

Sunday, May 4, 2025—Come Let Us Reason Together—Scriptural & Theological Foundations For Studying Logic

## **Introduction**

- Last fall I was approached by some of the saints in the assembly (possibly at the Men's Dinner) about the possibility of teaching on the subject matter of logic. Nate Kooienga informed me that he was in possession of a Logic curriculum written from a Christian point of view.
  - *Introductory Logic: The Fundamentals of Thinking Well* published by Canon Press
- I reviewed the curriculum, got Board approval, met with Nate and the idea for this class was born.
- Over the course of the summer months, we are going to be discussing the subject matter of logic from a Biblical point of view. Generally, we will be discussing the following topics:
  - Laws Of Logic: Excluded Middle, Identity, Noncontradiction, Etc.
  - Types Of Logic: Formal & Informal; Induction & Deduction; Categorical & Propositional
  - Genus & Species
  - Categorical Statements
  - Syllogisms & Validity
  - Formal & Informal Fallacies
- Our goal will be to learn to think better/more soundly to better understand God's word and be more effective in our ambassadorship.
  - II Corinthians 5:20
- We will endeavor to be interactive, and discussion oriented in our approach to teaching as we attempt to keep the class relevant and engaging for a wide age range of students.
- With these thoughts in mind our first lesson will cover the following points:
  - Scriptural & Theological Foundations For Studying Logic
  - What Is Logic?
  - Logic & God

### Scriptural & Theological Foundations For Studying Logic

- Isaiah 1:18—God is rational and therefore created humans as rational beings.
- I Peter 3:15—the Bible instructs us to give a “reason” for the hope that is in us.
- Matthew 22:37—Jesus instructed his disciples to love God with all their mind.
- Philippians 4:8—Paul instructs the church to think on things that are true.
- Thinking is not an option for a member of the body of Christ; it is a scriptural imperative/command.
- “Of course, everyone thinks. But not everyone thinks correctly.” (Geisler & Brooks, 7)
- In Chapter 1 of his *Systematic Theology In One Volume*, Dr. Norman L. Geisler identifies the “laws of logic” as the “rational precondition” to Christian Theology.
  - “Evangelical theology is defined as a discourse about God that maintains there are certain essential Christian beliefs. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible alone [We are aware of Geisler’s advocacy of Modern Versions but still find much of this thinking helpful on matters dealing with Apologetics.], the triunity of God, the virgin birth of Christ, the deity of Christ, the all-sufficiency of Christ’s atoning sacrifice for sin, the physical and miraculous resurrection of Christ, the necessity of salvation by faith alone through God’s grace alone based on the word of Christ alone, the physical bodily return of Christ to earth, the eternal conscious bliss of the saved, and the eternal conscious punishment of the unsaved.” (Geisler, 13)
  - “Evangelical theologians believe the Bible is an infallible, absolutely true communication in human language that came from an infinite, personal, and morally perfect God. This belief presupposes that many things are true—most of which are challenged by our current culture. Evangelicalism presupposes that there is a theistic God (the metaphysical precondition—chapter 2) who created the world and can miraculously intervene in it (the supernatural precondition—chapter 3); a God who has revealed Himself in both general and special revelation (the revelational precondition—chapter 4); **which revelation is subject to the law of logic (the rational precondition—chapter 5)** and which contains objectively meaningful statements (the semantical precondition—chapter 6) that are true objectively (the epistemological precondition—chapter 7) and true exclusively (the oppositional precondition—chapter 8); which statements can be properly understood in analogous language (the linguistic precondition—chapter 9), the meaning and truth of which can be understood objectively (the hermeneutical precondition—chapter 10),

including those elements relating to historical events (the historical precondition—chapter 11); and which revelation can be systematized by a complete and comprehensive theological method (the methodological precondition—chapter 12).” (Geisler, 14)

- For this we see that the laws of logic and the proper use thereof are indispensable to doing Christian theology. Put another way, proper thinking is crucial to forging proper theology. For example, consider the following verses:
  - Luke 1:70—As he **spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:**
  - Acts 3:21—Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath **spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.**
  - Romans 16:25—Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, **which was kept secret since the world began,**
- When we understand that there is a difference between that which was “spoken by the mouth” of the “holy prophets since the world began” and that “which was kept secret since the world began” we are using the laws of logic to arrive at this conclusion. We understand that two things that are different cannot be the same. We cannot “rightly divide the word of truth” without employing logic.
- So, since logic is indispensable when doing Christian theology, much less dispensational theology, we might as well learn to reason properly.

