



Lesson Guide

Lesson 4 - Theology: Who is God?

Introduction

Having explored the concept of truth itself and examined the biblical view of human nature – two basic issues that *had* to be settled before we could move on to the present discussion – Dr. Tackett now takes us to the eastern point of the compass and proceeds to lay the third and most important foundation of our “Truth Temple:” *Theology*, or that branch of study and investigation that grapples with the question, “Who is God?” *Knowing God*, he argues, ought to be our passion and our highest goal; for until we look upon *His* face, we cannot rightly know ourselves or begin to grasp the meaning of our existence in the world.

Themes

Knowing God is absolutely central to the meaning of human life, for it is only in the context of intimate, personal relationship with Him that we experience *eternal life*. At the same time, there is no assignment more daunting, no task more demanding, no challenge more overwhelming, than that of seeking to understand the being, nature, character, and attributes of the eternal Creator, who is Himself the ultimate source of all truth (Colossians 2:3). So impossibly huge is this endeavor that we could not hope to tackle it at all except for the fact that He has graciously *revealed* Himself to us in His Word. Apart from this *revelation*, mankind gropes and struggles in the darkness to piece together even the most flawed and rudimentary concept of God.

In line with this thought, R. C. Sproul asserts that ours is an era in which the knowledge of God has been *eclipsed* – not completely destroyed, but *obscured* and *shadowed* by lies and misconceptions. Given this situation, it is essential that we establish two main points: 1) that God exists; and 2) that the Bible, the vehicle of His self-revelation, is utterly reliable. Following Sproul’s lead, Dr. Tackett uses a significant portion of this tour to respond to attacks that have been leveled against God’s Word over the course of history (another aspect of the *Cosmic Battle*). He answers the objections of Voltaire, Robert Ingersoll, and liberal theologians such as Julius Wellhausen and the members of the Jesus Seminar. He also illustrates the Bible’s historical accuracy by helping us resolve an apparent scriptural discrepancy concerning the dates of King Jehoram’s reign.

But the heart of this episode’s message hits much closer to home. For in the end, Dr. Tackett makes it clear that we cannot truly know ourselves until we have begun to know God in the fullness and richness of His multifaceted nature and character – not only as the God of mercy and grace, but also as the God who is a consuming fire, *jealous* for the purity of the covenant relationship (*El Qanna*). When this knowledge dawns upon us, we can expect two things to happen. First, the revelation of God’s character will, like a mirror, reveal things to us about

ourselves, so that we, along with the prophet Isaiah, are compelled to cry, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5). But then secondly, as He raises us out of our despair and shows us who we are and who we can be *in Him*, we will be granted the gift of a *new name* – a whole new concept of our being, our identity, and our purpose in life *with God*. Once again, the fruit of this experience will be personal transformation.

Points to Watch For

During the course of this tour, the theme of the *Cosmic Battle* is revisited several times and from a number of different angles. As in the first three episodes, Dr. Tackett consistently returns to the point that fallen man *resists* the truth, and that, as Christians, we are thus called to “cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself *against the knowledge of God*, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man, says Dr. Tackett, has a tendency “play fast and loose” with God’s Word, *not* because he is seriously interested in ascertaining the facts about biblical history, but because he is unwilling to face up to the convicting power of divine revelation as it applies to his personal life. In the final analysis, God’s Word is the main thing standing in the way of “self-actualization” as it is promoted by the gurus of contemporary culture. Some students may find it difficult to accept this idea.

Discussion Questions (Pick 3 or 4 for your discussion time)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don’t just “read” them, but become familiar with them so that they don’t appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them.)

1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask)

A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items: Majesty and enormity of who God is; His character & being as the ultimate source of all truth; eternal life & knowing God; El Qanna; what is your name?; the attack on God’s Word; the veracity of God’s Word; Joram & Jehoram; the Jesus Seminar, etc. List your own).

B. Ask your guests to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.

C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.

D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

2) How did Jesus define “eternal life” in His John 17 prayer?

(Knowing God)

What was the point that Dr. Tackett was trying to make in saying that this was NOT just a clinical knowledge?

(It was an intimate knowledge—a deep relationship.)

- 3) **What was the thing that Dr. Tackett said he found to be the most astounding thing of all?**

(That God dwells within the heart of man.)

He asked the students if they really believed that this truth claim of God was really real. Do we?

