

Systematic Theology: Part 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God

This document contains the teacher notes for nine Sunday school lessons walking through the first part of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. There is a [complementary document](#) containing student handouts that can be shared with listeners to aid them with this material.

I claim no infallibility relative to the material presented here (the bulk is a condensation of Grudem's text). It is, as many have said before, beggars showing other beggars where to find bread. These teachings are provided free in the spirit of **Matthew 10:8b**.

As errors are found, please let me know so I can correct. The theology expressed here should not be construed as representing the theology of Stuart Heights Baptist Church (especially when I am wrong or when I am being an idiot).

The formatting is as follows:

- **bold green text are quotes from outside sources (primarily Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology text)**
- **bold red text is the Scripture** (NKJV is used unless otherwise noted. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)
- **bold blue text are Bible references**
- **bold purple text are questions to consider asking while teaching this material**
- **highlighted, bold, and underlined text in the teacher notes are answers to blanks in the student handouts**
- plain black text are my comments

The audio recordings of all nine of these teachings themselves are available via our class [podcast](#). Many thanks to David Barber for his faithfulness in this area.

I hope these resources assist in enabling you to teach through a work like Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. Feel free to contact me at jim314@yahoo.com with questions or feedback.

Grace and peace,

Jim Fleming
Hixson, Tennessee
April 2014

Systematic Theology

Introduction to Systematic Theology

What is systematic theology? Why should Christians study it? How should we study it?

Note: The primary textbook for the **structure** of this series is Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. The primary text for the **substance** of this series is the Bible.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Introduction

Grudem: What is systematic theology? Many different definitions have been given, but for the purposes of this book the following definition will be used: *Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the **whole Bible teach us today?" about any given **topic**.***

Grudem: This definition indicates that systematic theology 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 topic.

Example: Lego sets vs Lego pieces

The words

1. Systematic – carefully organized (all relevant passages organized into topics)
2. Theology – the study of religious truths

The schedule

Part 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God (February – April, 2014)

Chapter 1: Introduction to Systematic Theology

Chapter 2: The Word of God

- What are the different forms of the Word of God?

Chapter 3: The Canon of Scripture

- What belongs in the Bible and what does not belong?

Chapter 4: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (1) Authority

- How do we know that the Bible is God's Word?

Chapter 5: The Inerrancy of Scripture

- Are there any errors in the Bible?

Chapter 6: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity

- Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly?

Chapter 7: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (3) Necessity

- For what purposes are the Bible necessary?
- How much can people know about God without the Bible?

Chapter 8: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency

- Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?

Part 2: The Doctrine of God (September – November, 2014)

Part 3: The Doctrine of Man (March 2015)

Part 4: The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit (October – November 2015)

Part 5: The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption (January – April 2016)

Part 6: The Doctrine of the Church (June – August 2016)

Part 7: The Doctrine of the Future (November – December 2016)

Why this book?

Many theologians have written systematic theologies. Justin Martyr, Origen, St. Augustine of Hippo, and Tertullian all wrote types of systematic theologies over 1,000 years ago.

Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*) and Francis of Assisi were major players in the middle ages.

Karl Barth, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Rene Descartes, Charles Finney, Norman Geisler, John Gill, Charles Hodge, Martin Luther, Henri Nouwen, J. I. Packer, Blaise Pascal, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Charles Ryrie, R. C. Sproul, John Wesley, and Huldrych Zwingli all wrote systematic theologies in the last 500 years.

With so many choices, why Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology?

1. Based on the **Bible**
2. Clearly written
3. Application to **life**

Grudem: Application to life is a necessary part of the proper pursuit of systematic theology . . . Nowhere in Scripture do we find doctrine studied for its own sake or in isolation from life.

Warning

Grudem: It is inevitable that someone studying a systematic theology text or taking a course in systematic theology for the first time will have many of his or her own personal beliefs challenged or modified, refined or enriched.

B. Grudem: Initial assumptions of this book

1. **Grudem: The Bible is true** and that it is, in fact, our only absolute standard of truth
2. **Grudem: The God who is spoken of in the Bible exists, and that he is who the Bible says he is: the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in them**

Grudem: What are doctrines?

Grudem: A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic. Doctrines can be broad or narrow, and Grudem's book is divided in to seven. Different books on systematic theology have different numbers of major doctrines—most have more than seven.

Why should we as a class study systematic theology?

1. To fulfill the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.**): We cannot effectively and efficiently teach new disciples without having an orderly understanding of Scripture
2. To confront sin in our lives: **Grudem: It is helpful for us to be confronted with the total weight of the teaching of Scripture on [a] subject**
3. **Grudem: To be able to make better decisions later on new questions of doctrine that may arise**

E. Grudem: How should Christians study systematic theology?

1. **Grudem: With prayer: Psalm 119:18: Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law. 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:17-19**

2. **Grudem: With humility: 1 Peter 5:5b: Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." James 1:19-20: So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 3:13, 17-18: Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. . . . But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. 1 Corinthians 8:1b: Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.**
3. **Grudem: With reason: We find in the New Testament that Jesus and the New Testament authors will often quote a verse of Scripture and then draw logical conclusions from it. They reason from Scripture. It is therefore not wrong to use human understanding, human logic, and human reason to draw conclusions from the statements of Scripture.**
4. **Grudem: With help from others: 1 Corinthians 12:28a: And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers**
5. **Grudem: By collecting and understanding all relevant passages of Scripture on any topic**
 - a) **Grudem: Find the relevant verses**
 - b) **Grudem: Read, make notes on, and try to summarize the points made in the relevant verses**
 - c) **Grudem: Summarize into one or more points that the Bible affirms about that subject**
6. **Grudem: With rejoicing and praise: Psalm 139:17: How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! Psalm 19:8: The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. Psalm 119:14: I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, *As much as* in all riches. Psalm 119:103: How sweet are Your words to my taste, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:111: Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart. Psalm 119:162: I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure. Romans 11:33-36: Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the**

LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **What is your attitude now?** (about studying systematic theology)
2. **What is likely to happen to a church or denomination that gives up learning systematic theology for a generation or longer?**
3. **Are there any doctrines listed . . . for which a fuller understanding would help to solve a personal difficulty in your life at the present time?**
4. **Pray for God to make this study of basic Christian doctrines a time of spiritual growth and deeper fellowship with him, and a time in which you understand and apply the teachings of Scripture rightly.**

Scripture Memory Passage: Psalm 119:11

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Hymn: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (Charles Wesley, 1739)

O for a thousand tongues to sing	He speaks and, list'ning to His voice,
My great Redeemer's praise,	New life the dead receive;
The glories of my God and King,	The mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
The triumphs of His grace.	The humble poor believe.

My gracious Master and my God,	Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
Assist me to proclaim,	Your loosened tongues employ,
To spread through all the earth abroad,	Ye blind, behold your Savior come;
The honors of Thy name.	And leap, ye lame, for joy.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,	Glory to God and praise and love
That bids our sorrows cease;	Be ever, ever giv'n
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,	By saints below and saints above —
'Tis life and health and peace.	The church in earth and heav'n.

