

# BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

Pastor Thomas D. Alexander

First Baptist Church  
Wellington, OH

## SESSION 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE DOCTRINES & THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE DOCTRINES

This doctrinal study was prepared by Pastor Tom Alexander for use in a Bible Doctrine Survey class at Berea Baptist Bible School in Berea, Ohio, and reflects his personal doctrinal beliefs.

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## SESSION 1 - AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE DOCTRINES & THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE DOCTRINES

### 1. AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE DOCTRINES

#### A. Some Definitions

##### 1. Doctrine

- \* The root meaning of the word is “teaching” or “instruction.” A doctrine is something that is taught.
- \* The English word comes from a Latin root meaning “to teach.”
- \* In the King James Version, the English word “doctrine(s)” is used 56 times - 6 in the O.T., and 50 in the N.T. In both Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.), the root meaning is that of teaching or instruction.
  - ~ Once in the N.T. (Heb 6:1) the Greek word for “word” (*logos*) is translated “doctrine,” speaking of the “word of Christ,” or the “doctrine of Christ.”
- \* In the N.T., the various words based on the Greek word “to teach” (*didasko*) are used a total of 219 times. Teaching and proper doctrine are important N.T. concepts. The Greek word for teacher is even translated “Master” 40 times as a name or title for Christ.

##### 2. Bible Doctrines

- \* Bible doctrines are the teachings of the Word of God which have been organized in a logical fashion.
- \* Bible doctrines should be *arrived at* by inductive Bible study. This means that the various passages of the Bible concerning a given doctrine are properly interpreted individually. These specific passages are then correlated and summarized to come to a conclusion and a final statement concerning that doctrine.
- \* Bible doctrines are *taught* by using a deductive process. The general principle of the doctrine is stated and then supported by specific Scripture passages.
- \* It is important that we do not confuse these two processes! We cannot come to a Scripture passage with a preconceived doctrinal position and then force that Scripture to fit our conclusion. We must allow the Scripture to frame our theology - we cannot allow our theology to predetermine the meaning of a Scripture passage.

##### 3. Theology

- \* The word “theology” is not found in the Bible. It is another term that basically refers to the same thing as doctrine. The typical difference is that “theology” is usually used to refer to a study that is greater in its depth and detail than the term “doctrine.”

~ ILLUS: Books of Bible doctrine are typically one normal-sized volume. Books of theology are typically multi-volume sets, or a very large one-volume work with very small print.

~ ILLUS: The term “Bible doctrines” usually refers to study on a lay level, or study at a Bible institute or Bible college level. The term “theology” is typically seen as study on a professional level, or study at the seminary level.

\* The word “theology” comes from two Greek words: *theos*, the word for “God,” and *logos*, the word for “word” or, by extension, “teaching.” Theology is teaching about God. It is the science of studying God and his works.

#### 4. Approaches To Theological Study

\* There are actually several disciplines of theological study. Here are a few common ones:

- a. **Biblical Theology** - This discipline focuses on the study of what was taught at various times during the historical writing of the Bible. It recognizes the fact of progressive revelation and asks what people understood at various periods of time during Bible history. Examples: focusing on the Old Testament exclusively, or focusing on the writings of Moses, or the writings of Paul. The Biblical theologian attempts to analyze and summarize the teachings of a specific Bible book or a period of revelation. He may or may not use the standard theological categories that are typically part of systematic theology.
- b. **Historical Theology** - This discipline focuses on how theological understanding developed historically. What did the early church understand and believe? What about the second century? What have church councils determined? This study would include the study of both true and false doctrine.
- c. **Dogmatic Theology** - This discipline focuses on the teachings of various theological “schools” or positions, such as Catholic theology, or Reformed theology, or Armenian theology, or Baptist theology.
- d. **Contemporary Theology** - This discipline focuses on current theological issues and approaches. These frequently involve perversions of the truth of Scripture.
- e. **Systematic Theology** - This discipline parallels the definition of “Bible doctrines” above, and will be the focus of this study. It focuses on the total structure of Bible teaching.

