in **Psalm 90:2**,
"from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

God's eternity extends backward to _____ and forward to _____.

While God exists outside of time, He nonetheless sees a succession of events in time in relation to man and creation, for He created time and placed all creation within its realm.

- **Trancendence**

The transcendence of God is related to the _____ of God which emphasizes that *"He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty"* – Louis Berkhof

The transcendence of God means that God is _____ from His creation.

Isaiah speaks of God as *"the high and exalted One"* Who dwells on **"a high and holy place"** (Isa. 57:15).

Again, Isaiah says, *"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, **lofty and exalted**, with the train of His robe filling the temple"* (Isa. 6:1).

This pictures God as entirely separate and distinct from humanity and creation.

He is "wholly other."

When Isaiah recognized God as entirely separate, holy, and exalted above humanity, he cried out in fear (Isa. 6:5).

Isaiah also shows that while God is distinct from His creation, He nevertheless rules over it. (Isa. 66:1)

- **Immanence**

The immanence of God means that God is _____ in His creation.

Quote:

"The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in His creation. The Bible is the story of God's involvement with His creation, and particularly the people in it" – Wayne Grudem

Although God is entirely distinct from His creation, He is not inaccessible nor uninvolved in His creation.

Throughout Scripture God displays His immanence in ministering to His people and dealing with unbelievers.

- **Immensity**

Quote:

"[Immensity is] that perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space..." – Louis Berkhof

1 Kings 8:27 emphasizes this truth as Solomon declared, “Heaven and highest heaven cannot contain You” (also Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23, 24; Acts 7:48, 49).

This attribute is closely related to omnipresence.

- **Omnipresence**

In the next three attributes the prefix *omni* comes from the Latin word *omnis*, meaning “_____.”

Thus, omnipresence means God is _____ (not to be confused with pantheism, which states that God is *in* everything).

Psalms 139:7–12 explains the omnipresence of God.

From the highest heaven to the depths of the earth and sea—God is everywhere present.

There is no escaping God’s presence.

The doctrine of omnipresence is a comfort to the believer who recognizes that God is always present with him; yet it is also a _____ to the disobedient person that he cannot escape the presence of God.

- **Omniscience**

The English word *omniscience* comes from the Latin words *omnis*, meaning “all,” and *scientia*, meaning “knowledge”; thus it means that God has all knowledge.

God knows all things actual and possible, past, present, and future.

A number of things should be noted about God's omniscience.

First, God knows all things that exist in _____ (Psa.147:4; Mat. 6:8; 10:29-30).

The psalmist recognized the omniscience of God in that God knew his actions, his thoughts, his words before he even spoke them, and his entire life (Psa. 139:1-6).

Second, God knows all the _____ concerning things that have not occurred.

For example, Jesus knew what Tyre and Sidon would have done had they seen His miracles (Mat. 11:21).

Third, God knows all _____ events. Events that are future to man are an "eternal now" to God. He knew the nations that would dominate Israel (Dan. 2:36-43; 7:4-8), and He knows the events that will yet transpire upon the earth (Mat. 24-25; Rev. 6-19).

Fourth, God's knowledge is intuitive. It is immediate, not coming through the senses; it is simultaneous, not acquired through observation or reason; it is actual, complete, and according to reality.

- **Omnipotence**

The term *omnipotence* means that God is all-powerful and able to do all things that are in _____ with His nature and Person.

It is NOT theologically correct to define omnipotence by saying that "God can do anything," for His perfect holiness does not allow Him to sin (Hab. 1:13; James 1:13); His perfect truthfulness does not allow Him to lie (Heb. 6:18); His perfect faithfulness does not allow Him to go back on His Word (2 Tim. 2:13), etc..

Questions such as, "*Can God create a stone so large that He couldn't lift it?*" are not _____ questions, but semantic nonsense and philosophical foolishness.

- **Immutability**

Quote:

"[Immutability] is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises"
– Louis Berkhof

_____ is always for better or for worse, but since God is absolute perfection, improvement or deterioration is impossible for Him.

Malachi 3:6 teaches the doctrine of immutability: "*I, the Lord, do not change.*"

James 1:17 indicates there is no variation or shifting shadow with God.