**He breaks the pow'r of reigning sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.**

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 2: The Word of God

What are the different forms of the Word of God?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Psalm 119:11**

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. Grudem: The “Word of God” as a Person: Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Word of God. **Revelation 19:13**: He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **John 1:1**: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **John 1:14**: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (1 **John 1:1**: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life)

B. Grudem: The “Word of God” as speech by God

1. Grudem: God’s decrees: a word of God that **causes** something to happen

Grudem: The events of original creation: **Genesis 1:3**: Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. **Genesis 1:24**: Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind”; and it was so. **Psalm 33:6**: By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

Grudem: The continuing existence of all things: **Hebrews 1:3a**: who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power

2. **Grudem: God's words of personal address: when Grudem : God communicates with people on earth by speaking directly to them**

Genesis 2:16-17: And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." **Genesis 3:16-19:** To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you." **17** Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. **18** Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. **19** In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return." **Exodus 20:1-3:** And God spoke all these words, saying: **2** "I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **3** "You shall have no other gods before Me. **Matthew 3:17:** And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

3. **Grudem: God's words as speech through human lips**

Deuteronomy 18:18-19: I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put **My** words in **His** mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. **19** And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear **My** words, which **He** speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him.' **Jeremiah 1:9:** Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. **Jeremiah 1:7:** But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I *am* a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. **Exodus 4:12:** Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say. **Numbers 22:38:** And Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak." **1 Kings 20:36:** Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you." And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him. **2 Chronicles 25:15:** Therefore the anger of the LORD was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from

your hand?" **Jeremiah 36:29-31**: And you shall say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'Thus says the LORD: "You have burned this scroll, saying, 'Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and cause man and beast to cease from here?'" **30** Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. **31** I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah all the doom that I have pronounced against them; but they did not heed.'"

Grudem: Anyone who claimed to be speaking for the Lord but who had not received a message from him was severely **punished** (**Ezekiel 13:1-7**: And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, **2** "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the LORD!'" **3** Thus says the Lord GOD: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! **4** O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. **5** You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the LORD. **6** They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the LORD!' But the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. **7** Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The LORD says,' but I have not spoken." **Deuteronomy 18:20**: But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.)

4. **Grudem**: God's words in written form (the Bible)

Exodus 31:18: And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. **Exodus 32:16**: Now the tablets *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God engraved on the tablets. **Exodus 34:1**: And the LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*, and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. **Exodus 34:28**: So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. **Deuteronomy 31:9-13**: So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. **10** And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of

every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, **11** when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. **12** Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, **13** and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.” **Deuteronomy 31:24-26**: So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, **25** that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: **26** “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you. **Joshua 24:26**: Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD. **Isaiah 30:8**: Now go, write it before them on a tablet, And note it on a scroll, That it may be for time to come, Forever and ever. **Jeremiah 30:2**: “Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: ‘Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. **Jeremiah 36:2-4**: “Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. **3** It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.” **4** Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote on a scroll of a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the LORD which He had spoken to him. **Jeremiah 36:27-28**: Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: “Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.” **John 14:26**: But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. **John 16:12-13**: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. **1 Corinthians 14:37**: If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. **2 Peter 3:2**: that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment

of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.

Grudem: Several benefits come from the writing down of God's words . . . more accurate preservation . . . opportunity for repeated inspection . . . accessible to many more people.

C. Grudem: The focus of our study

God's words in written form—since, it **Grudem: is available for study, for public inspection, for repeated examination, and as a basis for mutual discussion. Psalm 1:1-2: Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. Joshua 1:8: This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **Do you think you would pay more attention if God spoke to you from heaven or through the voice of a living prophet than if he spoke to you from the written words of Scripture? Would you believe or obey such words more readily than you do Scripture? Do you think your present level of response to the written words of Scripture is an appropriate one? What positive steps can you take to make your attitude toward Scripture more like the kind of attitude God wants you to have?**
2. **When you think about the many ways in which God speaks and the frequency with which God communicates with his creatures through these means, what conclusions might you draw concerning the nature of God and the things that bring delight to him?**

Scripture Memory Passage: **Psalm 1:1-2**

**1 Blessed *is* the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.**

Hymn: “Break Thou the Bread of Life” (Mary A. Lathbury, 1877)

Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,

As thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;

Throughout the sacred page I seek thee, Lord,

My spirit pants for thee, O Living Word.

Bless thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,

As thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;

Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;

And I shall find my peace, my all in all.

Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,

Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;

Give me to eat and live with thee above;

Teach me to love thy truth, for thou art love.

O send thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,

That he may touch mine eyes, and make me see:

Show me the truth concealed within thy Word,

And in thy Book revealed I see the Lord.

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 3: The Canon of Scripture

What belongs in the Bible and what does not belong?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Psalm 1:1-2**

1 Blessed *is* the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: *The **canon** of Scripture is the list of all the books that belong in the Bible.*

Why is this important? If we do not know what constitutes the Bible, how can we trust it?

A. Grudem: The Old Testament canon

Grudem: *The Ten Commandments . . . form the beginning of the biblical canon.*

Exodus 31:18: *And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.* Obviously, anything written directly by the finger of God should be part of the canon of Scripture. **But what else should be included? What else do we add to the words written by the finger of God?** **Exodus 32:16:** *Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.* **Deuteronomy 4:13:** *So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.* **Deuteronomy 10:4:** *And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me.*

Grudem: Moses himself wrote additional words to be deposited beside the ark of the covenant. **Deuteronomy 31:24-26**: So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, **25** that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: **26** "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.

Grudem: After the death of Moses, Joshua also added to the collection of written words of God. **Joshua 24:26a**: Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God.

Grudem: This is especially surprising in light of the command not to add to or take away from the words which God gave the people through Moses: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it . . ." (Deuteronomy 4:2; cf. 12:32). In order to have disobeyed such a specific command, Joshua must have been convinced that he was not taking it upon himself to add to the written words of God, but that God himself had authorized such additional writing.

Grudem: Later, others in Israel [Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.], usually those who fulfilled the office of prophet, wrote additional words from God: **1 Samuel 10:25**: Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote *it* in a book and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. **1 Chronicles 29:29**: Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer. **2 Chronicles 20:34**: Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. **2 Chronicles 26:22**: Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote. **2 Chronicles 32:32**: Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they *are* written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, *and* in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. **Jeremiah 30:1-2**: The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you.

The entirety of the law and the prophets make up the Old Testament. **What should not be included?**

The Apocrypha

Grudem: In the New Testament, we have no record of any dispute between Jesus and the Jews over the extent of the canon. . . . According to one count, Jesus and the New

Testament authors quote various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures as divinely authoritative over 295 times, but not once do they cite any statement from the books of the Apocrypha or any other writings as having divine authority.

Grudem: The use of the Apocrypha gradually increased in some parts of the church until the time of the Reformation. The fact that these books were included by Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (completed in A.D. 404) gave support to their inclusion, even though Jerome himself said they were not “books of the canon” but merely “books of the church” that were helpful and useful for believers.

Grudem: There are doctrinal and historical inconsistencies with a number of these books. E. J. Young notes: There are no marks in these books which would attest a divine origin. . . . both Judith and Tobit contain historical, chronological and geographical errors. The books justify falsehood and deception and make salvation to depend upon works of merit. . . . Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon inculcate a morality based upon expediency. Wisdom teaches the creation of the world out of pre-existent matter (11:17). Ecclesiasticus teaches that the giving of alms makes atonement for sin (3:30). In Baruch it is said that God hears the prayers of the dead (3:4), and in I Maccabees there are historical and geographical errors.

Grudem: It was not until 1546, at the Council of Trent, that the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the Apocrypha to be part of the canon (with the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh). It is significant that the Council of Trent was the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the teachings of Martin Luther and the rapidly spreading Protestant Reformation, and the books of the Apocrypha contain support for the Catholic teaching of prayers for the dead and justification by faith plus works, not by faith alone. In affirming the Apocrypha as within the canon, Roman Catholics would hold that the church has the authority to constitute a literary work as “Scripture,” while Protestants have held that the church cannot make something to be Scripture, but can only recognize what God has already caused to be written as his own words. (One analogy here would be to say that a police investigator can recognize counterfeit money as counterfeit and can recognize genuine money as genuine, but he cannot make counterfeit money to be genuine, nor can any declaration by any number of police make counterfeit money to be something it is not. Only the official treasury of a nation can make money that is real money; similarly, only God can make words to be his very words and worthy of inclusion in Scripture.)

