

# Systematic Theology?

- ♦ “Any study that answers the question: “What does the Bible teach today?” about any given topic.”
- ♦ Involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each subject.
- ♦ How should we study systematic theology: with prayer, humility, reason, & worship. (Ps 119:18, 1 Cor 2:14)

## What is the Bible?

### BFC Articles of Faith

#### Article 1 - The Holy Scriptures

- ♦ 1-1 The Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the inspired, infallible Word of God, a divine revelation, the original writings of which were verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are the supreme and final authority of faith and conduct.
- ♦ 1-2 Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the Scriptures so that their words would convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, would bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other inspired books, and would be kept free from error of fact, doctrine, and judgment.
- ♦ 1-3 The Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God, are composed of all books of the Old Testament and New Testament.

### The Four Characteristics of Scripture:

1. The Authority of the Bible
2. The Clarity of Scripture
3. The Necessity of Scripture
4. The Sufficiency of Scripture

## 1. The Authority of the Bible

**All the words of the Bible are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God!**

- ♦ “Thus says the LORD” (OT: Ex. 4:22; Josh. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:18; Isa. 10:24)
  - ♦ Command of a King!
  - ♦ Obeyed without challenge and question
- ♦ “...command of the Lord.” (NT: 1 Cor. 14:37)

### **“Breathed out by God”**

- ♦ “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV)

### **Where did the content of the Bible come from?**

- ♦ God spoke directly to the author (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12)
- ♦ Author based writings on interviews and research (Luke 1:1-3)
- ♦ Holy Spirit brought to mind things that Jesus taught (John 14:26)

### **How were the words of the Bible written?**

- ♦ The Holy Spirit “carried along” men to write scripture, as they were “spoke from God,” the very words God wanted them to write as God’s own. (2 Pet 1:19-20)
- ♦ The words were an extension of the author’s personalities, skills, backgrounds and training.

### **What part does the Holy Spirit play in the Bible?**

- ♦ Does not supernaturally make the words become the word of God (they always have been)
- ♦ Changes the reader of scripture to receive, understand, and believe that these words are the very words of God!
- ♦ Historical reliability, internal consistency, fulfilled prophecies, influence on others, majestic beauty and wisdom are useful in helping us see the reasonableness of the claims of the Bible.

### **The scripture is not just simply true, it is truth itself! (John 17:17)**

- ♦ Because God cannot *lie*, scripture by necessity must be true! (Heb 6:18, Tit 1:2)

- ♦ Because scripture is true it is completely without **error** in any part, though it does not demand that the Bible report events with exact, scientific detail (all details it does report are true).
- ♦ **Inerrancy:** The Bible in its original form does not affirm anything contrary to fact.
  - ♦ To believe otherwise is to disbelieve God Himself.
  - ♦ To disbelieve God is to place yourself as a higher authority with a deeper understanding of all topics than God Himself.

### **In conclusion,**

“Since the Bible affirms that it is the very words of God, we are to seek to understand those words, for in doing so, we are seeking to understand God himself. We are to seek to trust the words of Scripture, for in doing so, we are seeking to trust God himself. And we are to seek to obey the words of Scripture, for in doing so, we are seeking to obey God himself.”

## **2. The Clarity of Scripture**

**The Bible is written in such a way that all things necessary to *become* a Christian, *live* as a Christian, and *grow* as a Christian are clear.**

- ♦ God’s Word is so understandable and clear that the simple can be made **wise** by it. (Ps 19:7, Ps 119:130)
- ♦ Since the things of God are “spiritually discerned”, a proper understanding of Scripture is often more a result of an individual’s **spiritual condition** than his **intellectual ability**. (1 Cor 2:14)

### **Why do godly men disagree with scripture?**

- ♦ **Misunderstanding** of what Jesus was saying. (Mt 15:16)
- ♦ Some have hardened hearts. (Luke 24:25)
- ♦ Need to wait for further events and understanding. (Jn 12:16)
- ♦ Result of our shortcomings (i.e. bad **study** habits)

**Hermeneutics** – the study of correct methods of interpretation.

**Exegesis:** the process of interpreting Scripture.

**When individuals disagree on the proper interpretation of a passage of Scripture,  
the problem does not lie with the Scriptures!**

### 3. The Necessity of Scripture

The Bible is necessary for *knowing* the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws. Without the Bible we could not know how to become a Christian, live as a Christian, and grow as a Christian.

- ♦ Therefore, the necessity of Scripture means that it is necessary to read the Bible or have someone tell us what is in the Bible if we are going to know God personally, have sins forgiven, and know with certainty what God wants us to do! (Rom 10:14, 2 Tim 3:15)

The Christian life doesn't only start with the Bible, but it *thrives* through the Bible.

- ♦ To neglect regular reading of the Bible is detrimental to the *health* of our souls. (Mt 4:4, 1 Peter 2:2)
- ♦ The Bible is our only source of clear and definite statements about God's *will*.
- ♦ Love for God is demonstrated by keeping "his commandments". (1 John 5:3)

#### **General Revelation: Given to *all* people**

- ♦ God's existence, character, and moral law. (Ps 19:1)
  - ♦ Seen through *nature*. (Roman 19:19-21)
  - ♦ God's historical works.
  - ♦ Inner God-given *sense*. (Rom 2:14-15)
- ♦ Does *not* reveal God's salvation plan.

#### **Specific Revelation: Given to *specific* people**

- ♦ The entire Bible
  - ♦ Direct messages from God to the prophets and others
  - ♦ Reveals God's salvation plan.

### 4. The Sufficiency of Scripture

- ♦ Since the Bible contains all the words of God that a person needs to become a Christian, live as a Christian, and grow as a Christian, all we need to do to be "blameless" before God is just *obey* His Word!

- ♦ The Sufficiency of Scripture means that God has given us instruction that equip us for “every good work” that He wants us to do. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- ♦ It is scripture alone that we search for God’s words to us, and should arrive at **contentment** at what we find there.

**Scripture should encourage us to search through the Bible to try and find what God would have us *think* about an issue or situation.**

- ♦ Will provide guidance we need “for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17)
- ♦ When we don’t find specific answers to a specific question in the Bible, we are not free to **add** to the commands of Scripture what we have found to be pragmatically correct.

Example: appropriate meeting time for Sunday Service

**The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that *nothing* is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.**

- ♦ Do not add prohibitions where we don’t believe Scripture is precise enough.  
Example: Type of dress on a Sunday morning
- ♦ In doctrinal, ethical, and moral teachings and beliefs, we should be content with what God has told us in Scripture.
- ♦ Exhibit humble **hesitancy** in placing more emphasis on issues that are not Biblically emphatic.

## **Questions for Review and Application**

- ♦ **Why is it important that the Bible be the basis for our belief?**
- ♦ **Will the Bible definitively answer every question we bring to it? Why or why not?**
- ♦ **What is one issue that the Bible speaks clearly on? What is one issue that the Bible does not speak clearly on? How does this affect the emphasis you should place on these issues?**