

Systematic Theology: Part 2: The Doctrine of God

This document contains the teacher notes for 12 Sunday school lessons walking through the second part of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. There is a [complementary document](#) containing student handouts that can be shared with listeners to aid them with this material.

I claim no infallibility relative to the material presented here (the bulk is a condensation of Grudem's text). It is, as many have said before, beggars showing other beggars where to find bread. These teachings are provided free in the spirit of [Matthew 10:8b](#).

As errors are found, please let me know so I can correct. The theology expressed here should not be construed as representing the theology of Stuart Heights Baptist Church (especially when I am wrong or when I am being an idiot).

The formatting is as follows:

- **bold green text are quotes from outside sources (primarily Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology text)**
- **bold red text is the Scripture** (NKJV is used unless otherwise noted. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)
- **bold blue text are Bible references**
- **bold purple text are questions to consider asking while teaching this material**
- **highlighted, bold, and underlined text in the teacher notes are answers to blanks in the student handouts**
- plain black text are my comments

The audio recordings of many of these teachings themselves are available via our class [podcast](#). Many thanks to David Barber for his faithfulness in this area.

I hope these resources assist in enabling you to teach through a work like Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. Feel free to contact me at jim314@yahoo.com with questions or feedback.

Grace and peace,

Jim Fleming
Hixson, Tennessee
November 2014

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 9: The Existence of God

How do we know that God exists?

Introduction & Review

Note: The primary textbook for the **structure** of this series is Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. The primary text for the **substance** of this series is the Bible.

Grudem: What is systematic theology? Many different definitions have been given, but for the purposes of this book the following definition will be used: *Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the **whole Bible teach us today?" about any given **topic**.***

This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic.

Example: Lego sets vs Lego pieces

The Words

1. Systematic – carefully organized (all relevant passages organized into topics)
2. Theology – the study of religious truths

The Schedule

Part 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God (February – April, 2014)

Part 2: The Doctrine of God (September – November, 2014)

Chapter 9: The Existence of God

- How do we know that God exists?

Chapter 10: The Knowability of God

- Can we really know God? How much of God can we know?

Chapter 11: The Character of God: "Incommunicable" Attributes

- How is God different from us?

Chapter 12: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 1)

- How is God like us in his being and in mental and moral attributes?

Chapter 13: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 2)

- How is God like us in attributes of will and in attributes that summarize his excellence?

Chapter 14: God in Three Persons: The Trinity

- How can God be three persons, yet one God?

Chapter 15: Creation

- Why, how, and when did God create the universe?

Chapter 16: God's Providence

- If God controls all things, how can our actions have real meaning? What are the decrees of God?

Chapter 17: Miracles

- What are miracles? Can they happen today?

Chapter 18: Prayer

- Why does God want us to pray? How can we pray effectively?

Chapter 19: Angels

- What are angels? Why did God create them?

Chapter 20: Satan and Demons

- How should Christians think of Satan and demons today? Spiritual warfare.

Part 3: The Doctrine of Man (March 2015)

Part 4: The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit (October – November 2015)

Part 5: The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption (January – April 2016)

Part 6: The Doctrine of the Church (June – August 2016)

Part 7: The Doctrine of the Future (November – December 2016)

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: How do we know that God exists?

1. **Humanity's Inner Sense of God. Romans 1:18-25: 18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **25** who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Grudem: Some people deny this inner sense of God and even deny that God exists

Psalm 14:1a: The fool has said in his heart, "*There is no God.*"

Psalm 53:1: The fool has said in his heart, "*There is no God.*"

Psalm 10:3-4: For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the LORD. The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God*; *God is* in none of his thoughts.

Why would people do this? **Sin** (Romans 1:18)

What about the believer? Grudem: In the life of a Christian this inner awareness of God becomes **stronger** and more distinct

John 14:23: Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. **Ephesians 3:17a:** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (if someone is living with you, you will get to know them better over time)

Philippians 3:8, 10: Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (Paul was willing to trade everything for Jesus—because he knew Him)

1 Peter 1:8: whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory (this unseen God causes joy)

2. Believing the Evidence in Scripture and Nature

The Bible clearly teaches that God exists (thank you, Captain Obvious—and **Genesis 1:1**)

Nature itself teaches us that God exists (thank you, **Acts 14:17:** Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. **Psalm 19:1:** The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.)

Grudem: If our hearts and minds were not so blinded by sin, it would be impossible for us to look closely at a leaf from any tree and say, “No one created this: it just happened.”

Grudem: When we believe that God exists, we are basing our belief not on some blind hope apart from any evidence, but on an overwhelming amount of reliable evidence from God’s words and God’s works. It is a characteristic of true faith that it is a confidence based on reliable evidence.

3. Traditional “Proofs” for the Existence of God

The cosmological argument (everything has a cause)

The teleological argument (everything has a purpose)

The ontological argument (I am still confused on this one)

The moral argument (right and wrong exist)

Grudem: The value of these proofs, then, lies chiefly in overcoming some of the intellectual objections of unbelievers . They cannot bring unbelievers to saving faith, for that comes about through belief in the testimony of Scripture.

4. **Only God Can Overcome Our Sin and Enable Us to Be Persuaded of His Existence**

2 Corinthians 4:4-5: But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5: And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **When the seraphim around God's throne cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3), do you think they are seeing the earth from a somewhat different perspective than ours? In what ways? How can we begin to see the world more from this perspective?**
2. **When is your inner sense of God's existence strongest? Weakest? Why?**
3. **Look at your hand. Is it more or less complex than a wristwatch? Is it logical to think that either one of them just came about by an accidental combination of elements?**
4. **Do most people today believe in the existence of God? Has this been true throughout history? If they believe that God exists, why have they not worshiped him rightly?**
5. **Why do some people deny the existence of God? Does Romans 1:18 suggest there is often a moral factor influencing their intellectual denial of God's existence (cf. Psalm 14:1-3)? What is the best way to approach someone who denies the existence of God?**

Scripture Memory Passage Romans 1:18-20

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the

things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Hymn: “The Spacious Firmament on High” (Joseph Addison)

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heav’ns, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim.

Th’ unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator’s pow’r display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list’ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth;

Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball?
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?

In reason’s ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing, as they shine,
“The hand that made us is divine.”

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 10: The Knowability of God

Can we really know God? How much of God can we know?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Romans 1:18-20**

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Last week we looked at the existence of God and saw how God put an inner sense of Himself in all men, as well as evidence in Scripture and nature, but ultimately, only God can illuminate Himself.

Grudem: The Necessity for God to Reveal Himself to Us

Grudem: If we are to know God at all, it is necessary that **he** reveal himself to **us**. **Romans 1:19:** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

Grudem: With regard to the personal knowledge of God that comes in salvation, this idea is even more explicit. **Matthew 11:27:** All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. **1 Corinthians 2:14:** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. **2 Corinthians 4:3-4:** But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. **John 1:18:** No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son . . . He has declared *Him*.

Grudem: **Sinful** people misinterpret the revelation about God found in nature. **Romans 1:18, 21, 25:** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. . . . because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. . . . who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (note: we are all sinful)

Grudem: We need Scripture if we are to interpret natural revelation rightly. . . . We depend on God's active communication to us in Scripture for our true knowledge of God.

Grudem: We Can Never Fully Understand God

Grudem: Because God is infinite and we are finite or limited, we can never fully understand God. **Psalm 145:3:** Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness *is* unsearchable. **Psalm 147:5:** Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding *is* infinite. **Psalm 139:6, 17:** *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. . . . How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* **1 Corinthians 2:10-12:** **10** But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. **11** For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. **12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. **Romans 11:33:** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

Grudem: It is not only true that we can never fully understand God; it is also true that we can never fully understand any **single** thing about God. His greatness (**Psalm 145:3**), his understanding (**Psalm 147:5**), his knowledge (**Psalm 139:6**), his riches, wisdom, judgments, and ways (**Romans 11:33**) are all beyond our ability to understand fully.

Isaiah 55:9: For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. **Job 26:14:** Indeed these *are* the mere edges of His ways, And how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand? **Job 11:7-9:** **7** Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? **8** *They are* higher than heaven— what can you do? Deeper than Sheol— what can you know? **9** Their measure *is* longer than the earth And broader than the sea. **Job 37:5:** God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

Grudem: We will **never** run out of things to learn about him, and we will thus never tire in delighting in the discovery of more and more of his excellence and of the greatness of his works.

Grudem: Even in the age to come, when we are freed from the presence of sin, we will never be able fully to understand God or any one thing about him. This is seen from the fact that the passages cited above attribute God's incomprehensibility not to our sinfulness but to his infinite greatness. It is because we are finite and God is infinite that we will never be able to understand him fully. **Psalm 139:17-18: How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.**

Grudem: We should be growing in our knowledge of God through our entire lives. **Colossians 1:10: that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God**

Grudem: To study and to teach God's Word in both formal and informal ways will always be a great privilege and joy.

Grudem: Yet We Can Know God Truly

"I know my wife" ≠ "I know everything about my wife," but it does mean that I know more than **you**.

Grudem: We can know **some** of God's thoughts— even many of them— from Scripture. **Psalm 139:17: How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!**

Grudem: Even more significantly, it is God himself whom we know, not simply facts about him or actions he does. **Jeremiah 9:23-24: Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.** (The source of our joy and sense of importance ought to come not from our own abilities or possessions, but from the fact that we know him)

Grudem: In praying to his Father, Jesus could say, "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (**John 17:3**). The promise of the new covenant is that all shall know God, "from the least of them to the greatest" (**Hebrews 8:11**), and John's first epistle tells us that the Son of God has come and given us understanding "to know him who is true" (**1 John 5:20**). John can say, "I write to you, children, because you know the Father" (**1 John 2:13**).

Grudem: The fact that we do know God himself is further demonstrated by the realization that the richness of the Christian life includes a **personal** relationship with God. As these passages imply, we have a far greater privilege than mere knowledge of facts about God. We speak to God in prayer, and he speaks to us through his Word. We commune with him in his presence, we sing his praise, and we are aware that he personally dwells among us and within us to bless us (**John 14:23**). Indeed, this personal relationship with God the Father, with God the Son, and with God the Holy Spirit may be said to be the greatest of all the blessings of the Christian life.

How are you availing yourself of this richness?

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Sometimes people say that heaven sounds boring. How does the fact that God is incomprehensible yet knowable help to answer that objection?
2. How can we be sure that when we reach heaven God will not tell us that most of what we had learned about him was wrong, and that we would have to forget what we had learned and begin to learn different things about him?
3. Do you want to go on knowing God more and more deeply for all eternity? Why or why not? Would you like sometime to be able to know God exhaustively? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think God decided to reveal himself to us? Do you learn more about God from his revelation in nature or his revelation in Scripture? Why do you think it is that God's thoughts are "precious" to us (**Psalm 139:17**)? Would you call your present relationship to God a personal relationship? How is it similar to your relationships with other people, and how is it different? What would make your relationship with God better?

Scripture Memory Passage Psalm 145:1-3

1 I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. 3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

Hymn: "I Will Thee Praise, My God, O King" (The Book of Psalms with Music (Pittsburgh: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1973)

**I will thee praise, my God, O King,
And I will ever bless thy name;
I will extol thee every day
And evermore thy praise proclaim.**

**The Lord is great; he praise exceeds;
His greatness fully search can none;
Race shall to race extol thy deeds
And tell thy mighty acts each one.**

**Upon thy glorious majesty
And wondrous works my mind shall dwell;
Men shall recount thy dreadful acts,
And of thy greatness I will tell.**

**They utter shall abundantly
The mem'ry of thy goodness great,
And shall sing praises cheerfully
While they thy righteousness relate.**

**Jehovah very gracious is;
In him compassions also flow;
In lovingkindness he is great,
And unto anger he is slow.**

**O'er all his works his mercies are;
The Lord is good to all that live.
Praise, Lord, to thee thy works afford;
Thy saints to thee shall praises give.**

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 11: The Character of God: “Incommunicable” Attributes

How is God different from us?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Psalm 145:1-3**

1 I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. 3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far in this part of Systematic Theology, we have looked at the existence of God (and we saw how God put an inner sense of Himself in all men, as well as evidence in Scripture and nature, but ultimately, only God can illuminate Himself) and we have looked at the knowability of God (and we saw how necessary it is for God to reveal Himself to us, how we can never know God fully—or even any single part of Him truly—but how we can know God truly). Today, we begin to look at the different parts of God’s character.

Grudem: Introduction to the Study of God’s Character

1. **Grudem: Classifying God’s Attributes.**

Grudem: We will adopt probably the most commonly used classification: the incommunicable attributes of God (that is, those attributes that God does not share or “communicate” to others) and the communicable attributes of God (those God shares or “communicates” with us). Grudem: We will use the two categories of “incommunicable” and “communicable” attributes then, while realizing that they are not entirely precise classifications, and that there is in reality much overlap between the categories.

2. Grudem: The Names of God in Scripture.

Grudem: All that we know about God from Scripture comes to us in terms that we understand because they describe events or things common to human experience. . . .

Grudem: If God is going to teach us about things we do not know by direct experience (such as his attributes), he has to teach us in terms of what we do know.

Grudem: It should caution us not to take any one of these descriptions by itself and isolate it from its immediate context or from the rest of what Scripture says about God.

Grudem: It must be remembered that though all that Scripture tells us about God is true, it is not exhaustive. Scripture does not tell us everything about God's character.

- ## 3. Grudem: Balanced Definitions of God's Incommunicable Attributes. Grudem: The incommunicable attributes of God are perhaps the most easily misunderstood, probably because they represent aspects of God's character that are least familiar to our experience. In this chapter, therefore, each of the incommunicable attributes of God is defined with a two-part sentence. The first part defines the attribute under discussion, and the second part guards against misunderstanding the attribute by stating a balancing or opposite aspect that relates to that attribute.

Grudem: The Incommunicable Attributes of God

1. **Independence** (self-existence). **Grudem:** God does not need us or the rest of creation for **anything**, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify him and bring him joy. **Acts 17:24-25:** God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. **Job 41:11:** Who has preceded Me, that I should pay *him*? Everything under heaven is Mine. **Psalm 50:10-12:** **10** For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a thousand hills. **11** I know all the birds of the mountains, *And* the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine. **12** "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.

Grudem: God exists by virtue of his very nature, and that he was never created and never came into being. He always was. **Revelation 4:11:** You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, *And* by Your will they exist and were created. **John 1:3:** All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. **Psalm 90:2:** Before the mountains were brought

forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God. **Exodus 3:14**: And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Grudem: God's existence and character are determined by himself alone and are not dependent on anyone or anything else.

Grudem: The balancing consideration with respect to this doctrine is the fact that we and the rest of creation can glorify God and bring him joy. This must be stated in order to guard against any idea that God's independence makes us meaningless. . . . We are in fact very meaningful because God has created us and **he** has determined that we would be meaningful to him. **Isaiah 43:7**: Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him. **Ephesians 1:11-12**: In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. **Revelation 4:11**: You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created. **Isaiah 62:3-5**: **3** You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God. **4** You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married. **5** For *as* a young man marries a virgin, *So* shall your sons marry you; And *as* the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, *So* shall your God rejoice over you. **Zephaniah 3:17-18a**: The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

2. **Unchangeableness** (immutability). **Grudem**: God is **unchanging** in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations. **Psalm 102:25-27**: **25** Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. **26** They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. **27** But You *are* the same, And Your years will have no end. **Malachi 3:6**: For I *am* the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. **James 1:17**: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Grudem: God is unchanging . . . **only** in ways that Scripture itself affirms. **Psalm 33:11**:

The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations. **Isaiah 46:9-11: 9** Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, **10** Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' **11** Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken *it*; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed *it*; I will also do it. **Numbers 23:19:** God *is* not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

Grudem: Does God Sometimes Change His Mind? (Exodus 32:9-14; Isaiah 38:1-6; Jonah 3:4, 10; Genesis 6:6, 1 Samuel 15:10; **Grudem: God responds differently to different situations**)

Grudem: If God changed for the better, then he was not the best possible being when we first trusted him. . . . If God could change for the worse . . . then what kind of God might he become?

3. **Eternity. Grudem: God has **no** beginning, end, or succession of moments in his own being, and he sees all time equally vividly, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.**

Grudem: God Is Timeless in His Own Being. Psalm 90:2: Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God. **Revelation 1:8:** I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*" says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. **Exodus 3:14:** And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Grudem: God Sees All Time Equally Vividly. Psalm 90:4: For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night. **2 Peter 3:8:** But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.; **Grudem: God created time and is Lord over time.**

Grudem: God Sees Events in Time and Acts in Time. Galatians 4:4-5: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. **Acts 17:30-31:** Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now

commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.; Grudem: God predicts his actions at one point in time and then carries out his actions at a later point in time.

4. **Omnipresence.** Grudem: God does **not** have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.

Grudem: God Is Present Everywhere. **Jeremiah 23:23-24:** *“Am I a God near at hand,” says the LORD, “And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?”* says the LORD; *“Do I not fill heaven and earth?”* says the LORD. **Psalm 139:7-10:** **7** Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? **8** If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*. **9** If I take the wings of the morning, *And* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, **10** Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. **Colossians 1:17:** And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Grudem: God Does Not Have Spatial Dimensions. **1 Kings 8:27:** But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! **Isaiah 66:1-2a:** Thus says the LORD: *“Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist,”* Says the LORD.

Grudem: Before God created the universe, there was no matter or material so there was no space either. Yet God still existed. Where was God? He was not in a place that we could call a “where,” for there was no “where” or space. But God still was! This fact makes us realize that God relates to space in a far different way than we do or than any created thing does. He exists as a kind of being that is far different and far greater than we can imagine.

We do not believe in pantheism. Grudem: The biblical perspective is rather that God is present everywhere in his creation, but that he is also **distinct** from his creation.

Grudem: God is present in different ways in different places . . . God acts differently in different places in his creation. **Amos 9:1-4:** **1** I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and He said: *“Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds may shake, And break them on the heads of them all. I will slay the last of them with the sword. He who flees from them shall not get away, And he who escapes from them shall not be delivered.* **2** *“Though*

they dig into hell, From there My hand shall take them; Though they climb up to heaven, From there I will bring them down; **3** And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, From there I will search and take them; Though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, From there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them; **4** Though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword, And it shall slay them. I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good.”

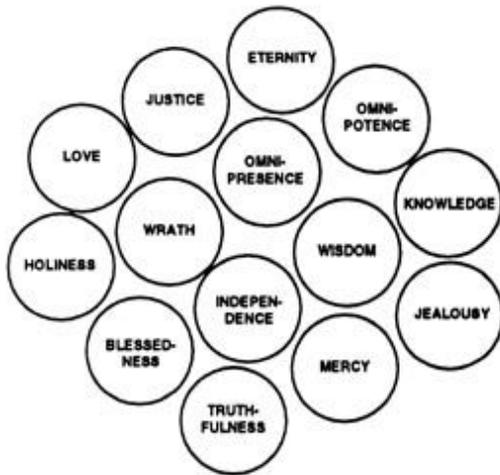
Colossians 1:17: And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. **Hebrews 1:3:** who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Grudem: Although the Bible can speak of God as being present everywhere, when the Bible says that God is “present” it usually means “present to **ble**ss.” **Psalm 16:11:** You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore. **2 Corinthians 3:17:** Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. **John 14:23:** Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. The opposite concept is found here: **Isaiah 59:2:** But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear. **Proverbs 15:29:** The LORD *is* far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

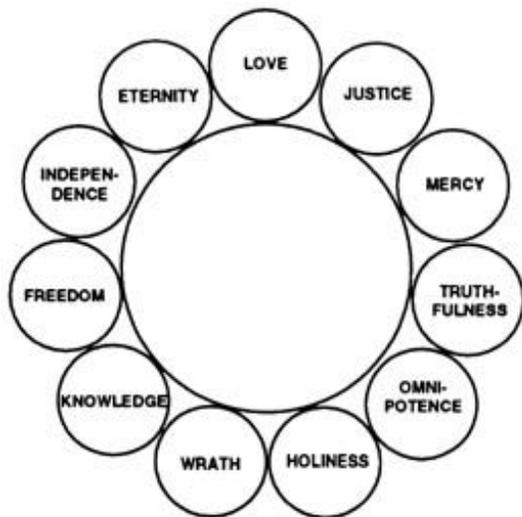
Grudem: In summary, God is present in every part of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places. Furthermore, when the Bible speaks of God’s presence, it usually means his presence to bless.

5. **Unity.** **Grudem:** God is not **div**ided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.

Grudem: God's being is not a collection of attributes added together.



Grudem: God's attributes are not additions to his real being:



Grudem: Each attribute is simply a way of describing one aspect of God's total character or being. God himself is a unity, a unified and completely integrated whole . . . who is infinitely perfect in all of these attributes.

Grudem: Why then does Scripture speak of these different attributes of God? It is probably because we are unable to grasp all of God's character at one time, and we need to learn of it from different perspectives over a period of time. Yet these perspectives should never be set in opposition to one another, for they are just different ways of looking at the totality of God's character. Jim's conclusion: Stop drawing pictures to describe God

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **As you think of God's independence, unchangeableness, eternity, omnipresence, and unity, can you see some faint reflections of these five incommunicable attributes in yourself as God created you to be? What would it mean to strive to become more like God in these areas? At what point would it be wrong to even want to be like God in each of these areas because it would be attempting to usurp his unique role as Creator and Lord?**
2. **Using each of these five incommunicable attributes, explain how we will be more like God in heaven than we are now, and also how we will for all eternity be unlike God in each of these five areas.**
3. **Explain how each of the five incommunicable attributes of God discussed in this chapter can be a help in your own prayer life.**

Scripture Memory Passage: Psalm 102:25-27

25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. 26 They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. 27 But You *are* the same, And Your years will have no end.

Hymn: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" (Walter Chalmers Smith, 1867)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth thee!

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 12: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 1)

How is God like us in his being and in mental and moral attributes?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: Psalm 102:25-27

25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. 26 They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. 27 But You *are* the same, And Your years will have no end.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far in this part of Systematic Theology, we looked at the existence of God (God puts an inner sense of Himself in men, Scripture, and nature, but only God can illuminate Himself), the knowability of God (it is necessary for God to reveal Himself to us, how we can never know God fully—but how we can know God truly), and five different parts of God's character that he does not share with us (incommunicable attributes). This week, we begin the communicable attributes.

Grudem: This division into "incommunicable" and "communicable" is not an absolute division and there is some room for difference of opinion concerning which attributes should fit into which categories.

Grudem's division (the first three bullets are this week and the last two are next week):

- **Attributes Describing God's Being: Spirituality, Invisibility**
- **Mental Attributes: Knowledge (or Omniscience), Wisdom, Truthfulness (and Faithfulness)**
- **Moral Attributes: Goodness, Love, Mercy (Grace, Patience), Holiness, Peace (or Order), Righteousness (or Justice), Jealousy, Wrath**
- **Attributes of Purpose: Will, Freedom, Omnipotence (or Power, and Sovereignty)**

- **“Summary” Attributes: Perfection, Blessedness, Beauty, Glory**

Summary: God **Himself** is the best, highest, and final standard for His attributes.

Grudem: Attributes Describing God’s Being

Spirituality

Grudem: God is in no way limited to a spatial location

John 4:24; 1 Kings 8:27; Exodus 20:4–6

Grudem: God’s being, his essential mode of existence, is different from everything that he has created

Grudem: God’s spirituality means that God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence

John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 14:14; Philippians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 6:17; Romans 8:16; Luke 23:46; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Hebrews 12:23

Invisibility

Grudem: God’s total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows himself to us through visible, created things

John 1:18; John 6:46; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12; Exodus 33:11; Exodus 33:20; Exodus 33:21–23

Grudem: There was a sense in which God could not be seen at all, but that there was also some outward form or manifestation of God which at least in part was able to be seen by man

Grudem: The Old Testament also records a number of theophanies. A theophany is “an appearance of God.” In these theophanies God took on various visible forms to show himself to people.

Genesis 18:1–33; Genesis 32:28–30; Exodus 13:21–22; Exodus 24:9–11; Judges 13:21–22; Isaiah 6:1; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3

Grudem: In the person of Jesus we have a unique visible manifestation of God in the New Testament that was not available to believers who saw theophanies in the Old Testament.

Grudem: Mental Attributes

Knowledge (Omniscience)

Grudem: God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple [not divided] and eternal act

Job 37:16; 1 John 3:20; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; Hebrews 4:13; Isaiah 46:9–10; Matthew 6:8; Psalm 139:1–2, 4, 16

Grudem: The fact that God knows all things possible can also be deduced from God's full knowledge of himself. If God fully knows himself, he knows everything he is able to do, which includes all things that are possible.

Wisdom

Grudem: God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals

Romans 16:27; Job 9:4; Job 12:13; 1 Corinthians 1:21-30; Romans 11:33; James 1:5; Psalm 19:7; Psalm 111:10

Truthfulness (and Faithfulness)

Grudem: He is the true God, and . . . all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth

Jeremiah 10:10–11; John 17:3

Grudem: He has implanted in our minds a reflection of his own idea of what the true God must be, and this enables us to recognize him as God

Job 37:16; Deuteronomy 32:4

Grudem: God always speaks truth when he speaks

Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5; John 17:17

Grudem: Whatever conforms to God's own words is also true, and what fails to conform to his words is not true

Grudem: Growth in knowledge is part of the process of becoming more like God or becoming creatures who are more fully in God's image

Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:25; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Proverbs 12:12

Grudem: Moral Attributes

Goodness

Grudem: God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval

Luke 18:19; Psalm 100:5; Psalm 106:1; Psalm 107:1; Psalm 34:8

Grudem: "Good" is what God approves

Grudem: When we evaluate things in the way God created us to evaluate them, we will also approve what God approves and delight in things in which he delights

Genesis 1:31; Romans 12:2; James 1:17; Psalm 84:11; Romans 8:28; Matthew 7:11; Galatians 6:10

Love

Grudem: God eternally gives of himself to others

1 John 4:8; John 3:35; John 14:31; 1 John 4:10; Romans 5:8; John 3:16; Galatians 2:20; Matthew 22:37–38; 1 John 5:3; 1 John 2:15; 1 John 4:19; 1 John 4:11; John 13:35; John 17:26; Matthew 5:43–48

Mercy, Grace, Patience

Grudem: Mercy is God's goodness toward those in misery and distress. Grudem: Grace is God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment. Grudem: Patience is God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time

Exodus 34:6; Psalm 103:8; 2 Samuel 24:14; Matthew 9:27; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Hebrews 4:16; Exodus 33:19; Psalm 119:132; 1 Peter 5:10; Romans 3:23–24; Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3; Romans 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:16; James 1:19; 1 Peter 2:20; Ephesians 4:2; Galatians 5:22; James 5:8

Holiness

Grudem: He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor

Exodus 26:33; Psalm 24:3; Exodus 20:11; Exodus 29:44; Psalm 71:22; Psalm 78:41; Psalm 89:18; Isaiah 6:3; Psalm 99:9; Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16; Exodus 19:4–6; Hebrews 12:14; Hebrews 12:10; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; Ephesians 2:21, 26–27

Peace (or Order)

Grudem: In God's being and in his actions he is separate from all **confusion** and disorder, yet he is continually active in innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions

1 Corinthians 14:33; Romans 15:33; Romans 16:20; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20; Psalm 29:11; Psalm 85:8; Psalm 119:165; Proverbs 3:17; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 26:3; Isaiah 57:19; John 14:27; Romans 8:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Galatians 5:22; Acts 9:31

Grudem: God's peace does not have to do with inactivity, but with ordered and controlled activity

Righteousness, Justice

Grudem: God **always** acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right

Grudem: In English the terms righteousness and justice are different words, but in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament there is only one word group behind these two English terms.

Deuteronomy 32:4; Genesis 18:25; Psalm 19:8; Isaiah 45:19; Romans 3:25-26

Grudem: Whenever Scripture confronts the question of whether God himself is righteous or not, the ultimate answer is always that we as God's creatures have no right to say that God is unrighteous or unjust.

Grudem: It should be a cause for thanksgiving and gratitude when we realize that righteousness and omnipotence are both possessed by God. If he were a God of perfect righteousness without power to carry out that righteousness, he would not be worthy of worship and we would have no guarantee that justice will ultimately prevail in the universe. But if he were a God of unlimited power, yet without righteousness in his character, how unthinkable horrible the universe would be! There would be unrighteousness at the center of all existence and there would be nothing anyone could do to change it. Existence would become meaningless, and we would be driven to the most utter despair. We ought therefore continually to thank and praise God for who he is.

Jealousy

Grudem: God continually seeks to **protect** his own honor

2 Corinthians 11:2; Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:14

Grudem: It is not wrong for God to seek his own honor, however, for he deserves it fully. God freely admits that his actions in creation and redemption are done for his own honor

Isaiah 48:11

Grudem: It is healthy for us spiritually when we settle in our hearts the fact that God deserves all honor and glory from his creation, and that it is right for him to seek this honor

Wrath

Grudem: He intensely hates all sin

Exodus 32:9-10; Deuteronomy 9:7-8

Grudem: The doctrine of the wrath of God in Scripture is not limited to the Old Testament, however, as some have falsely imagined

John 3:36; Romans 1:18

Grudem: It is helpful for us to ask what God would be like if he were a God that did not hate sin . He would then be a God who either delighted in sin or at least was not troubled by it. Such a God would not be worthy of our worship, for sin is hateful and it is worthy of being hated.

1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 3:25-26

Grudem: In thinking about God's wrath we must also bear in mind his patience

Psalms 103:8-9; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9-10

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

- 1. Spirituality: Why is God so strongly displeased at carved idols, even those that are intended to represent him? How then shall we picture God or think of God in our minds when we pray to him?**
- 2. What is it about our culture or our way of thinking today that makes us think of the physical world as more real and more permanent than the spiritual world? What can we do to change our intuitive perspective on the reality of the spiritual world?**
- 3. Knowledge: When should we try to hide our thoughts and deeds from God? How is your answer to this question a blessing for your life?**
- 4. Wisdom: Do you really believe that God is working wisely today in your life? In the world? If you find this difficult to believe at times, what might you do to change your attitude?**

5. **Truthfulness:** Why are people in our society, sometimes even Christians, quite careless with regard to truthfulness in speech? Why do we not very often realize that the greatest harm of all that comes from lying is the fact that God himself is dishonored? Do you need to ask God's help to more fully reflect his truthfulness in speech in any of the following areas: promising to pray for someone; saying that you will be some place at a certain time; exaggerating events to make a more exciting story; taking care to remember and then be faithful to what you have said in business commitments; reporting what other people have said or what you think someone else is thinking; fairly representing your opponent's viewpoint in an argument?
6. **Goodness:** Remembering that every good and perfect gift is from God (James 1:17), see how many good gifts from God you can list on a piece of paper in five minutes. When you have finished, ask yourself how often you have an attitude of thankfulness to God for most of these gifts. Why do you think we tend to forget that these blessings come from God? What can we do to remember more frequently?
7. **Love:** Is it appropriate to define love as "self-giving" with respect to our own interpersonal relationships? In what ways could you imitate God's love specifically today?
8. Is it possible to decide to love someone and then to act on that decision, or does love between human beings simply depend on spontaneous emotional feelings?
9. **Mercy:** If you were to reflect God's mercy more fully, for whom among those you know would you show special care during the next week?
10. **Holiness:** Are there activities or relationships in your present pattern of life that are hindering your growth in holiness because they make it difficult for you to be separated from sin and devoted to seeking God's honor?
11. **Peace:** As you think about reflecting God's peace in your own life, think first about your own emotional, mental, and spiritual state. Can you say that by-and-large you have God's peace in the sense that your inner life is separate from confusion and disorder, and is frequently or continually active in well-ordered and well-controlled actions that further God's glory? Then ask the same questions concerning what may be called the "external circumstances" of your life, that is, your family relationships, your relationships with neighbors, your activities in studying or at your job, and your relationships in church activities. What about the overall picture of your life, viewed as a whole? Does it exhibit God's peace? What might you do to reflect God's peace more fully?
12. **Righteousness:** Do you ever find yourself wishing that some of God's laws were different than they are? If so, does such a wish reflect a dislike for some aspect of God's moral character? What passages of Scripture might you read to convince yourself more fully that God's character and his laws are right in these areas?

13. **Jealousy: Do you reflect God's jealousy for his own honor instinctively when you hear him dishonored in conversation or on television or in other contexts? What can we do to deepen our jealousy for God's honor?**
14. **Wrath: Should we love the fact that God is a God of wrath who hates sin? In what ways is it right for us to imitate this wrath, and in what ways is it wrong for us to do so?**

Scripture Memory Passage: **Exodus 34:6-7**

6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Hymn: "O Worship the King" (Sir Robert Grant, 1833)

O worship the King all glorious above,
O gratefully sing his pow'r and his love;
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
Has 'stablished it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills; it descends to the plain;
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In you do we trust, nor find you to fail;
Your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend!

O measureless might! Ineffable love!
While angels delight to hymn you above,
The humbler creation, though feeble their ways,
With true adoration shall lisp to your praise.

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 13: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes (Part 2)

How is God like us in attributes of will and in attributes that summarize his excellence?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Exodus 34:6-7**

6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far in this part of Systematic Theology, we looked at the existence of God (God puts an inner sense of Himself in men, Scripture, and nature, but only God can illuminate Himself), the knowability of God (it is necessary for God to reveal Himself to us, how we can never know God fully—but how we can know God truly), and five different parts of God's character that he does not share with us (incommunicable attributes). This week, we continue the communicable attributes.

Grudem's division (the first three bullets were last week and the last two are this week):

- **Attributes Describing God's Being: Spirituality, Invisibility**
- **Mental Attributes: Knowledge (or Omniscience), Wisdom, Truthfulness (and Faithfulness)**
- **Moral Attributes: Goodness, Love, Mercy (Grace, Patience), Holiness, Peace (or Order), Righteousness (or Justice), Jealousy, Wrath**
- **Attributes of Purpose: Will, Freedom, Omnipotence (or Power, and Sovereignty)**
- **"Summary" Attributes: Perfection, Blessedness, Beauty, Glory**

Summary: God **Himself** is the best, highest, and final standard for His attributes.

Grudem: Misunderstanding would result if one attribute were isolated from the rest of God's character and emphasized in a disproportionate way

Grudem: Attributes of Purpose

Will

Grudem: God's will is that attribute of God whereby he **approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation**

Grudem: God's will in general: Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 4:11: You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.; Daniel 4:32; Romans 13:1; Acts 4:27-28; James 4:13-15

Grudem: God's necessary will includes everything that he must will according to his own nature. What does God will necessarily? He wills himself.

Grudem: God's free will includes all things that God decided to will but had no necessity to will according to his nature. Here we must put God's decision to create the universe, and all the decisions relating to the details of that creation. Here we must also place all God's acts of redemption. There was nothing in God's own nature that required him to decide to create the universe or to redeem out of sinful mankind a people for himself. . . . However, God did decide to create and to redeem, and these were totally free choices on his part.

Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Grudem: The revealed will of God is God's declared will concerning what we should do or what God commands us to do

Grudem: God's secret will usually includes his hidden decrees by which he governs the universe and determines everything that will happen

Matthew 6:10: Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Grudem: The prayer "Your will be done" must be understood as an appeal for the revealed will of God to be followed on earth

Ephesians 5:17: Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is; 1 John 5:14: Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything

according to His will, He hears us; **1 Timothy 2:4**: who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; **2 Peter 3:9**: The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Grudem: Both the revealing of the good news of the gospel to some and its hiding from others are said to be according to God's will: **Matthew 11:25-26**; **1 Timothy 2:4**; **Romans 9:18**

God does not rejoice in evil: **Ezekiel 33:11**

Bottom line: We will **never** fully understand God's will in this life

Freedom

Grudem: God's freedom is that attribute of God whereby he does **whatever** he pleases: **Psalm 115:3**: **But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases**; **Proverbs 21:1**; **Daniel 4:35**

Grudem: God has made us as creatures with a will. We exercise choice and make real decisions regarding the events of our lives. Although our will is not absolutely free in the way God's is, God has nonetheless given us relative freedom within our spheres of activity in the universe he has created.

Omnipotence (Power, Sovereignty)

Grudem: God's omnipotence means that God is able to do **all** his holy will: **Psalm 24:8**; **Jeremiah 32:17**: **Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.**; **Ephesians 3:20**; **Luke 1:37**: **For with God nothing will be impossible**; **Matthew 19:26**

Grudem: There are some things that God cannot do. God cannot will or do anything that would deny his own character. **Titus 1:2** (lie); **2 Timothy 2:13** (deny Himself); **James 1:13** (tempted with evil). **Grudem**: It is not entirely accurate to say that God can do anything

Grudem: God has given us power to bring about results. . . . The use of power in ways pleasing to God and consistent with his will is again something that brings him glory as it reflects his own character.

Grudem: "Summary" Attributes

Perfection

Grudem: God's perfection means that God completely possesses **all** excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him: **Matthew 5:48: Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect; Psalm 18:30**

Grudem: God lacks nothing in his excellence: he fully possesses all of his attributes and lacks nothing from any one of those attributes. . . . There is no quality of excellence that it would be desirable for God to have that he does not have: he is "complete" or "perfect" in every way.

Blessedness

Grudem: God's blessedness means that God **delights** fully in himself and in all that reflects his character: **1 Timothy 6:15b: He who is the blessed and only Potentate; 1 Timothy 1:11; Genesis 1:31: Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.; Isaiah 62:5b: And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.**

Grudem: We imitate God's blessedness when we find delight and happiness in all that is pleasing to God, both those aspects of our own lives that are pleasing to God and the deeds of others

Grudem: We find our greatest blessedness, our greatest happiness, in delighting in the source of all good qualities, God himself

Beauty

Grudem: God's beauty is that attribute of God whereby he is the sum of all desirable qualities: **Psalm 27:4: One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.**

Grudem: "Perfection" means that God doesn't lack anything desirable; "beauty" means that God has everything desirable. They are two different ways of affirming the same truth.

Grudem: We reflect God's beauty in our own lives when we exhibit conduct that is pleasing to him

1 Peter 3:4: rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God; Titus 2:10: not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our

Savior in all things; Ephesians 5:27: that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Grudem: It is right that we long to be in the fellowship of God's people in which God's character is manifested, for when we delight in the godliness of God's people, we are ultimately delighting in God himself as we see his character evidenced in the lives of his people

Glory

Grudem: God's glory is the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of himself: Isaiah 43:7; Romans 3:23; John 17:5; Hebrews 1:3: who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; Psalm 24:10: Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah; Psalm 104:1-2; Luke 2:9; Revelation 21:23: The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Grudem: God made us to reflect his glory. Grudem: Though we do not now find ourselves surrounded by a visible light, there is a brightness, a splendor, or a beauty about the manner of life of a person who deeply loves God, and it is often evident to those around such a person

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

- 1. Will, Freedom: As children grow toward adulthood, what are proper and improper ways for them to show in their own lives greater and greater exercise of individual will and freedom from parental control? Are these to be expected as evidence of our creation in the image of God?**
- 2. Power: If God's power is his ability to do what he wills to do, then is power for us the ability to obey God's will and bring about results in the world that are pleasing to him?**
- 3. Perfection: How does God's attribute of perfection remind us that we can never be satisfied with the reflection of only some of God's character in our own lives?**
- 4. Blessedness: Are you happy with the way God created you—with the physical, emotional, mental, and relational traits he gave you? With the spiritual gifts he has given you? In what ways is it right to be happy or pleased with our own personalities, physical characteristics, abilities, positions, etc.? In what ways is it wrong to be pleased or happy about these things?**
- 5. Think about the qualities that you admire in other people, both Christians and non-Christians. Which of these are right to admire and which are not? How can you decide?**

6. **Beauty:** If we refuse to accept our society's definition of beauty, or even the definitions that we ourselves may have worked with previously, and decide that that which is truly beautiful is the character of God himself, then how will our understanding of beauty be different from the one we previously held? Will we still be able to rightly apply our new idea of beauty to some of the things we previously thought to be beautiful? Why or why not?
7. Can you understand why David's one desire above all others in life was **Psalm 27:4**?
8. **Glory:** When the shepherds near Bethlehem experienced the glory of the Lord shining around them, "they were filled with fear" (**Luke 2:9**). Yet when we come to live forever in the heavenly city, we will continually be surrounded by the light of the glory of the Lord (**Revelation 21:23**). Would you like to live in the presence of this glory?

Scripture Memory Passage: **Psalm 73:25-26**

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Hymn: "If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee" (Georg Neumark, 1641)

If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
 And hope in him through all thy ways,
 He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide
 thee,
 And bear thee through the evil days:
 Who trusts in God's unchanging love
 Builds on the rock that naught can move.

What can these anxious cares avail thee,
 These never-ceasing moans and sighs?
 What can it help, if thou bewail thee
 O'er each dark moment as it flies?
 Our cross and trials do but press
 The heavier for our bitterness.

Only be still, and wait his leisure
 In cheerful hope, with heart content
 To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure

And all-deserving love hath sent;
 Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
 To him who chose us for his own.

All are alike before the highest;
 'Tis easy to our God, we know,
 To raise thee up though low thou liest,
 To make the rich man poor and low;
 True wonders still by him are wrought
 Who setteth up and brings to naught.

Sing, pray, and keep his ways
 unswerving,
 So do thine own part faithfully,
 And trust his Word, though undeserving,
 Thou yet shalt find it true for thee;
 God never yet forsook at need
 The soul that trusted him indeed.

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 14: The Trinity

How can God be three persons, yet one God?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Psalm 73:25-26**

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far in this part of Systematic Theology, we looked at the existence of God (God puts an inner sense of Himself in men, Scripture, and nature, but only God can illuminate Himself), the knowability of God (it is necessary for God to reveal Himself to us, how we can never know God fully—but how we can know God truly), and attributes of God (those that He shares and those that He does not).

Today, we look at the being of God—the Trinity.

Grudem: God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God

Grudem: The Doctrine of the Trinity Is Progressively Revealed in Scripture

1. Partial Revelation in the Old Testament.

Grudem: The word trinity is never found in the Bible. Grudem: The word trinity means “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness.”

“Us” verses: **Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 6:8**

“More than one person” in the same verse, verses: **Psalm 45:6-7; Hebrews 1:8; Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:41-46); Isaiah 61:1; Malachi 3:1-2**

2. More Complete Revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament

Places where the entire Trinity is present: **Matthew 3:16-17; 1 Peter 1:2**

References to three members: **Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 John 5:7**

Grudem: Three Statements Summarize the Biblical Teaching

1. God is three persons. Grudem: The Father is not the Son; they are distinct persons. It also means that the Father is not the Holy Spirit, but that they are distinct persons. And it means that the Son is not the Holy Spirit. John 1:1-2, 17:24; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25; John 14:26, 16:7

2. Each person is fully God

- The Father (no one disputes this because of the volume of Scripture)
- The Son (**John 1:1-4, John 20:28-31, Hebrews 1:8, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1, Isaiah 9:6, Colossians 2:9**)
- The Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**—the Spirit is placed on the same level as the Father and the Son; **Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Psalm 139:7-8** (God's Spirit is omnipresent, so God's Spirit is fully God; **1 Corinthians 2:10-11**)

3. There is one God. Grudem: God is only one being. There are not three Gods. There is only one God. Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Isaiah 45:21-22; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; James 2:19

Problems with denying any one of the three statements

If you deny the first, then the easiest solution is **modalism** (Father, Son, and Spirit are different names for God who shows Himself differently at different times; Example: Jim is a father, a teacher, and a son). **Grudem: Such a solution would deny the fact that the three persons are distinct individuals, that God the Father sends God the Son into the world, that the Son prays to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit intercedes before the Father for us.**

If you deny the second, then the easiest solution is to say that at least one of the members of the Trinity is **not** God (Jesus is not God or the Holy Spirit is not God).

If you deny the third, then the easiest solution is **polytheism** (we have three Gods).

In an effort to further explain the Trinity (over and above the three statements we affirmed), a wide variety of analogies have been created to more concretely explain the Trinity in simpler terms. Examples: three-leaf clover, a tree, water (in three forms), man (three roles), etc.

Many of the analogies fall short in the, 'fully,' part. Each sub-part is not fully the entire part. Many others fall short in the, 'person,' part—non-person examples are used. Many also fall short in the, 'characteristics,' part—not all of the components have the same characteristics.

Grudem: Scripture nowhere uses any analogies to teach the doctrine of the Trinity

Grudem: No analogy adequately teaches about the Trinity, and all are misleading in significant ways

So, how do we explain the Trinity to our children (or to each other)? State what we know to be true: Errors come in when we try to go further than Scripture.

Grudem: Errors Have Come By Denying Any of the Three Statements Summarizing the Biblical Teaching

1. Modalism/Sabellianism/Modalistic Monarchianism (**Grudem: There Is One Person Who Appears to Us in Three Different Forms (or “Modes”)**)

Grudem: Modalism ultimately loses the heart of the doctrine of the atonement— that is, the idea that God sent his Son as a substitutionary sacrifice, and that the Son bore the wrath of God in our place, and that the Father, representing the interests of the Trinity, saw the suffering of Christ and was satisfied (Isaiah 53:11)

The United Pentecostal Church is modalistic (not to be confused with other Pentecostal churches)

2. Arianism Denies the Full Deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit

Grudem: Arius taught that God the Son was at one point created by God the Father, and that before that time the Son did not exist, nor did the Holy Spirit, but the Father only

Grudem: While Arianism held that the Son was created and was not divine, subordinationism held that the Son was eternal (not created) and divine, but still not equal to the Father in being or attributes— the Son was inferior or “subordinate” in being to God the Father

Grudem: Adoptionism is the view that Jesus lived as an ordinary man until his baptism, but then God “adopted” Jesus as his “Son” and conferred on him supernatural powers

Grudem: The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Grudem: First, the atonement is at stake. If Jesus is merely a created being, and not fully God, then it is hard to see how he, a creature, could bear the full wrath of God against all of our sins.

Grudem: Second, justification by faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son. (This is seen today in the teaching of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who do not believe in justification by faith alone.) If Jesus is not fully God, we would rightly doubt whether we

can really trust him to save us completely. Could we really depend on any creature fully for our salvation?

(Grudem lists several other issues)

Grudem: What Are the Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

Jim (paraphrased from listening to Grudem for four hours): The Father **plans**, the Son **executes**, and the Spirit **sustains**

Grudem: The persons of the Trinity eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Grudem: Errors . . . have all come about through attempts to simplify the doctrine of the Trinity and make it completely understandable, removing all mystery from it

Grudem: Scripture does not ask us to believe in a contradiction. A contradiction would be "There is one God and there is not one God," or "God is three persons and God is not three persons," or even (which is similar to the previous statement) "God is three persons and God is one person." But to say that "God is three persons and there is one God" is not a contradiction. It is something we do not understand, and it is therefore a mystery or a paradox, but that should not trouble us as long as the different aspects of the mystery are clearly taught by Scripture.

Grudem: Application

Grudem: Because God in himself has both **unity and **diversity**, it is not surprising that unity and diversity are also reflected in the human relationships he has established (examples: marriage and the church)**

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

- 1. Why is God pleased when people exhibit faithfulness, love, and harmony within a family? What are some ways in which members of your family reflect the diversity found in the members of the Trinity? How does your family reflect the unity found among members of the Trinity? What are some ways in which your family relationships could reflect the unity of the Trinity more fully? How might the diversity of persons in the Trinity encourage parents to allow their children to develop different interests from each other, and from their parents, without thinking that the unity of the family will be damaged?**
- 2. Have you ever thought that if your church allows new or different kinds of ministries to develop, that it might hinder the unity of the church? Or have you thought that**

encouraging people to use other gifts for ministry than those that have been used in the past might be divisive in the church? How might the fact of unity and diversity in the Trinity help you to approach those questions?

3. Do you think that the trinitarian nature of God is more fully reflected in a church in which all the members have the same racial background, or one in which the members come from many different races (see [Ephesians 3:1-10](#))?
4. In addition to our relationships within our families, we all exist in other relationships to human authority in government, in employment, in voluntary societies, in educational institutions, and in athletics, for example. Sometimes we have authority over others, and sometimes we are subject to the authority of others. Whether in the family or one of these other areas, give one example of a way in which your use of authority or your response to authority might become more like the pattern of relationships in the Trinity.
5. If we see the trinitarian existence of God as the fundamental basis for all combinations of unity and diversity in the universe, then what are some other parts of creation that show both unity and diversity (for example: the interdependency of environmental systems on the earth, or the fascinating activity of bees in a hive, or the harmonious working of the various parts of the human body)? Do you think God has made us so that we take spontaneous delight in demonstrations of unity in diversity, such as a musical composition that manifests great unity and yet great diversity of various parts at the same time, or in the skillful execution of some planned strategy by members of an athletic team working together?
6. In the being of God we have infinite unity combined with the preservation of distinct personalities belonging to the members of the Trinity. How can this fact reassure us if we ever begin to fear that becoming more united to Christ as we grow in the Christian life (or becoming more united to one another in the church) might tend to obliterate our individual personalities? In heaven, do you think you will be exactly like everyone else, or will you have a personality that is distinctly your own? How do eastern religions (such as Buddhism) differ from Christianity in this regard?

Scripture Memory Passage: [Matthew 3:16-17](#)

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. **17** And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Hymn: "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Reginald Heber, 1826)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,

Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,

Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,

Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,

Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee

Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea;

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 15: Creation

Why, how, and when did God create the universe?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Matthew 3:16-17**

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far, in this part of Systematic Theology, we looked at the existence of God, the knowability of God, the attributes of God, and the being of God. Today, we look at the creation of God.

Grudem: Unlike most of the earlier material in this book, this chapter treats several questions on which evangelical Christians have differing viewpoints, sometimes very strongly held ones.

Grudem: We may define the doctrine of creation as follows: God created the entire universe out of **nothing; it was originally very **good**; and he created it to glorify **himself**.**

Grudem: God Created the Universe Out of Nothing

Grudem: Biblical Evidence for Creation Out of Nothing

Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6, 9; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11; Hebrews 11:3

Grudem: God rules over all the universe and that nothing in creation is to be worshiped instead of God or in addition to him.

Grudem: Were we to deny creation out of nothing, we would have to say that some matter has always existed and that it is eternal like God.

Grudem: The Creation of the Spiritual Universe

Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16

Grudem: The Direct Creation of Adam and Eve**Genesis 2:7, 21-22**

Grudem: While there are sincerely held differences on that question among some Christians with respect to the plant and animal kingdoms, these texts are so explicit that it would be very difficult for someone to hold to the complete truthfulness of Scripture and still hold that human beings are the result of a long evolutionary process.

Grudem: The Creation of Time

Grudem: One other aspect of God's creation is the creation of time. . . . When we speak of God's existence "before" the creation of the world, we should not think of God as existing in an unending extension of time. Rather, God's eternity means that he has a different kind of existence, an existence without the passage of time, a kind of existence that is difficult for us even to imagine.

Grudem: The Work of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in Creation

Grudem: God the Father was the primary agent in initiating the act of creation. But the Son and the Holy Spirit were also active.

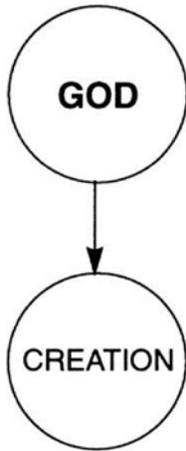
John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:2**Grudem: Creation Is Distinct From God Yet Always Dependent on God**

Grudem: The term often used to say that God is much greater than creation is the word **transcendent**. Very simply, this means that God is far "above" the creation in the sense that he is greater than the creation and he is independent of it.

Grudem: God is also very much involved in creation, for it is continually dependent on him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term used to speak of God's involvement in creation is the word **immanent**, meaning "remaining in" creation. The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in his creation. The Bible is the story of God's involvement with his creation, and particularly the people in it.

Job 12:10; Acts 17:25, 28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3Summary verse: **Ephesians 4:6**

Grudem: The fact that creation is distinct from God yet always dependent on God, that God is far above creation yet always involved in it (in brief, that God is both transcendent and immanent), may be represented as in:



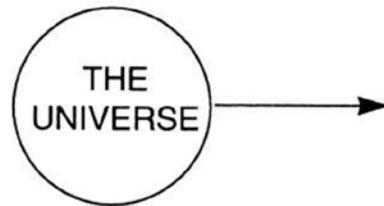
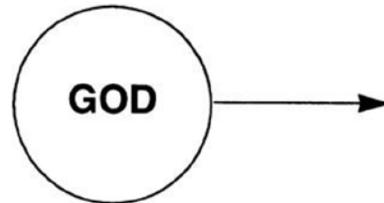
Grudem: Materialism would say that the material universe is all there is. It may be represented as:



Grudem: The Greek word pan means "all" or "every," and pantheism is the idea that everything, the whole universe, is God, or is part of God. This can be pictured as:



Grudem: The biblical account also rules out dualism. This is the idea that both God and the material universe have eternally existed side by side. Thus, there are two ultimate forces in the universe, God and matter. This may be represented as in:



(Star Wars)

Grudem: Deism is the view that God is not now directly involved in the creation. It may be represented as:



Grudem: God Created the Universe to Show His Glory

Psalm 19:1-2; Revelation 4:11. **Grudem:** This explains why we take spontaneous delight in all sorts of creative activities ourselves

Grudem: The Universe God Created Was “Very Good”

Genesis 1:31; 1 Timothy 4:4-5. Grudem: We must not let the danger of the abuse of God’s creation keep us from a positive, thankful, joyful use of it for our own enjoyment and for the good of his kingdom

Grudem: The Relationship Between Scripture and the Findings of Modern Science

Grudem: Careful observation of the natural world can cause us to go back to Scripture and reexamine whether Scripture actually teaches what we think it teaches. Sometimes, on closer examination of the text, we may find that our previous interpretations were incorrect.

Grudem: Careful observation of the facts of the created universe has produced widespread disagreement regarding theories of evolution. . . . So on both biblical and scientific grounds, theories of evolution have been challenged by Christians. . . . Pronouncements by scientists about creation and the early history of the earth are at best educated speculation. If we are convinced, however, that the only observer of these events (God himself) has told us about them in the reliable words of the Bible, then we should pay careful attention to the biblical account.

Grudem: Scripture itself places no such restriction on the subjects to which it can speak. . . . Scripture says that our understanding of some “scientific” facts is a matter of our faith (**Hebrews 11:3**)

Grudem: Some Theories About Creation Seem Clearly Inconsistent With the Teachings of Scripture

(1) Grudem: **Secular** Theories: For the sake of completeness we mention here only briefly that any purely secular theories of the origin of the universe would be unacceptable for those who believe in Scripture. A “secular” theory is any theory of the origin of the universe that does not see an infinite-personal God as responsible for creating the universe.

(2) Grudem: **Theistic** Evolution: Ever since the publication of Charles Darwin’s book *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), some Christians have proposed that living organisms came about by the process of evolution that Darwin proposed, but that God guided that process so that the result was just what he wanted it to be. This view is called theistic evolution because it advocates belief in God (it is “theistic”) and in evolution too.

Grudem: The objections to theistic evolution are as follows: (all green text in this section is Grudem)

1. The clear teaching of Scripture that there is purposefulness in God's work of creation seems incompatible with the randomness demanded by evolutionary theory. Grudem's fundamental issue with theistic evolution is that you can either have one or the other, but not both. **Grudem: Once . . . there is purpose and intelligent design in the process—we no longer have evolution at all, because there is no longer random mutation (at the points of divine interaction)**

2. Scripture pictures God's creative word as bringing immediate response (**Psalm 33:6, 9; Genesis 1**)

3. When Scripture tells us that God made plants and animals to reproduce "according to their kinds" (Genesis 1:11, 24), it suggests that God created many different types of plants and animals and that, though there would be some differentiation among them (note many different sizes, races, and personal characteristics among human beings!), nonetheless there would be some narrow limits to the kind of change that could come about through genetic mutations.

4. God's present active role in creating or forming every living thing that now comes into being is hard to reconcile with the distant "hands off" kind of oversight of evolution that is proposed by theistic evolution. **Psalm 104:14; Matthew 6:26**

5. The special creation of Adam, and Eve from him, is a strong reason to break with theistic evolution

6. There are many scientific problems with evolutionary theory (see the following section)

(3) The Theory of a "Gap" Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2: Some evangelicals have proposed that there is a gap of millions of years between **Genesis 1:1 . . . and Genesis 1:2 . . .** According to this theory, God made an earlier creation, but there was eventually a rebellion against God (probably in connection with Satan's own rebellion), and God judged the earth so that "it became without form and void" (an alternative, but doubtful, translation proposed for **Genesis 1:2**).

Problems with the "Gap" Theory:

1. There is no verse in Scripture that explicitly talks about an earlier creation

2. In Genesis 1:31, when God finished his work of creation, we read, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." But according to the gap

theory, God would be looking at an earth full of the results of rebellion, conflict, and terrible divine judgment.

3. In a later description of God's work of creation found in the Ten Commandments, we read, "for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11)

Grudem: The proponents of the gap theory would have to say that there are many things in the earth (such as fossil remains of dead animals, and the earth itself) and in the heavens (such as the stars) that God did not make in the six days specified in Exodus 20:11

Note: at this point in the lesson (and in Chapter 15), there may begin to be significant points of difference between Bible-believing Christians

Grudem: The Age of the Earth: Some Preliminary Considerations

Grudem: How old is the earth? . . . It is appropriate to treat this question after all the earlier matters, because it is really much less important than the doctrines considered above.

Fundamentally, there are two different views: Young-Earth creationism holds that the Earth is less than 20,000 years old, while Old-Earth creationism holds the Earth is ~ 4.5 billion years old.

a. Grudem: There Are Gaps in the Genealogies of the Bible. Compare **Matthew 1:8-9** with **1 Chronicles 3:10-12. Matthew 1:20.** Compare **1 Chronicles 26:24** with **Exodus 2:22. Grudem: It seems only fair to conclude that the genealogies of Scripture have some gaps in them, and that God only caused to be recorded those names that were important for his purposes.**

b. Grudem: The Age of the Human Race. Grudem spends a short amount of time describing species and cave paintings—none of his arguments here appears to help his case (in Jim's opinion). Summary: current science proposes that homo sapiens sapiens appeared less than 200,000 years ago and cave paintings have been dated to ~10,000 B.C.

c. Grudem: Did Animals Die Before the Fall? Grudem: The warning to Adam in Genesis 2:17 was only that he would die if he ate of the forbidden fruit, not that animals would also begin to die. When Paul says, "Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin" (Romans 5:12a), the following phrase makes clear that he is talking about death for human beings, not for plants and animals, for he immediately adds, "and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Romans 5:12b). From the information

we have in Scripture, we cannot now know whether God created animals subject to aging and death from the beginning, but it remains a real possibility.

e. Grudem: Are the Six Days of Creation Twenty-four-Hour Days? Grudem: The Hebrew word *yôm*, “day,” is sometimes used to refer not to a twenty-four-hour literal day, but to a longer period of time. Grudem: What does the word day mean in the context of **Genesis 1**? The fact that the word must refer to a longer period of time just a few verses later in the same narrative (**Genesis 2:4**) should caution us against making dogmatic statements that the original readers would have certainly known that the author was talking about twenty-four-hour days.

Grudem: The arguments in favor of understanding “day” as a twenty-four-hour day in **Genesis 1**

1. It is significant that each of the days of **Genesis 1** ends with an expression such as, “And there was evening, and there was morning— the first day”
2. The third day of creation cannot be very long, because the sun does not come into being until the fourth day, and plants cannot live long without light
3. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the Ten Commandments the word day is used to mean a twenty-four-hour day. **Exodus 20:8-11**
4. Those who argue for “day” as a twenty-four-hour day also ask whether anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible the word “days” in the plural, especially when a number is attached (such as “six days”), ever refers to anything but twenty-four-hour days. **Exodus 20:12**
5. When Jesus says, “**But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’**” (**Mark 10:6**), he implies that Adam and Eve were not created billions of years after the beginning of creation, but at the beginning of creation

Grudem: With respect to the length of days in **Genesis 1**, the possibility must be left open that God has chosen not to give us enough information to come to a clear decision on this question, and the real test of faithfulness to him may be the degree to which we can act charitably toward those who in good conscience and full belief in God’s Word hold to a different position on this matter.

Grudem: Both “Old Earth” and “Young Earth” Theories Are Valid Options for Christians Who Believe the Bible Today

a. “Old Earth” Theories of Creation

(1) **Day-Age View:** Many who believe that the earth is many millions of years old maintain that the days of **Genesis 1** are extremely long “ages” of time.

(2) **Literary Framework View:** This view argues that the six days of **Genesis 1** are not intended to indicate a chronological sequence of events, but are rather a literary “framework,” which the author uses to teach us about God’s creative activity. The framework is skillfully constructed so that the first three days and the second three days correspond to each other.

Days of forming

Day 1: Light and darkness separated

Day 2: Sky and waters separated

Day 3: Dry land and seas separated, plants and trees

Days of filling

Day 4: Sun, moon, and stars

Day 5: Fish and birds

Day 6: Animals and man

Note: there are wide varieties of issues with the categories listed above)

b. “Young Earth” Theories of Creation

(1) **Creation With an Appearance of Age (Mature Creationism):** Many who hold to a young earth point out that the original creation must have had an “appearance of age” even from the first day. . . . The appearance of Adam and Eve as full-grown adults is an obvious example.

(2) **Flood Geology:** This is the view that the tremendous natural forces unleashed by the flood at the time of Noah (**Genesis 6–9**) significantly altered the face of the earth, causing the creation of coal and diamonds, for example, within the space of a year rather than hundreds of millions of years, because of the extremely high pressure exerted by the water on the earth. This view also claims that the flood deposited fossils in layers of incredibly thick sediment all over the earth.

Grudem: Conclusions on the Age of the Earth

Grudem’s summary: Old Earth has more science and Young Earth has more Bible

Grudem: The Need for Further Understanding

Grudem: The age of the earth is a matter that is not directly taught in Scripture, but is something we can think about only by drawing more or less probable inferences from Scripture. Given this situation, it would seem best (1) to admit that God may not allow us to find a clear solution to this question before Christ returns, and (2) to encourage evangelical scientists and theologians who fall in both the young earth and old earth camps to begin to work together with much less arrogance, much more humility, and a

much greater sense of cooperation in a common purpose. . . . Both sides need to grow in knowledge of the truth, even if this means abandoning a long-held position.

Grudem: F. Application

Grudem: The doctrine of creation has many applications for Christians today. It makes us realize that the material universe is good in itself, for God created it good and wants us to use it in ways pleasing to him. . . . A healthy appreciation of creation will keep us from false asceticism that denies the goodness of creation and the blessings that come to us through it. It will also encourage some Christians to do scientific and technological research into the goodness of God's abundant creation, or to support such research.

The doctrine of creation will also enable us to recognize more clearly that scientific and technological study in itself glorifies God, for it enables us to discover how incredibly wise, powerful, and skillful God was in his work of creation. . . . The doctrine of creation also reminds us that God is sovereign over the universe he created. He made it all, and he is Lord of all of it. We owe all that we are and have to him, and we may have complete confidence that he will ultimately defeat all his enemies and be manifested as Sovereign King to be worshiped forever. In addition, the incredible size of the universe and the amazing complexity of every created thing will, if our hearts are right, draw us continually to worship and praise him for his greatness.

Finally, as we indicated above, we can wholeheartedly enjoy creative activities (artistic, musical, athletic, domestic, literary, etc.) with an attitude of thanksgiving that our Creator God enables us to imitate him in our creativity.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Are there ways in which you could be more thankful to God for the excellence of his creation? Look around you and give some examples of the goodness of the creation that God has allowed you to enjoy. Are there ways in which you could be a better steward of parts of God's creation of which he has entrusted to your care?
2. Might the goodness of all that God created encourage you to try to enjoy different kinds of foods than those you normally prefer? Can children be taught to thank God for variety in the things God has given us to eat? Does the doctrine of creation provide an answer to some strict animal rights advocates who say we should not eat steak or chicken or other meat, or wear clothing made from animal skins, since we are simply another form of animal ourselves? (See [Genesis 3:21](#).)
3. In order to understand something of the despair felt by contemporary non-Christians, just try to imagine for a moment that you believe that there is no God and that you

are just a product of matter plus time plus chance, the spontaneous result of random variation in organisms over millions of years. How would you feel differently about yourself? About other people? About the future? About right and wrong?

4. Why do we feel joy when we are able to “subdue” even a part of the earth and make it useful for serving us— whether it be in growing vegetables, developing a better kind of plastic or metal, or using wool to knit a piece of clothing? Should we feel joy at the accomplishment of these and other tasks? What other attitudes of heart should we feel as we do them?
5. When you think about the immensity of the stars, and that God put them in place to show us his power and glory, how does it make you feel about your place in the universe? Is this different from the way a non-Christian would feel?
6. Before reading this chapter, what did you think about the theory of evolution? How has your view changed, if at all?
7. What are some things that Christians can learn about theological discussion in general from observing the current controversy over the age of the earth? What significance do you see in this controversy for your own Christian faith?

Scripture Memory Passage: **Nehemiah 9:6**

You alone *are* the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

Hymn: “Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!” (William J. Kirkpatrick, 1838-1921)

Hallelujah, praise Jehovah, from the heavens praise his name;
Praise Jehovah in the highest, all his angels, praise proclaim.
All his hosts, together praise him, sun and moon and stars on high;
Praise him, O ye heav’ns of heavens, and ye floods above the sky.

Refrain: Let them praises give Jehovah, for his name alone is high,
And his glory is exalted, and his glory is exalted, and his glory is exalted
Far above the earth and sky.

Let them praises give Jehovah, they were made at his command;
Them for ever he established, his decree shall ever stand.
From the earth, O praise Jehovah, all ye seas, ye monsters all,
Fire and hail and snow and vapors, stormy winds that hear his call.

**All ye fruitful trees and cedars, all ye hills and mountains high,
Creeping things and beasts and cattle, birds that in the heavens fly,
Kings of earth, and all ye people, princes great, earth's judges all;
Praise his name, young men and maidens, aged men, and children small.**

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 16: God's Providence

If God controls all things, how can our actions have real meaning? What are the decrees of God?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Nehemiah 9:6**

You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far, in this part of Systematic Theology, we looked at the existence of God, the knowability of God, the attributes of God, the being of God, and the creation of God. Today, we look at God's providence. **Grudem: Though the term providence is not found in Scripture, it has been traditionally used to summarize God's ongoing relationship to his creation.**

Grudem: We may define God's providence as follows: God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) **keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) **cooperates** with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) **directs** them to fulfill his purposes.**

Grudem: Under the general category of providence we have three subtopics, according to the three elements in the definition above: (1) Preservation, (2) Concurrence, and (3) Government. We shall examine each of these separately, then consider differing views and objections to the doctrine of providence.

Grudem: Preservation

Grudem: God keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them. **Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17; Acts 17:28; Nehemiah 9:6; 2 Peter 3:7; Job 34:14-15**

Grudem: God, in preserving all things he has made, also causes them to maintain the properties with which he created them. God preserves water in such a way that it continues to act like water. He causes grass to continue to act like grass, with all its distinctive characteristics.

Grudem: God's providence provides a basis for science: God has made and continues to sustain a universe that acts in predictable ways.

Grudem: Concurrence

Grudem: God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do. Ephesians 1:11

Grudem: Inanimate Creation

Psalm 148:8; Job 37:6; Psalm 135:6; Psalm 135:7; Psalm 104:4; Job 38:12, 32; Matthew 5:45

Grudem: Animals

Psalm 104:27-29; Matthew 6:26

Grudem: Seemingly "Random" or "Chance" Events

Proverbs 16:33

Grudem: Events Fully Caused by God and Fully Caused by the Creature as Well

Grudem: It is incorrect for us to reason that if we know the "natural" cause of something in this world, then God did not cause it.

Grudem: The doctrine of concurrence affirms that God directs, and works through, the distinctive properties of each created thing, so that these things themselves bring about the results that we see. In this way it is possible to affirm that in one sense events are fully (100 percent) caused by God and fully (100 percent) caused by the creature as well.

Grudem: The Affairs of Nations

Job 12:23; Psalm 22:28; Acts 17:26

Grudem: All Aspects of Our Lives

Matthew 6:11; Philippians 4:19; Psalm 139:16; Job 14:5; Acts 17:28; Proverbs 20:24; Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 75:6-7; Luke 1:52; Psalm 127:3; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Proverbs 21:1; Psalm 33:14-15; Philippians 2:13

Grudem: Our words, our steps, our movements, our hearts, and our abilities are all from the Lord. But we must guard against misunderstanding. . . . We are significant and we are responsible. We do have choices, and these are real choices that bring about real results.

Grudem: It seems better to affirm that God causes all things that happen, but that he does so in such a way that he somehow upholds our ability to make willing, responsible choices, choices that have real and eternal results, and for which we are held accountable.

Grudem: Exactly how God combines his providential control with our willing and significant choices, Scripture does not explain to us. But rather than deny one aspect or the other (simply because we cannot explain how both can be true), we should accept both in an attempt to be faithful to the teaching of all of Scripture.

Grudem: What About Evil?

Jim's observations: God allows evil

Grudem: Scripture nowhere shows God as directly doing anything evil. . . . Scripture never blames God for evil or shows God as taking pleasure in evil, and Scripture never excuses human beings for the wrong they do.

Examples: the life of Joseph (**Genesis 37-50**); the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in **Exodus 7-8** (even though Pharaoh also hardened his own heart—see also **Romans 9:17-18**); David's **census** (**1 Samuel 2:25, 16:14; 2 Samuel 12:15-18, 24:1, 10, 12-17; 1 Chronicles 21:1**); Job's calamity (**Job 1:12, 15, 17, 19, 21-22**), Jonah (**Jonah 1:15, 2:3**), and the crucifixion of Christ

Grudem: None of us deserves God's favor or his mercy, but only eternal condemnation . Therefore, when God brings evil on human beings, whether to discipline his children, or to lead unbelievers to repentance, or to bring a judgment of condemnation and destruction upon hardened sinners , none of us can charge God with doing wrong. Ultimately all will work in God's good purposes to bring glory to him and good to his people. Yet we must realize that in punishing evil in those who are not redeemed (such as Pharaoh, the Canaanites, and the Babylonians), God is also glorified through the demonstration of his justice, holiness, and power.

Grudem: God was bringing about his plan through the willing choices of real human beings who were morally accountable for their actions. In a way not understood by us and not revealed to us, God caused them to make a willing choice to do what they did. The most evil deed of all history, the crucifixion of Christ, was ordained by God—not just the fact that it would occur, but also all the individual actions connected with it.

Grudem: Analysis of Verses Relating to God and Evil

Grudem: God uses all things to fulfill his purposes and even uses evil for his glory and for our good. **Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20**

Grudem: Nevertheless, God never does evil, and is never to be blamed for evil. James 1:13-14

John Calvin: Thieves and murderers and other evildoers are the instruments of divine providence, and the Lord himself uses these to carry out the judgments that he has determined with himself.

Grudem: If we maintain that God does not use evil to fulfill his purposes, then we would have to admit that there is evil in the universe that God did not intend, is not under his control, and might not fulfill his purposes. This would make it very difficult for us to affirm . . . Romans 8:28.

Grudem: God rightfully blames and judges moral creatures for the evil they do. Isaiah 66:3-4

Grudem: Evil is real, not an illusion, and we should never do evil, for it will always harm us and others. Matthew 6:13; 1 Peter 2:11

Grudem: In thinking about God using evil to fulfill his purposes, we should remember that there are things that are right for God to do but wrong for us to do: He requires others to worship him, and he accepts worship from them. He seeks glory for himself. He will execute final judgment on wrongdoers. He also uses evil to bring about good purposes, but he does not allow us to do so. Calvin quotes a statement of Augustine with approval: "There is a great difference between what is fitting for man to will and what is fitting for God. . . . For through the bad wills of evil men God fulfills what he righteously wills." And Herman Bavinck uses the analogy of a parent who will himself use a very sharp knife but will not allow his child to use it, to show that God himself uses evil to bring about good purposes but never allows his children to do so.

Grudem: In spite of all of the foregoing statements, we have to come to the point where we confess that we do not understand how it is that God can ordain that we carry out evil deeds and yet hold us accountable for them and not be blamed himself.

Grudem: Are we "free"? Do we have "free will"?

Calvin: Free will is not sufficient to enable man to do good works, unless he be helped by grace.

Grudem: Scripture nowhere says that we are "free" in the sense of being outside of God's control or of being able to make decisions that are not caused by anything. . . . Nor does it say we are "free" in the sense of being able to do right on our own apart from God's power. But we are nonetheless free in the greatest sense that any creature of God could

be free—we make willing choices, choices that have real effects. We are aware of no restraints on our will from God when we make decisions. We must insist that we have the power of willing choice; otherwise we will fall into the error of fatalism or determinism and thus conclude that our choices do not matter, or that we cannot really make willing choices. On the other hand, the kind of freedom that is demanded by those who deny God's providential control of all things, a freedom to be outside of God's sustaining and controlling activity, would be impossible if . . . **Hebrews 1:3** . . . is true, then to be outside of that providential control would simply be not to exist! An absolute "freedom," totally free of God's control, is simply not possible in a world providentially sustained and directed by God himself.

Grudem: Government

God has a purpose in all that he does in the world and he providentially governs or directs all things in order that they accomplish his purposes. **Psalm 103:19**; **Romans 11:36**; **1 Corinthians 15:27**; **Ephesians 1:11**; **Philippians 2:10-11**

Grudem: Though in God his will is unified, and not divided or contradictory, we cannot begin to understand the depths of God's will, and only in a small part is it revealed to us.

Jim's note: Grudem goes on to describe God's revealed will and His secret will. Since we have covered both of these previously, we will move past this section today.

Grudem: The Decrees of God

Grudem: The decrees of God are the eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens. **Ephesians 1:4**; **Psalm 139:16**

Grudem: All that God does he has planned before the creation of the world

Grudem: The Importance of Our Human Actions

1. We are still responsible for **our** actions

2. Our actions have real results and do change the course of events

3. Prayer is one specific kind of action that has definite results and that does change the course of events. **James 4:2**; **John 16:24**

4. In conclusion, we must **act!** Jim's note: **2 Samuel 10:12** is a good summary; **2 Timothy 2:10**. Grudem: A hearty belief in God's providence is not a discouragement but a spur to action.

5. What if we cannot understand this doctrine fully?

Grudem: Every believer who meditates on God's providence will sooner or later come to a point where he or she will have to say, "I cannot understand this doctrine fully." In some ways that must be said about every doctrine, since our understanding is finite, and God is infinite.

Grudem: Further Practical Application

1. Do not be afraid, but **trust** in God. **Matthew 6:26, 31; 10:29-31; Psalm 91; 121; 1 Peter 1:6-7**
2. Be **thankful** for all good things that happen. **Psalm 103:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:18**
3. There is no such thing as "luck" or "**chance**"

Grudem: Another Evangelical View: the Arminian Position

Grudem: Among denominations in contemporary evangelicalism, Methodists and Nazarenes tend to be thoroughly Arminian, whereas Presbyterians and the Christian Reformed tend to be thoroughly Reformed (at least by denominational statement of faith). Both views are found among Baptists, Episcopalians (though the Thirty-Nine Articles have a clearly Reformed emphasis), Dispensationalists, Evangelical Free Churches, Lutherans (though Martin Luther was in the Reformed camp on this issue), the Churches of Christ, and most charismatic and Pentecostal groups (though Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God have been predominantly Arminian).

Grudem: Those who hold an Arminian position maintain that in order to preserve the real human freedom and real human choices that are necessary for genuine human personhood, God cannot cause or plan our voluntary choices. Therefore they conclude that God's providential involvement in or control of history must not include every specific detail of every event that happens, but that God instead simply responds to human choices and actions as they come about and does so in such a way that his purposes are ultimately accomplished in the world. Those who hold this position argue that God's purposes in the world are more general and could be accomplished through many different kinds of specific events. So God's purpose or plan for the world "is not a blueprint encompassing all future contingencies" but "a dynamic program for the world, the outworking of which depends in part on man." Cottrell says, "God does not have a specific, unconditional purpose for each discrete particle, object, person, and event within the creation." Arminians believe that God achieves his overall goal by responding to and utilizing the free choices of human beings, whatever they may be. Pinnock says that "predestination does not apply to every individual activity, but is rather the comprehensive purpose of God which is the structural context in which history moves." Moreover, advocates of the Arminian position maintain that God's will cannot include

evil. Pinnock says, "The fall of man is an eloquent refutation to the theory that God's will is always done." He states that it "is not the case" that God's will "is also accomplished in the lostness of the lost." And I. Howard Marshall quite clearly affirms, "It is not true that everything that happens is what God desires." These statements make it clear that the differences between the Reformed and Arminian positions are not merely differences in terminology: there is a real disagreement in substance.

1. The verses cited as examples of God's providential control are exceptions and do not describe the way that God ordinarily works in human activity
2. The Calvinist view wrongly makes God responsible for sin
3. Choices caused by God cannot be real choices
4. The Arminian view encourages responsible Christian living, while the Calvinistic view encourages a dangerous fatalism

Jim's note: Grudem goes on to answer these responses, but the bulk of his responses have already been described in his initial arguments. The bottom line: There are Christians on both sides of this doctrine.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **Has thinking about the doctrine of providence increased your trust in God? How has it changed the way you think about the future? Are there difficulties or hardships in your life at this time? Give an example of a specific difficulty that you are now facing and explain how the doctrine of providence will help you in the way you think about it.**
2. **Can you name five good things that have happened to you so far today? Were you thankful to God for any of them?**
3. **Do you sometimes think of luck or chance as causing events that happen in your life? If you ever feel that way, does it increase or decrease your anxiety about the future? Now think for a moment about some events that you might have attributed to luck in the past. Instead, begin to think about those events as under the control of your wise and loving heavenly Father. How does that make you feel differently about them and about the future generally?**
4. **Do you ever fall into a pattern of little "superstitious" actions or rituals that you think will bring good luck or prevent bad luck (such as not walking under a ladder, being afraid when a black cat walks across your path, not stepping on cracks on a sidewalk, carrying a certain item "just for good luck," etc.)? Do you think those actions tend to increase or decrease your trust in God during the day and your obedience to him?**

5. **Explain how a proper understanding of the doctrine of providence should lead a Christian to a more active prayer life.**
6. **What has been the overall effect of this chapter on how you think and feel about God and the events of your life?**

Scripture Memory Passage: Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

Hymn: "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" (William Cowper, 1774)

**God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs, and works his sovereign will.**

**Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face.**

**His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow'r.
Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.**

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 17: Miracles

What are miracles? Can they happen today?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Romans 8:28**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

So far, in this part of Systematic Theology, we looked at the existence of God, the knowability of God, the attributes of God, the being of God, the creation of God, and God's providence.

Grudem: Definition

As we attempt to define 'miracle,' we do not want to unravel any of our theology we have established so far. The process for coming up with the definition for miracle is an example of how systematic theology helps us remain consistent in our theology.

In today's lesson, we will take a different path than Grudem takes. I am going to start with the Bible's use of this word and move into a definition instead of starting with a definition and going from there.

The Bible uses four different original language words that are translated as "miracle" in English.

Hebrew

owth: **sign**, signal, distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, miraculous sign, omen, warning, token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof (H226). **Genesis 1:14; 4:15; 9:13; Exodus 7:3; 31:13; Numbers 2:2; 2 Kings 20:9; Isaiah 7:14**

mowpheth: **wonder**, sign, miracle, token (H4159). **Exodus 4:21; 7:9; Ezekiel 24:24; Joel 2:30**

Greek

dynamis: **power**, mighty work, strength, miracle, might, virtue, ability, power in a thing by virtue of its nature (G1411). **Matthew 6:13; 7:22; 25:15; Mark 5:30; Luke 4:36; 9:1; 10:19; Acts 1:8;**

6:8; 19:11; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 19:1

semeion. **sign**, mark, miracle, wonder, token, unusual occurrence (G4592). **Matthew 12:38-39; 26:48; Mark 16:20; Luke 2:12; 23:8; John 2:11; 3:2; 6:2; 11:47; 20:30; Acts 4:16, 22; 8:6, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Revelation 12:3**

As we can see, these four words form an extremely broad definition for signs, wonders, and miracles. Some are big, some are small, some are literal, some are figurative. There are common themes, though—miracles are unusual and point men to God. With that background, let us look at Grudem's definition of miracle.

Grudem: We may define a miracle as follows: A miracle is a less **common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to **himself**.**

Grudem also spends considerable time shooting holes in other definitions of miracles. It was helpful to me to think through these as every man-made definition raises concerns.

Grudem: One definition of miracle is "a direct intervention of God in the world." But this definition assumes a deistic view of God's relationship to the world, in which the world continues on its own and God only intervenes in it occasionally.

Grudem: Another definition of miracle is "an exception to a natural law" or "God acting contrary to the laws of nature." But the phrase "laws of nature" in popular understanding implies that there are certain qualities inherent in the things that exist, "laws of nature" that operate independently of God, and that God must intervene or "break" these laws for a miracle to occur.

Grudem: Another definition of miracle is "an event impossible to explain by natural causes." This definition is inadequate because (1) it does not include God as the one who brings about the miracle; (2) it assumes that God does not use some natural causes when he works in an unusual or amazing way, and thus it assumes again that God only occasionally intervenes in the world; and (3) it will result in a significant minimizing of actual miracles and an increase in skepticism, since many times when God works in answer to prayer the result is amazing to those who prayed but it is not absolutely impossible to explain by natural causes, especially for a skeptic who simply refuses to see God's hand at work.

Grudem: But can we consider unusual answers to prayer to be miracles? Apparently so, if they are remarkable enough to arouse people's awe and wonder and cause them to acknowledge God's power at work: the answer to Elijah's prayer that God would send fire

from heaven was a miracle (1 Kings 18:24, 36-38), as were the answers to his prayers that the widow's dead son would come back to life (1 Kings 17:21), or that the rain would stop and later start again (1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45 with James 5:17-18). In the New Testament, the release of Peter from prison in answer to the prayers of the church was certainly a miracle (Acts 12:5-17).

The caution here is using the term miracle for everything.

Grudem: When an answer to prayer is so remarkable that people involved with it are amazed and acknowledge God's power at work in an unusual way, then it seems appropriate to call it a miracle.

No doubt some of you are wondering why this definition is so squishy and open-ended. Partly it is because the biblical usage is rather open-ended, but Grudem's reasons will become obvious shortly.

Grudem: Miracles as Characteristic of the New Covenant Age

Grudem: It seems to be a characteristic of the New Testament church that miracles occur. . . . Jesus gave authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons not only to the Twelve, but also to seventy of his disciples (Luke 10:1, 9, 17-19; cf. Matthew 10:8; Luke 9:49-50).

Grudem: The Purposes of Miracles

Grudem: One purpose of miracles is certainly to authenticate the message of the gospel. John 3:2

Grudem believes that miracles are "**expected to continue throughout the church age.**" Grudem's definition for miracles keeps the door open for miracles to continue to be performed by believers.

Grudem is a **continualist** (the sign gifts are present and active today in the lives of believers). Most Baptists (including Stuart Heights) are **cessationist** (the sign gifts are not present and not active today in the lives of believers).

We hold the continualist vs cessationist argument in an **open** hand. We will cover this in much more detail in chapters 52-53 of Part 6: The Doctrine of the Church when we look deeply into the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Grudem: A second purpose of miracles is to bear witness to the fact that the kingdom of God has come and has begun to expand its beneficial results into people's lives, for the results of Jesus's miracles show the characteristics of God's kingdom. Matthew 12:28; Luke 9:1-2

Grudem: A third purpose of miracles is to help those who are in need. Matthew 20:30, 34; 14:14

Grudem: A fourth purpose of miracles . . . is to remove hindrances to people's ministries. Matthew 8:15

Grudem: A fifth purpose for miracles (and one to which all the others contribute) is to bring glory to God. Matthew 9:8; John 9:3

Grudem: Were Miracles Restricted to the Apostles?

Grudem: Miracles were worked by others than apostles, such as Stephen (Acts 6:8), Philip (Acts 8:6-7), Christians in the several churches in Galatia (Galatians 3:5), and those with gifts of "miracles" in the body of Christ generally (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28).

Grudem: False Miracles

Exodus 7:11 ,22; 8:7, 19; Acts 8:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 13:11-14

Grudem: Two conclusions become clear from this brief survey of false miracles in Scripture: (1) The power of God is greater than the power of Satan to work miraculous signs. . . . (2) The identity of these workers of false miracles is always known through their denial of the gospel.

Grudem: Should Christians Seek Miracles Today?

Grudem: Certainly it is wrong to seek miraculous power to advance one's own power or fame, as Simon the magician did (Acts 8:21-22). . . . It is also wrong to seek miracles simply to be entertained, as Herod did (Luke 23:8). . . . It is also wrong for skeptical unbelievers to seek miracles simply to find ground to criticize those who preach the gospel (Matthew 16:1-4)

Grudem: Never does Jesus rebuke anyone who comes in faith, or in need, seeking healing or deliverance or any other kind of miracle, whether for himself or herself, or for others.

Grudem: After Pentecost, the early church prayed both for boldness to preach the gospel and for God to grant miracles to accompany its preaching. Acts 4:29-30. . . . Similarly, the disciples in Lydda sent for Peter to come and pray for Tabitha after she had died, thereby seeking a miraculous intervention by God (Acts 9:38).

Grudem: Miracles are God's work, and he works them to bring glory to himself and to strengthen our faith. When we encounter serious needs in people's lives today, it is right for us to seek God for an answer, and where miraculous intervention seems to be needed, then to ask God if he would be pleased to work in that way.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. When you first came to faith in Christ, did the stories of miracles in the Bible have any influence (negative or positive) on your believing the message of Scripture?
2. Before reading this chapter, have you thought of the church at the time of the New Testament as a church with frequent miracles? Have you thought of the contemporary church as one with frequent miracles?
3. If you hold a “cessationist” position, what kinds of unusual answers to prayer might you still think possible today? (For example, prayer for physical healing, for deliverance from danger, victory over demonic attack through prayer and/ or verbal rebuke of an evil spirit, or sudden and unusual insight into a passage of Scripture or a situation in someone’s life.) How would you distinguish these things that you might think possible today from “miracles” according to the definition given in this chapter?
4. Do miracles have to be large and “remarkable” (such as raising the dead or healing a man blind from birth) to accomplish useful purposes in the church today? What kinds of “small-scale” miracles might also accomplish some of the purposes for miracles listed in this chapter? Have you known of any answers to prayer in your own church (or your own life) that you would characterize as “miraculous” according to the definition given at the beginning of the chapter?
5. Would you like to see more miraculous power of the Holy Spirit (or more unusual answers to prayer) at work in your own church today, or not? If more miracles did occur, what might be the dangers? What might be the benefits?

Scripture Memory Passage: Hebrews 2:3-4

3 How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Hymn: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (Martin Luther, 1529)

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow’r are great; and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing.

**Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he,
Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same,
And he must win the battle.**

**And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.**

**That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth;
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.**

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 18: Prayer

Why does God want us to pray? How can we pray effectively?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Hebrews 2:3-4**

3 How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: Prayer is personal communication **with** God

Note: 'with' ≠ 'to'

Grudem: Why Does God Want Us to Pray?

Grudem gives three primary reasons: (1) **Prayer expresses our trust in God and is a means whereby our trust in him can increase. Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:13; Matthew 21:22.** (2) **Prayer brings us into deeper fellowship with God.** (3) **Prayer God allows us as creatures to be involved in activities that are eternally important.**

Prayer is an expression of the active nature of our faith. Christianity is not a passive religion.

Grudem: The Effectiveness of Prayer

Grudem: Prayer Changes the Way God Acts

James 4:2; Luke 11:9-10; Exodus 32:9-14; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 1:9

Grudem: Effective Prayer Is Made Possible by Our Mediator, Jesus Christ

Grudem: **Because we are sinful and God is holy, we have no right on our own to enter into his presence. We need a mediator to come between us and God and to bring us into God's presence. 1 Timothy 2:5. Grudem: But if Jesus is the only mediator between God and man, will God hear the prayers of those who do not trust in Jesus? The answer depends on what**

we mean by “hear.” Since God is omniscient, he always “hears” in the sense that he is aware of the prayers made by unbelievers who do not come to him through Christ. God may even, from time to time, answer their prayers out of his mercy and in a desire to bring them to salvation through Christ. However, God has nowhere promised to respond to the prayers of unbelievers.

Grudem: What about believers in the Old Testament? How could they come to God through Jesus the mediator? . . . Jesus as our mediator was foreshadowed by the sacrificial system and the offerings made by the priests in the temple (Hebrews 7:23-28; 8:1-6; 9:1-14). There was no saving merit inherent in that system of sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1-4), however. Through the sacrificial system believers were accepted by God only on the basis of the future work of Christ foreshadowed by that system (Romans 3:23-26). Hebrews 4:14-15; 9:3; 7:26-27; 10:19-20, 22; 9:24

Grudem: What Is Praying “in Jesus’ Name”?

John 14:13-14; 16:23-24. Grudem: Jesus is not merely speaking about adding certain words as if these were a kind of magical formula that would give power to our prayers. In fact, none of the prayers recorded in Scripture have the phrase “in Jesus’ name” at the end of them. . . . To come in the name of someone means that another person has authorized us to come on his authority, not on our own. Acts 3:6; 4:7; 16:18; 1 Corinthians 5:4

Grudem: Should We Pray to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit?

Grudem first points out that the primary pattern of prayer in the Scripture is prayer to the Father. Examples of prayers to Jesus: **Acts 7:59; 9:10-16; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Revelation 22:20. Grudem: Though no prayers directly addressed to the Holy Spirit are recorded in the New Testament, there is nothing that would forbid such prayer, for the Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, is fully God and is worthy of prayer and is powerful to answer our prayers.**

Grudem: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Our Praying.

Romans 8:26-27. Grudem: The Holy Spirit takes part with us and makes our weak prayers effective.

Grudem: Some Important Considerations in Effective Prayer

1. Praying According to God’s Will

1 John 5:14-15; Matthew 6:10; Matthew 26:39. Since the Scripture teaches us what God’s will is, the more we know Scripture, the better we will be able to pray this way. However, what if we do not know what God’s will is? Then ask humbly. **Grudem: Sometimes God will grant what**

we have asked. Sometimes he will give us deeper understanding or change our hearts so that we are led to ask something differently. Sometimes he will not grant our request at all but will simply indicate to us that we must submit to his will.

Grudem: It is important in our prayer that we not only talk to God but also listen to him. We should frequently bring a request to God and then wait **silently** before him. In those times of waiting on the Lord (**Psalm 27:14; 38:15; 130:5-6**), God may change the desires of our heart, give us additional insight into the situation we are praying about, grant us additional insight into his Word, bring a passage of Scripture to mind that would enable us to pray more effectively, impart a sense of assurance of what his will is, or greatly increase our faith so that we are able to pray with much more confidence.

2. Praying With Faith

Mark 11:24. **Grudem:** Biblical faith is never a kind of wishful thinking or a vague hope that does not have any secure foundation to rest upon. It is rather trust in a person, God himself, based on the fact that we take him at his word and believe what he has said.

Matthew 21:22; James 1:6

3. Obedience

Grudem: God readily hears the prayers of those who live lives of obedience to him. **Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:8; 15:29; 28:9; 1 Peter 3:12; 1 John 3:21-22**

4. Confession of Sins

Grudem: Because our obedience to God is never perfect in this life, we continually depend on his forgiveness for our sins. **Psalm 19:12; James 5:16**

5. Forgiving **Others**

Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:12. **Grudem:** Until sin is forgiven and the relationship is restored prayer will, of course, be difficult.

6. Humility

Luke 18:11-14; 20:47; Matthew 6:5-6

7. Continuing in Prayer over **Time**

Deuteronomy 9:25-26; 10:10-11; Genesis 32:26; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 2 Corinthians 12:8; Mark 14:36, 39; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2

8. Praying Earnestly

Hebrews 5:7; Daniel 9:19

9. Waiting on the Lord

Psalm 27:14; 38:15; 130:5-6. Grudem: Prayer is a relationship between two persons, myself and God. Grudem: Waiting patiently for an answer shows my earnestness, my sense of expectancy, and my respect.

10. Praying in **Private**

Daniel 6:10; Luke 5:16; Matthew 6:6

11. Praying With **Others**

Acts 4:24; Matthew 6:9-13

12. **Fasting**

Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23. Grudem: Fasting appropriately accompanied prayer in many situations: in times of intensive intercession, repentance, worship, and seeking of guidance. In each of these situations, several benefits come from fasting, all of which affect our relationship to God: [abbreviated]

(1) Increases our sense of humility and dependence on the Lord; (2) Allows us to give more attention to prayer; (3) A continual reminder that, just as we sacrifice some personal comfort to the Lord by not eating, so we must continually sacrifice all of ourselves to him; (4) Good exercise in self-discipline, for as we refrain from eating food, which we would ordinarily desire, it also strengthens our ability to refrain from sin, to which we might otherwise be tempted to yield. If we train ourselves to accept the small “suffering” of fasting willingly, we will be better able to accept other suffering for the sake of righteousness.; (5) Heightens spiritual and mental alertness and a sense of God’s presence; (6) Expresses earnestness and urgency in our prayers

Grudem: Though the New Testament does not specifically require that we fast, or set special times when we must fast, Jesus certainly assumes that we will. **Matthew 6:16**

13. What About Unanswered Prayer?

Grudem: We must begin by recognizing that as long as God is God and we are his creatures, there must be **some** unanswered prayers. This is because God keeps hidden his own wise plans for the future, and even though people pray, many events will not come about until the time that God has decreed. The Jews prayed for centuries for the Messiah to come, and rightly so, but it was not until “the time had fully come” that “God sent forth his Son” (**Galatians 4:4**). The souls of martyrs in heaven, free from sin, cry out for God to judge the earth (**Revelation 6:10**), but God does not immediately answer; rather he tells them to rest a little longer (**Revelation 6:11**). It is clear that there can be long periods of delay during which prayers go unanswered, because the people praying do not know God’s wise timing. Prayer will also be unanswered because we do not always know how to

pray as we ought (Romans 8:26), we do not always pray according to God's will (James 4:3), and we do not always ask in faith (James 1:6-8). And sometimes we think that one solution is best, but God has a better plan, even to fulfill his purpose through suffering and hardship.

Grudem: Praise and Thanksgiving

Grudem: Praise and thanksgiving to God, which will be treated more fully in chapter 51, are an essential element of prayer. Matthew 6:9; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Grudem: Thanksgiving, like every other aspect of prayer, should not be a mechanical mouthing of a "thank you" to God, but the expression of words that reflect the thankfulness of our hearts. . . . The kind of thanksgiving that appropriately accompanies prayer must express thankfulness to God for all circumstances, for every event of life that he allows to come to us.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Do you often have difficulty with prayer? What things in this chapter have been helpful to you in this regard?
2. When have you known the most effective times of prayer in your own life? What factors contributed to making those times more effective? Which other factors need most attention in your prayer life? What can you do to strengthen each of these areas?
3. How does it help and encourage you (if it does) when you pray together with other Christians?
4. Have you ever tried waiting quietly before the Lord after making an earnest prayer request? If so, what has been the result?
5. Do you have a regular time each day for private Bible reading and prayer? Are you sometimes easily distracted and turned aside to other activities? If so, how can distractions be overcome?
6. Do you enjoy praying? Why or why not?

Scripture Memory Passage: Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. **15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. **16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hymn: "From Every Stormy Wind" (Hugh Stowell, 1828, 1831)

From ev'ry stormy wind that blows, from ev'ry swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat; 'tis found beneath the Mercy Seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds the oil of gladness on our heads,
A place than all besides more sweet; it is the blood-stained Mercy Seat.

There is a spot where spirits blend, where friend holds fellowship with friend,
Tho' sundered far; by faith they meet around the common Mercy Seat.

Ah, whither could we flee for aid, when tempted, desolate, dismayed,
Or how the hosts of hell defeat, had suff'ring saints no Mercy Seat?

There, there on eagle wings we soar, and time and sense seem all no more,
And heav'n comes down our souls to greet, and glory crowns the Mercy Seat.

O may my hand forget her skill, my tongue be silent, cold, and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat, if I forget the Mercy Seat.

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 19: Angels

What are angels? Why did God create them?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Hebrews 4:14-16**

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. **15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. **16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: What Are Angels?

Grudem: Angels are **created**, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies

1. Created Spiritual Beings

Grudem: Angels have not always existed; they are part of the universe that God created. **Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 148:2, 5; Colossians 1:16**

Grudem: Angels exercise moral judgment. **2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6**

Grudem: Their high intelligence is seen throughout Scripture as they speak to people. **Matthew 28:5; Acts 12:6-11**

Grudem: Angels are "**spirits.**" **Hebrews 1:14**

Grudem: They do not ordinarily have physical bodies. **Luke 24:39**

Grudem: They cannot usually be seen by us unless God gives us a special ability to see them. **Numbers 22:31; 2 Kings 6:17; Luke 2:13**

Grudem: Ordinary activities . . . they are invisible. . . Guarding and protecting us. Psalm 34:7; 91:11; Hebrews 1:14. . . Joining with us in worship to God. Hebrews 12:22

2. Other Names for Angels

"Sons of God" Job 1:6; 2:1

"Watchers" Daniel 4:13, 17, 23

"Holy ones" Psalm 89:5, 7

**"Thrones," "dominions," "principalities,"
"authorities"** Colossians 1:16

"Spirits" Hebrews 1:14

"Powers" Ephesians 1:21

3. Other Kinds of Heavenly Beings

- **Grudem: The cherubim** were given the task of guarding the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24), and God himself is frequently said to be enthroned on the cherubim or to travel with the cherubim as his chariot (Psalm 18:10; Ezekiel 10:1-22). Over the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament were two golden figures of cherubim with their wings stretched out above the ark, and it was there that God promised to come to dwell among his people (Exodus 25:22; cf. vv. 18-21). Jim's note: 'im' at the end of a Hebrew word denotes the word is plural. While popular for Valentine's Day, the word, 'cherub' never occurs in the Bible. Cherubim always travel in pairs. Perhaps there is a lesson about community here.
- **Grudem: Another group of heavenly beings, the seraphim**, are mentioned only in Isaiah 6:2-7, where they continually worship the Lord and call to one another.
- **Grudem: Both Ezekiel and Revelation tell us of yet other kinds of heavenly beings known as "living creatures"** around God's throne. Ezekiel 1:5-14; Revelation 4:6-8

4. Rank and Order Among the Angels

Jude 9; Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:7-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16

5. Names of Specific Angels

Grudem: Only two angels are specifically named in Scripture

Michael. Jude 9; Revelation 12:7-8; Daniel 10:13, 21

Gabriel. Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26-27

6. Only One Place at One Time

Grudem: The idea that an angel can be in only one place at one time is consistent with the fact that angels are created beings. Unlike God, who is omnipresent, they are finite creatures and therefore limited to being in one place at one time, as is everything else that God has created. Luke 1:26; Daniel 10:12-14

7. How Many Angels Are There?

Grudem: Though Scripture does not give us a figure for the number of angels God created, it is apparently a very great number. **Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11**

8. Do People Have Individual Guardian Angels?

Grudem: Scripture clearly tells us that God sends angels for our protection. **Psalm 91:11-12; Acts 12:15; Matthew 18:10**

Grudem: Our Lord may simply be saying that angels who are assigned the task of protecting little children have ready access to God's presence. (To use an athletic analogy, the angels may be playing "zone" rather than "man-on-man" defense.) . . . There seems to be, therefore, no convincing support for the idea of individual "guardian angels" in the text of Scripture.

9. Angels Do Not Marry

Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:34-36

Grudem: This would suggest that angels do not have the kind of family relationships that exist among human beings.

Jim's note: Every angel recorded in the Bible appears in masculine form, so it could be that either all angels are masculine or it could be that they have no gender.

10. The Power of Angels

Psalm 103:20; Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; 2 Peter 2:11

Grudem: At least for the time of their earthly existence, human beings are made "**lower than the angels**" (**Hebrews 2:7**). Though the power of angels is great, it is certainly not infinite, but it is used to battle against the evil demonic powers under the control of Satan (**Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:7-8; 20:1-3**). Nonetheless, when the Lord returns, we will be raised to a position higher than that of angels (**1 Corinthians 6:3**).

11. Who Is the Angel of the Lord?

Grudem: Several passages of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, speak of the angel of the Lord in a way that suggests that he is God himself taking on a human form to appear briefly to various people in the Old Testament. In some passages "**the angel of the LORD**" (not "**an angel of the LORD**") is spoken of as the Lord himself. **Genesis 16:10, 13; 22:12; 31:11, 13; Exodus 3:2, 6**

Grudem: These are clear instances of the angel of the Lord or the angel of God appearing as God himself, perhaps more specifically as God the Son taking on a human body for a short time in order to appear to human beings.

Grudem: At other times the angel of the Lord seems to be distinguished from God (2 Samuel 24:16; Psalm 34:7; Zechariah 1:11-13), and passages that mention “an angel of the LORD” (e.g., Luke 1:11) usually indicate an angel sent by God.

Grudem: When Were Angels Created?

Grudem: All the angels must have been created **before** the seventh day of creation. Genesis 2:1; Exodus 20:11

Grudem: Can we be any more specific? There may be a hint at the creation of angelic beings on the first day of creation when we read that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), and then immediately after we read that “the earth was without form and void” (Genesis 1:2), but with no mention of the heavens in this second verse. This may suggest that the uninhabitable state of the earth is contrasted with the heavens where, perhaps, God had already created angelic beings and assigned them various roles and orders. This idea is made more plausible when we read that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” at the time when God laid the “cornerstone” of the earth and sunk its “bases” in the process of forming or founding it (Job 38:6-7). If the angels (“the sons of God”) shouted for joy when God was making the earth inhabitable, this could imply that God created the angelic beings early on the first day. However, since we have only hints in Scripture, we must remain content with the fact that God has not given us much information about the time of the creation of the angels.

Grudem: Some time before Satan tempted Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:1), a number of angels sinned and rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). This event occurred apparently after the sixth day of creation when “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1: 31), but beyond this, Scripture gives us no further information.

Grudem: The Place of Angels in God’s Purpose

1. Angels Show the Greatness of God’s Love and Plan for Us

Grudem: Angels are never said to be made “in the image of God,” while human beings are several times said to be in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6).

Grudem: God will someday give us authority over angels, to judge them. 1 Corinthians 6:3

Grudem: The ability of human beings to bear children like themselves . . . is another element of our superiority to angels, who apparently cannot bear children (cf. Matthew 22: 30; Luke 20: 34-36).

Grudem: Angels also demonstrate the greatness of God's love for us in that, though many angels sinned, none were saved. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Hebrews 2:16

Grudem: Among the angels, many sinned, but God decided to redeem none of them.

Grudem: As with the angels that sinned: God could have let all of us go on our self-chosen path toward eternal condemnation. . . . But God decided to do much more. . . . He decided to save some sinful human beings. . . . The striking contrast with the fate of angels brings this truth home to us. The fact that we have been saved from a life of rebellion against God means that we are able to sing songs that angels will never be able to sing for all eternity. Luke 15:10

2. Angels Remind Us That the Unseen World Is Real

Grudem: Many in our day deny the reality of anything they cannot see. But the biblical teaching on the existence of angels is a constant reminder to us that there is an unseen world that is very real. 2 Kings 6:17; Psalm 148:2; Hebrews 12:22

3. Angels Are Examples for Us

Grudem: In both their obedience and their worship angels provide helpful examples for us to imitate. Matthew 6:10; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 5:11-12

4. Angels Carry Out Some of God's Plans

Grudem: They bring God's messages to people. Luke 1:11-19; Acts 8:26; 10:3-8, 22; 27:23-24

Grudem: They carry out some of God's judgments. 2 Samuel 24:16-17; 2 Chronicles 32:21; Acts 12:23; Revelation 16:1

Grudem: When Christ returns, angels will come with him as a great army accompanying their King and Lord. Matthew 16:27; Luke 9:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7

Grudem: Angels also patrol the earth as God's representatives. Zechariah 1:10-11

Grudem: Carry out war against demonic forces. Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:7-8; 20:1-3

Grudem: When Christ returns, an archangel will proclaim his coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:16

5. Angels Directly **Glorify** God

Jim's note: This title it implies that seraphim and the four living creatures are angels. **Grudem: Angels glorify God for who he is in himself, for his excellence. Psalm 103:20; Isaiah 6:2-3; Revelation 4:8**

Grudem: Angels also glorify God for his great plan of salvation as they see it unfold. Luke 2:14; 15:10; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12

Grudem: Our Relationship to Angels

1. We Should Be Aware of Angels in Our Daily Lives

Grudem: Angels are watching our obedience or disobedience to God through the day. 1 Timothy 5:21; Hebrews 13:2

Grudem: When we are suddenly delivered from a danger or distress, we might suspect that angels have been sent by God to help us, and we should be thankful. Daniel 6:22; Acts 5:19-20; 12:7-11; Matthew 4:11; Psalm 91:11-12

2. Cautions Regarding Our Relationship to Angels

Grudem: Beware of receiving false doctrine from angels. Galatians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Kings 13:18. Grudem: These warnings should keep any Christians from being fooled by the claims of Mormons, for example, that an angel (Moroni) spoke to Joseph Smith and revealed to him the basis of the Mormon religion.

Grudem: Do not worship angels, pray to them, or seek them. Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10. Grudem: By virtue of omnipotence and omniscience, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are also worthy of being prayed to, but this is not true of any other being. 1 Timothy 2:5. Grudem: There is no example in Scripture of anyone praying to any specific angel or asking angels for help. Moreover, Scripture gives us no warrant to seek for appearances of angels to us. They manifest themselves unsought. To seek such appearances would seem to indicate an unhealthy curiosity or a desire for some kind of spectacular event rather than a love for God and devotion to him and his work.

Grudem: Do angels appear to people today? Grudem: In the earliest period of the church's history angels were active. Acts 8:26; 10:3-6; 12:6-11; 27:23-24; Hebrews 13:2. Grudem: There seems, therefore, no compelling reason to rule out the possibility of angelic appearances today. . . . However, we should use extreme caution in receiving guidance from an angel should such an unusual event happen. Grudem: Scripture is our guide, and no angelic creature can give authoritative teaching that is contrary to Scripture.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. How might this chapter affect how you think about angels from now on? What difference would it make in your attitude in worship if you consciously thought about being in the presence of angels when you were singing praises to God?
2. Do you think there are angels watching you right now? What attitude or attitudes do you think they have as they watch you? Have you ever experienced a remarkably elevated sense of joy just after praying with someone to receive Christ as personal Savior? Do you think one aspect contributing to that joy might be that angels are also rejoicing with you because a sinner has repented (Luke 15: 10)?
3. Have you had a remarkable rescue from physical or other kinds of danger and wondered if angels were involved in helping you at the time?
4. How can the example of angels who joyfully and faithfully perform their assigned tasks, whether great or small, be of help to you in the responsibilities that you face today, whether at work or at home or in the church?
5. How do you think you will feel when God asks you to judge angels (1 Cor. 6: 3)? Explain what that fact tells you about the greatness of your humanity as created in the image of God.

Scripture Memory Passage: Revelation 5:11-12

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Hymn: "Angels From the Realms of Glory" (James Montgomery, 1816)

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth
Ye who sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night;
God with man is now residing, yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.

Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations; ye have seen his natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.

**Saints, before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.**

**All creation, join in praising God the Father, Spirit, Son;
Evermore your voices raising to th' eternal Three in One:
Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.**

Systematic Theology

Part 2: Doctrine of God

Chapter 20: Satan and Demons

How should Christians think of Satan and demons today? Spiritual warfare.

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Revelation 5:11-12**

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Grudem: Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: Demons are evil **angels** who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world

Grudem: The Origin of Demons

Grudem: When God created the world, he "saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (**Genesis 1:31**). This means that even the angelic world that God had created did not have evil angels or demons in it at that time. But by the time of **Genesis 3**, we find that Satan, in the form of a serpent, was tempting Eve to sin (**Genesis 3:1-5**). Therefore, sometime between the events of **Genesis 1:31** and **Genesis 3:1**, there must have been a rebellion in the angelic world with many angels turning against God and becoming evil.

2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Isaiah 14:12-15

Grudem: The sin of Satan is described as one of **pride** and attempting to be equal to God in status and authority

Grudem: Satan as Head of the Demons

Grudem: "Satan" is the personal name of the **head** of the demons. **Job 1:6; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Zechariah 3:1**

Grudem: The name “Satan” is a Hebrew word (satan) that means “adversary”

A variety of names are used for Satan, including devil (**Matthew 4:1**), serpent (**2 Corinthians 11:3**); Be-elzebul (**Matthew 10:25**), ruler of this world (**John 12:31**), prince of the power of the air (**Ephesians 2:2**), and evil one (**Matthew 13:19**).

Grudem: The Activity of Satan and Demons

1. Satan Was the Originator of Sin

Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:3; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8

2. Demons Oppose and Try to Destroy Every Work of God

Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9; Psalm 106:37; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 4:8

3. Yet Demons Are Limited by God’s Control and Have Limited Power

Job 1:12; 2:6; Jude 6; James 4:7

Grudem: In the area of knowledge, we should not think that demons can know the future or that they can read our minds or know our thoughts. . . . there is no indication in Scripture that . . . demons know anything . . . about the future. Mark 13:32

Grudem: There is no indication that angels or demons can know our thoughts. . . . Demons can observe what goes on in the world and can probably draw some conclusions.

4. There Have Been Differing Stages of Demonic Activity in the History of Redemption

Grudem: In the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Psalm 106:35-37 (Could this mean all of the false gods in the Old Testament are demons? If so, there are a LOT of demons in the Old Testament. It appears that Paul thought so. **1 Corinthians 10:20**). **Grudem: Worship of demons will regularly lead to immoral and self-destructive practices. Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; Hosea 4:14**

Grudem: During the ministry of Jesus. Mark 1:27. Grudem: Such power over demonic forces had never before been seen in the history of the world. Matthew 12:28-29

Grudem: During the new covenant age. Matthew 10:8; Mark 3:15; Luke 10:17; Acts 8:7; 16:18; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9

Grudem: During the Millennium. Revelation 20:1-3, 7-9. Grudem: The fact that sin and rebelliousness persist in people’s hearts apart from the activity of Satan, even during the thousand-year reign of Christ, shows that we cannot blame all sin in the world on Satan and his demons.

Grudem: At the final judgment. Revelation 20:10

Grudem: Our Relationship to Demons

1. Are Demons Active in the World Today?

We have no reason not to think so

2. Not All Evil and Sin Is From Satan and Demons, but Some Is

Grudem: If we think of the overall emphasis of the New Testament epistles, we realize that very little space is given to discussing demonic activity in the lives of believers or methods to resist and oppose such activity. The emphasis is on telling believers not to sin but to live lives of righteousness. **1 Corinthians 1:10; 5:1-5; 6:1-8; 11:33, 28**

Grudem: Though the New Testament clearly recognizes the influence of demonic activity in the world . . . its primary focus regarding evangelism and Christian growth is on the choices and actions taken by people themselves. . . . We need to accept our own responsibility to obey the Lord and not to shift blame for our own misdeeds onto some demonic force. Flip Wilson was **wrong**—the Devil did **not** make me do it. However . . . **1 Corinthians 10:20; 1 Timothy 4:1, 3-4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2**

Grudem: Satan is thought of as the originator of lies, murder, deception, false teaching, and sin generally, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the New Testament wants us to understand that there is some degree of demonic influence in nearly all wrongdoing and sin that occurs today. Not all sin is caused by Satan or demons, nor is the major influence or cause of sin demonic activity, but demonic activity is probably a factor in almost all sin and almost all destructive activity that opposes the work of God in the world today.

Grudem: Where there is a pattern of persistent sin in the life of a Christian in one area or another, the primary responsibility for that sin rests with the individual Christian and his or her choices to continue that wrongful pattern. . . . Nevertheless, there could possibly be some demonic influence contributing to and intensifying that sinful tendency. **Ephesians 4:26; 6:11-12, 14; 1 John 5:18**

3. Can a Christian Be Demon Possessed?

Grudem: The term demon possession is an unfortunate term that has found its way into some English translations of the Bible but is not really reflected in the Greek text. The Greek New Testament can speak of people who “have a demon” (**Matthew 11:18; Luke 7:33; 8:27; John 7:20; 8:48, 49, 52; 10:20**), or it can speak of people who are suffering from demonic influence (Gk. *daimonizomai*), but it **never** uses language that suggests that a demon actually “possesses” someone. The problem with the terms demon possession and

demonized is that they give the nuance of such strong demonic influence that they seem to imply that the person who is under demonic attack has no choice but to succumb to it. They suggest that the person is unable any longer to exercise his or her will and is completely under the domination of the evil spirit. . . . So what should we say to the question, "Can a Christian be demon possessed?" The answer depends on what someone means by "possessed." Since the term does not reflect any word found in the Greek New Testament, people can define it to mean various things without having clear warrant to anchor it to any verse of Scripture, and it becomes difficult to say that one person's definition is right and another one's wrong. My own preference, for reasons explained above, is not to use the phrase demon possessed at all, for any kinds of cases. But if people explain clearly what they mean by "demon possessed," then an answer can be given depending on the definition they give. If by "demon possessed" they mean that a person's will is completely dominated by a demon, so that a person has no power left to chose to do right and obey God, then the answer to whether a Christian could be demon possessed would certainly be no, for Scripture guarantees that sin shall have no dominion over us since we have been raised with Christ (Romans 6:14, see also vv. 4, 11). On the other hand, most Christians would agree that there can be differing degrees of demonic attack or influence in the lives of believers (see Luke 4:2; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 6:12; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8).

4. How Can Demonic Influences Be Recognized?

Grudem: In severe cases of demonic influence, as reported in the Gospels, the affected person would exhibit bizarre and often violent actions, especially opposition to the preaching of the gospel. Mark 1:23-24; 9:17-18, 20, 22; 5:2-5, 13

Grudem: Satanic or demonic activity always tends toward the ultimate destruction of parts of God's creation and especially of human beings who are made in the image of God

Grudem: A refusal to **confess** "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." 1 John 4:2-3

Grudem: It should not surprise us that there may be some degree of uncertainty in our perception of the presence of demonic influence

5. Jesus Gives All Believers Authority to Rebuke Demons and Command Them to Leave 1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7

Grudem: The work of Christ on the cross is the ultimate basis for our authority over demons. Though Christ won a victory over Satan in the wilderness, the New Testament epistles point to the cross as the moment when Satan was decisively defeated. Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 12:11

2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:4; Philippians 1:28; Ephesians 6:16, 13

Grudem: Why does God want Christians to speak directly to the demon who is troubling someone rather than just praying and asking God to drive away the demon for them? . . . In the world that God has created, he has given us a very active role in carrying out his plans, especially his plans for the advancement of the kingdom and the building up of the church. In all of these cases, our direct involvement and activity is important in addition to our prayers. . . . Like a wise father who does not settle all of his children's disputes for them, but sometimes sends them back out to the playground to settle a dispute themselves, so our heavenly Father encourages us to enter directly into conflict with demonic forces in the name of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

How do we rebuke demons? Follow Jesus' example in **Matthew 4** and quote **Scripture**—remind Satan he is already defeated and command him to flee in Jesus' name.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **Are there areas in your own society where you think there might be some demonic influence today? Do you feel some fear at the prospect of encountering demonic activity in your own life or the lives of others around you?**
2. **Are there any areas of sin in your own life now that might give a foothold to some demonic activity? If so, what would the Lord have you do with respect to that sin?**
3. **Are there cases where you have had victory over some demonic force by speaking to it in the name of Jesus? . . . What are the dangers of becoming too interested in or too deeply involved in this kind of ministry?**

Scripture Memory Passage: James 4:7-8

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

Hymn: "Christian, Dost Thou See Them?" (John Mason Neale, 1862)

**Christian, dost thou see them on the holy ground,
How the pow'rs of darkness rage thy steps around?
Christian, up and smite them, counting gain but loss,
In the strength that cometh by the holy Cross.**

**Christian, dost thou feel them, how they work within,
Striving, tempting, luring, goading into sin?
Christian, never tremble; never be downcast;
Gird thee for the battle, watch and pray and fast.**

**Christian, dost thou hear them, how they speak thee fair?
"Always fast and vigil? Always watch and prayer?"
Christian, answer boldly, "While I breathe I pray!"
Peace shall follow battle, night shall end in day.**

**Hear the words of Jesus: "O my servant true;
Thou art very weary, I was weary too;
But that toil shall make thee some day all mine own,
And the end of sorrow shall be near my throne."**