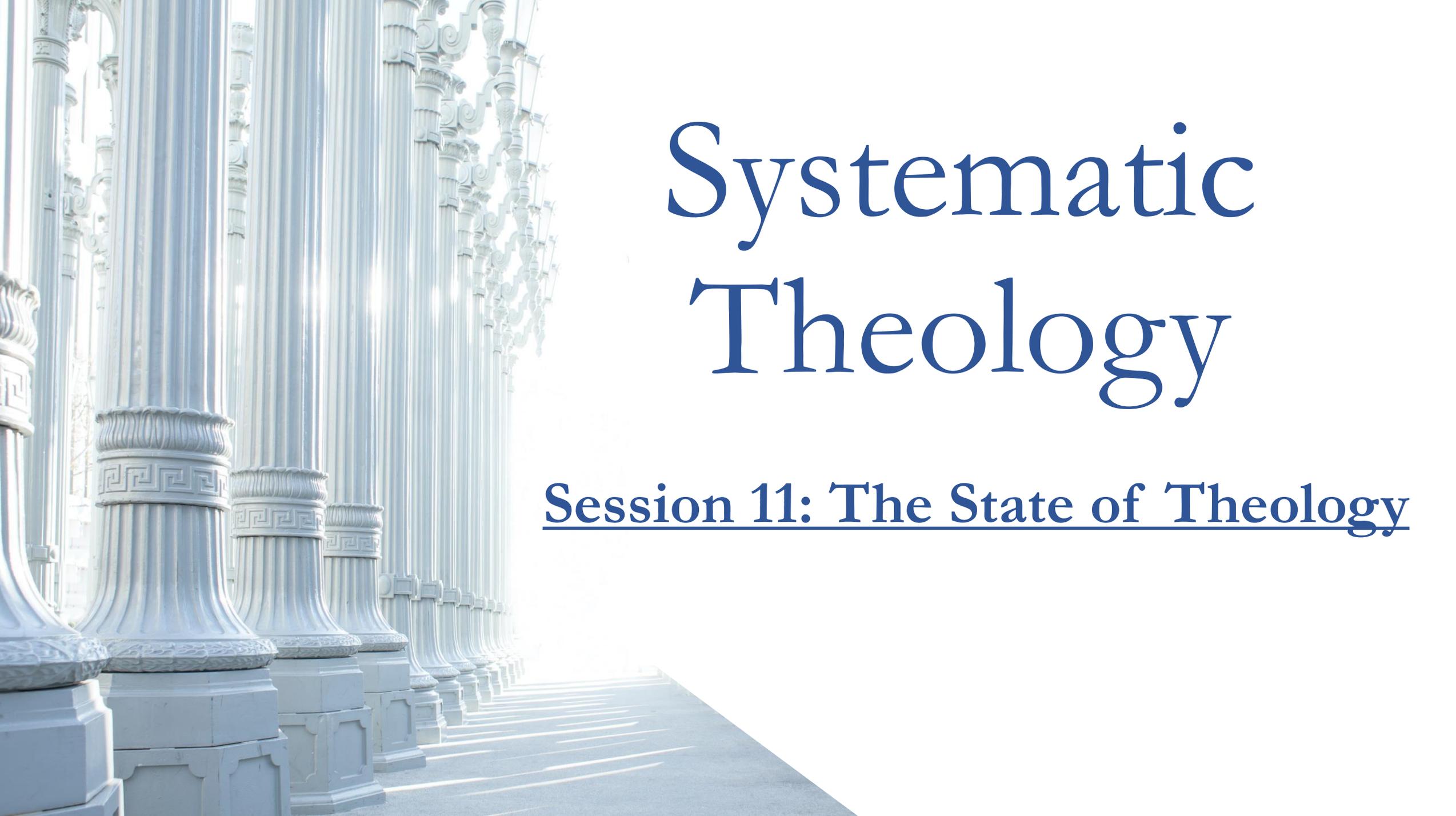




# Systematic Theology

A row of classical white columns receding into the distance under a bright sky. The columns are fluted and have decorative capitals. The scene is brightly lit, with long shadows cast on the ground.

