

Study Guide for
Body of Divinity
Introduction to Systematic Theology

What is theology? Simply put, it is the science (study) of God. As with any science, there is an objective truth, God Himself, and theology is the pursuit, through scientific methods, of discovering the truth about God.

Two Methods of Studying God

- 1 **General Revelation** – revelation of God in nature, in creation. (Romans 1:19ff, Psalm 97:6, Psalm 19:1ff, Acts 14:7). General revelation is helpful, it is conclusive, but it is not complete. It is insufficient to reveal God as full as He can be known.
- 2 **Special Revelation** – revelation of God through His work of regeneration, and through the record He left, the Bible.
 - God is a Spirit, and can thus only be fully known spiritually. John 4:24
 - He is revealed to humans by His Spirit II Cor. 4:3-7, John 3:3
 - Revealed through the Word II Timothy 3:16, Romans 15:4, John 5:39
 - This special revelation does not give perfect knowledge of God. That will only be accomplished throughout eternity by beholding Him with eyes unfettered by sin.

Note: These two terms can also be called natural theology (general revelation) and supernatural theology (special revelation).

Two Methods of Studying Special Revelation (The Bible)

- 1 **Expository** – This is a word normally used with a method of preaching. It simply means to take a passage of Scripture and give the sense of what the Scripture is teaching within its setting and context. It is a “verse by verse” study. (Two important terms to be familiar with: **Exegesis** (ex: out) – a layman’s definition is to take out of Scripture what is there. In other words, Scripture has a meaning, and it is our job to take the meaning from Scripture. **Eisegesis** (eis: into) – an interpretation of Scripture that expresses the interpreter’s own ideas or bias rather than the meaning of the text.
- 2 **Systematic** – arranging or comprising an ordered system. This branch of theology studies the revelation of God by reducing revealed truth to a series of statements that together constitute an organized whole. Example: Grouping all Scriptures mentioning the love of God, and then from that grouping, forming a conclusive statement regarding the love of God that harmonizes all of the revealed truth on that subject.

Reasons for Studying Systematically

1. To learn all that Scripture teaches on a particular subject (love of God).
2. To compare Scripture with Scripture (Gives a scriptural balance).
3. Values each of the Bible doctrines (can’t just pick favorites).
4. “An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshipped.”

Purpose in Studying Theology

This exercise is not meant to be merely academic. In fact, if it is only academic, it will be a failure. A spiritual person, when contemplating God, is spiritually strengthened. Good doctrine breeds good practice – Titus 2:11,12.

- Daniel 11:32 Strengthened

- John 8:31,32 Freedom from bondage
- I Peter 3:15 Equipped to witness
- I Chronicles 28:9 Answer for the searcher

Proper Attitude Towards Theology

- Reverence for truth
- Prayer for help and wisdom
- Remove prejudice and bias
- Eager to learn
- Teachable humility
- Timidity to new doctrines

Who was John Gill?

- Eminent Baptist theologian of the 18th century
- Lived 1697-1771
- Proficient in many ancient languages from an early age
- Beloved by his congregation for both knowledge and peripiscuity
- Undertook this work as a means to spiritually strengthen his congregation.

Note: Read the overview of Gill's life in the foreword to the Body of Divinity.