#### **B. Standard Theological Categories**

\* Note: Theologians commonly summarize Bible doctrines under 10 headings. Some subdivide one or two (angelology vs. Satan & demons; soteriology vs. Christian life), while others may combine the doctrine of sin into the doctrine of man. These titles are based on Greek terms.

1. Bibliology - The doctrine of the Bible
2. Theology Proper - The doctrine of God
3. Christology - The doctrine of Christ
4. Pneumatology - The doctrine of the Holy Spirit
5. Angelology - The doctrine of angels, including Satan and demons

- 6. Anthropology - The doctrine of man
- 7. Hamartiology - The doctrine of sin
- 8. Soteriology - The doctrine of salvation
- 9. Ecclesiology - The doctrine of the church
- 10. Eschatology - The doctrine of last things

### C. A Proper Approach To Doctrinal Study

\* How should we approach the study of Bible Doctrines? What presuppositions or attitudes must we have?

1. We must be saved - II Cor 4:3-4; I Cor 2:14
2. We must have a basic acceptance of the Bible as God's truth - II Tim 3:16-17
3. We must rely on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

\* *Jn 16:12-15* I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

*13* Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. *14* He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. *15* All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

~ Christ made this promise near the end of His earthly ministry, just before the crucifixion.

~ The Holy Spirit's teaching ministry was still future at that time - it began at Pentecost.

~ He would teach "all truth" (literally, "all the truth"). He would teach the apostles God's truth ("he shall not speak of himself"), which they recorded in Scripture. His ministry today is to take this Scripture and help us understand it (illumination).

~ His teaching would include prophetic truth ("things to come").

~ The result of the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry is to glorify Christ.

\* *I Cor 2:9-13* But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. *10* But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. *11* For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. *12* Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. *13* Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

~ Human experience is not sufficient to help us know what our future lives in Heaven will be like. Human knowledge and intuition are insufficient as well. We need revelation from God, which He has given through His Holy Spirit!

~ The Holy Spirit, because He is God, fully understands the things of God. Therefore, He is able to teach us the truths that God wants us to know.

- ~ The Holy Spirit's teaching ministry is not earthly in nature. It is not man's wisdom, but Gods; it is spiritual truth that only spiritual (regenerated) people can understand.
  - \* *I Jn 2:27* But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.
  - ~ The indwelling Holy Spirit is present to teach us! While we do benefit from the teaching of others (cf. gift of teaching), we evaluate the truthfulness and accuracy of that teaching through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit! We can discern the presence of false teaching and false teachers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
4. We must approach the study with humility - Deut 29:29; Isa 55:8-9; Rom 11:33-34
    - \* We will never understand everything about God and His Word. Some of our current accepted beliefs may be tested as we study deeper into Scripture. We must allow God to speak for Himself, and not force Him into saying what we want Him to say!
  5. We must allow the study to impact our lives in how we worship and how we live - Col 1:9-12; Php 1:9-11

## **II. THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF BIBLE DOCTRINES**

### **A. Because Of The Nature Of Bible Doctrines**

- \* Bible doctrines are simply the teachings of the Bible arranged in an orderly fashion. If a teaching (doctrine) is important enough for God to place in His inspired Word, it is important enough for us to understand and teach to others to the best of our ability - Mt 28:19-20

### **B. Because Of The Purposes Of Bible Doctrines**

1. Doctrine teaches the proper way of salvation - II Tim 3:15; Rom 10:13-17; Gal 1:8-9
2. Doctrine prepares believers for Christian living - II Tim 3:16-17; Titus 2:10-13
  - \* Men live their lives on the basis of what they believe. True beliefs lead to godly living; false beliefs result in ungodliness - Pr 23:7; Mt 7:15-20; I Tim 1:9-10
  - \* Example: In Paul's epistles he typically teaches doctrinal truth in the first part of the letter and then applies that truth to everyday living in the latter portion of the letter. Note the turning point in Rom 12:1-2 and Eph 4:1.
3. Doctrine prepares believers for Christian service - Eph 4:11-14; II Tim 3:16-17
4. Doctrine is crucial to ministry - I Tim 4:16; II Tim 4:1-4; Titus 1:9-11
5. Doctrine protects believers (and churches) from error - Rom 16:17-18; Eph 4:4; I Tim 4:1-2; II Jn 9-11
6. Doctrine aids in evangelism - I Pet 3:15; Rom 1:16; Rom 10:17

