

Deep Dive Bible Study

Syllabus

OVERVIEW: This study is founded on guidance by the Holy Spirit whose direction and empowerment are paramount. In alignment with Him, we are given the privilege to facilitate this study as a group of like-minded Christ followers. Our discussions will be rooted in biblical truth and mindfulness of the gravity and accountability that comes with handling God's Word. To the exclusion of any other belief framework, this study applies to those who embrace the following:

- Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone as final authority
- Sola Fide – Faith alone justifies
- Sola Gratia – Grace alone saves
- Solus Christus – Christ alone as mediator
- Soli Deo Gloria – Glory to God alone

In this study we will address weightier topics rarely covered in typical Bible studies, which are generally designed to appeal to a broad range of interests, beliefs, and spiritual maturity levels. This study is for those who long to delve deeply into the riches of Scripture alongside other Christ-followers who share the same hunger.

OBJECTIVES:

- To know God on His terms
- To strengthen our gifted faith
- To compels us to greater reverence and loyalty to our Triune God
- To increases our wisdom and discernment
- To drive us to reflect His image more fully, so that others may come to know Him on His terms.

ACKNOWLEDGED LIMITS: Humans are on a “need to know” basis by the Triune God, yet all that we need to know is readily available in Scripture. There will be areas of “*adiaphora*” we must acknowledge, mysteries we do not understand and legitimate nuanced theological positions that may differ among us but are within biblical doctrinal boundaries thus should not create disunity.

PARTICIPANT PARAMETERS:

1. To facilitate full participation this study will be **limited to 8 Christ followers**.
2. The topics to be studied will require a more **academic approach** than typical Bible studies, therefore **participants will need** the following:
 - a. A robust prayer life
 - b. Previous significant time studying the Old and New Testament augmented by material from recognized biblical commentators and scholars.
 - c. A firm grasp on the essential tenets of Biblical Christian doctrines.
 - d. Skills in hermeneutics, accurate exegesis, logic & reasoning, critical thinking.
 - e. Spiritual maturity in their journey with Jesus

(NOTE: These baseline prerequisites are assumed to facilitate an effective pursuit of the deeper insights found in scripture. This is analogous to a 300-level course in a university venue with prerequisites of related 100 and 200 level courses having been completed.)

3. Each participant must:

- a. Be willing and able to **prepare a study** on any one of the topics the group decides is a beneficial area of exploration.

(NOTE: Pre-built, “commercial off the shelf” material, “pop-Christianity” books, YouTube videos, or Podcasts as the primary study content is discouraged).

- b. Teach thru the prepared study and **facilitate discussion**.
- c. Be able to **operate in a “learner mode” as well “teacher mode”**.

(NOTE: With a group of type “A” individuals, all with great insights to offer, good minds, and passion, we must guard against “pontification” to mitigate diminished participation and contribution by others.

STUDY DESIGN:

Date: The last Saturday of every month
Time: 9:00 am – 11:00 am
Location: 14707 Costa Mesa Dr. La Mirada, CA.

Teaching:

- 1) All participants will at some point teach a session.
 - a. Each teacher has their own personal presentation preferences. There is no standardized format as content is the important element, not style.
 - b. Based on the attendees invited the content is certain to be coherent, organized and following a logical thought flow in a document all can study before the session.
- 2) The teacher will:
 - a. Take the first 2 week of the month to prepare his material.
 - b. Email it to Paul La Capria who will upload it to our [website](#) in the “Materials Download” section. Ideally this is done by the third week of the month so all can download it and study the content.

Learning:

- 1) All participants are expected to study the content in advance of a session.
 - a. All should download the material from the [website](#) “Materials Download” section Paul Las Capria manages.
 - b. All should come prepared with their own insights, questions and discussion points for the purpose of edifying and benefitting other session attendees.
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SUGGESTED STUDY TOPICS:

The topics suggested below are not exhaustive. They are provided to illustrate the “weightier” topics this study is designed to cover. The group may elect to add other topics similar in nature. This study is designed to challenge you with respect to:

- Understanding the integration, interdependency, and harmony of God’s perfect attributes.
- Demand for doctrinal accuracy often foreign to modern traditions or popular movements.
- Sharpening our skills in hermeneutics, harmonization, literary styles, biblical languages semantics, syntax, and grammar as well as logic/reason, critical thinking and proper exegesis.
- Evaluation of cultural contextual influence at the time the Scripture text was written.

