**BASIC CONCEPTS AND DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIANITY**

**LECTURE 4 – 7**

**Objective;**

1. Explain what doctrine is and the advantages of the same
2. Identify and explain some of the basic doctrines (concepts) of Christianity, namely; The Doctrine of God, Christ, Man, Sin, Salvation, Redemption and the Church.

**LECTURE FOUR**

**WHAT IS DOCTRINE?**

The word doctrine literally means ‘teaching’ or ‘instruction’. Therefore, **Christian doctrine may be defined as fundamental truths of the Bible arranged in a systematic form**. This teaching or instruction is also commonly known as Theology, which literally means ‘a treatise or reasoned discourse about God’. Theology may be described as the science which deals with our knowledge of God and his relations to man.

**Why do we describe theology or doctrine as a ‘science’?** Science is the systematic and logical arrangement of certified facts. Theology is called a science because it consists of facts relating to God and divine things, presented in an orderly manner.

**What is the connection between theology and religion?** Religion comes from a Latin word meaning to ‘bind’. Religion represents those activities which bind man to God. Thus, religion is practice while theology is knowledge. Ideally, religion and theology should blend together in a balanced experience. However, in practice, they are sometimes separated so that one may be a Theologian without necessarily being religious.

**What is the difference between doctrine and dogma?** A doctrine is God’s revelation of truth as found in the scriptures. Dogma is man’s statement of that truth as set forth in a creed.

**Advantages of Doctrine**

1. Doctrine helps to save us from theological food poisoning
2. Doctrine helps to settle us. (Eph 4:14)
3. Doctrine acquaints us with details of God’s eternal plans. (1 Cor. 12:1; Thess. 4:13; 2 Pet. 3:8, 10).
4. Doctrine helps us edify God. (2 Tim. 2:15)
5. Doctrine helps us equip ourselves. (2 Tim. 3:13-17; Eph. 6:10-17)

**DOCTRINE OF GOD**

The knowledge of God: - Our knowledge of God is two-fold. Man’s inborn knowledge of God and acquired knowledge of God. The acquired knowledge of God comes from general and special revelation.

**Inborn knowledge** – under normal conditions certain (not all) knowledge of God naturally develops in man. This knowledge is, of course, of a very general nature.

**Knowledge of God as known from special revelation** - While it is not possible to define God, it is possible to give a general description of his being. It is perhaps best to describe Him as a pure spirit of infinite perfections. This description involves the following;

1. God is a pure spirit. A spirit is an intelligent and moral being, capable of determining the course of his life. However, God of the Bible is certainly a personal God, a God with whom we can converse with, whom they can trust, who enters into their experiences, who helps them in their difficulties, and who fills their hearts with joy and gladness.
2. God is infinitely perfect. His being and virtues are free from all limitations and imperfections. He is not only boundless and limitless, but also stands out above all His creations in moral perfection and in glorious majesty.
3. God and his perfections are one. Simplicity is one fundamental characteristic of God. This means that he is not composed of different parts, and also that his being and attributes are one.

**Does God Exist?**

Traditionally, there have been two lines of arguments used to demonstrate the existence of God,

1. Philosophical argument
2. Biblical argument

**Philosophical argument**

1. Naturalistic argument: The argument is that nature as we see it is an effect and every effect has a cause. This cause must be God.
2. Everything exists for a purpose. This nature’s existence has a purpose which is to serve God.
3. Nature of man: All bestowed upon man; conscience, morality, intelligence and mental capacities must have been bestowed upon him by some being.
4. Existence of a perfect nature: - Since man has a notion of a most perfect being, then, this perfect being must be in existence. The only perfect being in existence must be God.

**Biblical argument**

The bible does argue for the existence of God, and assumes it throughout. (Psa.19, Isa. 40:26, Act. 14:17).