### **C. Because Of God's Commands**

1. The Great Commission involves doctrine (teaching) - Mt 28:19-20
2. Discipleship demands doctrine (teaching) - II Tim 2:2

3. We are commanded to teach doctrine - I Tim 4:6-16; II Tim 4:1-3; Titus 2:1

**D. Because Of The Example Of The New Testament Church - Acts 4:42; 17:11**

**E. Because Of Christ's Evaluation Of The Church - Rev 2-3**

- \* As Jesus gave John the "7 Letters to the 7 Churches" in Rev 2-3, he gave words of praise and condemnation to these churches. Their stand for pure doctrine brought His praise, and their willingness to compromise pure doctrine brought His rebuke and condemnation. These churches were commanded to repent.

**III. REASONS FOR DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES - Why doesn't everyone agree?**

**A. Because Of The Limitations Inherent In The Study Of Bible Doctrine**

1. Our mind is finite, while God is infinite.
2. We are fallen creatures, and sin has corrupted our understanding.
3. There are many things that God has chosen to not reveal to us - Deut 29:29
4. Human language has inherent inadequacies.

**B. Because Of Satanic Corruption**

1. Satan, our adversary, corrupts and counterfeits the truth - I Tim 4:1-3; II Cor 11:13-14
2. We are warned repeatedly in Scripture concerning false teachers, false prophets, and false Christs - Deut 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Mt 7:15; 24:23-24; II Pet 2:1; I Jn 4:1-3

**IV. DEALING WITH THOSE WHO ERR**

**A. We Must Separate From False Doctrine And False Teachers - II Cor 6:14-7:1; Rom 16:17-18; II Jn 9-11**

**B. We Must Protect Our Church's Doctrine - I Tim 1:3; 1:18-20; Titus 1:10-14**

**C. We Must Be Discerning And Patient - II Tim 2:23-26**

- \* Four good questions to ask concerning doctrinal differences and erroneous teaching:

1. How far has this teaching deviated from the truth?
  - \* Is this a difficult area of Scripture? Do solid, conservative theologians hold differing opinions? Could I possibly be wrong?
2. How important is this teaching?
  - a. Some doctrines are foundational to the faith. To deviate from them results in heresy and apostasy, and is a denial of the true faith.

- \* Examples: Inerrancy of Scripture; Deity of Christ; Virgin birth of Christ; Substitutionary atonement of Christ; Bodily resurrection of Christ; Salvation by grace through faith alone; etc.

- b. Other doctrines are important, but do not involve issues fundamental to salvation.
    - \* Examples: Eternal security; The mode of baptism; Views on prophecy; Speaking in tongues; Views of church government; etc.
    - \* Many of these doctrines are at the heart of denominational differences. Those who differ may still be saved (they are not apostates), but these differences make it difficult to “do church” in the same way.
  - c. Still other doctrines deal with matters that are more secondary in nature. There is room for disagreement, but we can still worship together in the same church.
3. What level of fellowship is being considered?
- \* We can fellowship over a meal and even try to help true believers who differ in significant matters. But we would not allow them to teach in, or pastor, our church.
4. What is the motive of the teacher?
- a. Is he sincere, but has made an honest mistake?
    - \* Teach him! - Acts 18:24-26
  - b. Is he proud, refusing to be taught, or to admit error? Is he stubbornly divisive?
    - \* Admonish him, then avoid him if he refuses to listen - Titus 3:10-11
  - c. Is he knowingly distorting Scripture? Is his teaching perverting the faith?
    - \* Avoid him! - Rom 16:17-18