



Systematic Theology

A row of classical white columns receding into the distance under a bright sky. The columns are fluted and have decorative capitals. The perspective is from a low angle, looking down the length of the colonnade.

Systematic Theology

Session 7: Heresy

Part 1



Introduction

- As we begin to study Theology Proper, we must remember that we, as finite beings, are studying an Infinite Being
- As a result, we will begin to encounter mystery and seeming contradictions
- It is often in these areas that stretch the capacity of our comprehension that we can end up compromising essential doctrine
- This can lead us into heresy



Definition of Heresy

- Our English word “heresy” is derived from the Greek word αἵρεσις (*haireisis*)
- This word generally refers to a “group that holds tenets distinctive to it.”
- In its most basic sense, it refers to a sect or a party
- It can also be used to refer to the tenets that distinguish a groups thinking
- Initially the term was not always negative



Definition of Heresy

- In the Bible, the negative application of the term begins with Jewish leaders designating Christians as part of a *haireisis* (Acts 24:14)

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Acts 24:14

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a **sect** (*hairesis*), I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,

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Definition of Heresy

- In the Bible, the negative application of the term begins with Jewish leaders designating Christians as part of a *haireisis* (Acts 24:14)
- In the 1st century church, haireisis took on a specific focus on sectarianism.
 - Sects would often form schisms (1 Cor. 11:17-19)



1 Corinthians 11:17-19

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions (*schisma*) among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions (*hairesis*) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.



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 - Sects would often form schisms (1 Cor. 11:17-19)
 - These sects did not always form over doctrine
 - Church Figures



1 Corinthians 1:12-13

What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?



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 - Church Figures
 - Socio/Economics

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James 2:1-3

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?



Definition of Heresy

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Acts 15:36-39

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,



Definition of Heresy

- In the Bible, the negative application of the term begins with Jewish leaders designating Christians as part of a *hairesis* (Acts 24:14)
- In the 1st century church, *hairesis* took on a specific focus on sectarianism.
 - Sects would often form schisms (1 Cor. 11:17-19)
 - These sects did not always form over doctrine
 - Church Figures
 - Ministry Strategy
 - Socio/Economics
 - Sinful Choices



2 Timothy 4:10

For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.



Definition of Heresy

- In the Bible, the negative application of the term begins with Jewish leaders designating Christians as part of a *haireisis* (Acts 24:14)
- In the 1st century church, haireisis took on a specific focus on sectarianism.
- As time went on, these sects would become more doctrinally focused, uniting around a particular way of thinking rather than around individuals



Biblical Definition of Heresy

(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

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2 Peter 1:20-21

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

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2 Peter 2:1

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

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2 Peter 2:2-3

And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.



Biblical Definition of Heresy

(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

- Heresy is a departure from the Holy Spirit inspired teachings of Scripture



John 16:13

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

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1 Timothy 6:3

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,



Biblical Definition of Heresy

(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

- Heresy is a departure from the Holy Spirit inspired teachings of Scripture
- Heresy comes from false teachers.
- Heresy is always covert

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Jude 4

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.



Galatians 2:4

Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

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Biblical Definition of Heresy

(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

- Heresy is a departure from the Holy Spirit inspired teachings of Scripture
- Heresy comes from false teachers.
- Heresy is always covert
- Heresy is always destructive and always denies Christ.

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2 Peter 3:16

As he (*Paul*) does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.



Biblical Definition of Heresy

(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

- Heresy attaches itself to the church



1 Corinthians 5:1

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.



Biblical Definition of Heresy


(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

- Heresy attaches itself to the church
- Heresy exploits God's People

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1 Timothy 6:4-5

He is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.



John 13:35

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”



Philippians 3:19

Their end is destruction, their
god is their belly, and they
glory in their shame, with
minds set on earthly things.

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Romans 16:17-18

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

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Colossians 2:2-4

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.



Biblical Definition of Heresy

(2 Peter 1:20 – 2:1-3)

- Heresy attaches itself to the church
- Heresy exploits God's People
- Heresy brings the judgment of God
- Heresy cannot be tolerated by the church

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Matthew 7:15-23

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

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Matthew 7:15-23

Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

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Matthew 24:9-13

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

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Matthew 24:23-25

Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.



Biblical Responses to Heresy and Heretics

- Watch for Heresy



Romans 16:17

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.



Biblical Responses to Heresy and Heretics

- Watch for Heresy
- Challenge Heresy with Humility

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2 Timothy 2:25-26

Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.



Biblical Responses to Heresy and Heretics

- Watch for Heresy
- Challenge Heresy with Humility
- Avoid Heresy and Heretics

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Romans 16:17

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.



Galatians 1:8-9

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

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2 John 10-11

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.



Biblical Responses to Heresy and Heretics

- Watch for Heresy
- Challenge Heresy with Humility
- Avoid Heresy and Heretics



Titus 3:10-11

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

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1 Timothy 1:19-20

Holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.



Biblical Responses to Heresy and Heretics

- Watch for Heresy
- Challenge Heresy with Humility
- Avoid Heresy and Heretics
- Warn Against Heresy and Heretics

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Acts 20:28-32

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

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Acts 20:28-32

Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.



Systematic Theology