- Consideration of internal and external (extra-Biblical) information.
- Addressing perceived paradoxes (sovereignty/freedom, already/not-yet).
- Avoidance of eisegesis to force Scripture alignment with contemporary sensibilities and cultural norms.

Below is a subset of suggested topics taken from a larger set commonly organized as “Systematic Theology”. As a group, we will agree on the topic for each session and who will teach it. Those already covered or in process are highlighted in yellow strike-through

1. **Supralapsarianism vs. Infralapsarianism** The logical order of God’s eternal decrees (decretive will) example; predestination before or after the decree to permit the Fall. Requires untangling divine causality, time, and human freedom in eternity. Requires understanding the distinctions of God’s decretive will vs preceptive will.
2. **The Communication of Attributes** How Christ’s divine and human natures share properties without mixing (e.g., the finite human nature containing the infinite divine).
3. **Limited Atonement (Definite Atonement)** Whether Christ died effectively only for the elect or sufficiently for all but efficiently for the elect. Involves parsing intent vs. extent in the atonement’s design.
4. **The Extra Calvinisticum** The Reformed doctrine that the Logos exists beyond (extra) the incarnate flesh, even during Christ’s earthly life.
5. **Covenant of Redemption** An intra-Trinitarian pact before time whereby the Father appoints, the Son undertakes, and the Spirit applies redemption. Abstract and speculative; not explicitly scriptural.
6. **Irresistible Grace (Effectual Calling)** God’s grace cannot be finally resisted by the elect, yet humans act voluntarily. Reconciling divine sovereignty and human responsibility without coercion.
7. **The Perseverance of the Saints in Light of the Warning Passages** How Hebrews 6:4–6 and similar texts warn believers without implying true saints can fall away. Requires nuanced exegesis of “appearance” vs. reality.
8. **The Visible/Invisible Church Distinction** The true Church is invisible (known only to God), yet the visible church contains hypocrites. Practical implications for baptism, discipline, and marks of the church.
9. **The Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper (Calvin’s View)** Christ is truly present to faith by the Spirit, but not locally in the elements. Neither transubstantiation nor mere memorial—requires a “sacramental union” concept.
10. **Double Predestination** God actively elects some to salvation and reprobates others to damnation (or passes over them). The asymmetry between election and reprobation fuels endless debate.
11. **The Federal Headship of Adam and Christ** All humanity is legally represented in Adam (imputed guilt) and the elect in Christ (imputed righteousness). Forensic categories clash with modern individualism.
12. **The Active Obedience of Christ Imputed** Not just Christ’s death, but His lifelong perfect law-keeping is credited to believers. Essential for Reformed soteriology but often conflated with passive obedience.
13. **The Covenant of Works vs. Covenant of Grace** Pre-Fall covenant demanded perfect obedience for life; post-Fall covenant rests on Christ’s merits. Subtle distinctions in continuity/discontinuity across Testaments.
14. **The Third Use of the Law** The law as a guide for sanctified believers, not just to condemn or restrain. Balancing antinomianism and legalism in Christian ethics.
15. **The Order of Salvation** Logical sequence: election → calling → regeneration → faith → justification → sanctification → glorification. Debates over regeneration preceding faith.
16. ~~**Union with Christ as the Fountain of All Benefits** Every soteriological benefit (justification, sanctification, adoption) flows from mystical union—yet union itself is ineffable and simultaneous with faith. —Greg~~
17. **The Distinction Between Law and Gospel** Law demands; Gospel gives. Essential for preaching and assurance, but texts often blend both, requiring careful contextual exegesis.

18. **The Role of Good Works in Final Justification.** Works as necessary evidence of true faith, not meritorious cause. Subtle nuance often misread as semi-Pelagian or antinomian.
19. **The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1–3 (Millennial Restraint)** Whether Satan is *currently* bound (amillennial) or will be bound in a future golden age (historic premillennial/postmillennial). Involves defining “binding,” “thousand years,” and deception scope. — **Paul La Capria**
20. **The Nature of the Millennium (Rev 20:4–6)** Literal 1,000-year earthly reign (premit), symbolic present reign (amill), or progressive spiritual victory (postmil)? Requires harmonizing apocalyptic genre with historical prophecy. — **Paul La Capria**
21. **The Timing and Nature of the Resurrection(s)** One general resurrection (amillennial simultaneous) vs. two staged resurrections (premit: saints at rapture, wicked later). Debates over “first resurrection” as physical or spiritual. — **Paul La Capria**
22. **The Rapture and Its Relation to the Tribulation** Pre-trib (secret rapture before 7 years), mid-trib, or post-trib (at Christ’s visible return)? Dispensational import vs. Reformed covenantal continuity. — **Paul La Capria**
23. **The Antichrist: Individual, System, or Both?** A final personal lawless one (2 Thess 2) vs. ongoing spirit of antichrist (1 John). Reformation identified papacy; modern views vary—requires typological exegesis. — **Paul La Capria**
24. **The Great Tribulation: Future, Historical, or Ongoing?** Seven literal years (dispensational), Nero-to-Parousia persecution (historicist), or symbolic intensifying apostasy (idealist/amill)? Daniel 12 and Matthew 24 interplay. — **Paul La Capria**
25. **The Conversion of “All Israel” in Romans 11:25–26** Future national ingathering of ethnic Jews, spiritual inclusion of Gentiles as “Israel,” or both? “And so” (houtōs) as manner vs. sequence. — **Paul La Capria**
26. **The Two Ages and the Already/Not Yet Overlap** This age (evil) and age to come (kingdom) overlap post-Christ. Eschatology inaugurated but not consummated—challenges linear time intuition. — **Paul La Capria**
27. **The Intermediate State: Soul Sleep, Conscious Disembodiment, or Immediate Presence?** Reformed generally affirm conscious presence with Christ (Phil 1:23) vs. Lutheran soul sleep debates. Implications for purgatory rejection. — **Paul La Capria**
28. **The Final Judgment: One Event or Multiple Phases?** Single assize (Rev 20:11–15) vs. judgment of sheep/goats, believers’ works, and unbelievers. Role of works as evidence vs. basis. — **Paul La Capria**
29. **The New Heavens and New Earth: Renewal or Annihilation?** Continuity (transformed creation, Rom 8:21) vs. total destruction/re-creation. “New” (kainos) as qualitative vs. chronological. — **Paul La Capria**
30. **The Role of the Land Promise to Abraham in Eschatology** Fulfilled in Christ/celestial inheritance (Reformed amill), partially in national Israel, or fully in millennial kingdom? Galatians 3 vs. literal hermeneutic. — **Paul La Capria**
31. **The Gog and Magog Invasion (Ezek 38–39; Rev 20:8)** Pre-millennial battle, post-millennial final rebellion, or symbolic of all anti-kingdom forces? Timing and identification resist mapping. — **Paul La Capria**
32. **The Olivet Discourse: AD 70, Final Generation, or Both?** Preterist (70 AD fulfillment), futurist (end-time), or dual prophecy (near/far)? “This generation” (Matt 24:34) as key crux. — **Paul La Capria**
33. **The Man of Lawlessness and the Katechon (2 Thess 2:3–8)** Who/what “restrains” the revelation of the lawless one? Roman emperor, Holy Spirit, preaching of Gospel? Textual ambiguity fuels speculation. — **Paul La Capria**
34. **The Number 666/616 and Gematria** Symbolic imperfection (666 = human falling short) vs. historical Nero (Neron Kaisar). Reformation historicist vs. idealist readings. — **Paul La Capria**

- 35.-**The Seven Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls: Recapitulation or Chronology?** Parallel (amillennial recapitulation) or sequential (premil/dispensational)? Literary structure of Revelation defies linear timeline. — **Paul La Capria**
- 36.-**The Restoration of All Things (Acts 3:21; Apokatastasis)** Universal reconciliation (Origen) rejected; yet cosmic renewal includes animals, creation. Limits of “all things” without universalism. — **Paul La Capria**
- 37.-**The Timing of the Day of the Lord: Sudden or Progressive?** Thief-like suddenness (1 Thess 5:2) vs. signs preceding (birth pains). Balancing imminence with observable precursors. — **Paul La Capria**
- 38.-**The Role of the Church in the Kingdom: Present Reign or Future Inheritance?** Spiritual reign now (amill/postmil) vs. future co-regency in millennial temple (premil). Ephesians 2:6 (“seated in heavenly places”) as already reigning. — **Paul La Capria**

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

The above topics were drawn from the broader set of key systematic theological categories in Reformation Theology representing the structural framework used to organize doctrine during and after the Reformation.

1. Theology Proper (Doctrine of God)

- Unity and Trinity of God – One essence, three persons; *economic* and *ontological* Trinity.
- Attributes of God – Aseity, simplicity, immutability, infinity, sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, holiness, justice, goodness, love.
- Decrees of God – Eternal, sovereign, unchangeable; includes predestination.
- Providence – Preservation, concurrence, government; rejects mere permission.

2. Anthropology & Hamartiology (Doctrine of Man and Sin)

- Creation in the Image of God (Imago Dei) – Rational, moral, relational capacity.
- Covenant of Works – Pre-Fall federal relationship with Adam; conditional obedience for life.
- The Fall – Total depravity: corruption of whole person (mind, will, affections).
- Original Sin – Inherited guilt (reatus) and corruption (concupiscence); federal headship of Adam.
- Total Inability – Bondage of the will; cannot initiate salvation.

3. Christology (Doctrine of Christ)

- Two Natures in One Person – Hypostatic union; Chalcedonian definition upheld.
- Communication of Attributes – Lutheran (genus maiestaticum) vs. Reformed (extra Calvinisticum).
- Offices of Christ – Prophet, Priest, King.
- States of Christ – Humiliation (incarnation, suffering, death, burial) and Exaltation (resurrection, ascension, session, return).

4. Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation)

- Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation)
 1. Election
 2. Effectual Calling
 3. Regeneration
 4. Faith/Repentance
 5. Justification
 6. Adoption
 7. Sanctification
 8. Perseverance
 9. Glorification
- Unconditional Election – Based on God’s good pleasure, not foreseen faith.
- Limited (Definite) Atonement – Christ died *effectually* for the elect.
- Irresistible Grace – Effectual calling overcomes resistance.

- Justification by Faith Alone (Sola Fide) – Forensic declaration; imputed righteousness of Christ.
- ~~Union with Christ – Mystical, federal; source of all saving benefits. – Greg~~
- Faith as Instrument – Not a work; receives Christ's merits.

5. Pneumatology (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit)

- Personhood and Deity of the Spirit – Co-equal with Father and Son.
- Filioque Clause – Spirit proceeds from Father *and Son* (Western/Reformed affirmation).
- Illumination, Regeneration, Sanctification – Internal work of applying redemption.
- Sealing and Indwelling – Guarantee of inheritance (Eph 1:13–14).

6. Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church)

- Nature of the Church – Visible (institutional) vs. Invisible (elect known to God).
- Marks of the True Church – Pure preaching of the Word, right administration of sacraments, church discipline (Reformed); Word and Sacrament (Lutheran).
- Keys of the Kingdom – Authority to bind/loose through preaching and discipline.
- Church Government – Episcopal, presbyterian, congregational models debated.
- Ministry – Universal priesthood of believers; ordained ministry (pastor/elder/deacon).

7. Sacraments (Means of Grace)

- Definition – Visible signs and seals of invisible grace; covenantal.
- Number – Two only: Baptism and Lord's Supper (Reformed/Zwinglian); Lutherans retain confession as quasi-sacramental.
- Baptism – Sign of initiation, cleansing, union with Christ; paedobaptism (covenant) vs. credobaptism (Anabaptist rejection).
- Lord's Supper – Real spiritual presence (Calvin), consubstantiation (Luther), memorial (Zwingli); *sacramental union*.

8. Covenant Theology

- Covenant of Redemption (Pactum Salutis) – Eternal intra-Trinitarian agreement.
- Covenant of Works – With Adam; life conditioned on obedience.
- Covenant of Grace – Post-Fall; unilateral, based on Christ's merits; administered differently in OT (promises, sacrifices) and NT (full revelation).
- Continuity/Discontinuity – One covenant, two administrations; law/gospel distinction.

9. Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things) – Paul La Capria

- ~~Personal Eschatology – Death, intermediate state (conscious presence with Christ), soul competence.~~
- ~~General Eschatology – Second Coming, resurrection, final judgment, eternal states (heaven/hell).~~
- ~~Millennial Views – Amillennial (symbolic, present reign), Postmillennial (gospel triumph), Historic Premillennial (Christ returns before literal reign).~~
- ~~Inaugurated Eschatology – "Already/Not Yet" kingdom tension.~~

10. Christian Life & Ethics (Sanctification and Law)

- Third Use of the Law – Guide for believers (not for justification).
- Good Works – Necessary fruit of faith, not merit; evaluated at judgment as evidence.
- Liberty of Conscience – No human authority over soul; rejection of papal tyranny.
- Vocation (Calling) – All lawful work as divine service; priesthood of all believers in daily life.