



Outline

Lesson 4 –Theology: Who is God?

- I. Introduction – Theology – Who is God?
 - A. Theology: The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God
 - B. The Ultimate Source of Truth – Colossians 2:2-3 “Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
 - C. Westminster Confession – trying to capture the infinite essence of God’s nature
- II. What is Eternal Life?
 - A. Scriptural emphasis on eternal life – Luke 18:18, John 3:16, John 4:13-14, John 5:24, John 5:39-40, John 6:27, John 6:54
 - B. “Now this is eternal life...” John 17:1-3 “...that they may know you...”
 - C. Spurgeon’s and Paul’s perspective – “I want to know Christ...”
 - D. God’s perspective – Hosea 6:6, Jeremiah 9:23-24 ...that he knows me...”
 - E. Connection between knowledge of God and knowledge of self
- III. Meaning of Names
 - A. Names of God – El Qanna – A jealous God – Deuteronomy 4:23-24, Zechariah 8:2, Exodus 34:14
 - B. Jacob, Abram, Moses, Simon, Saul, John, Jesus
 - C. Your name – Your identity in Christ and as a child of God
- IV. The Attack
 - A. The Battle – 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself against the knowledge of God...”
 - B. On God – His nature, His character
 - C. On His Word – Throughout history men have tried to destroy God’s Word
 - 1. Jesus Seminar – democratic voting process on God’s Word
 - 2. Ezekiel 22:26-28 – “...her priests have done violence to my law...”

3. Joram and Jehoram – Unraveling a supposed conflict – Can you trust the Word of God? – “The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings”

V. Conclusion – God’s word can be trusted

A. 1 Peter 1:24-25 “...the word of the Lord stands forever.”

B. Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active...”



Lesson Guide

Lesson 4 - Theology: Who is God?

Introduction

Having explored the concept of truth itself and examined the biblical view of human nature – two basic issues that *had* to be settled before we could move on to the present discussion – Dr. Tackett now takes us to the eastern point of the compass and proceeds to lay the third and most important foundation of our “Truth Temple:” *Theology*, or that branch of study and investigation that grapples with the question, “Who is God?” *Knowing God*, he argues, ought to be our passion and our highest goal; for until we look upon *His* face, we cannot rightly know ourselves or begin to grasp the meaning of our existence in the world.

Themes

Knowing God is absolutely central to the meaning of human life, for it is only in the context of intimate, personal relationship with Him that we experience *eternal life*. At the same time, there is no assignment more daunting, no task more demanding, no challenge more overwhelming, than that of seeking to understand the being, nature, character, and attributes of the eternal Creator, who is Himself the ultimate source of all truth (Colossians 2:3). So impossibly huge is this endeavor that we could not hope to tackle it at all except for the fact that He has graciously *revealed* Himself to us in His Word. Apart from this *revelation*, mankind gropes and struggles in the darkness to piece together even the most flawed and rudimentary concept of God.

In line with this thought, R. C. Sproul asserts that ours is an era in which the knowledge of God has been *eclipsed* – not completely destroyed, but *obscured* and *shadowed* by lies and misconceptions. Given this situation, it is essential that we establish two main points: 1) that God exists; and 2) that the Bible, the vehicle of His self-revelation, is utterly reliable. Following Sproul’s lead, Dr. Tackett uses a significant portion of this tour to respond to attacks that have been leveled against God’s Word over the course of history (another aspect of the *Cosmic Battle*). He answers the objections of Voltaire, Robert Ingersoll, and liberal theologians such as Julius Wellhausen and the members of the Jesus Seminar. He also illustrates the Bible’s historical accuracy by helping us resolved an apparent scriptural discrepancy concerning the dates of King Jehoram’s reign.

But the heart of this episode’s message hits much closer to home. For in the end, Dr. Tackett makes it clear that we cannot truly know ourselves until we have begun to know God in the fullness and richness of His multifaceted nature and character – not only as the God of mercy and grace, but also as the God who is a consuming fire, *jealous* for the purity of the covenant relationship (*El Qanna*). When this knowledge dawns upon us, we can expect two things to happen. First, the revelation of God’s character will, like a mirror, reveal things to us about ourselves, so that we, along with the prophet Isaiah, are compelled to cry, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5). But then secondly, as He raises us out of our despair and shows us who we are and who we can be *in Him*, we will be granted the gift of a *new name* – a whole new

concept of our being, our identity, and our purpose in life *with God*. Once again, the fruit of this experience will be personal transformation.