Grudem: Thus the writings of the Apocrypha should not be regarded as part of Scripture: (1) they do not claim for themselves the same kind of authority as the Old Testament writings; (2) they were not regarded as God’s words by the Jewish people

from whom they originated; (3) they were not considered to be Scripture by Jesus or the New Testament authors; and (4) they contain teachings inconsistent with the rest of the Bible. We must conclude that they are merely human words, not God-breathed words like the words of Scripture. They do have value for historical and linguistic research, and they contain a number of helpful stories about the courage and faith of many Jews during the period after the Old Testament ends, but they have never been part of the Old Testament canon, and they should not be thought of as part of the Bible. Therefore, they have no binding authority for the thought or life of Christians today.

B. Grudem: The New Testament canon

The New Testament points exclusively to **Jesus Christ**: His coming, His life, His death, His resurrection, His church, and His returns. Exploring and expanding these concepts is the New Testament.

Grudem: The development of the New Testament canon begins with the writings of the apostles. **John 14:26:** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance **all** things that I said to you. **John 16:13-14:** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into **all** truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and **declare** *it* to you.

Grudem: In these verses the disciples are promised amazing gifts to enable them to write Scripture: the Holy Spirit would teach.

Grudem: Furthermore, those who have the office of apostle in the early church are seen to claim an authority equal to that of the Old Testament prophets, an authority to speak and write words that are God's very words. Peter: **2 Peter 3:2:** that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior. Paul: **1 Corinthians 2:13:** These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **1 Corinthians 14:37:** If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. **1 Thessalonians 2:13:** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Grudem: The apostles, then, have authority to write words that are God's own words, **equal** in truth status and authority to the words of the Old Testament Scriptures. They do this to record, interpret, and apply to the lives of believers the great truths about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Grudem: Some of the New Testament writings [are] placed with the Old Testament Scriptures as part of the canon of Scripture: **2 Peter 3:15-16**: and consider *that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. **1 Timothy 5:17-18**: Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the **Scripture** says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," [Deuteronomy 25:4] and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." [Luke 10:7]*

Grudem: If we accept the arguments for the traditional views of authorship of the New Testament writings, then we have most of the New Testament in the canon because of direct authorship by the apostles. This would include **Matthew; John; Romans to Philemon** (all of the Pauline epistles); **James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Revelation**. This leaves five books, **Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews, and Jude**, which were not written by apostles. The details of the historical process by which these books came to be counted as part of Scripture by the early church are scarce, but **Mark, Luke, and Acts** were commonly acknowledged very early, probably because of the close association of Mark with the apostle Peter, and of Luke (the author of **Luke-Acts**) with the apostle Paul. Similarly, **Jude** apparently was accepted by virtue of the author's connection with **James** (see **Jude 1**) and the fact that he was the brother of Jesus. The acceptance of **Hebrews** as canonical was urged by many in the church on the basis of an assumed Pauline authorship.

Grudem: For some books (at least **Mark, Luke, and Acts**, and perhaps **Hebrews and Jude** as well), the church had, at least in some areas, the personal testimony of some living apostles to affirm the absolute divine authority of these books.

Grudem: In A.D. 367 the Thirty-ninth Paschal Letter of Athanasius contained an exact list of the twenty-seven New Testament books we have today. This was the list of books accepted by the churches in the eastern part of the Mediterranean world. Thirty years later, in A.D. 397, the Council of Carthage, representing the churches in the western part of the Mediterranean world, agreed with the eastern churches on the same list. These are the earliest final lists of our present-day canon.

Grudem: Should we expect any more writings to be added to the canon? The opening sentence in **Hebrews** puts this question in the proper historical perspective, the perspective of the history of redemption: **“In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Hebrews 1:1-2).** The contrast between the former speaking **“of old”** by the prophets and the recent speaking **“in these last days”** suggests that God’s speech to us by his Son is the culmination of his speaking to mankind and is his greatest and final revelation to mankind in this period of redemptive history. The exceptional greatness of the revelation that comes through the Son, far exceeding any revelation in the old covenant, is emphasized again and again throughout chapters 1 and 2 of **Hebrews**. These facts all indicate that there is a finality to the revelation of God in Christ and that once this revelation has been completed, no more is to be expected. . . . The New Testament writings contain the final, authoritative, and sufficient interpretation of Christ’s work of redemption.

Revelation 22:18-19: **For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**

Grudem: It is not inappropriate for us to understand this exceptionally strong warning at the end of **Revelation** as applying in a secondary way to the whole of Scripture. Placed here, where it must be placed, the warning forms an appropriate conclusion to the entire canon of Scripture.

Grudem: We base our confidence in the correctness of our present canon on the faithfulness of **God**.

Grudem: Even those writings that were for a time thought by some to be worthy of inclusion in the canon contain doctrinal teaching that is contradictory to the rest of Scripture. “The Shepherd” of Hermas, for example, teaches “the necessity of penance” and “the possibility of the forgiveness of sins at least once after baptism. . . . The author seems to identify the Holy Spirit with the Son of God before the Incarnation, and to hold that the Trinity came into existence only after the humanity of Christ had been taken up into heaven” (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 641). The Gospel of Thomas, which for a time was held by some to belong to the canon, ends with the following absurd statement (par. 114): Simon Peter said to them: “Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus said: “Lo, I shall lead her, so

that I may make her a male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself a male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Grudem: The work of the early church was not to **bestow** divine authority or even ecclesiastical authority upon some merely human writings, but rather to **recognize** the divinely authored characteristic of writings that already had such a quality. This is because the ultimate criterion of canonicity is divine authorship, not human or ecclesiastical approval.

Grudem: God’s faithfulness to his people convinces us that there is nothing missing from Scripture that God thinks we need to know for obeying him and trusting him fully. The canon of Scripture today is exactly what God wanted it to be, and it will stay that way until Christ returns.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. Why is it important to your Christian life to know which writings are God’s words and which are not? How would your relationship with God be different if you had to look for his words that were scattered among all the writings of Christians throughout church history? How would your Christian life be different if God’s words were contained not only in the Bible but also in the official declarations of the church throughout history?
2. Have you had doubts or questions about the canonicity of any of the books of the Bible? What caused those questions? What should one do to resolve them?
3. Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and members of other cults have claimed present-day revelations from God that they count equal to the Bible in authority. What reasons can you give to indicate the falsity of those claims? In practice, do these people treat the Bible as an authority equal to these other “revelations”?
4. If you have never read any parts of the Old Testament Apocrypha, perhaps you would want to read some sections. Do you feel you can trust these writings in the same way you trust Scripture? Compare the effect these writings have on you with the effect Scripture has on you. You might want to make a similar comparison with some writings from a collection of books called the New Testament Apocrypha, or perhaps with the Book of Mormon or the Qur’an. Is the spiritual effect of these writings on your life positive or negative? How does it compare with the spiritual effect the Bible has on your life?

Scripture Memory Passage: Hebrews 1:1-2

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

Hymn: "O Word of God Incarnate" (William Walsham How, 1867)

O Word of God incarnate, O wisdom from on high,
O truth unchanged, unchanging, O light of our dark sky;
We praise thee for the radiance that from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps, shines on from age to age.

The church from her dear Master received the gift divine,
And still that light she lifteth o'er all the earth to shine.
It is the golden casket, where gems of truth are stored;
It is the heav'n-drawn picture of Christ, the Living Word.

It floateth like a banner before God's host unfurled;
It shineth like a beacon above the darkling world.
It is the chart and compass that o'er life's surging sea,
'Mid mists and rocks and quicksands, still guides, O Christ, to thee.