### What Is Logic?

- We use logic all the time even if we have never explicitly thought about it. Almost everything we do in some way involves the use of logic. When you decide to take a shower after your workout instead of before you are using logic. In its simplest form, logic is the process of using information and reasoning to draw conclusions.
  - For example, if you came home and found your fishing pole was gone from the garage and you lived with a roommate, logic would dictate that your roommate took your fishing pole based on the fact that no one else should be in the house.
- Essentially, “logic really means putting your thoughts in order.” (Geisler, 11) *Introductory Logic: The Fundamentals Of Thinking Well* defines “reasoning” as follows:
  - “Reasoning means drawing proper conclusions from other information. A proper use of reason allows us to form rational statements, and to understand the statements that are made by others. . . Without the ability to reason, we would be unable to discuss, preach,

read, hear the gospel, or follow God's commands. In other words, proper reasoning opens the mind so that it can close upon truth." (1)

- Simply stated, logic is related to the proper ordering of our thoughts. Norman Geisler points out how "order" is the key word when thinking about logic. Consider the following examples of "order" that are discoverable by reason:
  - Nature—there is an order that reason discovers i.e., natural laws and DNA.
  - Art—artists produce order so that we can make sense of things i.e., painting, sculpting, composing.
  - Ethics—we order our choices by ethical standard.
- Logic is concerned with the ordering of thoughts so that we can form sound conclusions. Consider the following formal definitions of logic:
  - "Logic is the study of right reason or valid inferences and the attending fallacies, formal and informal. . .
 

**Logic is the study of right reason . . .** That is the main point. Logic is a study, an ordering, of how to think rightly, or how to find truth. . . logic is a way to think so that we come to correct conclusions.

. . . **or valid inferences . . .** That means implications, Part of studying logic is recognizing when A implies B and when it does not. There are clear-cut rules to help with this.

. . . **and the attending fallacies, formal and informal.**

A fallacy is a mistake. Sometimes we make mistakes in the way we set up our thinking, or by using an implication that is not true." (Geisler & Brooks, 12-13).
  - "Formal logic is the science and art of reasoning well. As a science, logic includes discovering and identifying the patterns or rules by which we reason. As an art, logic teaches how to follow those rules, without abusing them in a wooden (and unreasonable) way." (*Introductory Logic*, 1)
- In short, we cannot avoid using logic, so we might as well know what we are doing.
  - "It [logic] is the basis for all other studies. It is the basis for all math and science. Even music, from Bach to the Beach Boys, is based on logic. Without it, there could be no rational discussion of anything; writing would be impossible." (Geisler & Brooks, 13)
- Logic is required for sound Bible study and exegesis of scripture. So being skilled in logic will make us better students of God's word.

- Sometimes people object to the study of logic on one or more of the following grounds:
  - There are many kinds of logic.
    - “True, there are other kinds of logic that we might study, and maybe you will go on to read about non-Aristotelian logic, but the basic laws of logic are the same for all logic. They are necessary and undeniable, not just arbitrary rules that someone made up. Aristotle didn’t invent logic, he only helped to discover it. These undeniable laws are the same for all thinking. . .” (Geisler & Brooks, 14)
  - People are not logical. Why bother?
    - “Often people are not moral either; does this mean that we should close down all the churches and fire the police force? People may not act morally but they ought to . . . Likewise, people may not think logically at times, but still, they ought to. If logic is a way to think so that we find truth, then we always ought to be logical so that we know the truth.” (Geisler & Brooks, 14)
  - Logic does not work. People do not respond to it.
    - “Logic does work on reasonable people, and everyone should be reasonable. On unreasonable people, nothing works. So why not try to be reasonable and let the other fellow be unreasonable? Besides, something is not true or right because it works. The idea that it is, is called pragmatism.” (Geisler & Brooks, 14)
  - Not everything is subject to logic.
    - “Only questions of truth are subject to logic. Logic gives us rules for rational judgements and inferences, but it says nothing about some kinds of statements. For example, it says nothing about emotive expressions, that is, expressions of feelings. When you touch a hot stove and say, “Ouch,” that expression is neither true nor false. . . True/false categories don’t fit everything. However, logic can evaluate the consistency between moral judgements and the inferences from them. It can help us understand some things even about areas that it can’t enter into.” (Geisler & Brooks, 14-15)
  - Logic is contrary to human intuition.
    - “Not necessarily. Intuition can be a source of truth, but once a person makes a claim about his intuitions, it can be tested by the laws of logic. . . Intuition can be true, but you can’t know that it is true until you make some claim about it that can be tested with the laws of logic.” (Geisler & Brooks, 15)

