



# **Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth**

*John F. MacArthur Jr. (Editor) , Richard L. Mayhue (Editor) , William Barrick (Contributor) , Nathan Busenitz (Contributor) , James Mook (Contributor) , Bryan Murphy (Contributor) , Michael Riccardi (Contributor) , Jeremy Smith (Contributor) , more... Michael Vlach (Contributor) ...less*

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Doctrine isn't just for theologians--it's important for every Christian because it shows us who God is and how we should live. Systematizing the robust theology that has undergirded John MacArthur's well-known preaching ministry for decades, this overview of basic Christian doctrine covers topics such as God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, salvation, and more. Comprehensive in scope yet written to be accessible to the average reader--with non-technical vocabulary, minimal footnotes, and a helpful bibliography--this volume offers Christians a solid foundation for what they believe and why.

## Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth Details

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Author : John F. MacArthur Jr. (Editor) , Richard L. Mayhue (Editor) , William Barrick (Contributor) , Nathan Busenitz (Contributor) , James Mook (Contributor) , Bryan Murphy (Contributor) , Michael Riccardi (Contributor) , Jeremy Smith (Contributor) , more... Michael Vlach (Contributor) ...less

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# From Reader Review Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth for online ebook

## Joshua Tan says

Absolutely breathtaking. My first MacArthur book (and unlikely to be my last).

MacArthur is a Calvinist who subscribes to the Futuristic Premillennialism view. Readers may wish to keep this at the back of their minds when navigating the book.

He tackles the following topics in a little under 1000 pages:

- \* Introduction (Prolegomena)
- \* God's Word (Bibliology)
- \* God the Father (Theology proper)
- \* God the Son (Christology)
- \* God the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)
- \* Man (Anthropology) & Sin (Hamartiology)
- \* Salvation (Soteriology)
- \* Angels (Angelology)
- \* The Church (Ecclesiology)
- \* The Future (Eschatology)

Each chapter begins with a complementary hymn (e.g. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" for the chapter on Christology, "The Church's One Foundation" in the chapter on Ecclesiology) and concludes with a sincere prayer reproduced verbatim from *At the Throne of Grace: A Book of Prayers*. This brings me to my next point.

Some reviewers have pointed out that the book is a collage of previously written material. I would be hard-pressed to disagree entirely. Parts of the book have been paraphrased from various sources, not least from material which MacArthur has previously written. However, for someone new to this field (the only other book on systematic theology I've read is John Frame's introductory *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* masterpiece), I've found this medley of "previously written material" to be immensely helpful to me for grasping the subject matter. It takes both skill and effort to organise these snippets as seamlessly as the author has done and I truly appreciate it.

MacArthur quotes Scripture extensively - so much so that the Scripture index itself is over fifty pages long! The reader would do well to check at least a couple of these references out to verify and appreciate how he masterfully elucidates why he believes what he believes. Understandably, for a book of this length, it is inevitable that the reader finds points of disagreement. Nonetheless, the author presents opposing views fairly before refuting them and asserting his own in a gracious, level-headed manner; there is always something to learn, something to broaden one's horizons, irrespective of the camp one belongs to.

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Here are ten quotes from the book, one from each chapter (as you might imagine, it was extremely challenging picking just ten from the over five hundred I've highlighted):

(view spoiler)

from Ch2 Bibliology:

"God through his Spirit inspired every word penned by the human authors in each of the sixty-six books of the Bible in the original documents (i.e., the autographs). Inspiration describes the process of divine causation behind the authorship of Scripture. It refers to the direct act of God on the human author that resulted in the creation of perfectly written revelation. It conveys the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit whereby he used the individual personality, language, style, and historical context of each writer to produce divinely authoritative writings."

from Ch3 Theology:

"Because God's image in man was fractured by the fall, sinful humans refract God's glory more than they reflect it back to him. But once believers begin to be transformed into the same image at the moment of salvation, they reflect more than they refract. Thus, God's glory is more and more returned to him just as he transmitted it to his beloved ones. That's how Christians can give to God something that he alone possesses and shares with no one (Isa. 42:8; 48:11)."

from Ch4 Christology

"Christ made himself of no reputation precisely by taking on a human nature. He emptied himself not by pouring out portions of his deity but by adding to himself full and true humanity."

from Ch5 Pneumatology

"The major characteristics of indwelling in the Old Testament can be summarized as follows:

1. Infrequent
2. Involving selected leaders in Israel only
3. Temporary
4. An empowerment for service"

from Ch6 Anthropology & Hamatology

"Sin is any lack of conformity to God's will in attitude, thought, or action, whether committed actively or passively. The center of all sin is autonomy, which is the replacing of God with self."

from Ch7 Soteriology

"the elect receive mercy, for they are not punished as their sins deserve, but the nonelect receive justice, for they are rightly condemned as their sins deserve. On neither ground can God be charged with unrighteousness, because all are guilty and because he is not obligated to show

grace to any."

from Ch8 Angelology

"Angels have a holy curiosity to understand the kind of mercy and grace they will never experience. The holy angels do not need to be saved, and the fallen angels cannot be saved. But the holy ones seek to understand salvation so that they might glorify God more fully, which is their primary reason for existence."

from Ch9 Ecclesiology

"Submission to God's will, Christ-centered worship, the pursuit of holiness, and fellowship with other believers - these are just some of the ways that the church on earth foreshadows the glories of heaven."

from Ch10 Eschatology

"The presence of nations and world leaders shows that literal nations exist on the new earth and that activity takes place outside the New Jerusalem. While there is one people of God in regard to salvation, the presence of nations reveals ethnic and national diversity on the new earth."

(hide spoiler)]

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TLDR: I heartily recommend this invaluable resource to the layman making a foray into systematic theology. Intermediate-level readers are also likely to benefit from the sheer breath and profundity of the topics covered. If one thirsts for more, one can peruse the thematic bibliographies inserted at the end of each chapter; the author has thoughtfully highlighted the more useful/recommended books from each list.

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## Ryan Marks says

As a member of Crossway's Blog Review Program, I was given a digital copy of Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth. Let me begin by saying that it was a privilege and to review this book and be given an electronic copy.

To begin, as a seminary student, I have read three theology texts and Biblical Doctrine is by far superior in my estimation. The book is thoroughly grounded in Scripture. Firmly, the book holds to Creationism, Premillennialism, male eldership and the Trinity. Few theology books take a firm stance on Creation, Premillennialism (that Jesus will return before He establishes His Kingdom on earth for 1000 years, see Rev 21 and Rev 22), and male eldership, instead spending the bulk of their space simply describing all the views without critiquing them by the Scripture. Yet, Biblical Doctrine upholds Scripture as their authoritative

evaluation criterion.

An encouraging feature was the prayers and hymns within the book and that quotes were used to compliment Scripture, not to argue its interpretation. In other theology texts, I have seen perhaps an overemphasis of what theologians have said and not a fair treatment of Scripture.

The book is not just information. No, it is a thoroughly devotional work as well. One comes face to face with the Scripture and the tone balances between thorough study and devotional encouragement of Christ's sacrifice for you. The book is not overly academic in tone yet maintains scholarship. What a rare masterpiece!

I disagree with the Cessationist and Calvinist conclusions of the book. I don't agree with cessationism (the view that certain spiritual gifts have ceased) because the Scripture nowhere says that. Secondly, While there is not space here nor is the purpose to address Calvinism, Calvinism teaches that God has predetermined the universe and predestined some to Heaven and some to Hell. On those sections, the work, in my opinion, departs from the Biblical exposition that is used in the rest of its contents and turn to arguments to defend their conclusions rather than standing on what Scripture says. Yet, I would still give the book 5/5 stars.

If I was a theology professor, this would be my primary teaching text. My other theology books gave me a lot of knowledge but left me feeling wanting on the Gospel, getting caught up in spotting and knowing all the different ideas out there rather than gazing deeply on the face of Jesus. Biblical Doctrine helped me to gaze on Jesus and the Word again instead of being distracted by "theologies." It was encouraging to see a stand for Biblical truth on Creation, Male Eldership (yet maintaining the Biblical truth of women deacons) and premillennialism.

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## **David Steele says**

John F. MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2017, 1,024 pp. \$41.43

A theological tour de force. A magnum opus. A breath-taking panorama that leaves the reader in awe. These are only a few descriptions of *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*. by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue.

The book is arranged as one might expect and is arranged according to the various branches of systematic theology:

Prolegomena  
God's Word: Bibliology  
God the Father: Theology Proper  
God the Son: Christology  
God the Holy Spirit: Pneumatology  
Man and Sin: Anthropology and Hamartiology  
Salvation: Soteriology  
Angels: Angelology  
The Church: Ecclesiology  
The Future: Eschatology

A comprehensive glossary is included which helps beginning students with cumbersome theological language. Also included is an excellent topical and Scriptural index for instant access to this treasure trove.

Each branch of theology is carefully explained and biblically defended. Opposing views are highlighted and refuted with grace and tact. MacArthur and Mayhue never leave the reader guessing. As such, there is never a hint of ambiguity here.

Several terms characterize Biblical Doctrine. These terms will either attract or repel readers, but will nonetheless provide a helpful template for evaluating the prospect of plopping down almost \$50.00 for a book!

**Biblical** - This book is literally drowning in Scripture. Anyone familiar with MacArthur's writing, in particular, will not be surprised to find a dogmatic edge. But dogmatism undergirded by humility and informed by Scripture is surely a path worth tracing out.

**Evangelical** - This book is guided by a commitment to the gospel. Look elsewhere for a pragmatic approach. Readers will be blessed by the relentless pursuit of Jesus and his glory.

**Orthodox** - This book is committed to historic orthodoxy, which is grounded by a literal, grammatical hermeneutic. Liberalism is soundly defeated and relegated to the ash heap.

**Reformed** - This book is informed by the infrastructure of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Weaving throughout this volume is a commitment to grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, and to God alone be the glory.

John MacArthur helpfully sums up the essence of the Reformed faith:

"It is the marvel of marvels that the King of kings, whose glory is exalted above the heavens, should lift a finger to rescue even one of such vile traitors as the sons of Adam. Then to learn that this infinitely worthy King has purposed to redeem not one but countless multitudes at the cost of the life of his own dear Son bows the sinner's heart in humble wonder."

I cannot recommend Biblical Doctrine high enough. It is an outstanding addition to the growing number of books committed to teaching systematic theology. Students will be challenged and stretched; spiritual growth will no doubt occur as they pour over the many pages of this tome. But most significantly, their hearts and minds will be drawn to worship and glorify the Triune God. Soli Deo Gloria!

I received this book free from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review.

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## **Becky says**

Two words: thorough and scholarly

Is Biblical Doctrine a reference book? Yes! Is it only a reference book? No!

Is it a good one for pastors? Yes! Is it good only for pastors and above and beyond the realm of the laity? No. I think this one is for all of us--all believers, both men and women.

I would recommend reading this one slowly, with patience and diligence. I would also recommend rereading sections of this one as time allows for deeper study.

It is certainly possible to skim this one--to read at a 'normal' pace and grab hold of the big picture ideas. But I think a slower-more-deliberate pace where you allow yourself time to absorb the information and think about what you're reading would be better.

I think a few pages at a time--perhaps one sub-sub division at a time would be the best approach to this one. Perhaps read best with a cup of tea or coffee!

I do think this one would be a good one for church groups--for small groups--to tackle together, over the course of a year or two years.

There are ten chapters in this one.

Introduction: Prolegomena

God's Word: Bibliology

God the Father: Theology Proper

God the Son: Christology

God the Holy Spirit: Pneumatology

Man and Sin: Anthropology and Hamartiology

Salvation: Soteriology

Angels: Angelology

The Church: Ecclesiology

The Future: Eschatology

Each chapter has divisions and subdivisions and sub-sub-divisions. I would say it's definitely well-organized. For example, here is the outline for the fourth chapter, "God the Son":

I Preincarnate Christ

A Eternity Past

B Eternal Son of God

C Old Testament Appearances

D Old Testament Activities

E Old Testament Prophecies

II Incarnate Christ

A Incarnation

B Teachings

C Miracles

D Arrest and Trials

E Death and Atonement

F Resurrection and Ascension

III Glorified Christ

A Heavenly Intercessor

B Rapture

C Judgment Seat

D Second Coming

E Millennial Reign

F Great White Throne Judgment

G Eternity Future



This one is packed with information including hundreds of definitions. The insights and conclusions are drawn from Scripture. Here are the five principles used:

1. The literal principle. Scripture should be understood in its literal, natural, and normal sense. While the Bible does contain figures of speech and symbols, they are intended to convey literal truth. In general, however, the Bible speaks in literal terms and must be allowed to speak for itself.
  2. The historical principle. A passage should be interpreted in its historical context. What the author intended and what the text meant to its first audience must be taken into account. In this way, a proper, contextual understanding of the original meaning of Scripture can be grasped and articulated.
  3. The grammatical principle. This task requires an understanding of the basic grammatical structure of each sentence in the original languages. To whom do the pronouns refer? What is the tense of the main verb? By asking simple questions like these, the meaning of the text becomes clearer.
  4. The synthetic principle. This principle, the *analogia scriptura*, means that Scripture is to be its own interpreter. It assumes that the Bible does not contradict itself. Thus, if an understanding of a passage conflicts with a truth taught elsewhere in the Scriptures, that interpretation cannot be correct. Scripture must be compared with Scripture to discover its accurate and full meaning.
  5. The clarity principle. God intended Scripture to be understood. However, not every portion of the Bible is equally clear. Therefore, clearer portions should be employed to interpret the less clear.
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## **Michael Watt says**

John MacArthur owes no allegiance to any creed or theological system. Although He finds value in studying outside sources, the approach to theology in His recent book along with Richard Mayhue is refreshingly biblical. Mayhue and MacArthur believe that the Bible teaches a system of doctrine but they also defend the truth that our theological systems must always be vetted against Scripture. Although most theological systems claim to be biblical, I have found the book *Biblical Doctrine* to be the most accurate to its title.

The reader cannot overestimate the powerful companionship and scholarship of Richard Mayhue's and John MacArthur's ministry. This dynamic duo along with others from the Master's Seminary have blessed the church time and time again with their teaching and preaching resources. This book is the culmination of years of faithful ministry and is the theological volume that I have been longing to have on my shelf for many years. It is academically thorough but devotionally accessible for the lay reader. I believe theology should always be done in that manner. Truth must always lead to living, and preaching must always lead to praise.

Because of their sole allegiance to scripture, MacArthur and Mayhue teach eschatological positions found among Dispensational theologians but from the approach and with the language of Covenant theologians. This is why I found the volume so refreshing. Covenant theology tends to overlook many of the promises to Israel, and Dispensational theologians, when not careful, make Israel the center point of the Bible. MacArthur and Mayhue show how Christ is the center of theology and that in Him all of the promises of God find their "yes" (2 Corinthians 1:20 Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). This includes both the promises to Israel and to the Church.

*Biblical Doctrine* also answers questions that a student actually has when reading the Bible rather than simply trying to defend a particular theological position, making this volume thoroughly pastoral.

Some theologies are heretical, some are valuable and helpful, but *Biblical Doctrine* is truly a system that seeks to be faithful and subservient to Scripture.

Note: I received this book as a review copy from Crossway.

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## **Kenson Gonzalez says**

Students of theology or any believer will find in the christian bookstores, many systematic theologies. Some will be very deep and philosophical, others will address practical and less dense aspects.

This systematic theology written by MacArthur and Mayhue has characteristics that make it very interesting:

a) abundant theological quotations, b) explanations of complex terms and c) accessibility for all readers.

MacArthur, shows a Calvinistic soteriology, a dispensational eschatology and a scriptural perspective of God and man. Students of other theological schools can find in this work a reference material, as well a work to contrast ideas.

The book is divided into 12 chapters:

God's Word: Bibliology

God the Father: Theology Proper

God the Son: Christology

God the Holy Spirit: Pneumatology

Man and Sin: Anthropology and Hamartiology

Salvation: Soteriology

Angels: Angelology

The Church: Ecclesiology

The Future: Eschatology

Appendix

Basic Glossary

General Bibliography

In each section, we find biblical material to know more about God and the Scriptures.

MacArthur quotes Pastor John Dick, answering the question "Why study theology ?", one of these answers is: "To ascertain the character of God in its aspect toward us."

I received this book free from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review.

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## **willmainz says**

### **Collage**

Had high expectations about this book however it is clearly a collage of previously written material. It is more of a catechism than anything else. It can be useful in my opinion as a reference for further study when one is approaching a subject.

The other main concern I have is that it almost always states a view as truth but does not provide any discussion about objections, therefore a student of this book remains ill prepared to discuss. Aquinas taught a better method.

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## **Blake says**

Two words come to mind to describe Biblical Doctrine, by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue: Doctrinally Rich. As I peddled my way through the pages of this tome, I was struck again and again of, not only the depth of the theology within the pages, but of the beauty of how God's Word and the doctrine derived from God's Word is so extensive and, as I say above, rich. Although the book seemed to develop slowly at the very beginning, it was in Chapter 4, the chapter on God the Son, where it turned into page after page of absolutely encouraging thoughts. I felt like I was drinking from a proverbial doctrinal fire hydrant. Day after day as I read this wonderful treasure, I was taken to the deepest recesses of Biblical Doctrine. I was encouraged by the chapters regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, of man, of sin, of salvation. Ah, the chapter on the doctrine of Salvation was so beautiful and it blessed my heart in so many ways. The last three sections too were so very helpful as MacArthur and Mayhue unpacked the theology of angels, the theology of the church, and the theology of end times. Biblical Doctrine was NOT light reading. It was very indepth but so very good and I highly, highly recommend this book for anyone who desires an enriched walk with Christ.

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## **Casey Sandberg says**

Every pastor should have this systematic theology in their library along with Dr. Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology. It's a great introductory volume written for beginners.

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## **Scott says**

As a pastor-teacher who has preached through every verse of every book in the New Testament at Grace Community Church, an accomplished author with over 150 books (and counting) including commentaries on every New Testament book, the editor of a popular study Bible, and the featured teacher of a worldwide radio and television program, it was no surprise that John MacArthur would finally write a book of systematic theology. And like his sermons, he holds nothing back in explaining theological concepts in a comprehensive, yet easy to understand manner. Covering everything from creation to eschatology, MacArthur presents each topic with sufficient Scriptural references, explanation of Greek lexicon, and occasional quotes from other well-respected theologians. It is quite a resource if you're interesting in diving into theology.

I must mention, however, that I would not consider this the most comprehensive resource on systematic theology. A "Summary of Bible Truth" describes this quite accurately; it has a distinct Calvinistic, Premillennial, Cessationist, Complementarian slant, characteristic of MacArthur's convictions, as well as those from Mayhue and the Master's Seminary. Discussion on differing interpretations is limited or absent altogether. One may want to include a systematic theology from someone like Wayne Grudem for a more complete view of a certain topic, as Grudem's Systematic Theology discusses contrasting views, even those he disagrees with.

However, I personally agree with 99% of the content of this book and think MacArthur does an excellent job explaining his perspectives, thoroughly backed by Scripture. I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone wanting a solid introduction to theology.

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## Danhibbert says

An accessible overview that also provides enough detail for extensive future study. I read through it all, but will need to return to several sections to revisit in much more detail, a valuable resource ongoing.

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## Dan says

Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth is edited by John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue and published by Crossway Publishing and is worthy of a spot on your shelf even if your shelving is as small as mine. At some point in the ministry of a great theologian they decide to write a systematic theology, which usually becomes their seminal work, in the case of MacArthur and the plethora of works phenomenal books he has already published it is hard to say whether this book is his seminal work or adding to his continued excellence in exegesis of scripture.

Biblical Doctrine begins in a way that I have never seen a systematic theology begin. It begins with a hymn "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty". The way this work begins sets the tone for the entire volume, inviting the reader to study scripture by worshiping God, and what better way to be worshiping God than by singing this stalwart hymn declaring praise to our Heavenly King. Furthermore this trend continues throughout the work always positioning the reader to keep their focus on God above all. Each hymn is specially chosen to draw the reader's mind back to the worship of God, which is the purpose of theology. I have read more systematic theologies than I can count and have never encountered this stylistic approach, I hope it is the beginning of a new trend in scholarship presentation.

While in many ways systematic theologies are the same, in how they go about the study of God, meaning the different categories (eg. Theology Proper, Eschatology, Christology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, anthropology, etc.) the depth that Biblical Doctrine goes to is sensational. While Biblical Doctrine is not a long book, for a systematic theology in one volume, at 1024 pages, the sub topics that are explored are practical and timely. For instance I was quickly drawn in by the inclusion of a particularly useful and apt study on the topic of gender. Biblical Doctrine espouses how gender is something that is created and established by God and not by man, this argument goes to great lengths to prove this idea through scripture and its effects on marriage, procreation, and gender confusion.

While the depth of study that is contained in this volume can be cumbersome to certain readers, Biblical Doctrine is not meant to be read in one sitting. Rather it is to be paired with your personal or group study of scripture and can even be used for preparation in teaching the Bible. Biblical Doctrine therefore puts the focus not on itself but clearly on scripture, meaning that Sola Scriptura is not only highly valued in this work but is the foundation of it so that God can be glorified.

This book was provided to me free of charge from Crossway Publishing in exchange for an unbiased, honest review.

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