- 4) **There were three things that Dr. Tackett said happen to us when we gaze upon the face of God. What were they?**

A. (Exposes us.) What does that mean?

B. (Exposes our culture.) What does this mean?

C. (Creates a desire to answer God's call to go for Him.) What does this mean?

- 5) **Thinking about the first one, that it exposes us, does anyone want to be bold and offer to admit that tonight...did anything strike you?**

(Some will be struck by the concept of El Qanna; some by God's infinity; some by the "new name" idea; some by the veracity of God's Word, etc.)

- 6) **Considering the second one, that it exposes our culture, what did our tour tonight reveal about our culture?**

Deeper Questions for Discussion

- 7) **If *theology*, or the study of God, is the most important of the three foundations we are seeking to lay, why was it put aside until the fourth tour? What does this imply about our culture and our calling as modern ambassadors for Christ?**

(Dr. Tackett says that, given our present cultural context, we were not ready to talk about God until we had first established the existence of *Truth as an objective reality* [a concept widely contested by many contemporary thinkers] and grappled with the biblical view of humanity and its broader implications. Generally speaking, this is the pattern we need to follow as representatives of truth in today's society. We can no longer take anything for granted: we must lay the groundwork carefully before moving on to talk about God and the Gospel message.)

- 8) **What does R. C. Sproul mean when he says that the knowledge of God has not been *destroyed* but rather *eclipsed* in our day? How has this come about? Can you think of examples of this *eclipsing, filtering, or shadowing* of the truth in your own experience or in the experience of your friends?**

(As long as man retains the least vestige of the divine image, the knowledge of God can never be completely destroyed. But it *can* be seriously clouded or marred by the intermixture of lies, distortions, and "cosmic cube" based notions of deity and spirituality.)

- 9) **“This is eternal life,” says Jesus, “that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Why do you think Jesus defines eternal life in this way? What is the connection between *knowledge* and *life*?**
(The point here is to highlight the distinction between mere *clinical* or *academic* knowledge and *intimate, relational* knowledge [as in “Adam *knew* Eve ...”]. To “know” God in the sense Jesus here intends is to establish a vital heart-connection with Him. Only in the context of such a relationship can we truly be said to “live.”)
- 10) **Why are names so significant in the Bible? What are some of the names of God revealed to us in Scripture? How does knowing God’s name impact our understanding of our own “name”?**
(Names have a meaning. Figuratively speaking, to know someone’s “name” is to grasp that person’s inner essence, vitality, and significance. It is only as we learn God’s name(s) – i.e., get to *know* Him in the sense defined in Question 3 – that we gain a “universal” context within which we can begin to understand our own place and purpose in the universe.)
- 11) **Why is it important to establish that a “spiritual” book like the Bible is also historically accurate?**
(This question harks back to the definition of “truth” established in Lesson 1: “Conformity to fact or reality.” Those who divorce “truth” from reality [as in “everyone creates his or her own personal truth”] might possibly be able to reconcile their so-called “spirituality” with a factually inaccurate Bible. But those who believe that truth = reality cannot.)
- 12) **Picture yourself in the Temple with Isaiah, beholding the glory and majesty of God firsthand. How would this experience change your life? What is there about you that simply *could not* remain the same after such a revelation?**
(This question is intended to remind us that our concept of truth – in this case, the overwhelming truth of God’s infinite holy nature – ought to impact our behavior. The point is to make this concept as immediate and personal for participants as possible.)



Tour Guide Notes: Why Not Start With God? Lesson 4 – Theology: Who is God?

I have been asked this question a number of times. We attempted to answer it in the DVD, but it was way too brief, and it demands a more detailed response.

We actually began with God in Tour 1. If you recall, we were dealing with the critical importance of truth, examining the very clear declaration by Jesus that the reason He was born was to testify to the truth. We established the reality that the primary battle that rages around us and within us is the battle between truth and lie. We then made the point that the ultimate source of truth is the very character, nature and being of God, and that the forces of evil, in reality, are ultimately arrayed against who He is. It was in this context that we pointed out that all of our tours were going to follow one central theme: “gazing upon His face”.

In Tour 2, we took note of the two presuppositions of our worldview: 1) that God exists and 2) that He has revealed Himself to us. That revelation, through His creation and through His Word, provided for us the fundamental answers to all of the critical philosophical questions of life. We examined, in contrast, the wandering futility of those who attempt to answer those questions without Him and the deep ethical consequences of that position. We paused briefly to look at the nature of God to discover that His laws are not capricious, but an expression of His character.