## Logic & God

- Some argue that logic does not/should not apply to God because the Christian faith is full of mysteries such as the Trinity or the Incarnation. While there are admittedly aspects of the faith that are full of mystery, rejecting logic on account of these realities is itself not logical. Logic is unavoidable. Uttering the statement “logic does not apply to God” uses logic in the attempted denial.
- John 1:1—theology is a rational discourse about God.
  - “Theological method builds on the foundation of these elementary laws of logic. If logic is a necessary precondition of all thought, then it must also be necessary for all thought about God.” (Geisler & Brooks, 16)
  - “In the order of being, God is first; but in the order of knowing, logic leads us to the knowledge of God. God is the basis of all logic (in the order of being), but logic is the basis of all knowledge of God (in the order of knowing).” (Geisler & Brooks, Objections to using logic in Theology include:
    - Using logic puts logic before God.
      - “We use logic in the process of knowing God, but that does not mean that God came after logic in reality. Without God, nothing could have existence. God is the basis of all logic in reality and his is in now way inferior to logic. Logic comes from God, not God from logic.” (Geisler & Brooks, 17)
  - Using logic makes God subject to our logic.
    - “First, it isn’t our logic. Man didn’t invent logic, he only discovered it. God is the author of all logic. So, technically speaking, God does not flow from logic; logic flows from God. Second, it isn’t God that we examine using logic; it is our statements about God.” (Geisler & Brooks, 17)
  - Using logic is a form of rationalism.
    - “Being reasonable and being a rationalist are quite different. A rationalist tries to determine all truth by reason. Reasonable Christians only try to discover it. A rationalist won’t let any empirical data change his conclusion; he doesn’t want to be confused by the fact. A reasonable person takes account of the facts, incorporates them into his view, and sometimes changes his conclusions when new facts become known.” (Geisler & Brooks, 18)

- God can do the impossible. He is not bound by logical limitations.
  - “God can do what is humanly impossible, but not what is actually impossible. Some things are impossible because of our human limitations, such as walking through walls, raising the dead, and being in two places at once.” (Geisler & Brooks, 18)
- If God created the law of logic, then why can he not break them? After all, he created the laws of nature, and he breaks them every time he does a miracle.
  - “There is a big difference between the laws of nature and the laws of logic. Natural law is really only a description of how things normally do operate but laws of logic are more like ethical laws that tell us how our minds should operate, even if that is not the way we always think. Natural laws deal with the way things ought to be, In this sense, logical laws are prescriptive, calling for our obedience, since we ought to think logically.” (Geisler & Brooks, 19)
- Don’t some doctrines like the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, and predestination, involve contradictions.
  - “In each of these cases, it can be shown that there is no real contradiction involved. Some theologians have used words like antinomy or paradox to describe the problems encountered in these doctrines, but those words imply a contradiction. Surely these things are mysteries that go beyond human reason, and we cannot grasp them fully, but they are not contradictions that go against reason.” (Geisler & Brooks, 19)
- Logic is not devised by man. Rather it is an “attribute” of God which is reflected in creation.
  - “We need to be careful here, because it is not an attribute of God that is stated directly in Scripture, as His holiness, love, and righteousness are. But it is a characteristic of God that we see assumed everywhere in Scripture. We do not believe that the triune God is not the sovereign God of the bible. But neither do we believe that God could have created a nonsensical world where He was both the creator of it and not the creation of it. This leaves us with the assumption that all things are ultimately defined by God Himself, rather than by “rules.” Since we want to learn how to reason as faithful Christians, we begin by assuming that all faithful God. So when we study logic faithfully, we are studying some of the divine reflection in the world around us.” (*Introductory Logic*, 2)

### Works Cited

- Geisler, Norman L. & Ronald M. Brooks. *Come Let Us Reason: An Introduction To Logical Thinking*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990.
- Geisler, Normal L. *Systematic Theology In One Volume*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011.
- Introductory Logic: The Fundamentals of Thinking Well*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2014.