O make thy church, dear Savior, a lamp of purest gold,
To bear before the nations thy true light, as of old.
O teach thy wand'ring pilgrims by this their path to trace,
Till, clouds and darkness ended, they see thee face to face.

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 4: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (1) Authority

How do we know that the Bible is God's Word?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Hebrews 1:1-2**

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

Introduction

Grudem: The major teachings of the Bible about itself can be classified into four characteristics . . . (1) the authority of Scripture; (2) the clarity of Scripture; (3) the necessity of Scripture; and (4) the sufficiency of Scripture.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: *The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey **any** word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.*

A. Grudem: All the words in Scripture are God's words

1. **Grudem:** This is what the Bible claims for itself

The Old Testament is Scripture: **2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; 2 Peter 1:21: for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**

The New Testament is Scripture: **2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in**

righteousness; 1 Timothy 5:18: For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer *is* worthy of his wages." Since **2 Timothy 3:16** applies to Scripture, it applies to the New Testament. Therefore, the entire Bible is God's Word.

2. **Grudem: We are convinced of the Bible's claims to be God's words as we read the Bible.**

1 Corinthians 2:13-14: These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.; John 10:27: My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

3. **Grudem: Other evidence is useful but not finally convincing.**

Grudem: It is helpful for us to learn that the Bible is historically accurate, that it is internally consistent, that it contains prophecies that have been fulfilled hundreds of years later, that it has influenced the course of human history more than any other book, that it has continued changing the lives of millions of individuals throughout its history, that through it people come to find salvation, that it has a majestic beauty and a profound depth of teaching unmatched by any other book, and that it claims hundreds of times over to be God's very words. All of these arguments and others are useful to us and remove obstacles that might otherwise come in the way of our believing Scripture. But all of these arguments taken individually or together cannot finally be convincing. As the Westminster Confession of Faith said in 1643-46, We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. (chap. 1, para. 5). We can have head knowledge, but until the Holy Spirit reveals and convicts us, head knowledge does not assure. This is

why logic does not convict smart pagans of the truthfulness of Christianity. Only the Holy Spirit convicts and draws. All else is useful, but not convicting.

4. **Grudem: The words of Scripture are self-attesting. They cannot be “proved” to be God’s words by appeal to any higher authority.**

Who is the highest authority to you? At work? At home?

5. **Grudem: Objection : This is a circular argument. All arguments for an absolute authority must ultimately appeal to that authority for proof: otherwise the authority would not be an absolute or highest authority.**

B. Grudem: To disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God

Grudem: Throughout the history of the church the greatest preachers have been those who have recognized that they have no authority in themselves and have seen their task as being to explain the words of Scripture and apply them clearly to the lives of their hearers. Their preaching has drawn its power not from the proclamation of their own Christian experiences or the experiences of others, nor from their own opinions, creative ideas, or rhetorical skills, but from God’s powerful words. . . . Only the written words of Scripture can give this kind of authority to preaching.

C. Grudem: The truthfulness of Scripture

1. **Grudem: God cannot lie or speak falsely. Titus 1:2: in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began; Hebrews 6:18: that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; 2 Samuel 7:28: And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant.**
2. **Grudem: Therefore all the words in Scripture are completely true and without error in any part. Psalm 12:6: The words of the LORD *are* pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.; Proverbs 30:5: Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.; Psalm 119:89: Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.**
3. **Grudem: God’s words are the ultimate standard of truth. John 17:17: Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. Jesus does not use the adjectives *alethinos* or**

alethes ("true"), which we might have expected, to say, "Your word is true." Rather, he uses a noun, *aletheia* ("truth"), to say that God's Word is not simply "true," but it is truth itself. . . . Thus we are to think of the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, the reference point by which every other claim to truthfulness is to be measured. Those assertions that conform with Scripture are "true" while those that do not conform with Scripture are not true. What then is truth? Truth is what God says, and we have what God says . . . in the Bible.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. If you want to persuade someone that the Bible is God's Word, what do you want that person to read more than any other piece of literature?
2. Who would try to make people want to disbelieve something in Scripture? To disobey something in Scripture? Is there anything in the Bible that you do not want to believe? To obey? If your answers to either of the preceding two questions were positive, what is the best way to approach and to deal with the desires you have in this area?
3. Do you know of any proven fact in all of history that has shown something in the Bible to be false? Can the same be said about other religious writings such as the *Book of Mormon* or the *Qur'an*? If you have read in other books such as these, can you describe the spiritual effect they had on you? Compare that with the spiritual effect that reading the Bible has on you. Can you say that when you read the Bible you hear the voice of your Creator speaking to you in a way that is true of no other book?
4. Do you ever find yourself believing something not because you have external evidence for it but simply because it is written in Scripture? Is that proper faith, according to [Hebrews 11:1](#)? If you do believe things simply because Scripture says them, what do you think Christ will say to you about this habit when you stand before his judgment seat? Do you think that trusting and obeying everything that Scripture affirms will ever lead you into sin or away from God's blessing in your life?

Scripture Memory Passage: [2 Timothy 3:16](#)

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Hymn: "Standing on the Promises" (R. Kelso Carter, 1886)

Standing on the promises of Christ my King,
Through eternal ages let his praises ring!

**Glory in the highest I will shout and sing
Standing on the promises of God!**

**Standing on the promises that cannot fail
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail;
By the living Word of God I shall prevail
Standing on the promises of God!**

**Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,
Bound to him eternally by love's strong cord,
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword
Standing on the promises of God!**

**Standing on the promises I cannot fall,
List'ning every moment to the Spirit's call,
Resting in my Savior as my all in all
Standing on the promises of God!**

**Chorus: Standing, standing, standing on the promises of God my Savior;
Standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God.**

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 5: The Inerrancy of Scripture

Are there any errors in the Bible?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **2 Timothy 3:16**

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Grudem: The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to **fact**.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. Grudem: The meaning of inerrancy

Grudem: This definition focuses on the question of truthfulness and falsehood in the language of Scripture. The definition in simple terms just means that the Bible **always** tells the truth, and that it always tells the truth concerning **everything** it talks about. This definition does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact there is to know about any one subject, but it affirms that what it does say about any subject is true.

1. **Grudem:** The Bible can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language of everyday speech

Examples: **Ecclesiastes 1:5:** **The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose.** The reality is that the Earth revolves around the sun.

Grudem: From the perspective of the speaker this is exactly what happens.

Numbers 1:35: **those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred.**

Grudem: It should not trouble us, then, to affirm both that the Bible is absolutely truthful in everything it says and that it uses ordinary language to describe natural phenomena or to give approximations or round numbers when those are

appropriate in the context.

Grudem: Biblical statements can be imprecise and still be totally true. Inerrancy has to do with truthfulness, not with the degree of precision with which events are reported.

2. **Grudem: The Bible can be inerrant and still include loose or free quotations.**

Grudem: The method by which one person quotes the words of another person is a procedure that in large part varies from culture to culture. In contemporary American and British culture we are used to quoting a person's exact words when we enclose the statement in quotation marks (this is called direct quotation). But when we use indirect quotation (with no quotation marks) we only expect an accurate report of the substance of a statement.

Grudem: Written Greek at the time of the New Testament had no quotation marks or equivalent kinds of punctuation, and an accurate citation of another person needed to include only a correct representation of the content of what the person said (rather like our indirect quotations): it was not expected to cite each word exactly.

Note: this is why some of the gospels use different words for some of Jesus' teachings.

3. **Grudem: It is consistent with inerrancy to have unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions in the Bible**

Grudem: There are a few statements in Scripture (in the original languages) that are ungrammatical (according to current standards of proper grammar at that time) but still inerrant because they are completely true. The issue is truthfulness in speech. Good grammar \neq inerrancy.

