



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 1.1 – Introduction

Introduction

As we begin a study of Bible teachings, it is important that we first state the doctrinal position which we hold as a result of our studies of Bible teachings. The doctrinal position of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) is summarized in Article III of the CLC Constitution, as follows:

We accept without reservation the canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God and therefore as the sole and only infallible rule of doctrine and life.

We confess the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds and the Particular Symbols of the Lutheran Church as published in the *Book of Concord* of 1580, because they are a true exposition of the Word of God.

We also subscribe to the *Brief Statement* of 1932.

Because of differences that arose within the Synodical Conference we have found it necessary to define our position in a particular statement entitled *Concerning Church Fellowship* as well as in *Theses on the Relation of Synod and Local Congregation to the Holy Christian Church* and *Theses on the Ministry of the Keys and the Public Ministry*. [Note: These two sets of theses are printed and explained in the pamphlet entitled *Concerning Church and Ministry*.]

It is our position that what we confess in these historical documents agrees with the Holy Scriptures, and that all the doctrines that they teach are derived from the Bible. In short, we want to teach only what the Bible teaches, without adding or subtracting or altering anything.

The Religions of the World

The idea of a higher power or powers is found throughout the world because God has written His law in the hearts of all human beings.

When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things of the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them (Romans 2:14-15).

Gentiles are non-Jews. God did not reveal Himself to the Gentiles by means of a written record, as He did with the Jews. Nevertheless, all Gentiles have a sense of morality; all Gentiles have a conscience, that is, an awareness of a higher power; all Gentiles have excusing thoughts when they do right and accusing thoughts when they do wrong.

Because of this natural knowledge of God, human beings throughout the world are religious and follow various religions. In general, these religions are of three kinds: they center on either morality, mysticism, or speculation. A religion centering on **morality** believes that the way to God is to follow certain rules of behavior. A religion centering on **mysticism** believes that the way to God is to have an emotional spiritual experience of God through various rituals or practices. A religion centering on **speculation** believes that the way to God is through the use of the brain, that is, through logical thinking.

All of these religions have one thing in common: they believe that the way to God is through man's own efforts, either by obeying God, by experiencing God, or by imagining God. This is the best that man can accomplish without a special revelation from God.

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Christianity is the only religion revealed by God Himself. In contrast to all the religions of the world, which stress man's efforts to attain the favor of God, Christianity teaches that man cannot earn God's favor by any of his own efforts, whether by obedience, experience, or thinking. Christianity is the only religion in which God comes down to man and saves him entirely by grace. We are saved entirely by God's work, not our own. This is the message of the Bible from beginning to end.

Questions

1. What are the three types of false religions in the world?
2. How does Christianity differ from all other religions of the world?
3. What is our source for doctrine?
4. What is the message of the Bible from beginning to end?
5. Give an example of a religion that teaches that the way to God is through obedience.
6. What are in reality the only two religions in the world?
7. Why is Christianity the only true religion?