SOFTWARE & TECH

Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology Outline

Published: November 20, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Introduction: Understanding the Blueprint of Christian Doctrine

For pastors, students, and lay Christians seeking a deeper grasp of their faith, few resources have proven as enduringly valuable as Wayne Grudem's "Systematic Theology." Since its publication, this seminal work has become a cornerstone reference in evangelical circles, praised for its clarity, accessibility, and biblical fidelity. However, the sheer size of the text—often exceeding 1,200 pages—can be daunting. This is where the **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** becomes an indispensable tool. An outline is not merely a shortcut; it is a structural map that reveals the logical flow of Christian doctrine, allowing readers to see how each theological topic connects to the grand narrative of Scripture. This article provides a comprehensive walkthrough of the major sections of Grudem's systematic theology, offering a guide that will help you navigate its depths, whether you are preparing for a sermon, writing a paper, or simply seeking to articulate your faith more clearly.

What is a Systematic Theology Outline and Why Does It Matter?

Before diving into the specific chapters, it is essential to understand what a systematic theology outline actually accomplishes. Theology, by its nature, is the study of God. Systematic theology, specifically, organizes this study into logical categories—such as the doctrine of God, the doctrine of humanity, and the doctrine of salvation. Grudem defines it as the study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" This is distinct from biblical theology, which follows the historical development of doctrine through the Bible.

A well-structured **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** matters because it provides a coherent framework. Without an outline, the reader may feel overwhelmed by the interconnected concepts of sovereignty, grace, atonement, and eschatology. The outline serves as a theological compass, ensuring that you understand how predestination relates to free will, or how the resurrection of Christ guarantees the future resurrection of believers. For students, pastors, and small group leaders, having a clear outline facilitates teaching and retention, transforming a complex academic discipline into a practical, life-changing study.

The Prolegomena: Setting the Stage for Theological Study

The Nature and Sources of Theology

Grudem begins his systematic theology not with a doctrine of God, but with a prolegomena—a foundational introduction. In this opening section, he addresses the essential questions: What is systematic theology? Why should we study it? And, crucially, what are the sources of authority? Grudem is unapologetically evangelical in his approach, affirming that the Bible is the ultimate and inerrant source of theological knowledge. However, he also acknowledges the roles of reason, tradition, and experience as secondary sources that must be tested against Scripture.

In an outline of this section, you will encounter discussions on the canon of Scripture, the authority of the Bible, and the clarity of Scripture. Grudem argues that while some parts of the Bible are difficult to understand, the central message of salvation is clear enough for any believer to grasp. This section is crucial because it establishes the hermeneutical foundation upon which the rest of the outline is built. It answers the "why" and "how" of theology, preparing the reader to engage with the doctrines that follow.

The Doctrine of God: The Being and Character of the Creator

The Attributes of God and the Trinity

Having established the source of theology, Grudem moves to the central subject: God Himself. This section of the **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** is divided into two major categories: the attributes of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. Grudem categorizes God's attributes into two helpful groups: communicable attributes (those that God shares with humanity, such as love, mercy, and justice) and incommunicable attributes (those that belong to God alone, such as omnipotence, omniscience, and immutability).

This outline systematically walks through each attribute, explaining its biblical basis and its practical implications for the believer. For instance, the doctrine of God's sovereignty is paired with a discussion of human responsibility, a tension that Grudem navigates with careful biblical reasoning. Following the attributes, the outline delves into the Trinity. Grudem provides a clear, biblically grounded explanation of the three persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—affirming their equality in essence while distinguishing their roles in creation and redemption. For anyone teaching on the Trinity, this section of the outline is an invaluable resource, offering clear distinctions and avoiding common heresies like modalism or Arianism.

The Doctrine of Humanity: Who We Are and Why We Were Created

Creation, Image of God, and Sin

From the Creator, Grudem turns to the creature. The doctrine of humanity explores our origin, our purpose, and our tragic fall. A key concept in this outline is the **Imago Dei**—the image of God. Grudem argues that being made in God's image means that humans possess rationality, morality, creativity, and the capacity for relationship. This doctrine has profound implications for ethics, human dignity, and the sanctity of life.

The outline then transitions into the fall of humanity and the entrance of sin. Grudem provides a detailed explanation of original sin, the corruption of human nature, and the transmission of guilt from Adam to all humanity. He tackles difficult questions: Is humanity totally depraved? What is the nature of sin? How does sin affect the will? By following the **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline**, readers can see the logical progression from creation to fall, setting the stage for the need for redemption. This section is sobering but essential, as it explains the depth of the human condition that Christ came to remedy.