B. Grudem: Some current challenges to inerrancy

1. **Grudem: The Bible is only authoritative for "faith and practice."**

2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Psalm 12:6: The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times. Proverbs 30:5: Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to

those who put their trust in Him.

What are some New Testament passages that refer to details in the Old Testament?

Grudem (abbreviated list): Jonah was in the whale (Matthew 12:40)

Naaman the Syrian was cleansed of leprosy (Luke 4:27)

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14)

The people of Israel passed through the sea, ate and drank spiritual food and drink, desired evil, sat down to drink, rose up to dance, indulged in immorality, grumbled, and were destroyed (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Abraham gave a tenth of everything to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-2)

Esau sold his birthright for a single meal and later sought it back with tears (Hebrews 12:16-17)

Balaam's donkey spoke (2 Peter 2:16)

Grudem: No detail was too insignificant to be used for the instruction of New Testament Christians. . . . It seems clear that the Bible itself does not support any restriction on the kinds of subjects to which it speaks with absolute authority and truth

2. **Grudem: The term *inerrancy* is a poor term**

Grudem: We often use nonbiblical terms to summarize a biblical teaching. The word Trinity does not occur in Scripture, nor does the word incarnation. Yet both of these terms are very helpful because they allow us to summarize in one word a true biblical concept, and they are therefore helpful in enabling us to discuss a biblical teaching more easily.

3. **Grudem: We have no inerrant manuscripts; therefore, talk about an inerrant Bible is misleading**

We have no original manuscripts because they would be worshipped. This was for our protection. But textual analysis and textual criticism (the study and comparison of ancient texts) has proven that our modern manuscripts are over 99% the same as the originals.

Grudem: We know where the uncertain readings are (for where there are no textual variants we have no reason to expect faulty copying of the original). Thus, our present manuscripts are for most purposes the same as the original manuscripts, and the doctrine of inerrancy therefore directly concerns our present manuscripts

as well.

4. **Grudem: The biblical writers “accommodated” their messages in minor details to the false ideas current in their day, and affirmed or taught those ideas in an incidental way.**

(Translation: the authors did not correct errors of the day to communicate their messages)

Grudem: Yes, God does condescend to speak our language, the language of human beings . But no passage of Scripture teaches that he “condescends” so as to act contrary to his moral character. . . . Such activity would not in any way show God’s greatness, for God does not manifest his greatness by acting in a way that contradicts his character.

5. **Grudem: inerrancy overemphasizes the divine aspect of Scripture and neglects the human aspect.**

A proper view of inerrancy does not exclude human involvement—it magnifies **divine** oversight.

6. **Grudem: There are some clear errors in the Bible.**

Gary Jared: Show me (Google has deluded us into thinking we answer in 0.17 seconds)

Grudem: In every case, the first answer that should be made to this objection is to ask where such errors are. In which specific verse or verses do these errors occur?

Grudem: If we believe that the Bible is indeed inerrant, we should be **eager and certainly not afraid to inspect these texts in minute detail.**

Grudem: Our understanding of Scripture is **never perfect, and this means that there may be cases where we will be unable to find a solution to a difficult passage at the present time.**

C. Grudem: Problems with denying inerrancy

1. **Grudem: If we deny inerrancy, a serious moral problem confronts us: may we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters also?**

Ephesians 5:1: Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. Grudem: A denial of inerrancy that still claims that the words of Scripture are God-breathed words necessarily implies that God intentionally spoke falsely to us in some of the less central affirmations of Scripture. It's never right to do **wrong** to get a chance to do right.

2. **Grudem: If inerrancy is denied, we begin to wonder if we can really trust God in anything he says.**
3. **Grudem: If we deny inerrancy, we essentially make our own human minds a higher standard of truth than God's word itself.**
4. **Grudem: If we deny inerrancy, then we must also say that the Bible is wrong not only in minor details but in some of its doctrines as well.**

How can we be sure it's not wrong elsewhere?

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **Why do you think the debate about inerrancy has become such a large issue in this century? Why do people on both sides of the question think it to be important?**
2. **If you thought there were some small errors affirmed by Scripture, how do you think that would affect the way you read Scripture? Would it affect your concern for truthfulness in everyday conversation?**
3. **Do you know of any Scripture texts that seem to contain errors? What are they? Have you tried to resolve the difficulties in those texts? If you have not found a solution to some text, what further steps might you try?**
4. **As Christians go through life learning to know their Bibles better and growing in Christian maturity, do they tend to trust the Bible more or less? In heaven, do you think you will believe the Bible is inerrant? If so, will you believe it more firmly or less firmly than you do now?**
5. **If you are convinced that the Bible teaches the doctrine of inerrancy, how do you feel about it? Are you glad that such a teaching is there, or do you feel it to be something of a burden which you would rather not have to defend?**
6. **Does belief in inerrancy guarantee sound doctrine and a sound Christian life? How can Jehovah's Witnesses say that the Bible is inerrant while they themselves have so many false teachings?**

7. **If you agree with inerrancy, do you think belief in inerrancy should be a requirement for church membership? For teaching a Sunday school class? For holding a church office such as elder or deacon? For being ordained as a pastor? For teaching at a theological seminary? Why or why not?**
8. **When there is a doctrinal controversy in the church, what are the personal dangers facing those whose position is more consistent with Scripture? In particular, how could pride in correct doctrine become a problem? What is the solution? Do you think inerrancy is an important issue for the future of the church? Why or why not? How do you think it will be resolved?**

Scripture Memory Passage: Psalm 12:6

The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.

Hymn: "The Law of the Lord is Perfect" (Anonymous)

The law of the Lord is perfect,
converting the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart.

The commandments of the Lord are pure,
enlight'ning the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.

Refrain: More to be desired are they than
gold,
yea than much fine gold.
Sweeter also than honey
and the honeycomb.

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 6: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity

Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Psalm 12:6**

The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.

Introduction

Some parts of the Bible are **easier** to understand than others. Peter writes in **2 Peter 3:15-16**: **and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand** [even Peter said *some* of what Paul wrote was hard to understand], **which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.**

But Peter never said the Bible is impossible to understand. And neither did the Bible.

Some believe that the Bible can only be understood by those that are ‘professionals’—college professors, seminary graduates, or those with Bible degrees. If we have the view that the Bible can only be understood by professional scholars, we begin to view church as a place where we are taught by professionals (like a clinic at Home Depot). This is not the case—the laity has an obligation to understand Scripture—lest we view church as professionals-only club.

Grudem: The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by **all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.**

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. Grudem: The Bible frequently affirms its own clarity

Moses: **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**: **And these words which I command you** [the entire nation of Israel] **today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Grudem: All** the people of Israel were expected to be able to understand the words of Scripture well enough to be able to “teach them diligently” to their children.

So, how do we do that? First, meditation helps. **Psalm 1:1-2**: **Blessed** [happy] **is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates** [thinks about how to apply it to his life] **day and night.**

Yeah, Jim, but you have to be smart to understand the Bible. **Psalm 19:7**: **The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple** [naïve, foolish, open-minded, silly]. The Bible says that even if you are a naïve, open-minded, silly fool that you can be made wise. This implies that even the fool can understand the Bible.

Grudem: In a day when it is common for people to tell us how hard it is to interpret Scripture rightly, we would do well to remember that not once in the Gospels do we ever hear Jesus saying anything like this: “I see how your problem arose—the Scriptures are not very clear on that subject.” Jesus’ response to questions: **Matthew 12:3**: **But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him. Matthew 12:5**: **Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Matthew 22:31**: **But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying. Matthew 21:42a**: **Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures.**

Grudem: Lest we think that understanding the Bible was somehow easier for first-century Christians than for us, it is important to realize that in many instances the New Testament epistles were written to churches that had large proportions of Gentile Christians. They were relatively new Christians who had no previous background in any kind of Christian society, and who had little or no prior understanding of the history and culture of Israel.

