

Dr. Scott Swain
Introduction to Systematic Theology
Lecture 1 – Scripture
First Presbyterian Church of Orlando
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I. Introduction

A. Course: “systematic theology”

1. Systematic theology is a way of studying the Bible that gives attention to ...

a. The *unity* of biblical teaching

- i. *Coordinates* biblical teaching with biblical teaching, and with truths we learn from outside of the Bible

b. The *full scope* of biblical teaching

- i. “The whole counsel of God” (Acts 20.27)
- ii. **Herman Bavinck:** failure to attend to the whole counsel of God “leads to one-sidedness and error in theology and pathology in the religious life.”

c. The *proportions* of biblical teaching

- i. The Bible says something about *everything*. But it doesn’t say *everything about everything*. (John Webster)
- ii. The Bible has matters of “first importance” (1 Cor 15.3) and matters of secondary importance (Matt 23.3)—and *all* of it is important for thought, life, and worship.
- iii. ST is concerned with the *whole* counsel of God; but it tries *to reflect* the Bible’s own priorities and emphases and *to shape* our thinking, living, and worship in light of these priorities.

d. The *relationships* between various aspects of biblical teaching.

- i. **Example:** “grace” and “works” in Ephesians 2.8-10
- ii. ST is ultimately *theocentric* biblical interpretation: Rom 11.33-36
- iii. **Teaching that comes *from* God *about* God that leads us *to* God.**

B. Scripture: Three texts, three big ideas

II. Matthew 11.25-30: God is pleased to reveal himself to us in order that we might find rest in him.

- A. **God knows and loves himself in the bliss of his triune life:** 11.27; 1 Cor 2.11
- B. God is *pleased* to reveal himself to us: 11.26.
- C. God is pleased to reveal *himself* to us: “the Father” and “the Son”
- D. God is pleased to reveal himself to us in order that we may find *rest* in him: 11.28.

- 1. **What is the connection** between *revelation* and *rest*?
- 2. **C. S. Lewis:** cars are made to run on petrol
- 3. **Augustine:** You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.

III. Psalm 19: God is pleased to reveal himself in a twofold manner.

- A. **God reveals himself through “two books”:** “general” and “special” revelation
 - 1. **Belgic Confession, article 2:** “We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says (Romans 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.”
- B. **General revelation: 19.1-6**
 - 1. All times (2), all ears (3), all places (4, 6)
- C. **Special revelation: 19.7-14**
 - 1. **More valuable, sweeter, more rewarding:** 19.10-11
Why?
 - 2. **Special revelation promotes human flourishing to the glory of God:** 19.7-9
 - a. **Human anatomy:** soul, [mind], heart, eyes, taste
 - b. **Human wholeness/flourishing to the glory of God:** reviving, making wise, rejoicing, enlightening, etc.

3. **Special revelation teaches us *how to talk to God when sin has led to God-dishonoring misery*: 19.12-14**

IV.2 Peter 1.16-21: Until Jesus returns, the Bible is our supreme source of special revelation.

- A. **The Bible is our supreme source of special revelation. Why?**
- B. **Scripture is *God's inspired Word* through human spokesmen.**
 1. We know what it's like to live with *untrustworthy reporting: fake news*
 2. **Access:** 1.16-18
 3. **Anointing:** 1.20-21
- C. **Therefore ... perfections of Holy Scripture**
 1. **The *unity* of Scripture: the glory of God in Jesus Christ**
 - a. Jesus now: 1.16-18 and not yet: 1.19
 - b. OT and NT: "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed" (1.19)
 2. **The *sufficiency* of Scripture**
 - i. "All things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1.3)
 3. **The *truthfulness* of Scripture**
 - a. Again: fake news
 - b. No "cleverly devised myths" (1.16)
 4. **The *authority* of Scripture**
 - i. "Pay attention" (1.19)
 5. **The *clarity* of Scripture**
 - i. "A lamp shining in a dark place" (1.19)

V. Conclusion: "Until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (1.19)

- A. ST is *theocentric* biblical interpretation
- B. An ST analysis of the Bible: **The Bible is the supreme source of knowledge of God given to us *by God* that leads us to rest *in God*** (Matt 11.30).