



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 2 – THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

LESSON 65 – THE DOCTRINE OF GOD – CONCLUSION

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, BY LOUIS BERKHOF, PG. 16-21

Incomprehensible yet Knowable

- ▶ “The Christian Church confesses on the one hand that God is the Incomprehensible One, but also on the other hand, that He can be known and that knowledge of Him is an absolute requisite unto salvation.” – Berkhof, pg. 16
- ▶ Job 17:11 “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?”
- ▶ Isaiah 40:18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?
- ▶ John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
- ▶ 1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Imperfect Knowledge

- ▶ “Reformed theology holds that God can be known, but that it is impossible for man to have a knowledge of Him that is exhaustive and perfect in every way. To have such a knowledge of God would be equivalent to comprehending Him, and this is entirely out of the question. Man cannot give a definition of God in the proper sense of the word, but only a partial description.” – Berkhof, pg. 17
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 13:9 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Divine Self-Revelation

- ▶ True knowledge of God can be acquired only from divine self-revelation, and only by the man who accepts this with child-like faith. It is the most sacred relation between man and his God, a relation in which man is conscious of the absolute greatness and majesty of God as the supreme Being, and of his own utter insignificance and subjection to the High and Holy One.” – Berkhof, pg. 17
- ▶ Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.”

Man Can Know God

- ▶ “God communicates knowledge of Himself to man. In the study of all other sciences man places himself above the object of his investigation and actively elicits from it his knowledge by whatever method may seem most appropriate, but in theology he does not stand above but rather under the object of his knowledge. In other words, man can know God only in so far as God makes Himself known to man.” – Berkhof, pg. 21
- ▶ Job 38:1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 2 “Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.
- ▶ Job 40:3 3 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 4 “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

Reason and Revelation

- ▶ “Without revelation man would never have been able to acquire any knowledge of God. And even after God has revealed Himself objectively, it is not human reason that discovers God, but it is God who discloses Himself to the eye of faith. However, by the application of sanctified human reason to the study of God’s Word, man can, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gain an ever-increasing knowledge of God.” – Berkhof, pg. 21
- ▶ God is always the subject, but never the object of study. The Word of God is an object that we study. The living revelation of God in the Person of Jesus is the subject through which He makes Himself known.
- ▶ John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- ▶ Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”