Why would the authors expect believers to understand their words? Because understanding Scripture is not about intelligence—it is about the **Holy Spirit**

B. Grudem: The moral and spiritual qualities needed for right understanding

Grudem: The New Testament writers frequently state that the ability to understand Scripture rightly is more a moral and spiritual than intellectual ability: 1 Corinthians 2:14: But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 2 Corinthians 3:14-16: But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. James 1:5: If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 1 Corinthians 1:18-3:4 (homework)

So, what does a person need to be able to rightly understand the Scriptures? The **Holy Spirit**

D. Grudem: Why do people misunderstand Scripture?

Grudem: The problem always lies not with Scripture but with ourselves.

Grudem: It is possible that we have made mistakes in our interpretation of Scripture. I would caution you to hold tightly to too many things—you only have two hands.

So, why is all of this important? Answering the question, “Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly?” is important because it affects how we engage God. If we take the view that only professionals can understand the Bible, we outsource our relationship with God to others, we put up a non-necessary hurdle between ourselves and God, and we minimize the work of the Holy Spirit. However, if we believe we can rightly understand the Bible, then we interface directly with God, we use the teachers and preachers in our churches properly, and we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us.

F. Grudem: The role of scholars

1. **Grudem: They can teach Scripture clearly**
2. **Grudem: They can explore new areas of understanding the teachings of Scripture.**

Many times in my own life I have found that others speaking into my life have enabled me to see new ways to apply the Scriptures (either through their personal experiences or

through their personal study). **Grudem: The process of relating its various teachings to one another, synthesizing them, and applying them to each new generation, is a greatly rewarding task that will never be completed in this age. Every scholar who deeply loves God's Word will soon realize that there is much more in Scripture than can be learned in any one lifetime!** Personal example: I hope to teach well into my 80s. If I am permitted to teach for 50 more years, assuming I teach 75% of the time, I will have about 150 series to teach (assuming I teach 75% of the time and that my average series length is 10 weeks and assuming that I reteach material 25% of the time). There is simply no enough time to be an expert on everything.

3. **Grudem: They can defend the teachings of the Bible against attacks by other scholars.**

Titus 1:9: holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict; 2 Timothy 2:25: in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. **If the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture is true, why does there seem to be so much disagreement among Christians about the teaching of the Bible? Observing the diversity of interpretations of Scripture, some conclude, "People can make the Bible say anything they want." How do you think Jesus would respond to this statement?**
2. **What would happen to the church if most believers gave up reading the Bible for themselves and only listened to Bible teachers or read books about the Bible? If you thought that only expert scholars could understand the Bible rightly, what would happen to your personal reading of Scripture? Has this already happened to some extent in your life or in the lives of those you know?**
3. **Do you think that there are right and wrong interpretations of most or all passages of Scripture? If you thought the Bible was generally unclear, how would your answer change? Will a conviction about the clarity of Scripture affect the care you use when studying a text of Scripture? Will it affect the way you approach Scripture when trying to gain a biblical answer to some difficult doctrinal or moral problem?**
4. **If even seminary professors disagree about some Bible teaching, can other Christians ever hope to come to a correct decision on that teaching? (Give reasons for your answer.) Do you think ordinary people among the Jews at the time of Jesus had a hard**

- time deciding whether to believe Jesus or the scholarly experts who disagreed with him? Did Jesus expect them to be able to decide?
5. How can a pastor preach biblically based sermons each Sunday without giving the impression that only people with seminary training (like himself) are able to interpret Scripture rightly? Do you think it should ever be necessary, in a doctrinal or ethical controversy, for a Bible scholar to speak in a church and base his main arguments on special meanings of Greek or Hebrew words that the church members themselves are unable to evaluate or take issue with personally? Is there an appropriate way for a scholar to use such technical knowledge in popular writing or speaking?
 6. Church leaders at the time of Martin Luther said they wanted to keep the Bible in Latin to prevent the common people from reading it and then misinterpreting it. Evaluate this argument. Why do you think Martin Luther was so anxious to translate the Bible into German? Why do you think church leaders in previous centuries have persecuted and even killed men— like William Tyndale in England— who were translating the Bible into the language of the people? Why is the task of Bible translation into other languages so important a part of the work of missions?
 7. Does the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture mean that the New Testament can be fully understood by people who do not have access to an Old Testament?

Scripture Memory Passage: **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Hymn: “Jehovah’s Perfect Law” (From: The Psalter, 1912)

Jehovah’s perfect law restores the soul again;
His testimony sure gives wisdom unto men;
The precepts of the LORD are right,
And fill the heart with great delight.

The LORD’s commands are pure; they light and joy restore;
Jehovah’s fear is clean, enduring evermore;
His statutes, let the world confess,
Are wholly truth and righteousness.

They are to be desired above the finest gold;
Than honey from the comb more sweetness far they hold;

**With warnings they your servant guard,
In keeping them is great reward.**

**His errors who can know? Cleanse me from hidden stain;
Keep me from willful sins, nor let them o'er me reign;
And then I upright shall appear
And be from great transgressions clear.**

**Whene'er you search my life, may all my thoughts within
And all the words I speak your full approval win.
O Lord, you are a rock to me,
And my Redeemer you shall be.**

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 7: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (3) Necessity

For what purposes are the Bible necessary? How much can people know about God without the Bible?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Grudem: The necessity of Scripture means that 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.

Knowing what the Bible is necessary for helps us to use it rightly and to misuse it less.

A. Grudem: The Bible is necessary for knowledge of the gospel

It works for New Testament saints looking back to Christ: **Romans 10:13-17: 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** It works for Old Testament saints looking to Christ: **Hebrews 11:13: These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.** Even Abraham

was looking forward to the Messiah's coming: **John 8:56: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.**

Grudem: One must either read the gospel message in the Bible for oneself, or hear it from another person. Even those believers who came to salvation in the old covenant did so by trusting in the words of God that promised a Savior to come.

This is a very old concept (some One is coming to fix things): **Genesis 3:15: And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.** **Grudem: As the history of the Old Testament progressed, God's words of promise became more and more specific, and the forward-looking faith of God's people accordingly became more and more definite. Yet it seems always to have been a faith resting specifically on the words of God himself.**

B. Grudem: The Bible is necessary for maintaining spiritual life

Physical food is not enough for life: **Matthew 4:4: But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"**

Grudem: To neglect regular reading of God's Word is as detrimental to the health of our souls as the neglect of physical food is detrimental to the health of our bodies. This concept (that the words of God are necessary for spiritual life) is found in the Old Testament: **Deuteronomy 32:47: For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life, and by this word you shall prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.** And in the New Testament: **1 Peter 2:2: as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.** **Grudem: The Bible, then, is necessary for maintaining spiritual life and for growth in the Christian life.** Example: my bonsai

C. Grudem: The Bible is necessary for certain knowledge of God's will

Grudem: In the Bible, however, we have clear and definite statements about God's will.

We have enough to fulfill his will: **Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret *things* belong to the LORD our God, but those *things* which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.**

Grudem: A philosopher might argue as follows: The fact that we do not know everything requires us to be uncertain about everything we do claim to know. This is because some fact unknown to us may yet turn out to prove that what we thought to be true was actually false. . . . Ultimately, there are only two possible solutions to this problem: (1) We must learn all the facts of the universe in order to be sure that no

subsequently discovered fact will prove our present ideas to be false; or (2) someone who does know all the facts in the universe, and who never lies, could tell us some true facts that we can then be sure will never be contradicted. This is one reason why we cannot trust in reason/science/the observable world for ultimate knowledge. We must rely on One who knows all, has seen all, and communicates with us.

