

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 2:
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Lecture 4:
GOD'S BEING



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module 2

The Doctrine of God

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Module 2: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Lecture 4: God's Being

Introduction

Mankind was created to know, love, worship, and to glorify God. Now man's rebellion and sin has diverted us from that path and privilege. But through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God re-creates sinful men into believers, into worshippers who see, and adore, and serve the Triune God. He delivers sinners from serving idols, the figments of their depraved imaginations, and brings them to serve the living and true God, so that the heart cry of the true Christian is, "Lord, show me thy glory."

Theme: *The Being of God.*

I. Scriptural Basis

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord." (Mark 12:28–29)

1. *The Shema*—The Lord our God is one Lord.
2. The unbelieving world follows a multitude of false gods.

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John 10:28–30)

3. The Father and Christ have one and the same power.
4. The Father and Christ have one essence.
5. There is one and only one divine being.

6. God reveals to us that he is simple, and infinite, and a Spirit, showing us who he is—his self-revelation to us.

Questions:

1. What is the core doctrinal truth found in *The Shema*? What does *shema* mean?

2. How is the truth of *The Shema* proven in the New Testament? What is the common characteristic of the unbelieving world for all of time?

3. Since there is but one only living and true God, how can we understand the relationship between God the Father and God the Son?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 2, paragraph 1.

1. Christianity is monotheistic.
2. God is one with himself—the self-same, indivisible in his being and operations.
3. Understanding God’s simplicity is very important in our consideration of his attributes.
 - a. God is his attributes.
4. We don’t believe in tritheism.
5. God is infinite in his being, in all of his attributes.
6. God is a Spirit.

7. *Conclusion*—We’ve especially highlighted three things:

- a. the divine simplicity of God,
- b. the fact that God is infinite,
- c. and the fact that God is a spirit in his being.

Questions:

1. What does it mean that Christianity is “monotheistic”? How does the monotheism of Christianity differ from the monotheism of Islam? Or from that of the Jews?

2. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, question 4 describes God as “without parts.” What does that mean? What is the relation between God’s essence and his existence?

3. What is meant by the term “divine simplicity” in regards to considering the attributes of God? Why is it wrong to say that some of God’s attributes are greater or lesser than other of his attributes?

4. What is “tritheism”? How does it relate to Christianity?

5. What does the term “omnipotent” mean? How does God’s omnipotence influence our knowledge and understanding of God?

6. What is “anthropomorphic language” used in the Bible? Does the statement “God is a Spirit” only refer to the third person of the Trinity?

III. Polemical Exposition

1. The threat of idolatry.
 - a. Worship only the true God
 - b. Only worship him in the way he has prescribed.
2. We need to confront the temptation to worship God with the use of images.
3. We need to be prepared to reject tritheism.

Questions:

1. What do the First and Second Commandments tell us about how we are to worship the living and true God? What does it say about worshipping God with images?

2. According to what we have learned about God’s being, how should we worship him? What does the Bible tell us about making or using images that represent the persons of the Godhead?

3. What are the dangers of tritheism? How can we be prepared to reject this false doctrine?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. We should respond to these doctrines with worship.
2. The seriousness of sin—it is against an infinite God.
3. We need to understand the atonement for sin.
4. There are immeasurable riches of grace in our simple, infinite God.
5. God is the supreme good of the believer.

Questions:

1. Read and meditate on *The Shema*, in Deuteronomy 6, verses 4–5. What should be our first and lifelong response to this doctrine?

2. How does knowing about God and his being help us to comprehend the seriousness of sin and the great blessing of the atonement for sin? Why was it absolutely necessary for Christ to be both true God and true man?

3. What comforts can Christians draw from learning these doctrines about God and what he has done and is doing in the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins? What is the everlasting portion that is promised to the believer?

4. Do these truths lift your heart toward heaven? How should these doctrines help the believer live in this world?

V. Self-Reflection

Augustine of Hippo, the early church father, wrote, “*The truest beginning of piety is to think as highly of God as possible.*” Consider this statement, and spend some quality time meditating on Deuteronomy 6. What is the imperative of devotion and the performance of devotion in that chapter? Do you realize your life is a growing exercise in God-consciousness? What means has God given to help us grow spiritually?