**How has God revealed himself?**

God has revealed himself through;

1. His work (i.e. creation of the universe and nature)
2. Through history
3. Through Jesus Christ
4. Attributes of God

God reveals himself not only in his names, but also in his attributes. That is, in the perfection of the divine being. It is customary to distinguish between incommunicable and communicable attributes. Of the former, there are no traces in the creature; of the latter, there are.

**The incommunicable attributes**

These emphasize the absolute distinction between God and the creature, and include the following;

1. ***The independence or self-existence of God:*** – He is independent in his being, in his virtue and in his actions and causes all his creatures to depend on him.
2. ***The immutability of God:-*** He is the same yesterday, today and forever. God never changes.
3. ***The infinity of God:-***God is not subject to any limitation.
4. ***The simplicity of God:-***God is one and whole.

**Communicable attributes**

These are those attributes in which we find God’s resemblance in man. However, that which we see in man is only but finite and imperfect likeness of that which is infinite and perfect in God.

1. ***The knowledge of God:-*** God has complete knowledge of himself
2. ***The wisdom of God:-*** His virtue manifests itself in the selection of worthy causes, ends and the best means of realizing those ends.
3. ***The goodness of God:-*** God is good all the time.
4. ***The love of God:-*** God is merciful and compassionate.
5. ***Holiness of God:-*** God is free from all moral imperfections.
6. ***The righteousness of God:-*** He holds himself holy over and against every violation of his holiness.
7. ***The veracity of God:-*** God is faithful in the fulfillment of his promises.
8. ***Sovereignty of God:-*** He is the final cause of all things. He has the power to execute his will (omnipotence)

**WHAT IS GOD LIKE?**

1. God is omniscient: - He knows everything – past, present and future.
2. God is holy
3. God is Just (righteous)
4. God is love
5. God is true – he keeps his promise
6. God is free – he is not limited by anything
7. God is omnipotent – He has the power to execute his will
8. God is infinite and eternal
9. God is immutable – God never changes
10. God is omnipresent – he is present everywhere
11. God is sovereign

**God’s names**

***Primary Old Testament names;***

1. Elohim –means “strong one”
2. Jehovah – derived from the word Yahweh
3. Adonai – means lord (master)

***Compound Old Testament names;***

1. El Elyon – means “ the most high” (Gen. 14:22)
2. El Olam – means “the everlasting God” (Gen. 21:33)
3. El Shaddai – means “the almighty God” (Gen. 17:1)
4. Yahweh Jire – “The lord provides” (Gen. 22:14)
5. Yahweh Nissi – “The lord is my banner” (EX. 17:15)
6. Yahweh Shalom – “The lord is peace” (Judge 6:24)
7. Yahweh Sabbaoth – “the lord of hosts” (1 Sam. 1:3)
8. Yahweh Maccaddeshcem – “the lord thy satisfier” (Ex. 31:13)
9. Yahweh Roi – “The lord my shepherd” (Psa. 23:1)
10. Yahweh Tsidken – “The lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6)
11. Yahweh Shammah – “The lord is there” (El. 48:35)
12. Yahweh Elohim Israel – “The lord God of Israel” (Jude 5:3)
13. Qadosh Israel – “The holy one of Israel” (Isa. 1:4)

**What is the Trinity?**

The word trinity is derived from ‘tri’ meaning threeness and ‘nity’ meaning unity (or oneness)

**Evidence of oneness**

The doctrine of trinity must not imply in any way that there might be three Gods. God is single and unique. (Deut. 4:35;32;39, Isa. 45:46 and 46:9, ex. 20:3, Deut 5:7, 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:3-6; Sam. 2:19)

**Evidence of Threeness**

The verse that best states the doctrine of trinity of God balancing both aspects of the concept, the unity, and the trinity is Matt. 28:19, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” other verses are 2 Cor. 13:14; Matt. 3:6-17.

This can be conclusively be stated in the words of Warfield “The doctrine that there is one only and true God, but the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and co-equal persons, the same in substance but distinctive subsistence”. The fact that God is Father, Son and Spirit emphasizes the fact that he is a God of love and fellowship with his own being.