The value of this doctrine is enormous: since God does not change, His love and His promises forever remain certain.

- **Unity**

Two thoughts are expressed in the unity of God.

First, it emphasizes that God is _____ numerically.

Part of Israel's daily worship was the recitation of the Shema (**Deuteronomy 6:4**), "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" This was a declaration of monotheism, affirming that God is one in His essence and cannot be divided.

It also affirmed Him as absolutely unique; there is none other that can be compared with Him (Ex. 15:11).

Second, the unity of God stresses that God is not a composite and cannot be _____ into parts.

- **Truth**

Truth means that the facts conform to _____. In God, we see the perfection of truth in three different ways.

First, He is **the true God** in distinction to all others; there is none like Him (Isa. 44:8-10; 45:5).

Second, He is the truth in that His Word and His revelation are reliable (Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:3-4; John 14:1-2, 6; Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2).

Third, He knows things as they are.

He is the truth in a comprehensive sense.

He is the _____ of all truth, not only in the sphere of morals and religion, but also in every field of scientific endeavor.

3B. Communicable attributes

- **Love**

1 John 4:8 indicates “*God is love,*” while verse 10 explains how that love is displayed: “*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*”

Quote:

“[God’s love is] that perfection of the divine nature by which God is eternally moved to communicate Himself. It is not a mere emotional impulse, but a rational and voluntary affection, having its ground in truth and holiness and its exercise in free choice” – Henry C. Thiessen

The Greek term *agape*, translated “ _____,” is frequently used to denote God and His response to humanity (John 3:16; 5:42; Rom. 5:5, 8; 8:35, 39; 1 John 4:10, 11, 19; Rev. 1:5).

Agape denotes a reasoned-out love, rather than an emotionally based love (but not devoid of emotion)—one that loves the object irrespective of the _____ of the object and even though the love may not be reciprocated.

- **Goodness**

The Hebrew word *tob* expresses the absolute goodness of God.

The Greek word *agathos* indicates that God is essentially and absolutely good (Mat. 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19).

The goodness of God is broad, encompassing a number of aspects.

One is benevolence, which describes God's affection toward people. It is seen for both believer and unbeliever (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17). God abounds in goodness toward His creatures (Ex. 34:6), even _____ (Psa. 36:6; 104:21; 145:16; Mat. 6:26).

Ultimately, God's goodness is demonstrated in His love toward the undeserving when He sent His only Son to be the _____ of the world (John 3:16; Eph. 3:18-19; 1 John 4:10).

- **Holiness**

The basic meaning of holiness is "set apart" or "separation" (Heb. *qedosh*; Gk. *hagiozo*). Many see holiness as the _____ attribute of all because holiness pervades all the other attributes of God.

Several features are embraced in the holiness of God.

It has a transcendent emphasis, indicating that He is utterly distinct from and high above all His creation.

It has an _____ emphasis, indicating that He is completely separate from all sin, all moral evil (Lev. 11:44-45). He isn't tempted by evil (James 1:13), nor can He condone it (Psa. 11:4-6; Hab. 1:13).

In His holiness God IS the moral and ethical _____.

- **Mercy**

Quote:

"[Mercy is] the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts" – Louis Berkhof

The Hebrew word *chesed* in the Old Testament emphasizes "the grace of a superior." It stresses the faithfulness of God despite man's unfaithfulness and emphasizes pity, sympathy, and love.

The New Testament Greek word *eleos* also includes the idea of pity and sympathy and may be translated " _____ - _____ " in a general sense.

God is indeed "*rich in mercy*" (Psa. 5:7; 6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 18:50; 21:7; 23:6, etc.; the word is frequently translated "*lovingkindness*").

God's mercy ministers to both the temporal needs of mankind (Ruth 2:20; Heb. 4:16) and to their eternal salvation (Isa. 55:7; Rom. 9:23; Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3); and it extends to Israel (Psa. 102:13) as well as to Gentiles (Rom. 11:30–32; 15:9).

His mercy is given according to His sovereign _____ (Rom. 9:15–16, 18).

- **Grace**

Grace may be defined as the _____ favor of God to those who are under condemnation.

A prominent Old Testament word describing God's grace is also *chesed*. This word denotes deliverance from enemies or adversity (Psa. 6:4; 31:7, 16; 57:3; 69:13-16). The New Testament word *charis* particularly focuses on the provision of _____ in Christ.

Grace is reflected in God providing salvation (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; 2:8); Christ brought _____ and truth (John 1:14; Rom. 1:5); the grace of Christ enabled believers to have a positional standing before God (Rom. 5:2); Christ brought life instead of death through grace (Rom. 5:17); the grace of Christ exceeded the sin of Adam (Rom. 5:15, 20); the grace of Christ dispensed spiritual gifts to all believers (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7-13); and Jews and Gentiles alike are accepted through grace (Eph. 3:2).

- **Justice**

The justice of God means that God is entirely correct in all His dealings with humanity, acting in accordance with His _____.

Since God's Law reflects God's standard, then God is righteous and just when He judges man for his violation of God's revealed Law (Psa. 89:14; 97:2).

5A. Names of God

1B. Elohim

Elohim is a Hebrew plural form used more than two thousand times in the Old Testament and usually termed a "plural of majesty" of the general name for God.

It comes from the abbreviated name, *El*, which probably has a root meaning "to be strong" (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; Josh. 3:10) or "to be preeminent." It is usually translated "God" in the English translations. *Elohim* emphasizes God's transcendence: He is _____ all others.

2B. Adonai

The designation *Adonai* means " _____ " or "Master" and is usually translated "Lord" in English Bibles. *Adonai* occurs 449 times in the Old Testament and 315 times in conjunction with Yahweh. It emphasizes the servant-master relationship and thus highlights God's sovereign authority (Psa. 8:1). *Adonai* should probably be understood as meaning "Lord of all" or "Lord par excellence" (Deut. 10:17; Josh. 3:11). It is also possible to understand *Adonai* as a personal address meaning "my Lord."

3B. Yahweh

The name *Yahweh* translates the Hebrew tetragrammaton (four-lettered expression) YHWH.

Because the name was originally written without vowels, it is uncertain how it should be pronounced. Most modern translations render it "LORD" (to distinguish it from *Adonai*, "Lord").

Although there is considerable discussion concerning the origin and meaning of the name, this common designation (used 6,828 times in the Old Testament) is likely related to the verb " _____ ."

Thus in Exodus 3:14–15 the Lord declares, *“I AM WHO I AM ... The LORD ... has sent me to you. This is My name forever.”*

This has particular significance to the *“I AM”* claims of Christ (John 6:35; 8:12; 8:58; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1), Who in His statements claimed equality with *Yahweh*.

By the name *Yahweh*, God identified Himself in His personal relationship with His people, Israel, and it was to this name that Abram responded in acknowledging the Abrahamic _____ (Gen. 12:8). By this name God brought Israel out of Egypt and redeemed them from bondage (Ex. 6:6; 20:2). Whereas *Elohim* and *Adonai* were designations known to other cultures, the revelation of *Yahweh* was unique to Israel.

4B. El Shaddai

Translated *“God Almighty,”* this name is probably derived from the verb meaning *“to be _____”* (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; Isa. 13:6; Ezk. 1:24; Joel 1:15). Because God is Almighty, all things are possible (Mat. 19:26). The One Who has formed the unborn child (Psa. 139:13–16) and created the heavens (Jer. 32:17) can do all things; nothing is too hard for Him.

He does as He pleases (Psa. 115:3) and decrees all things in accordance with His will (Eph. 1:11). By this name God is also seen as a covenant-keeping God (Gen. 17:1–8).

5B. El Elyon

Translated *“God Most High,”* this name emphasizes the _____ of God. He is above all so-called gods, for He is Possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:18–22).

6B. El Olam

Translated the "Everlasting God," this name stresses the _____ character of God (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28).

7B. Others

There are other terms that are sometimes mentioned as names of God, but they may simply be descriptions of God:

- *Yahweh-jireh*, "The LORD Will Provide" (Gen. 22:14)
- *Yahweh-Nissi*, "The LORD Is My Banner" (Ex. 17:15)
- *Yahweh-Shalom*, "The LORD is _____" (Judg. 6:24)
- *Yahweh-Sabbaoth*, "The LORD of Hosts" (1 Sam. 1:3, 11)
- *Yahweh-Maccaddeshcem*, "The LORD Your Sanctifier" (Ex. 31:13)
- *Yahweh-Tsidkenu*, "The LORD Our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6).

6A. The Trinity of God

1B. Definition of the Trinity

The Trinity of God is a fundamental doctrine; belief or disbelief in the Trinity marks orthodoxy from unorthodoxy. Human _____ cannot fathom the Trinity, nor can logic explain it; but although the word itself is not found in the Scriptures, the doctrine is plainly taught in them.

The term *Trinity* is not the best one because it emphasizes only the three Persons but not the unity within the Trinity. The German word *Dreieinigkeit* ("three-oneness") better expresses the concept. A proper definition must include the distinctness and equality of the three Persons within the Trinity as well as the _____ within the Trinity. The word *Tri-unity* may better express the doctrine.

Quote:

"The Trinity is composed of three united Persons without separate existence—so completely united as to form one God. The divine nature subsists in three distinctions—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit " – Paul Enns

2B. Misinterpretations of the Trinity



- **Tri-theism**

In Early Church history men such as John Ascunages and John Philoponus taught that there were three Who were God, but very loosely associated. The error of this teaching was that its proponents abandoned the _____ within the Trinity with the result that they taught there were three Gods rather than three Persons within one Godhead.

- **Sabellianism or Modalism**

This teaching, originated by Sabellius (c. A.D. 200), erred in the opposite direction from that of Tri-theism. Although Sabellius spoke of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he understood all three as simply manifestations of one God. The teaching is thus also known as *modalism* because it presents one God Who variously manifests Himself in three _____ of existence: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- **Arianism**

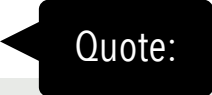
Arian doctrine had its roots in Tertullian (c. 155–c. 220 AD), who subordinated the Son to the Father. Origen (c. 185–c. 253) carried Tertullian’s concept further by teaching that the Son was subordinate to the Father “in respect to essence.” This ultimately led to Arianism, which denied the _____ of Christ. Arius and his teachings were condemned at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.

3B. Explanation of the Trinity

- **God is one in regard to essence**

The essential oneness of God is linked to Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” (Heb. *echad*, “compound unity; united one”). This statement stresses not only the uniqueness of God, but also the _____ of God (James 2:19). All three Persons possess _____ of the divine attributes. Oneness in essence also emphasizes that the three Persons of the Trinity do not act independently of one another. This was a constant theme of Jesus in rebuffing the charges of the Jews (John 5:19; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10).

- **God is three with respect to Persons**



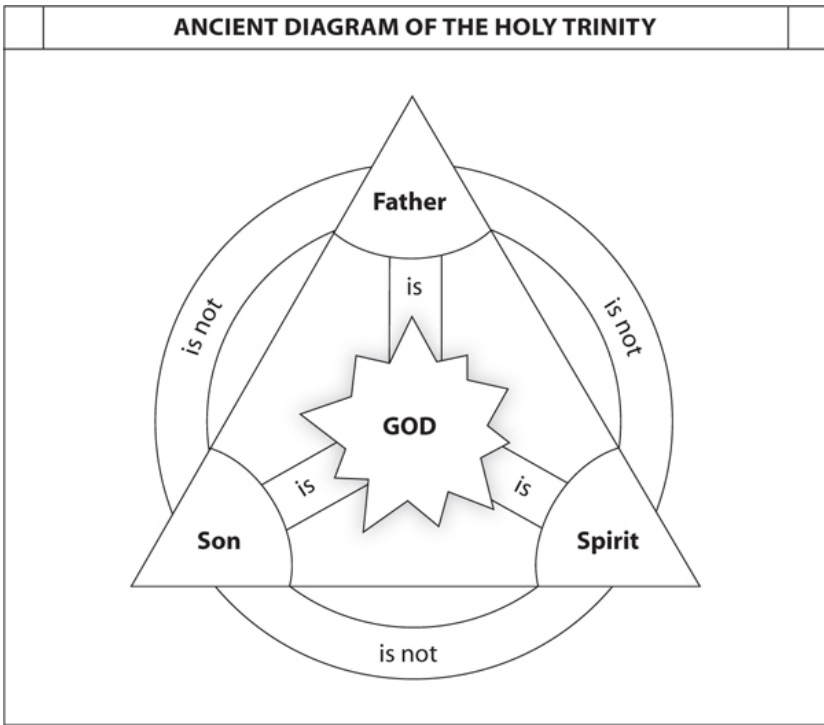
Quote:

“In God there are no three individuals alongside of, and separate from, one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence” – Louis Berkhof

This unity within three Persons is seen in Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 48:16 where the Father has sent the Messiah and the Spirit to speak to the restored nation.

In Isaiah 61:1 the Father has anointed the Messiah with the Spirit for His mission. These references emphasize both the equality and the unity of the three Persons.

ANCIENT DIAGRAM OF THE HOLY TRINITY



- **The three Persons have distinct relationships**

The Father is not _____, nor does He proceed from any person.

The Son is _____ begotten from the Father (John 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9).

The Holy Spirit eternally _____ from the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 16:7).

- **The three Persons are equal in authority**

The Father is recognized as authoritative and supreme (1 Cor. 8:6); the Son is also recognized as _____ to the Father in every respect (John 5:21-23); the _____ is likewise recognized as equal to the Father and the Son (Mat. 3:16; 4:1; 12:18, 31; 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:26; 15:26; Rom. 5:5; 8:2, 9; 15:30).

4B. Old Testament Teaching

The Old Testament bears witness in a number of passages to the fact that God is a Triune Being. In the creation account of Genesis 1 both God the Father and the Holy Spirit are seen in the work of creation. It is stated that God created heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1) while the Holy Spirit hovered over the earth to infuse it with vitality (Gen. 1:2). The term *God* in Genesis 1:1 is *Elohim*, which is a _____ form for God.

Even though this does not explicitly teach the Trinity, it certainly allows for it as seen in the plural pronouns "*Us*" and "*Our*" in Genesis 1:26. In Psalm 110:1 David recognized a distinction of Persons between "*LORD*" [referring to God the Father] and "*my Lord*" [referring to Messiah].

In the prophecy concerning Christ in Isaiah 7:14 the Lord makes it clear that the One born of a virgin will also be Immanuel, "*God with us.*" It is an attestation to Messiah's deity.

Two additional passages previously mentioned that clearly depict the Trinity are Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1. In both of these passages all _____ Persons of the Godhead are mentioned and seen as distinct from one another.

5B. New Testament Teaching

The _____ is called God (1 Cor. 8:6); the _____ is called God (Heb. 1:8-10); the _____ is called God (Acts 5:3-4); God is one God (Mark 12:29; John 5:44). Combining these four statements affirms the Trinity.

In the act of making disciples Jesus commanded that the Apostles were to baptize the new disciples "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). The equality as well as the unity of the three Persons is intended.

In Mary's conception the Trinity is involved: the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, the power of God overshadowed her, and the resultant offspring was called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

All three are also seen as distinct at the baptism of Jesus (a denial of modalism; Luke 3:21-22).

In John 14:16 the unity of the three is again clear: the Son asks the Father Who sends the Spirit to indwell believers forever.

In Romans 8:9-11 all three are mentioned as _____ the believer.

The benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14 is a strong affirmation of the equality and unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:4-8; Rev. 1:4-5).



7A. Decrees of God

The decrees of God have been established in _____ and have reference to God's sovereign control over every realm and over all events.

1B. Definition of God's decrees

Quote:

"The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

– Westminster Shorter Confession

Ultimately, there are only two options. Either God is _____ and has absolute control over the world and universe or God does _____ have sovereign control, and the world and universe carry on in defiance of His holy will. Of course, the former is true; God has absolute control. Yet it must also be affirmed that man is responsible for sinful actions. God is never the Author of sin nor does His sovereignty eliminate man's responsibility.

2B. Characteristics of God's decrees

Because everything is encompassed in God's sovereign plan it is sometimes spoken of in the singular—it is one decree.

The decree covering all things was formed in _____ past but is manifested in time.

- The believer was _____ by God in eternity past (Eph. 1:4; the phrase "before the foundation of the world" = "from all eternity").
- The believer's _____ and calling are related to God's determination from eternity past (2 Tim. 1:9).
- The decision for Christ to take on humanity and shed His blood for humanity was made "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20).

The decree is a wise plan because God Who is wise has planned what is best.

In Romans 9–11 Paul discusses the sovereignty of God and His election of Israel and concludes this "difficult to comprehend" section with a doxology extolling the wisdom of God in His sovereign acts (Rom. 11:33–36). Because God knows all things He controls and guides all events *for His glory and for our good* (Psa. 104:24; Prov. 3:19; Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28–29).

The decree is according to God's sovereign _____ –He does as He pleases.

- God does not adjust His plan according to the events of human history; instead, His decree governs human history. Daniel 4:35 is all encompassing: God "*does according to His will*" in the angelic realm as well as on earth. God determines the course of human history and the rulers of the kingdoms of earth (Dan. 2:21, 31–45).

The decree has _____ aspects.

- The _____ will of God. There are some things in which God is the Author; He actively brings about the events. He creates (Isa. 45:18); He controls the universe (Dan. 4:35); He establishes kings and governments (Dan. 2:21); He elects people to be saved (Eph. 1:4).
- The _____ will of God. Even though God has determined all things, He may bring them about through secondary causes. Sinful acts, for example, do not frustrate the plan of God, but neither is God the Author of them. They are within the scope of God's decree, but man is nonetheless responsible for sinful acts. Hence, a distinction must be made between the decree and its execution. All acts—including sinful acts—conform to the eternal plan of God, but He is not directly the Author of all acts. For example, when the people of Israel demanded a king to rule over them, they sinned against the Lord (1 Sam. 8:5–9, 19–22). But the Lord had foreordained that kings would come from Abraham's lineage (Gen. 17:6; 35:11), culminating in Messiah. The people sinned, but God's plan was still being executed. In Acts 2:23 Peter explained that Jesus died because of the "*predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.*" Foreknowledge suggests not merely previous knowledge, but action. Hence, Christ died because of the decision of God in eternity past; nevertheless, Peter held the people responsible for killing Christ, saying, "*You nailed [Him] to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*"

The purpose of the decree is the _____ of God.

- The creation of the _____ is designed to reveal God's glory (Psa. 19:1). The vastness of the heavens and the beauty of the flora and fauna of earth reflect the glory of God. God's sovereign act whereby He predestined believers to salvation (Eph. 1:4-5) is "*to the praise of His glory*" (Eph. 1:6, 11-12). God is glorified in the display of His unconditional grace (Rom. 9:23; Rev. 4:11).

Some aspects of the decree are carried out by people.

This distinguishes the decree of God from fatalism. For example, the decree of God involves electing certain ones to salvation, yet no one is saved apart from _____. On the one hand, the decree says the believer is chosen in Christ "*before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. 1:4), yet someone must present the Gospel to the person to enable him to believe and be saved (Acts 16:31). In the matter of salvation, God uses people in evangelism to carry out His decree.

4B. Objections Answered

"The decree does not allow for man's _____ will."

The decree allows for man's responsible action, and man is held responsible for sinful choices. The concept of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is an antinomy (an apparent paradox), but only in the mind of man. The Biblical writers do not view it as an inconsistency (Acts 2:23—Peter saw no contradiction in this). Man acts in harmony with his nature, and all these acts are within the scope of God's decree, and man is held responsible for them.

"The decree makes it unnecessary to preach the gospel."

Paul taught that God had predestined people to salvation (Eph. 1:4–11), and he taught the doctrine of election (Rom. 1:1; 8:30; 9:11), but with equal fervency Paul taught the _____ of preaching the Gospel in order that people might be saved (Rom. 10:14–15; 1 Cor. 9:16).

CONCLUSION

- We can entrust our entire lives to an almighty God.
- We should rejoice in the wonder of our salvation—that we were the choice of God in eternity past.
- We should _____ that God holds people responsible for sin.
- Man, in his pride, desires to run his own life; the recognition that God is sovereign is humbling.
- We should rest in peace as we observe the tumultuous world events, knowing that God is sovereignly controlling all things (this does not imply indifference).
- We should stand in _____ of a great God Who is wise, powerful, and loving!

Questions to Ask:



Extra Notes:

