

Biblical Theological Seminary
1985 Summer Institute: "Our Great God"
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THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A Creed Derived from the Synoptics:

I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob [1], creator of the world and mankind [2], who feeds the birds and clothes the plants [3]. He is the one and only God, the Mighty One, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, with whom nothing is impossible [4]. He is the just One, who knows our hearts and will judge us as we judge others on that day when he will destroy body and soul of the unrighteous in hell and welcome the blessed into his eternal kingdom [5]. He alone is good, able to forgive sin and by his mercy to give salvation to men [6]. He may be known only through his Son, Jesus Christ [7]. As his servant, I am to worship him only [8]; to love him with all my heart, soul & mind [9]; to trust him rather than test him [10]; to pray to him [11]; to fear & obey him [12]; to praise him [13]; and to tell others what he has done for me [14].

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1. Mt 22.32; Mk 12.26; Lk 20.37
 2. Mt 19.4; Mk 10.6; 13.19
 3. Mt 6.26,30; Lk 12.24,28
 4. Mk 12.29,32; Lk 1.49;2.29; Mt 11.25;19.26; Mk 10.27; Lk 1.37
 5. Mt 5.21-26; 7.1-5; 10.28; 11.22-24; Lk 16.15; Mt 25.31-46
 6. Mt 19.17; Mk 10.18; 2.7; Lk 5.21; 1.77
 7. Mt 11.27
 8. Mt 4.10; Lk 4.8;Mt 6.24; Lk 16.13
 9. Mt 22.37; Mt 12.30; Lk 10.27
 10. Mk 11.22; Mt 4.7; Lk 4.12
 11. Mt 6.5-13
 12. Lk 23.40; Mt 5.17-20; 15.3-6
 13. Mt 9.8; Mk 2.12; Lk 17.15,17; 24.53
 14. Lk 8.39

Some Figures by which God is Pictured:

Farmer: indirect thru parables; mostly Matthew

Father: title & parables; in all 3, but most in Matthew; ideas of Christ as son, believers as sons, in all 3

Judge: by parables or judicial terms; Matt/Luke

King: parables in Matthew; kingdom frequent in all 3

Lord: so common as to be "dead" metaphor

Some Distinctives within the Synoptics:

Matthew: tends to avoid naming God by using passive voice & circumlocutions; uses "Lord, Master, King" interchangeably between Christ and God; distinguishes via "Father/Son" and "Son of Man"

Mark: also some use of passive voice & circumlocutions "heaven, power, blessed"; less frequent use of "Father"; doesn't have farmer, judge, king materials

Luke: shows less avoidance of name of God than Mt, Mk; less freq use of "Father" than Mt; much emphasis on praise of God; some emphasis on word of God

Some Distinctive Synoptic Presentations of God:

Basically parabolic pictures of God as given by Jesus; distinction from "allegories" of John

Judge/King:

The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

argument by contrast

what does our non-persistence in prayer show about how we think of God?

The Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:21-35)

note differences in size of debts (10,000 talents vs 100 denarii)

if we demand justice, we will get it!

Marriage of King's Son (Matt 22:1-14)

do we really want to go to heaven?

do we presume upon God's mercy?

Father:

Son Asking Bread (Matt 7:9-11; Lk 11:11-13)

argument from lesser to greater

similar to Unjust Judge, above

Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)

Father lets him go, won't learn w/o experience

waits his return

runs to meet him!

reinstated as son

wants others to have same attitude