The Doctrine of Christ: The Person and Work of the Redeemer

The Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection

Perhaps the most beautiful section of the outline is the doctrine of Christ. Grudem devotes careful attention to both the person of Christ (who He is) and the work of Christ (what He did). Regarding His person, the outline covers the incarnation—the eternal Son of God taking on full humanity. Grudem defends the hypostatic union: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, two natures in one person forever.

Regarding His work, the outline systematically covers the atonement. Grudem explains the various theories of the atonement but strongly advocates for the penal substitutionary view, arguing that Christ bore the wrath of God in the place of sinners. This is not merely a dry academic point; it is the heart of the Gospel. The outline also covers the resurrection, ascension, and current session of Christ at the right hand of the Father. For pastors preparing a sermon series on Christology, this part of the **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** provides a comprehensive survey of the biblical evidence and theological implications.

The Doctrine of Salvation: How We Are Saved by Grace

Ordo Salutis: The Order of Salvation

Moving from the objective work of Christ to the subjective application of that work, Grudem introduces the **Ordo Salutis**(the order of salvation). This is one of the most practically important sections of the entire outline. Grudem walks through each step in the process of salvation: election, calling, regeneration, conversion (faith and repentance), justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification.

One of the strengths of this outline is how Grudem explains the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility within salvation. He holds a Reformed perspective but presents opposing views fairly, allowing the reader to weigh the evidence. The outline clarifies that justification is a legal declaration by God that the sinner is righteous based on the merits of Christ, while sanctification is the ongoing process of becoming holy.
Understanding this **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** of salvation is vital for anyone seeking to explain the Gospel accurately, guarding against both legalism and license.

The Doctrine of the Church: The Community of Believers

Sacraments, Government, and Spiritual Gifts

Salvation is not an isolated experience; it brings believers into the church, the body of Christ. Grudem's outline on ecclesiology covers the nature of the church (visible vs. invisible), the marks of the church, and the purpose of the church in worship, discipleship, and mission. A significant portion of this section is dedicated to the sacraments (or ordinances). Grudem discusses baptism and the Lord's Supper, presenting arguments for different viewpoints (paedobaptism vs. credobaptism, spiritual presence vs. memorialism) while clearly stating his own positions.

The outline also addresses church government (congregational, presbyterian, episcopal) and the ongoing role of spiritual gifts. Grudem is a continuationist, meaning he believes that gifts like prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues continue today, though he carefully defines them within a biblical framework. For church leaders debating the role of spiritual gifts or seeking a biblical model for church leadership, this section of the **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** offers a thorough, practical guide.

The Doctrine of the Future: Eschatology and Final Glory

The Return of Christ, Resurrection, and Final Judgment

The final major section of the outline deals with the last things—eschatology. Grudem divides this into several key events: the physical return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the millennium, and the eternal state. He presents the three main millennial views (premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism), explaining the biblical texts that support each one.

Grudem's own position is premillennial, but he encourages charity and humility among believers who differ. The outline culminates with a glorious vision of the new heavens and the new earth. This is not merely a disembodied spiritual existence; it is a renewed creation where God dwells with His people forever. This final section is deeply pastoral, offering hope and motivation for perseverance. It completes the grand biblical narrative: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

How to Use This Outline for Study and Teaching

A **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** is more than just a list of topics; it is a pedagogical tool. For

students, use the outline as a pre-reading guide. Before diving into a chapter, scan the outline to understand the main arguments and structure. For teachers and pastors, the outline can serve as a skeleton for a lesson plan or sermon series. Because Grudem organizes his material around clear doctrinal statements and supporting Scripture, the outline is easy to adapt for different audiences.

Furthermore, the outline is excellent for memorization and catechism. If you are discipling a new believer, you can walk them through the major doctrines using the outline as a roadmap. It helps to systematically build a robust Christian worldview, ensuring that no major doctrine is neglected.

Conclusion: The Lasting Value of a Structured Theology

The **Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology outline** is a gift to the Church. It takes a massive, authoritative text and distills it into manageable, logical categories. Whether you are studying the incommunicable attributes of God, the mechanics of the atonement, or the order of events in the last days, this outline provides clarity and direction. It encourages readers to think systematically about their faith, connecting individual doctrines to the whole counsel of God.

In a world of fragmented information and shifting opinions, a systematic approach to theology anchors the soul. Grudem's work invites us to love God with our minds, to worship Him with understanding, and to serve His Church with conviction. By engaging with this outline, you are not just learning theology; you are learning to see the world through the lens of Scripture. Use it, study it, and let it deepen your love for the God who has revealed Himself so clearly in His Word.

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