Theos

A. **Theos** belongs to the following word group:
   1. **Theos** (θεός) (noun), “God.”
   3. **Atheos** (ἄθεος) (adjective), “without God, not worshipping any God, atheist.”
   4. **Theoidaktos** (θεοίδαικτος) (adjective), “taught of God, instructed by God.”
   5. **Theios** (θεῖος) (adjective), “divine.”
   6. **Theiotes** (θειότης) (noun), “divinity, divine nature, the properties and attributes of deity.”
   7. **Philotheos** (φιλόθεος) (adjective), “God-loving, a lover of God.”

B. Classical Usage

1. The etymology of theos has not yet been clarified.
2. The only thing that is certain is that it was originally a title.
3. It is originally a predicative term and had a broad usage in classical literature.
4. Homer employed both the plural theoi and the indefinite singular theos (tis).
5. In this use he is sometimes thinking of a divine being and work in general.
6. Sometimes he has a particular god in mind and sometimes specifically Zeus.
7. Hermann Kleinknecht commenting on the word’s usage in classical literature, writes, “The Greek concept of God is essentially polytheistic, not in the sense of many individual gods, but in that of an ordered totality of gods, of a world of gods, which, e.g., in the divine state of Homer, forms an integrated nexus. This view naturally gave strong support to the term theos. Indeed, it brought it into prominence, and it found its finest expression in the person of Zeus, the pater andron te theon te (Homer, Illiad, 15, 47), the monarchical theon hupatos kai aristos (Homer Odyssey, 19, 303), the exponent of divine rule in general (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament volume 3, page 67).
8. The term was applied to any superhuman being.
9. Johannes Scheider commenting on the classical usage of the word, writes, “Greek religion was polytheistic. The gods were represented in anthropomorphic form as personal beings who exercised a determining influence on the world and fate of men, but who themselves were dependent on a superior fate. As they were not creator-gods, they were not thought of as outside the universe and transcendent. The cosmos included both gods and men. The influence of the gods was not universal, but was limited by their natures and attributes. They were not righteous in the OT sense. The Greek gods had form. Consequently, the statement ‘God is spirit’ (John 4:24) could not be applied to them. From Aeschylus onwards the different gods came increasingly to be identified. Their convergence into one divine being was prepared by the pre-Socratic thinkers and the ideas of classical tragedy. The Greek philosophical understanding of God was non-personal. Philosophers sought the origin of all things and the principle that shaped the world. In the process of rationalizing and moralizing, brought about by philosophical criticism and reflection, an important transformation of the Greek concept of god took place. The divine forms were spiritualized and finally replaced by general concepts like ‘world reason, the divine,’ and ‘being,’ which influenced and formed the world as powers giving it meaning and creating order. In Hellenistic syncretism the various Greek and non-Greek divinities were assimilated and even equated as a result of the recognition that behind the diverse names stood the same entities. This is particularly clear in the Isis cult. Not infrequently these tendencies lead to the honouring of one godhead as the divine All. The development reached its height in Neo-Platonism, where the divine is the universal One which has no objective existence or personality. It is being itself which is manifested through a series of hypostases and emanations in the world, since it is the ground and force behind everything that is” (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology volume 2, pages 66-67).
10. Hermann Kleinknecht once again commenting on the usage of theos in Greek literature, writes, “Zeus takes the first decision and has the final word. Hence piety often equates him quite simply with God (cf. Hom. Od., 4, 236; Demosth.Or., 18, 256; Aesch. Suppl., 524 ff.; 720 ff.; Ag., 160 ff.). Under the influence of rational theological speculation along causal lines there develops out of the original plurality of gods a divine genealogy and hierarchy (cf. Hesiod’s theogony). We read of higher and lower gods, of families of gods, and finally of a pantheon. In Greece and Rome there is not only a Trinity etc., but also a group of twelve gods (hoi dodeka theoi), and this expression comes to be used for the unity and totality of the gods who rule the world (cf. Pind. Olymp., 5, 5; Plat. Phaedr., 247a). For the most part theos is used for such well-known deities as Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Eros etc. But to call the cosmos God is also good
Greek (Plat. Tim. 92c: ὁδὲ ὁ κόσμος...θεός, Orig. Cels. V, 7); the phthonos is a kakistos kadikotatos theos, Hippothoon Fr., 2 (TGF, p. 827), and in Eur. even meeting again is a god: Hel. 560: ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐστιν. In Aesch. Choeph. 60 euteuchein is for μὲν ἦσαν τε καὶ θεοὶ θεοὶ. Similarly, original forces (dike II, 181), both inward and outward, may be furnished with the predicate theos, and later abstract concepts, cosmic magnitudes and divine attributes such as aion (I, 198), logos, nous (Corp. Herm. II, 12), are personified in the cultus and philosophy and hypostatised as gods. Eulabeia is an adikos theos, Eur. Phoen., 560; 782, and lupe isa deine theos, Eur. Or. 399” (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament volume 3, page 68).

11. Heroes such as Chiron and Colonos were described as gods.
12. Homer speaks of extraordinary men as theos.
13. An outstanding ruler may be called theos in the Hellenistic period.
14. In the Hellenistic cult of the ruler and the Roman cult of the emperor theos becomes a designation of office.
15. The word is used increasingly in the world of religious philosophy to denote impersonal metaphysical powers and forces.
16. To the Greek  ἀθανάτοις is synonymous with theos.
17. The gods are called immortals (athanatoi, Hom. Iliad, 1, 503; Odyssey 1, 31).
18. This does not mean eternal pre-existence.
19. It means only that they have no end, that they are not subject to death.
20. Hermann Kleinknecht writes, “In the intellectual history of antiquity there is thus a progressive refinement of the conception of God in human terms, but a personal, monotheistic view of God as the Creator of heaven and earth is plainly rejected, as is only natural in a form of religious experience and thought which is constantly oriented to eternal being and law and which thus thinks of God as the power or essence which ensures permanence as being. Neither in the anthropopathism of Homer nor in the later metaphysics of ideas is there a personal conception of God or even a personal relation of the individual soul to God. The early and later views are merely different but not mutually exclusive forms of the same basic religious attitude in religion, art and philosophy, which as a self-contained unity is absolutely different from the NT concept of God” (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament volume 3, page 79).

C. LXX Usage
1. θεός occurs in the LXX with few exceptions as a translation for the Hebrew words ʾElohim and Yehwah (Yahweh, Lord God).
2. This latter is the personal name of God, the name under which He revealed Himself as the God of Israel (Exodus 3:13-15).
3. Elohim and Yahweh are rarely translated by kuriōs or other terms.
4. ʾElohim describes God and is the plural of ʾeloahh, but it usually takes its verb in the singular when used of the true God.
5. When it is in reference to the Lord the plural form has no effect upon the reality that God is one (monotheism).
6. ʾElohim, derived from ʾel, is one of the oldest terms for God, and it is found in all the Semitic languages.
7. In the OT ʾel serves both as a common name and as a proper name for the God of Israel (Num. 23:8; Psa. 16:1 [LXX 15:1]; Isa. 40:18; etc.).
8. The Greek theos as well as the Hebrew ʾel were also used by polytheists.
9. They are in fact used so in the Scripture both of the true God (theos) and of foreign gods (theoi).
10. The term theos is actually a title and not the personal name for God.

D. NT Usage
1. The noun theos as would be expected appears numerous times in the NT.
2. The NT rests firmly on the foundation of the OT, when it speaks about God, but its emphases are new.
3. It is the same God who reveals Himself in the NT as in the OT, and whose plan of salvation, there promised, comes to fulfillment in the NT.
4. Walter Schneider lists the following concepts that the noun is related to in the NT (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, volume 2, pages 73-82):
   a. The one God
   b. The transcendent God
   c. The personal character of God
   d. The attributes of God
   e. God and Christ
   f. Christ as God
5. Louw and Nida lists the following NT meanings (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, volume 2):
   a. The one supreme supernatural being as creator and sustainer of the universe – ‘God’ (page 137).
   b. Any one of many different supernatural beings regarded as having authority or control over some aspect of the universe or human activity – ‘god’ (page 143).
   c. A female deity – ‘goddess’ (page 144).

6. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, “theos, (I) in the polytheism of the Greeks, denoted "a god or deity," e. g., (Acts 14:11; 19:26; 28:6; 1 Cor. 8:5; Gal. 4:8). (II) (a) Hence the word was appropriated by Jews and retained by Christians to denote "the one true God." In the Sept. *theos* translates (with few exceptions) the Hebrew words *Elohim* and *Jehovah*, the former indicating His power and preeminence, the latter His unoriginated, immutable, eternal and self-sustained existence. In the NT, these and all the other divine attributes are predicated of Him. To Him are ascribed, e. g., His unity, or monism, e. g., (Mark 12:29; 1 Tim. 2:5); self-existence, (John 5:26); immutability, (Jas. 1:17); eternity, (Rom. 1:20); universality, (Matt. 22:11; Acts 17:26-28); almighty power (Matt. 19:26); infinite knowledge, (Acts 2:23; 15:18; Rom. 11:3); creative power, (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Rev. 4:11: 10:6); absolute holiness, (1 Pet. 1:15; 1 John 1:5); righteousness, (John 17:25); faithfulness, (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thes. 5:24; 2 Thes. 3:3; 1 John 1:9); love, (1 John 4:8; 16); mercy, (Rom. 9:15;18); truthfulness, (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). See GOOD, No. 1 (b). (b) The divine attributes are likewise indicated or definitely predicated of Christ, e. g., (Matt. 20:18-19; John 1:1-3; 1:18); RV, marg.; (5:22-29; 8:58; 14:6; 17:22-24; 20:28; Rom. 1:4; 9:5; Phil. 3:21; Col. 1:15; 2:3; Titus 2:13); RV; (Heb. 1:3; 13:8; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 22:12,13). (c) Also of the Holy Spirit, e. g., (Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7-14; Rom. 8:9; 26; 1 Cor. 12:11; 2 Cor. 13:14). (d) *Theos* is used (1) with the definite article, (2) without (i. e., as an anarthrous noun). "The English may or may not have need of the article in translation. But that point cuts no figure in the Greek idiom. Thus in (Acts 27:23) ("the God whose I am," RV) the article points out the special God whose Paul is, and is to be preserved in English. In the very next verse (ho *theos*) we in English do not need the article" (A. T. Robertson, Gram. of Greek, NT, p. 758). As to this latter it is usual to employ the article with a proper name, when mentioned a second time. There are, of course, exceptions to this, as when the absence of the article serves to lay stress upon, or give precision to, the character or nature of what is expressed in the noun. A notable instance of this is in (John 1:1), "and the Word was God"; here a double stress is on *theos*, by the absence of the article and by the emphatic position. To translate it literally, "a god was the Word," is entirely misleading. Moreover, that "the Word" is the subject of the sentence, exemplifies the rule that the subject is to be determined by its having the article when the predicate is anarthrous (without the article). In (Rom. 7:22), in the phrase "the law of God," both nouns have the article; in (v. 25), neither has the article. This is in accordance with a general rule that if two nouns are united by the genitive case (the "of" case), either both have the article, or both are without. Here, in the first instance, both nouns, "God" and "the law," are definite, whereas in (v. 25) the word "God" is not simply titular; the absence of the article stresses His character as lawgiver. Where two or more epithets are applied to the same person or thing, one article usually serves for both (the exceptions being when a second article lays stress upon different aspects of the same person or subject, e. g., (Rev. 1:17)). In (Titus 2:13) the RV correctly has "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Moulton (Prol., p. 84) shows, from papyri writings of the early Christian era, that among Greek-speaking Christians this was "a current formula" as applied to Christ. So in (2 Pet. 1:1) (cf. (1:11; 3:18)). In the following titles God is described by certain of His attributes; the God of glory, (Acts 7:2); of peace, (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 13:20); of love and peace, (2 Cor. 13:11); of patience and comfort, (Rom. 15:5); of all comfort, (2 Cor. 1:3); and of hope, (Rom. 15:13); of all grace, (1 Pet. 5:10). These describe Him, not as in distinction from other persons, but as the source of all these blessings; hence the employment of the definite article. In such phrases as "the God of a person," e. g., (Matt. 22:32), the expression marks the relationship in which the person stands to God and God to him. (e) In the following the nominative case is used for the vocative, and always with the article; (Mark 15:34; Luke 18:11,13; John 20:28); (Acts 4:24) in some mss.; (Heb. 1:8: 10:7). (f) The phrase "the things of God" (translated literally or otherwise) stands for (1) His interests, (Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33); (2) His counsels, (1 Cor. 2:11); (3) things which are due to Him, (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). The phrase "things pertaining to God," (Rom. 15:17; Heb. 2:17; 5:1), describes, in the Heb. passages, the sacrificial service of the priest; in the Rom. passage the gospel ministry as an offering to God. (III) The word is used of divinely appointed judges in Israel, as representing God in His authority, (John 10:34), quoted from (Ps. 82:6), which indicates that God Himself sits in judgment on those whom He has appointed. The application of the term to the Devil, (2 Cor. 4:4), and the belly, (Phil. 3:19), virtually places these instances under (I)."
7. Bauer, Gingrich and Danker list the following major categories in which the word is used (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, pages 356-358):
   a. Of divine beings generally
   b. With reference to Christ
   c. Quite predominately of the true God, sometimes with, sometimes without the article
   d. Figuratively of that which is worthy of reverence or respect
   e. Of the devil
8. The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon provides the following (pages 287-288):
   a. A general appellation of deities or divinities
   b. Christ
   c. Spoken of the only and true God
   d. Used of whatever can in any respect be likened to God, or resembles him in any way
9. The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following NT meanings (page 193):
   a. A deity
   b. An idol
   c. God, the true God
   d. God, possessed of true godhead
10. Theos was retained by Christians to denote the one true living God.
11. The personal nature of God to the NT writers was a living reality to them and it revealed itself to them through the Person, Work and Life of Christ.
12. The Scriptures teach that God is 3 co-equal, co-infinite and co-eternal Persons with the same identical essence or attributes.
   a. God the Father (1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:3)
   b. God the Son (John 10:30; 14:9; Col. 2:9)
13. God is one in essence, three in Person and the oneness of God is called His glory.
14. The English word essence is derived from the Greek adjective *ousia* (οὐσία) and means “inner nature, true substance, a person’s qualities or attributes.”
15. Some of these qualities of a person are visible and some are invisible.
16. Essence implies being or existence.
17. God exists and there are certain qualities or attributes which belong to His essence.
18. God in His grace has revealed Himself, and His essence.
19. God essence has been revealed to be understood.
20. He reveals His essence through the Word of God, Bible Doctrine.
21. His glory or oneness is His essence or character (John 10:30).
22. All the invisible attributes of God are always present in Him, but not all are revealed to man at the same time.
23. The divine essence has the following attributes:
   a. Sovereignty (Father: Matt. 6:10; Son: Matt. 28:18; Holy Spirit: 1 Cor. 12:11)
   b. Righteousness (Father: John 17:25; Son: 1 John 2:1)
   c. Justice (Father: Rom. 3:24-26; Son: 2 Tim. 4:8; Spirit: John 16:8-11)
   d. Love (Father: John 3:16; Son: Rom. 5:8; Spirit: Rom. 5:5)
   e. Eternal life (Father and Son: John 1:1; Spirit: Heb. 9:14)
   f. Omnipotence (Father: Mark 14:36 and Luke 1:37; Son: Col. 1:16-17; Spirit: Rom. 15:13)
   g. Omniscience (Father: Matt. 6:8; Son: John 2:25 and 18:4; Spirit: Isa. 11:2)
   h. Omnipresence (Father: Eph. 4:6; Son: Matt. 28:18; Spirit: Psa. 139:7)
   i. Immutability (Father: Jam. 1:17; Son: Heb. 13:8; Spirit: 1 John 5:7)
   j. Veracity (Father: John 7:28; Son: John 14:6; Spirit: 1 John 5:7)
24. Essence is the Being which is attributed to God since the characteristics of His essence are eternal and inherently in Him.
25. The grace of God and the work of God are manifestations of His attributes.
26. To understand Who and What God is, you must understand His invisible attributes.
27. To understand His invisible attributes, you must learn the Word of God through the utilization of the 2 power options of the operational type spiritual life for the Church Age.
28. Jesus Christ manifested God to man (John 1:18) and to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, we must understand His divine essence.
29. Man’s finite mind can come into contact with the infinite through the use of the 2 power options of the operational type spiritual life for the church age.
30. There are 2 categories of divine attributes:
   a. Absolute
   b. Relative
31. God’s absolute attributes are those attributes which are outside of man’s frame of reference.
32. His absolute attributes belong to the nature of God apart from His connection with the creation.
33. God’s absolute attributes cannot be comprehended.
34. The absolute attributes of God are as follows:
   a. Spirit
   b. Infinite involving self-existence, immutability and unity.
   c. Perfection involving veracity, virtue-love and integrity.
35. His relative attributes can be understood.
36. They are related to our frame of reference.
37. His relative attributes are related to things in our frame of reference such as:
   a. Time
   b. Space
   c. Creation
   d. Moral beings
38. The relative attributes of God related to time and space are as follows:
   a. Eternity
   b. Immensity
39. The relative attributes of God related to creation are as follows:
   a. Omnipresence
   b. Omniscience
   c. Omnipotence
40. The relative attributes of God related to humanity are as follows:
   a. Veracity and Faithfulness
   b. Mercy and Goodness
   c. Justice and Righteousness
41. Other characteristics of God are as follows:
   a. Freedom
   b. Affections
   c. Authority
42. God is absolute and man is relative.
43. God transcends time, space, creation and moral beings but man is confined to time.
44. God reveals Himself to man in 3 ways:
   a. By nature or creation (Psalm 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20).
   b. The Living Word, i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 1:24; Heb. 1:1-3).
   c. The Written Word, the Bible in its original languages, i.e., Bible Doctrine.
45. John 4:24, “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit (Filling of the Spirit) and truth (Word of God).”
46. Since, God is spirit, His attributes are invisible to the human eye.
47. His qualities cannot be perceived through empiricism or by rationalism.
48. His invisible attributes can only be understood through the non-meritorious system of perception called faith.
49. The believer is totally dependent upon the Word of God to understand the invisible, immaterial, infinite, unlimited essence of God.
50. The essence of God is unseen and totally beyond human comprehension.