In Tour 3, we spent most of our time dealing with man, who he really is, the state that he is in, and the true solution to His problem. We began with God’s creation of man, the separation that occurred between God and man at the Fall, the glorious work that Christ undertook to redeem us from the curse of death, and the promised glory that awaits those who are His. We ended by noting the inability for those who deny God to have any basis for ethical notions or even ethical language. The problem of evil is a greater problem for those who stand opposed to the reality of God than for us.

In fact, every tour will focus upon God. In Tour 5, we will deal with Science. But we will begin with the reality that the heavens declare His glory and that all of science is meaningless without the beginning notion that we live in a rational, ordered universe rather than a random, purposeless one. In Tour 6, History, we will gaze upon the Sovereignty of God to comprehend that we are part of His larger story and not just one of a billion other pitiful creatures fighting to make our own little script successful. Tour 7 through 12 will take us on a fascinating tour that will examine one jewel after another, each pointing to some aspect of God’s nature.

So, we did begin with God and we will end with God. And we will look upon Him everywhere in between. But, to be honest, Tour 4 comes after one, two, and three, primarily because we live in a culture that has so bought the lies of the world, that we are not able to deal directly with the

question “who is God” without some preparation. As the Old Testament priests underwent a lengthy ritual before they entered the Holy of Holies, so too, we must often prepare our hearts and minds before we engage this awesome question.

In the end, my prayer is that we will daily ask this question and daily seek its answer: “Who are you, O Lord?”

THEOLOGY

who is God?

1

THEOLOGY

[Greek: theos (God) + logos (word)]

the study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God.

2

THE COSMIC BATTLE
KEY VERSES

"...Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Colossians 2:2-3 (NAS)

3

ULTIMATE SOURCE OF TRUTH

the ultimate **source of all truth** is the nature, character, being and attributes of **God Himself**

nothing that is **true** can **contradict** the Nature of God

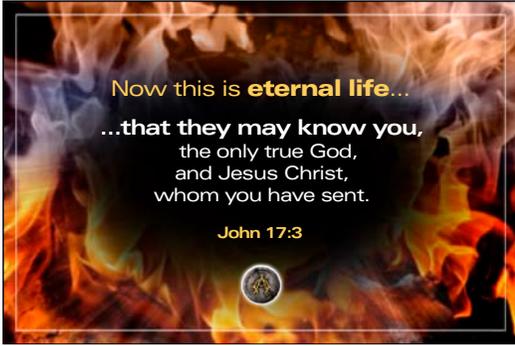
4

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION

"There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory;

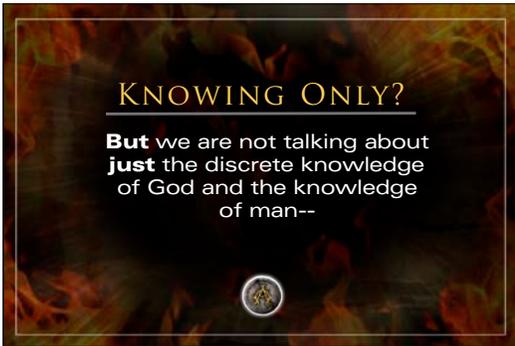
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The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 2, Section I.



Now this is **eternal life...**
...that they may know you,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ,
whom you have sent.
John 17:3

11



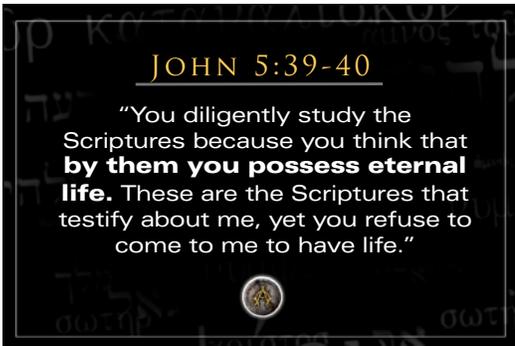
KNOWING ONLY?
But we are not talking about
just the discrete knowledge
of God and the knowledge
of man--

12



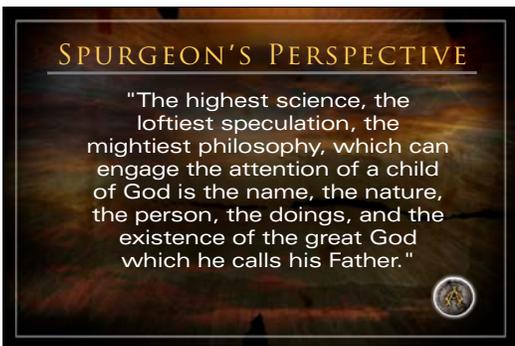
KNOWING ONLY?
we are talking about the **relationship**,
the **social** order,
the **personal** communion
and the objective, **real relationship**
that **exists** between God & man.