Points to Watch For

During the course of this tour, the theme of the *Cosmic Battle* is revisited several times and from a number of different angles. As in the first three episodes, Dr. Tackett consistently returns to the point that fallen man *resists* the truth, and that, as Christians, we are thus called to “cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself *against the knowledge of God*, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man, says Dr. Tackett, has a tendency “play fast and loose” with God’s Word, *not* because he is seriously interested in ascertaining the facts about biblical history, but because he is unwilling to face up to the convicting power of divine revelation as it applies to his personal life. In the final analysis, God’s Word is the main thing standing in the way of “self-actualization” as it is promoted by the gurus of contemporary culture. Some students may find it difficult to accept this idea.

Discussion Questions

- 1) **What were the key points of this tour?**
- 2) **How did Jesus define “eternal life” in His John 17 prayer? What was the point that Dr. Tackett was trying to make in saying that this was NOT just a clinical knowledge?**
- 3) **What was the thing that Dr. Tackett said he found to be the most astounding thing of all? He asked the students if they really believed that this truth claim of God was really real. Do we?**
- 4) **There were three things that Dr. Tackett said happen to us when we gaze upon the face of God. What were they? What does that mean?**
- 5) **Thinking about the first one, that it exposes us, does anyone want to be bold and offer to admit that tonight...did anything strike you?**
- 6) **Considering the second one, that it exposes our culture, what did our tour tonight reveal about our culture?**

Deeper Questions for Discussion

- 7) **If *theology*, or the study of God, is the most important of the three foundations we are seeking to lay, why was it put aside until the fourth tour? What does this imply about our culture and our calling as modern ambassadors for Christ?**
- 8) **What does R. C. Sproul mean when he says that the knowledge of God has not been *destroyed* but rather *eclipsed* in our day? How has this come about? Can you think of examples of this *eclipsing, filtering, or shadowing* of the truth in your own experience or in the experience of your friends?**

- 9) **“This is eternal life,” says Jesus, “that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Why do you think Jesus defines eternal life in this way? What is the connection between *knowledge* and *life*?**
- 10) **Why are names so significant in the Bible? What are some of the names of God revealed to us in Scripture? How does knowing God’s name impact our understanding of our own “name”?**
- 11) **Why is it important to establish that a “spiritual” book like the Bible is also historically accurate?**
- 12) **Picture yourself in the Temple with Isaiah, beholding the glory and majesty of God firsthand. How would this experience change your life? What is there about you that simply *could not* remain the same after such a revelation?**



Key Terms

Lesson 4 – Theology: Who is God?

Deism: The belief that God created the universe and has since assumed no control over life, exerted no influence on nature, and given no supernatural revelation.

El Qanna: A name of God: "For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14). See also Deuteronomy 4:23-24 and Zechariah 8:2

Eternal Life: To know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent to earth. A deeply personal and intimate relationship. See John 17:3.

Jesus Seminar: Started in 1985 in Berkley, California, by Robert Funk and thirty-five other liberal New Testament scholars. The Seminar,--which now includes about 100 members--meets twice a year to debate technical papers. At the close of debate on each agenda item, members vote using colored beads to indicate the degree of authenticity of Jesus' words or deeds.

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918): A 19 th century German liberal scholar who suggested the Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD), which theorizes that the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) was not written by Moses but evolved over time and was compiled from at least four sources written by various authors. Numerous scholars have refuted the theory.

Pantheism: Belief that God and the material world are one and the same thing and that God is present in everything; pantheism sometimes entails belief in many deities. A form of spiritual naturalism.

Theism: Belief that God created and governs humans and the world.

Theology: The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God.

Westminster Confession of Faith: A confession of faith drawn up by the 1646 Westminster Assembly, which remains a standard of doctrine within many Protestant churches. The full confession took more than five years to complete and provides advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government, and discipline for the church.