

Providence Presbyterian Church

September 2008, Trish Luber

The Major Themes of the Bible Applied to Everyday Life:

God and the Holy Trinity

Homework for Preparation –

A.) What do we know about God from these verses?

Deut. 6:4

1 Corinthians 8:4

Jeremiah 10:10

B.) (Ps. 19) Where do we find proof that God exists?

C.) (John 4:24) What does it mean when scripture says that God is a spirit?

D.) (Romans 11:33 & 34, Ps 147:5) Can God learn anything? Explain your answer.

E.) What do we know about God from these verses?

1 John 5:7 (NKJ version particularly)

Matthew 28:19

Lesson -

1. Basic Building Block #1 = Scripture

- a. Scripture is true
- b. What does it teach?

Shorter Catechism Question 3:

What do the scriptures principally teach?

- A. The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Hebrews 11:6 – ESV – “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Psalms 37:4 – ESV – “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

2. What do we learn about God?

Homework question B – Where do we find proof that God exists? Psalm 19

- In all of nature, as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit -

Homework question A – What do we know about God from these verses?

Deuteronomy 6:4 –

1 Corinthians 8:4 – All 3 verses tell us that He is the one true and living God

Jeremiah 10:10 –

Homework question C – What does it mean when scripture says that God is a Spirit?

- He has not a body like men

What we believe about God deeply affects our lives. When we talk about the nature and being of God, we are talking about His Attributes which fall into 2 categories:

Incommunicable – this means: Attributes that belong to God alone

These are: God is eternal, infinite and unchangeable (immutable)

Communicable – this means: Qualities which He does in some degree bestow upon creatures as He pleases.

These are – wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth

3. God is Omniscient, knowing all things.

Homework question D – Can God learn anything? (no, because he already knows all things.) Explain your answer.
(Handout on Openness of God Controversy)

Psalms 50 verse 21 identifies a basic human problem – the desire to recreate God and make Him be like us – “you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.”

4. The Holy Trinity – the manner in which God exists

WCF 2.3 “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

1 John 5:7 NKJ – “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. (Other translations read differently)

Matthew 28:19 ESV – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

2 Cor 13:14, John 1:14, John 15:26, Galatians 4:6 are other proof texts for the Trinity.

5. God has always existed in 3 persons. He is unchangeable.

God chose to reveal Himself to mankind gradually throughout the Old Testament, but He has not changed. Only through the revelations in the New Testament are we able to fully comprehend much of the Old. Let’s examine some references to the Holy Spirit and the Pre-Incarnate Christ in the Old Testament:

Genesis 1:2 ...the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. The Angel of God frequently appeared to the people of God and is clearly recognized as God. Genesis 32:24 & 30 – Jacob wrestles with the pre-incarnate Christ.

In the New Testament, we have plain evidence of the 3 persons of God:

Luke 3:22 “the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove; and a voice came from heaven “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” A mystery of the Christian life is the importance of drawing near to God, learning what we can about him – combined with the fact that we will never completely comprehend Him.

Openness of God Controversy (Handout)

A movement within the evangelical church that seeks to radically change how we think about God. Known as “open theism,” “free will theism,” “openness of God,” or “open view theism.” 2 main views:

1. God deliberately chooses to limit his own sovereignty because he created free agents. His power stops where human will begins. He cannot know the future actions of free agents because then they would not be truly free. The future is not certain and fixed and God’s foreknowledge is self-limited. His greatness is not in his divine control of the future or in his foreknowledge, but rather in his flexible, wise and quick responses to things as they unfold.
2. (similar to above with slight differences) The future exists partly as events God sovereignly determines to bring about, and partly as possibilities that he allows his creatures to bring about. Some things in the future are as yet unsettled and dependent on the decisions of people. God cannot know the parts of the future that people will decide because those decisions are not yet made by them.

A key passage used by one advocate of “open theism” is Jeremiah 18:6 – 12. Open theists understand this passage to mean that the potter is flexible, the behavior of the clay determining what the potter will do with it.

WCF 2.2 says this: “In His sight all things are open and manifest; His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature so as nothing is to Him contingent, or uncertain.”

Scripture proofs used for this are:

Hebrews 4:13 – “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

Romans 11:33 – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?”

Psalms 147:5 – “Great is our Lord and of great power: his understanding is infinite.”

Acts 15:18 “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

Ezekiel 11:5 – “And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak: Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. “

Consider also these passages:

Daniel 4:35 – “He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand.”

Proverbs 19:21 – “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.”

What are Open Theists basically saying?

What’s wrong with that?

What idea or objection do you think is the basic underlying concept in “open theism?”

Homework for Reflection – Week 2

God and the Holy Trinity

Day 1: Thinking Rightly about God

A.W. Tozer in his book The Knowledge of the Holy says this: “It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate.”

Scripture spells this out in detail in Romans 1:18 – 25 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

What do we know about God, then?

WCF 2.2 “God..is..in and unto Himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made.” WCF 2.3 “The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

Tozer again “The divine attributes are what we know to be true of God. He does not possess them as qualities; they are how God is as He reveals Himself to His creatures. Love, for instance, is not something God has and which may grow or diminish or cease to be. When He loves He is simply being Himself. And so with the other attributes.”

Shorter Catechism: Q4 – What is God? A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. (consider committing this to memory)

Look up these scripture references given to support Question 4 –

John 4:24, Job 11:7 – 9, Psalm 90:4, James 1:17, Exodus 3:14, Revelation 4:8, 15:4, Exodus 34:6

Meditate on Psalm 147:5 – “Great is our Lord and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.” What difference does it make in your life to know this about God?

Day 2: Drawing near to the one true and living God

Do you fully and completely in your own heart believe that God IS? Read Hebrews 11:6 and John 14:21. Meditate on John 14:21, pray that God would enable you to grow in faith and obedience and that He would reveal Himself more to you daily.

What do you seek that you believe will bring joy, satisfaction and peace? Is it the one true and living God or a god of our culture or of your own making?

Which one has life in himself? John 5:26

Which one drains and enslaves? Isaiah 44:9 & 20, Isaiah 46:1 & 2

How have you seen this to be true?

What are your own struggles and trials? If you belong to the one true and living God, your trials are in His hands. He is fully trustworthy.

He is (Ps 147:5) _____

(Ps 139:7 & 8) _____

(Daniel 4:35) _____

(Exodus 34:6) _____