Grudem: No fact can ever turn up to contradict the truth spoken by this one who is omniscient. Thus, it is appropriate for us to be more certain about the truths we read in Scripture than about any other knowledge we have. This knowledge produces boldness. This knowledge produces confidence. This knowledge produces trust. And this knowledge engenders a relationship. **Grudem: For people who are not omniscient, the Bible is necessary for certain knowledge about anything.**

D. Grudem: But the Bible is not necessary for knowing that God exists

Grudem: What about people who do not read the Bible? Can they obtain any knowledge of God? Can they know anything about his laws? Yes. **Grudem: People can obtain a knowledge that God exists, and a knowledge of some of his attributes, simply from observation of themselves and the world around them.** There is a creator: **Psalm 19:1: The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.** God is a God of love and mercy: **Acts 14:16-17: Who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.** Those that deny His existence are without excuse: **Romans 1:19-21: Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.** **Grudem: Even without the Bible, all persons who have ever lived have had evidence in creation that God exists, that he is the Creator and they are creatures, and have also had some evidence of his character.**

E. Grudem: Furthermore, the Bible is not necessary for knowing something about God's character and moral laws

Sinners know their sin is wrong: **Romans 1:18-32: 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His**

eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. **24** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **25** who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. **26** For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. **27** Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. **28** And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; **29** being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, **30** backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, **31** undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; **32** who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

God placed within man a conscience to point man to God: **Romans 2:14-15**: **for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them***). Grudem: It is on this basis that Paul argues that **all** humanity is held guilty before God for sin, even those who do not have the written laws of God in Scripture.

Grudem: The knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law, which comes through creation to all humanity, is often called "**general** revelation" (because it comes to all people generally). General revelation comes through observing nature, through seeing God's directing influence in history, and through an inner sense of God's existence and his laws that he has placed inside every person.

Grudem: "**Special** revelation" . . . refers to God's words addressed to specific people, such as the words of the Bible, the words of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, and the words of God spoken in personal address, such as at

Mount Sinai or at the baptism of Jesus. Special revelation . . . also includes, for example, many words of Jesus that were not recorded in Scripture, and probably there were many words spoken by Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles that were not recorded in Scripture either.

Grudem: The fact that all people know something of God's moral laws is a great blessing for society, for unless they did there would be no societal restraint on the evil that people would do and no restraint from their consciences. Because there is some common knowledge of right and wrong, Christians can often find much consensus with non-Christians in matters of civil law, community standards, basic ethics for business and professional activity, and acceptable patterns of conduct in ordinary life.

Grudem: In a fallen world knowledge gained by observation of the world is always imperfect and always liable to error or misinterpretation. Therefore the knowledge of God and creation gained from Scripture must be used to interpret correctly the creation around us. Using the theological terms that we will define below, we can say that we need **special** revelation to interpret **general** revelation rightly.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. When you are witnessing to an unbeliever, what is the one thing above all others that you should want him or her to read? Do you know of anyone who ever became a Christian without either reading the Bible or hearing someone tell him or her what the Bible said? What then is the primary task of an evangelistic missionary? How should the necessity of Scripture affect our missionary orientation?
2. Do you nourish your soul on the spiritual food of the Word as carefully and diligently as you nourish your body on physical food? What makes us so spiritually insensitive that we feel physical hunger much more acutely than spiritual hunger? What is the remedy?
3. When we are actively seeking to know God's will, where should we spend most of our time and effort? In practice, where do you spend most of your time and effort when seeking to find God's will? Do God's principles in Scripture and the apparent guidance we receive from feelings, conscience, advice, circumstances, human reasoning, or society ever seem to conflict? How should we seek to resolve the conflict?
4. Is it a hopeless task to work for civil legislation based on standards that accord with God's moral principles in Scripture? Why is there good reason to hope that we will finally be able to persuade a great majority of our society to adopt laws consistent with scriptural norms? What would hinder this effort?

Scripture Memory Passage: Matthew 4:4

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Hymn: "Teach Me, O Lord, Your Way of Truth" (From: The Psalter, 1912)

Teach me, O Lord, your way of truth,
And from it I will not depart;
That I may steadfastly obey,
Give me an understanding heart.

In your commandments make me walk,
For in your law my joy shall be;
Give me a heart that loves your will,
From discontent and envy free.

Turn now my eyes from vanity,
And cause me in your ways to tread;
O let your servant prove your Word
and thus to godly fear be led.

Turn away my reproach and fear;
Your righteous judgments I confess;
To know your precepts I desire;
Revive me in your righteousness.

Systematic Theology

Part 1: Doctrine of the Word of God

Chapter 8: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency

Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Matthew 4:4**

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. Grudem: The definition of the sufficiency of Scripture

Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains **everything we **need** God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: **15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. James 1:8: he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. 1 Peter 1:23: having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, Psalm 119:1: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD!****

B. Grudem: We can find all that God has said on particular topics, and we can find answers to our questions

Do you ever get overwhelmed with how much you don't know about what others have learned about God and how to follow Him?

Grudem: The Bible alone and saves us from the endless task of searching through all the writings of Christians throughout history, or through all the teachings of the church, or through all the subjective feelings and impressions that come to our minds from day to day, in order to find what God requires of us.

We have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This should give us confidence.

Grudem: The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture tells us that it is possible to study systematic theology and ethics and find answers to our questions.

C. Grudem: The amount of Scripture given was sufficient at each stage of redemptive history

Grudem: It helps us to understand how God could tell his people that his words to them were sufficient at many different points in the history of redemption, and how he could nevertheless add to those words later.

Grudem: God has always taken the initiative in revealing things to us: Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret *things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.* God is clear that man is not to add to God's words (that is reserved for God alone): Deuteronomy 4:2: *You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.* Deuteronomy 12:32: *Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.* Proverbs 30:5-6: *Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.* Revelation 22:18-19: *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

D. Grudem: Practical applications of the sufficiency of Scripture

1. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture should encourage us as we try to discover what God would have us to think (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to do (in a particular situation).**

But what if Scripture is silent? Then we should also be silent.

2. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture, and that we are to consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture.**

(not even Grudem's—or Fleming's—or Jared's—or Smith's—or Davenport's—or MacArthur's—or Piper's—or Spurgeon's—or Graham's)

3. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that God does not require us to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work that is not found in Scripture.**

We do not have to worry about missing something that we need.

4. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture shows us that no modern revelations from God are to be placed on a level equal to Scripture in authority.**

(a slightly different take than #2)

5. **Grudem: With regard to living the Christian life, the sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.**

But what if Scripture is silent? Then we should also be silent.

6. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication.**

We are free in Christ. Follow only the Bible's teachings—everything else is commentary.

7. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that in our doctrinal and ethical teaching we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture.**

Do not fret over what you think God left out. He did not leave anything out that we need.