13



JOHN 5:39-40
"You diligently study the
Scriptures because you think that
by them you possess eternal
life. These are the Scriptures that
testify about me, yet you refuse to
come to me to have life."

14



SPURGEON'S PERSPECTIVE
"The highest science, the
loftiest speculation, the
mightiest philosophy, which can
engage the attention of a child
of God is the name, the nature,
the person, the doings, and the
existence of the great God
which he calls his Father."

15

Spurgeon, Charles H. (1855). *The immutability of God*.
Southwark: New Park Street Chapel.

PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE

"What is more, **I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law...

16

PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE

...but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. **I want to know Christ** and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..."

Philippians 3:8-10

17

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the **knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings.

Hosea 6:6 (NAS)



18

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, **that he understands and knows me...**"

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (ESV)



19

MY JOURNEY

Jehovah Shalom

Jehovah Jireh

Sovereign

Holy, Holy, Holy

Immanuel

The Vine

El Qanna

...

20

EL QANNA

“Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a **jealous** God.”

Deuteronomy 4:23-24



21

EL QANNA

This is what the LORD Almighty says:
“I am very **jealous** for Zion;
I am burning with **jealousy** for her.”

Zechariah 8:2



22

EL QANNA

“Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, **whose name is Jealous**, is a jealous God.”

Exodus 34:14



23

NAMES MEAN SOMETHING

Jacob (supplanter)
changed to **Israel** (strives with God)
Genesis 32:28

Abram (father of height)
changed to **Abraham** (father of a multitude)
Genesis 17:5

Moses (taken out of the water)

24

NAMES MEAN SOMETHING

Simon (hearing) changed to **Peter** (rock)

Saul (demanded) changed to **Paul** (little)

You shall name the child **John**
(God is Gracious)
Luke 1:13

You shall name Him **Jesus** (Savior)

25

what is
Your name?

26

HUNGERING FOR GOD
As the deer pants for streams
of water, so my soul pants for
you, O God. My soul thirsts
for God, for the living God.
Psalm 42:1-2

27

EL QANNA
Gazing on the face of God...
this is what **transforms**
us...and it came through
the **Word of God**
Should we be surprised that
it is here we find the focus of
the attack?

28

THE ATTACK
"The weapons we fight with are not the
weapons of the world. On the contrary,
they have divine power to demolish
strongholds. We demolish arguments
and every pretension **that sets itself
up against the knowledge of God**,
and we take captive every thought to
make it obedient to Christ."
2 Corinthians 10:4-5

29

THE ATTACK ON GOD
His Nature...
twisting, distorting, denying, ignoring
and His Word
accusing, demeaning

30

ATTACK ON GOD'S WORD

All attempts to...	By all the powers...
extinguish, suppress, discredit, destroy, dilute, deny, ignore ...	empires, religion, philosophy, science, academia, judiciary ...

--All have failed--

31

ATTACK ON GOD'S WORD

Voltaire (1776)

"100 years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker."

"It took 12 men to start Christianity; one will destroy it."



32

McDowell, Josh. *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1972, p. 20

ATTACK ON GOD'S WORD

Robert Ingersoll:

"In 15 years I will have **this book** [the Bible] in the **morgue**."

Fifteen years later,
Ingersoll was in the **morgue**.

A pastor purchased Ingersoll's desk and spent his life writing sermons on it.