# Systematic Theology

Session 11: The State of Theology



# IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGY

- Everyone is a theologian
- Our theology is the most important thing about us
- The American church has focused much on evangelization
- The American church has failed to properly teach doctrine
- Discipleship demands scripture shaped doctrine



# IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGY

- Our theology will affect
  - Our Morals
  - Our Ethics
  - Our Socialization
  - Our Contentment and Mental Health

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# WHAT IS AN EVANGELICAL?

- Since 2016, Ligonier Ministries in conjunction with Lifeway Research have published a bi-annual report on the “State of Theology”
- This study specifically centers on Americans and has them self-identify with a “religion”
- Our discussion will center on how self-identifying “evangelicals” answered these questions



# WHAT IS AN EVANGELICAL?

- Some inherent limitations:
  - Some may identify as evangelicals but not understand the term
  - Some may identify as evangelicals deceptively
  - Some may have chosen the term as what closest represents their identity but not their beliefs



# WHAT IS AN EVANGELICAL?

- The term comes from the Greek word for Gospel- euangelion
- According to the National Association of Evangelicals, evangelicals are people “who take the Bible seriously and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The evangelical faith focuses on the “good news” of salvation brought to sinners by Jesus Christ.”



# WHAT IS AN EVANGELICAL?

- Generally, Evangelicals emphasize
  - Biblicism
  - Conversion
  - Cross-Centeredness
  - Evangelism



# THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

- As we have seen, God's immutability is His attribute of unchangeableness
- God never changes His character, His purposes, or His plan. (Numbers 23:19)



# Numbers 23:19

God is not man, that he should lie,  
or a son of man, that he should  
change his mind. Has he said, and  
will he not do it? Or has he  
spoken, and will he not fulfill it?



# THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

- As we have seen, God's immutability is His attribute of unchangeableness
- God never changes His character, His purposes, or His plan. (Numbers 23:19)
- This attribute forms a bedrock foundation for our hope in God.
- Among self-identifying evangelicals, 48% agree that God learns and adapts to different circumstances.



# THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

- Among all Americans, 51% agreed that God learns and adapts.
- The modern-day heresies of “Open Theism” and “Process Theology” may be reflected in these responses.
  - Open Theism denigrates the omniscience of God (wisdom)
  - Process Theology denigrates the omnipotence of God (sovereignty)



# THE VERACITY OF SCRIPTURE

- Unsurprisingly, the majority of US respondents did not consider the Bible to be literally true.
- However, among evangelicals, over 1/4 also agreed that the Bible was not literally true.
- This represents a 10% jump from 2020 when only 15% of evangelical rejected the veracity of scripture.



# THE VERACITY OF SCRIPTURE

- While the vast majority of evangelicals still accept the truthfulness of scripture, the significant jump in denial of a key point of biblical doctrine is very concerning.
- This may reflect an infiltration of the world's suspicion regarding scripture's truth into the church, particularly among younger evangelicals



# GOSPEL EXCLUSIVITY

- Among all US respondents, 67% agreed that God accepts the worship of all religions
- Among evangelicals, 53% agreed that God accepts the worship of all religions
- This rejection of the exclusivity of the gospel represents a 14% jump from 2020
- This attitude makes evangelicalism's emphases unnecessary
- This reflects the influence of postmodernism upon believers



# THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT

- Another frightful finding was that 60% of identifying evangelicals believe that “The Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.”
- The personality of the Spirit is vital to Trinitarian doctrine.
- To reject the separate personhood of the Spirit is an acceptance of Modalism
- The scripture affirms both the full deity and separate personhood of the Holy Spirit

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# John 14:16-17

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

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# Acts 5:3-4

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”



# THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN

- Finally, the majority of evangelicals who participated in the survey denied the doctrine of “original sin.”
- In an 11% jump from 2020, 57% agreed that while people may sin individually, their basic nature is good. (“Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.”)
- This reflects modern day Pelagianism
- This is perhaps the most concerning trend because it dissolves the need for the gospel

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# CONCLUSIONS:

- Doctrine Matters
- We Must Treat People with Grace & Humility
- We Must Not Compromise Truth
- We Must Set our Hope in Christ, not “Evangelicalism”



# 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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# John 10:16

And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.



# 2 Timothy 2:9

For which I am suffering,  
bound with chains as a  
criminal. But the word of  
God is not bound!



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