Grudem: Questions for Personal Application (abbreviated)

1. In the process of growing in the Christian life and deepening your relationship with God, approximately how much emphasis have you placed on reading the Bible itself and how much on reading other Christian books? In seeking to know God's will for your daily life, what is the relative emphasis you have put on reading Scripture itself and on reading other Christian books? Do you think the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture will cause you to place more emphasis on reading Scripture itself?
2. What are some of the doctrinal or moral questions you are wondering about? Has this chapter increased your confidence in the ability of Scripture to provide a clear answer for some of those questions?
3. Have you ever wished that the Bible would say more than it does about a certain subject? Or less? What do you think motivated that wish? After reading this chapter, how would you approach someone who expressed such a wish today? How is God's wisdom shown in the fact that he chose not to make the Bible a great deal longer or a great deal shorter than it actually is?
4. If the Bible contains everything we need God to tell us for obeying him perfectly, what is the role of the following in helping us to find God's will for ourselves: advice from others; sermons or Bible classes; our consciences; our feelings; the leading of the Holy Spirit as we sense him prompting our inward desires and subjective impressions; changes in circumstances; the gift of prophecy (if you think it can function today)?
5. In the light of this chapter, how would you find God's "perfect" will for your life? Is it possible that there would be more than one "perfect" choice in many decisions we make? (Consider [Psalm 1:3](#) and [1 Corinthians 7:39](#) in seeking an answer.)
6. Have there been times when you have understood the principles of Scripture well enough with regard to a specific situation but have not known the facts of the situation well enough to know how to apply those scriptural principles correctly? In seeking to know God's will, can there be any other things we need to know except (a) the teaching of Scripture and (b) the facts of the situation in question, together with (c) skill in applying (a) to (b) correctly? What then is the role of prayer in seeking guidance? What should we pray for?

Scripture Memory Passage: [Psalm 119:1](#)

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD!

Hymn: "How Firm a Foundation" (Rippons Selection of Hymns, 1787)

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the
Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he hath
said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not
dismayed;
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause
thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through the deep waters I call thee
to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway
shall lie,

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to
refine,
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to
refine.

"E'en down to old age all my people shall
prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples
adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be
borne,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be
borne.

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for
repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor
to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."

Systematic Theology: Review of the Doctrine of the Word of God

Scripture Memory Passage Review: **Psalm 119:1**

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD!

Chapter 1: Introduction to Systematic Theology

What is systematic theology? Why should Christians study it? How should we study it?

Grudem: *Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic.* Example: **Lego** sets vs pieces

Why should we as a class study systematic theology?

1. To fulfill the Great Commission
2. To confront sin in our lives
3. **Grudem:** *To be able to make better decisions later on new questions of doctrine that may arise*

Scripture Memory Passage: **Psalm 119:11**

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Chapter 2: The Word of God

What are the different forms of the Word of God?

A. Grudem: The "Word of God" as a Person: Jesus Christ

B. The "Word of God" as speech by God

1. **Grudem:** *God's decrees: a word of God that causes something to happen*
2. **Grudem:** *God's words of personal address: when God communicates with people on earth by speaking directly to them*
3. **Grudem:** *God's words as speech through human lips*
4. **Grudem:** *God's words in written form (the Bible)*

Scripture Memory Passage: Psalm 1:1-2

1 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, 2 Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Chapter 3: The Canon of Scripture

What belongs in the Bible and what does not belong?

Grudem: *The canon of Scripture is the list of all the books that belong in the Bible.*

The Old Testament and the New Testament both point exclusively to Jesus

Scripture Memory Passage: Hebrews 1:1-2

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

Chapter 4: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (1) Authority

How do we know that the Bible is God's Word?

Grudem: *The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.*

A. Grudem: All the words in Scripture are God's words

1. **Grudem:** *This is what the Bible claims for itself (2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.; 1 Timothy 5:18: For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages.")*
2. **Grudem:** *We are convinced of the Bible's claims to be God's words as we read the Bible*
3. **Grudem:** *Other evidence is useful but not finally convincing*
4. **Grudem:** *The words of Scripture are self-attesting*

B. Grudem: Therefore, to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God

C. Grudem: The truthfulness of Scripture

1. **Grudem: God cannot lie or speak falsely**
2. **Grudem: Therefore all the words in Scripture are completely true and without error in any part**
3. **Grudem: God's words are the ultimate standard of truth**

Scripture Memory Passage: 2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Chapter 5: The Inerrancy of Scripture

Are there any errors in the Bible?

Grudem: The Bible always tells the truth, and that it always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about.

1. **Grudem: The Bible can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language of everyday speech. Grudem: Biblical statements can be imprecise and still be totally true. Inerrancy has to do with truthfulness, not with the degree of precision with which events are reported.**
2. **Grudem: The Bible can be inerrant and still include loose or free quotations.**
3. **Grudem: It is consistent with inerrancy to have unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions in the Bible**

C. Grudem: Problems with denying inerrancy

1. **Grudem: A serious moral problem confronts us: may we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters also?**
2. **Grudem: We begin to wonder if we can really trust God in anything he says.**
3. **Grudem: We essentially make our own human minds a higher standard of truth than God's word itself.**
4. **Grudem: Then we must also say that the Bible is wrong not only in minor details but in some of its doctrines as well.**

Scripture Memory Passage: Psalm 12:6

The words of the LORD *are* pure words, *Like* silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.

Chapter 6: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (2) Clarity

Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly?

Grudem: The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by **all** who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.

A. Grudem: The Bible frequently affirms its own clarity

Deuteronomy 6:6-7: **And these words which I command you** [the entire nation of Israel] **today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.** **Psalm 19:7:** **The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple** [naïve, foolish, open-minded, silly]. **Why would the authors expect believers to understand their words?** Understanding Scripture is not about intelligence—it is about the **Holy Spirit**.

D. Grudem: Why do people misunderstand Scripture?

Grudem: The problem always lies not with Scripture but with ourselves. **Grudem:** It is possible that we have made mistakes in our interpretation of Scripture.

F. Grudem: The role of scholars

1. **Grudem:** They can teach Scripture clearly
2. **Grudem:** They can explore new areas of understanding the teachings of Scripture
3. **Grudem:** They can defend the teachings of the Bible against attacks by other scholars

Scripture Memory Passage: Deuteronomy 6:6-7

6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Chapter 7: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (3) Necessity

For what purposes are the Bible necessary? How much can people know about God without the Bible?

Grudem: The necessity of Scripture means that 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.

A. Grudem: The Bible is necessary for knowledge of the gospel

Romans 10:13-17: **13** For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” **14** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? **15** And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” **16** But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” **17** So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

B. Grudem: The Bible is necessary for maintaining spiritual life

Matthew 4:4: But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

C. Grudem: The Bible is necessary for certain knowledge of God’s will

Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we may do all the words of this law.* Grudem: For people who are not omniscient, the Bible is necessary for certain knowledge about **anything**.

D. Grudem: But the Bible is not necessary for knowing that God exists

Psalms 19:1: The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

E. Grudem: Furthermore, the Bible is not necessary for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws

Romans 1:18-21: **18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Grudem: The knowledge of God’s existence, character, and moral law, which comes through creation to all humanity, is often called “general revelation.” Grudem: “Special revelation” . . . refers to God’s words addressed to specific people, such as the words of the Bible, the words of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament

apostles, and the words of God spoken in personal address. Grudem: We need special revelation to interpret general revelation rightly.

Scripture Memory Passage: Matthew 4:4

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Chapter 8: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency

Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?

Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains **everything** we **need** God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly. **2 Timothy 3:15-17: 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

B. Grudem: We can find all that God has said on particular topics, and we can find answers to our questions

Grudem: The Bible alone and saves us from the endless task of searching through all the writings of Christians throughout history, or through all the teachings of the church, or through all the subjective feelings and impressions that come to our minds from day to day, in order to find what God requires of us.

C. Grudem: The amount of Scripture given was sufficient at each stage of redemptive history

Grudem: **God** has always taken the initiative in revealing things to us: **Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.**

D. Grudem: Practical applications of the sufficiency of Scripture (abbreviated)

1. Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture should encourage us as we try to discover what God would have us to think (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to do (in a particular situation).

2. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture, and that we are to consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture.**
3. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that God does not require us to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work that is not found in Scripture.**
4. **Grudem: With regard to living the Christian life, the sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.**
5. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication.**
6. **Grudem: The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that in our doctrinal and ethical teaching we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture.**

Scripture Memory Passage: Psalm 119:1

Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD!