

ESSENTIALS OF REFORMED DOCTRINE

Lesson #1

THEOLOGY: THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

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Lesson #1: The Knowledge Of God

- **(1) WHAT IS THEOLOGY?**
 - A study of what the Bible (and the Reformed creeds) teaches us concerning GOD.
 - **In Theology, we are not simply interested in knowing “about” God.**
 - It is possible to know everything about Him – His attributes, works, power, glory, purposes, etc. But that is not enough, for even the devils know all this.
 - Our knowledge (as believers) is a personal knowledge of God.
 - To know God is to “love God,” and to love Him as your God.
 - To know God is to have a close relationship of friendship and fellowship with Him.
 - To know God is to live with Him, and talk to Him, and walk with Him.

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- **(2) WHY STUDY THEOLOGY?**
 - **The Knowledge of God is the most important knowledge to have. {Q&A 1. and Q&A 2.}**
 - More important than any other subject (in school, college, life) – e.g., science, history, politics, economics,
 - For, to know God is to have eternal life (John 17:3).
 - To have eternal life means to live in an eternal covenant of friendship and fellowship with God. (Genesis 5:24, Deuteronomy 34:10)
 - In order to live that covenant life with God, you need to know Him. (I John 1:3)
 - No other knowledge results in this blessing of eternal life. In fact, all other knowledge is vain if you do not know God (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18).

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- **(2) WHY STUDY THEOLOGY?**

- **The Knowledge of God is the most important knowledge to have.**

- **Jeremiah 9:23-24** – *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”*

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- **(3) WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING GOD AND COMPREHENDING GOD?**
 - We cannot comprehend God.
 - We cannot fully or completely know and understand Him. For He is infinite, we are finite. He is the Creator, we are creatures.
 - Job 11:7 – *“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”*
 - Psalm 145:3 – *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.”*
 - 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!”*
 - **But this does not mean God is un-knowable. We are able to know Who and What God is.**

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**

- 1. **Because God Exists**

- **Denials:**

- Atheism: “There is no God”
 - Polytheism: “There are many Gods”
 - Pantheism: “Everything is God”
 - Agnosticism: “We cannot know if there is a God”

- **God exists! God is real! He is not simply in our imagination.**

- You cannot prove this by reason and argumentation. You cannot convince an unbeliever that God exists.
 - Only proofs are
 - (1) The Bible.
 - (2) The Spirit Who works faith in us to believe.

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**
 1. **Because God Exists**
 2. **Because God Reveals Himself To Us**
 - “Revelation” is God speaking to us about Himself in a way that we can understand. God condescends to us. God makes Himself known to us.
 - If God did not do this, we could not know Him.
 - For He is so great, eternal, invisible, infinite, etc.
 - Because we cannot seek and know Him by our own efforts.
 - God reveals Himself to us in two ways {Q&A 3}:
 - **By means of Creation** (“General Revelation”)
 - **By means of Scripture** (“Special Revelation”)

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**

1. **Because God Exists**

2. **Because God Reveals Himself To Us**

- **Belgic Confession, Article 2: By What Means God Is Made Known To Us** – *“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 contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith, Romans 1:20. All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, 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.”*

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**
 - **God's Revelation In Creation:**
 - God reveals Himself to all men by means of His creation – (that's why it is referred to as “General Revelation”).
 - Why does the creation reveal God?
 - Because He made it (Psalm 19)
 - Because He preserves it (Psalm 104)
 - Because He governs it (Proverbs 21:1).
 - Anyone who looks at the creation (nature, heavens, animals, man, history, etc.) can see truths concerning God. The creation is a book that God wrote about Himself.

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**
 - God's Revelation In Creation:
 - **What does the creation reveal/show/say?**
 - *Romans 1:19-20 – “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”*
 - Creation reveals many of God's virtues: His power, wisdom, greatness, infinity, justice, wrath, etc.
 - All men learn especially two things from this revelation:
 - That God is the only God - (“His eternal power”)
 - That God must be worshipped - (“His Godhead”)

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**
 - God's Revelation In Creation:
 - **What purpose does this serve for the wicked?** {Q&A's 4-6}
 - Romans 1:20 – *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”*
 - It is not a “common grace” of God to them.
 - God does not express love for all and a desire to save all.
 - This revelation cannot save them – Romans 10:14.
 - The revelation in creation serves two purposes for the wicked:
 - It leaves the wicked without excuse.
 - It adds to their condemnation.

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**
 - (1) God's Revelation in Creation
 - **(2) God's Revelation In Scripture:**
 - God reveals Himself more clearly in the Bible.
 - We can know all that is necessary to know concerning God.
 - God reveals all that we need to know for our salvation.
 - Belgic Confession, Article 2.
 - {Q&A 7}
 - **How do we get this knowledge from the Bible?**
 - Not simply by reading the Bible. The wicked read the Bible, but are not saved.
 - The Spirit must work faith in us to believe the Word of God.
 - {Q&A 10}

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- **(4) WHY IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW GOD?**
 - **Note: For the believer, there's an important connection between God's revelation in Scripture and God's revelation in Creation. {Q&A 8}**
 - **Because we have the Bible, and because we have faith, we see and believe the revelation of God in the creation.**
 - **Using the Bible, we see God's hand in everything – His power in storms, His skill and wisdom in the human body, His glory in the creation's beauty, etc.**
 - **John Calvin referred to the Bible as the “spectacles” we put on and use in order to read God's book of Creation.**
 - **We see things that the wicked are blind to.**

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EXTRA WORK for LESSON #1

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- **EXTRA WORK #1 – Creation revealing God**
 - **Psalm 19:1-2** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.”*
 - **Psalm 8:1** – *“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.”*
 - **Romans 1:20** – *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; ...”*

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- **EXTRA WORK #2 – Creation revealing Christ**
 - **Isaiah 53:7** – *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”*
 - **Song of Solomon 2:1** – *“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”*
 - **Malachi 4:2** – *“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; ...”*

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- **EXTRA WORK #3 – Belgic Confession, Article 2**
- **By what means God is made known unto us –** *“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 contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith, Romans 1:20. All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, 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.”*

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- **EXTRA WORK #4 – Romans 1:18-25**
 - Does God show His favor to all men by His revelation in creation, as common grace teaches?
 - God revealing His wrath is certainly not grace/favor.
 - God giving them up to uncleanness is not grace/favor.
 - What do the wicked do with God's revelation in creation?
 - They change God's revelation – change the truth into a lie.
 - They worship the creature and not the Creator.
 - How does God punish this wickedness?
 - His wrath is revealed from heaven against them.
 - He gives them up to uncleanness.

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- **EXTRA WORK #5 – Psalm 14:1 and Atheists**
 - **Psalm 14:1** – *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.”*
 - **Some say/claim they are Atheists.**
 - But by saying “there is no God,” they are acknowledging that there is a God.
 - They know (all men know) that there is a God. Romans 1 makes clear no one is without excuse regarding this.
 - One who denies that God exists is a fool.