

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY CLASS

Session 1

What is systematic theology?

“Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic.” (John Frame)

Why study it?

1. Jesus commanded us to make disciples and teach them all he taught
2. It helps us overcome wrong (and rebellious) ideas
3. It helps us make better decisions later regarding questions about doctrine
4. It helps us grow as Christians

The Scriptures
The Triune God
God the Father
Jesus Christ
The Holy Spirit
Man
The Gospel
Man's Response To The
Gospel

Man's Inheritance Through
The Gospel
Sanctification
The Church
Ordinances of the Church
The Family
The Consummation

The Bible contains the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament.

The Old Testament can be broken into 5 main divisions: Law, History, Poetry, Major Prophets and Minor Prophets.

Genesis – Deuteronomy

Law

Joshua – Esther

History

Job – Song of Songs

Poetry

Isaiah – Daniel

Major Prophets

Hosea – Malachi

Minor Prophets

However, a Jew of the 1st Century would have only known 3 Divisions:

1. The Law

- a) Genesis - Deuteronomy

2. The Writings

- a) Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

3. The Prophets

- a) History + Major Prophets + Minor Prophets

HOW WERE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CHOSEN?

The Jewish people carefully recorded their history and transcribed their Scriptures

During this time, many books were written that were never considered Scripture. In fact, it never seems as though it were a debate.

Books continued to be added until about a century after being led off into captivity and then they stopped.

By the time Jesus was born, everyone knew they had gone hundreds of years without a prophet. The “Old Testament” we have today are exactly the same Scriptures Jesus had.

When the temple was destroyed in AD 70, a group of Jewish Rabbis got together at the Council of Jamnia and simply reaffirmed what the Jewish people already believed to be Jewish Scripture.

The New Testament can be broken into 5 main divisions as well:
Gospels, History, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles and
Apocalypse.

Matthew – John

Acts

Romans – Philemon

Hebrews – Jude

Revelation

Gospels

History

Pauline Epistles

General Epistles

Apocalypse

HOW WERE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHOSEN?

First Century Christians saw the words of Jesus and his apostles as Scripture like the Old Testament.

After the apostles died, the church saw a greater need to preserve correct doctrine because many heretical writings were coming into circulation.

Books accepted had to be written by an apostle or the associate of one.

HOW WERE BOOKS EVALUATED?

Quoted from Geisler and Nix

1. Is it authoritative – did it come from the hand of God? (Does this book come with a divine “thus saith the Lord”?)
2. Is it prophetic – was it written by a man of God?

3. Is it authentic? [The fathers had the policy, “If in doubt, throw it out.” This enhanced the “validity of their discernment of canonical books.”]

4. Is it dynamic - did it come with the life transforming power of God?

5. Was it received, collected, read and used - was it accepted by the people of God?

All the books of the New Testament were written in the first century. The Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170) shows that almost all (22/27) of the New Testament we have today was being considered the “New Testament” by then.

In A.D. 393, church leaders came together at the Synod of Hippo to formalize what was already a reality in churches – the 27 books of the New Testament.

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THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Scripture is:

1. Authoritative
2. Clear
3. Necessary
4. Sufficient