33

ATTACK ON GOD'S WORD

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but **the Word of the Lord stands forever.**

1 Peter 1:24-25



34

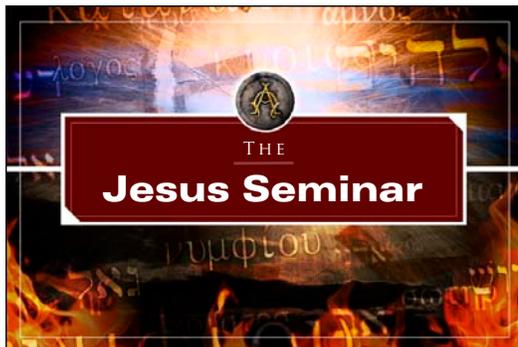
JULIUS WELLHAUSEN

Father of "Higher Criticism"

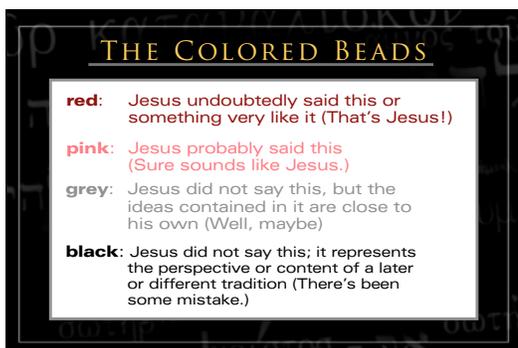
Documentary Hypothesis: "JEDP"



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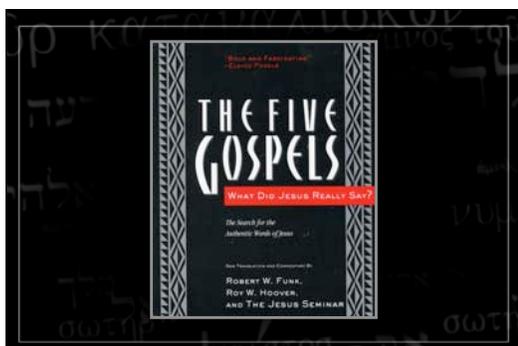


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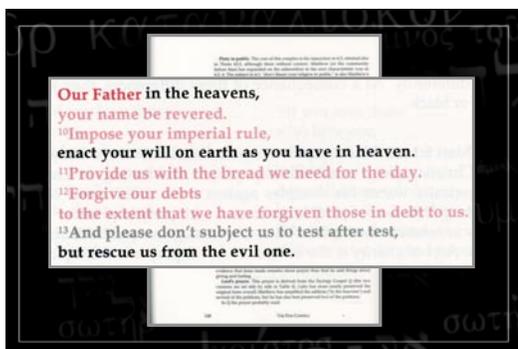
37

Funk, Robert and Hoover, Roy. *The Five Gospels*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993, pp. 36-37.



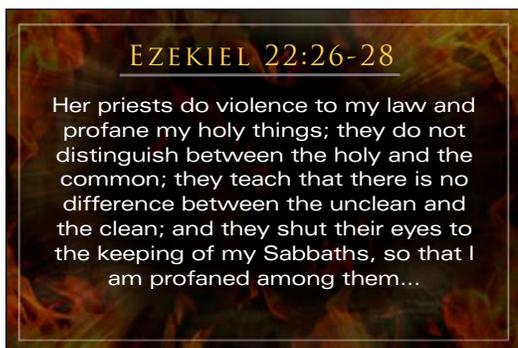
38

Funk, Robert and Hoover, Roy. *The Five Gospels*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.



39

Funk, Robert and Hoover, Roy. *The Five Gospels*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993, pp. 148.



40

HOW TRUE IS THE BIBLE?

2 Ki 8:16-17 In the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, when Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Jorhoram son of Jehosaphat began his reign as king of Judah. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years.

2 Ki 1:17 So Ahaziah died, according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshapat

46

HOW TRUE IS THE BIBLE?

2 Ki 3:1 Joram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehosaphat king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years

47

So, Jeroboam, who actually started to reign after Rehoboam, would be considered to be in his 3rd year when Rehoboam was still in his first year

48

Thiele, Edwin (1983). *The mysterious numbers of the Hebrew kings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications (1994 ed.).

Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*

49

Thiele, Edwin (1983). *The mysterious numbers of the Hebrew kings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications (1994 ed.).

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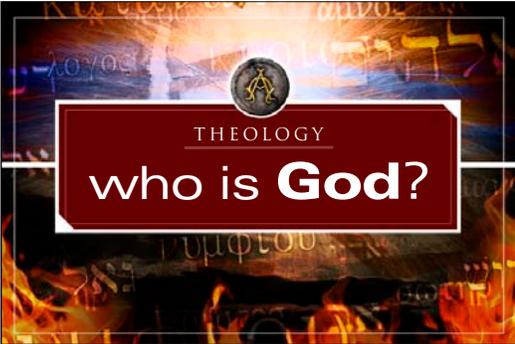
WHY SO FIERCE?

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)



51



THEOLOGY

who is God?



52



Outline

Lesson 4 –Theology: Who is God?

- I. Introduction – Theology – Who is God?
 - A. Theology: The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God
 - B. The Ultimate Source of Truth – Colossians 2:2-3 “Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
 - C. Westminster Confession – trying to capture the infinite essence of God’s nature
- II. What is Eternal Life?
 - A. Scriptural emphasis on eternal life – Luke 18:18, John 3:16, John 4:13-14, John 5:24, John 5:39-40, John 6:27, John 6:54
 - B. “Now this is eternal life...” John 17:1-3 “...that they may know you...”
 - C. Spurgeon’s and Paul’s perspective – “I want to know Christ...”
 - D. God’s perspective – Hosea 6:6, Jeremiah 9:23-24 ...that he knows me...”
 - E. Connection between knowledge of God and knowledge of self
- III. Meaning of Names
 - A. Names of God – El Qanna – A jealous God – Deuteronomy 4:23-24, Zechariah 8:2, Exodus 34:14
 - B. Jacob, Abram, Moses, Simon, Saul, John, Jesus
 - C. Your name – Your identity in Christ and as a child of God
- IV. The Attack
 - A. The Battle – 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself against the knowledge of God...”
 - B. On God – His nature, His character
 - C. On His Word – Throughout history men have tried to destroy God’s Word
 - 1. Jesus Seminar – democratic voting process on God’s Word
 - 2. Ezekiel 22:26-28 – “...her priests have done violence to my law...”

3. Joram and Jehoram – Unraveling a supposed conflict – Can you trust the Word of God? – “The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings”

V. Conclusion – God’s word can be trusted

A. 1 Peter 1:24-25 “...the word of the Lord stands forever.”

B. Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active...”



Key Terms

Lesson 4 – Theology: Who is God?

Deism: The belief that God created the universe and has since assumed no control over life, exerted no influence on nature, and given no supernatural revelation.

El Qanna: A name of God: "For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14). See also Deuteronomy 4:23-24 and Zechariah 8:2

Eternal Life: To know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent to earth. A deeply personal and intimate relationship. See John 17:3.

Jesus Seminar: Started in 1985 in Berkley, California, by Robert Funk and thirty-five other liberal New Testament scholars. The Seminar,--which now includes about 100 members--meets twice a year to debate technical papers. At the close of debate on each agenda item, members vote using colored beads to indicate the degree of authenticity of Jesus' words or deeds.

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918): A 19 th century German liberal scholar who suggested the Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD), which theorizes that the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) was not written by Moses but evolved over time and was compiled from at least four sources written by various authors. Numerous scholars have refuted the theory.

Pantheism: Belief that God and the material world are one and the same thing and that God is present in everything; pantheism sometimes entails belief in many deities. A form of spiritual naturalism.

Theism: Belief that God created and governs humans and the world.

Theology: The study of the existence, nature, and attributes of God.

Westminster Confession of Faith: A confession of faith drawn up by the 1646 Westminster Assembly, which remains a standard of doctrine within many Protestant churches. The full confession took more than five years to complete and provides advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government, and discipline for the church.



Scripture References
Lesson 4 – Theology: Who is God?

Col 2:3	John 3:16	Luke 18:18	John 4:13-14
John 5:24	John 5:39-40	John 6:27	John 6:54
John 17: 1-3	Phil 3:8-10	Hosea 6:6	Jer 9: 23-24
Deut 4: 23-24	Zech 8:2	Ex 34:10-17	Gen 32:28
Gen 17:5	Luke 1:13	Psa 42:1-2	2 Cor 10:4-5
1 Pet 1:24-25	Ezek 22:26-28	1 King 16:29	2 King 8:16
2 King 1:17	2 King 3:1	Heb 4:12	



Recommended Reading Lesson 4 – Theology: Who is God?

Please note that not everything in these suggested resources should be considered endorsed by Focus on the Family. Nevertheless, Dr. Tackett has found this material helpful. Scripture should be your first and primary resource.

- Boice, James M. (ed). 1974. *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture*. Minneapolis, MI: Bethany Fellowship.
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