

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
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God the Trinity

- Belief in the Existence of God
 - The belief in a divine being greater than man has been common to all cultures and civilizations.
 - The work of the Holy Spirit which extends to every creature (common grace) helps to explain this.
 - Atheism is a perversion of thinking and the Bible calls the atheist a fool (Ps 14:1).
 - The evidence for the existence of God in creation is so clear that suppressing this truth is grounds for the condemnation of unbelievers (Rom 1:18-20).
 - God's revelation through the prophets and the Scriptures has permeated the thinking of the world with the result that almost all of mankind has some notion of a higher being.
 - Various systems have attempted to explain the existence of our universe with or without the reality of a higher being.
 - ✦ Polytheism – the belief in many gods.
 - ✦ Hylozoism – the life principle found in all creation is god.
 - ✦ Pantheism – god is impersonal and identical to nature itself (all is god and god is all), immanent but not transcendent.
 - ✦ Materialism – matter is self-functioning according to natural laws and the universe itself (the earth, the sun, nature, etc.) is a life source requiring no higher being to exist (evolution).
 - In attempting to argue for the existence of God from the facts of creation apart from the Scripture, four general lines of reasoning are commonly found
 - ✦ Ontological – God must exist because man generally believes that He exists.
 - ✦ Cosmological – every effect must have a cause and, since the universe is an effect, its cause must be the Creator.
 - ✦ Teleological – the creation is so intricate and interwoven that it must have been designed and God is the Designer.
 - ✦ Anthropological – man's very nature (capacity to think, feel, make moral choices) is unexplainable apart from a creator God who has these same capabilities only to a greater degree.
 - Although such arguments for the existence of God have considerable validity, they are not sufficient to bring fallen man into a proper relationship with God.

- Scriptural revelation confirms all of the facts found in nature, but adds many truths without which it would be almost impossible to lead someone to a real faith in God and His provision for salvation.
- The Unity of the Divine Trinity
 - Both the O.T. (Ex 20:3; Deut 6:4; Isa 44:6) and N.T. (Jn 10:30; 14:9; 17:11, 22-23; Col 1:15) emphasize the unity of God.
 - While the N.T. gives more information about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the O.T. has references to the Trinity.
 - The plural Hebrew word *elohim* as a name for God is used with singular verbs indicating the unity of the triune God.
 - Ps 2:7 (where “I” is the Father) indicates the purpose of God the Father to have His Son reign sovereign over all the earth.
 - In Ps 104:30 God sends forth His Spirit.
 - The Angel of the Lord (Jehovah) references in the O.T. speak of the Son of God as sent by the Father (Christophanies).
 - In John 14:16-17 the Helper (Holy Spirit) and the Father are clearly distinguished from Jesus Christ the Son of God.
 - The Great Commission passage (Matt 28:19-20) names all three members of the Trinity explicitly.
 - While the word “trinity” is not found in the Bible, the evidence of a triune God in Scripture permits no other conclusion.
 - The doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental element of Biblical truth, yet it is beyond human comprehension and has no parallel in human experience.
 - The simplest and clearest definition is this: God is One and He exists as three Persons.
 - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are equal, having the same attributes, and are equally worthy of our worship.
 - The three Persons of the Godhead are not three separate gods, but are One in essence, purpose, etc.
 - The Trinity is not one God manifesting Himself in three ways.
 - The doctrine of the procession makes clear distinctions in that the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son together sent the Holy Spirit.
 - The reality of the Trinity must be accepted by faith on the basis of Scriptural revelation even if we do sometimes find it difficult to comprehend, define and/or explain.
- The Names of God
 - In the O.T. three principal names are ascribed to God.
 - ✦ The tetragrammaton (YHWH), which is translated as Yahweh or Jehovah, first appears in Gen 2:4 and is explained in Ex 3:13-14 as the “I am who I am” describing God as self-existent.
 - ✦ The most common name, *elohim*, is introduced in Gen 1:1. It most likely means “ruler” or “mighty one” referring to one who should be feared/respected.

- ✦ The title *adonai* which means “master” or “lord”. It is frequently joined to *elohim* as in Gen 15:2 to emphasize that God is our Lord.
 - Other compounds are found in the O.T., such as Jehovah-jireh (the Lord will provide), Jehovah-rapha (the Lord who heals), Jehovah-shalom (the Lord our peace), etc.
 - In the N.T. additional titles of God are found.
 - ✦ The Father.
 - ✦ The Son.
 - ✦ The Holy Spirit.
- The Attributes of God
 - God is Spirit (John 4:24).
 - God is self-existent (Ex 3:14).
 - God is infinite (Ps 145:3).
 - God is immutable (Ps 102:27; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17).
 - God is truth (Deut 32:4; John 17:3).
 - God is love (1 John 4:8).
 - God is eternal (Ps 90:2).
 - God is holy (1 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:5).
 - God is omnipresent (Ps 139:8; Jer 23:23-24).
 - God is omniscient (Ps 147:4-5).
 - God is omnipotent (Matt 19:26).
 - God is merciful and gracious (Ps 86:15).
 - God is jealous (Ex 34:14).
 - God is sovereign (1 Tim 6:15).
 - And so on...
- The Sovereignty of God
 - God is supreme over all.
 - God yields to no other power or authority.
 - God will accomplish His eternal Λ to Ω plan with certainty.
 - Without sacrificing His authority or jeopardizing the final realization of His perfect will, it has pleased God to give men a measure of freedom of choice, and for the exercise of this choice God holds man responsible.
 - Examples:
 - ✦ God the Father draws and the Holy Spirit convicts, yet man is held responsible for unbelief and is commanded to believe (Acts 16:31).
 - ✦ God works to accomplish His will in believers (Ph 2:13), yet He does not make men obey, but asks them to do so (Rom 12:1-2).

- Questions
 - How can we account for the common belief in the existence of God?
 - Why is atheism unreasonable?
 - How clear is the revelation of God in nature?
 - Define four systems of thought which attempt to explain the universe on the basis of a higher being.
 - What is the ontological argument for the existence of God?
 - What is the cosmological argument for the existence of God?
 - What is the teleological argument for the existence of God?
 - What is the anthropological argument for the existence of God?
 - To what extent do the O.T. and N.T. emphasize the unity of God?
 - To what extent does the O.T. teach the doctrine of the Trinity?
 - To what extent does the N.T. teach the doctrine of the Trinity?
 - Distinguish the doctrine of the Trinity from tritheism.
 - Why is the Trinity not to be explained as three modes of existence of God?
 - Explain how the Trinity is distinguished by certain properties.
 - State and define the three most important names for God in the O.T.
 - What are some of the compound names for God in the O.T.?
 - What are the distinguishing titles of the three persons of the Trinity in the N.T.?
 - Name some of the important attributes of God as revealed in Scripture.
 - What is meant by the sovereignty of God?
 - Give some examples of God's sovereignty and man's freedom of choice co-existing.