

# **FOUNDATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP**

## *Systematic Theology Course*

**Dr. William E. Bell**

### **VOLUME 4** 122

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# **General & Special Revelation**

## *Volume 4 - Unit 1*

### **I. The Question of Epistemology**

A. The Term - From epistomai, "to know, understand"

B. The Question

C. The Christian Answer

1. General (Natural) revelation

2. Special revelation

### **II. General Revelation**

A. What It Is

1. Scriptures

a. Psalms 19:1-2

b. Acts 14:17

c. Romans 1:19-20

2. The strength of the evidence

B. Its Limits

C. Its Relationship to Special Revelation (What about the heathen in Lapland who never heard the gospel?)

1. Negative response - no excuse (Romans 1:20)
  
2. Positive response - additional (special) revelation
  - a. Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8)
  - b. Cornelius (Acts 10)
  - c. Corinthians (Acts 18:10)

### **III. Special Revelation**

A. Liberalism

B. Neo-Orthodoxy

C. Historic Christian Orthodoxy

1. The concept
  
2. The church fathers

### **IV. Bibliography**

Harris, R. Laird, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, Zondervan.  
Henry, Carl (Editor), *Revelation and the Bible*, Presbyterian and Reformed.  
Lightner, Robt. P., *The Savior and the Scriptures*, Presbyterian and Reformed.  
Packer, J. I., *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, Eerdmans.  
Pinnock, Clark, *Biblical Revelation*, Moody.  
Warfield, B. B., *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Presbyterian and Reformed  
Wenham, J. W., *Christ and the Bible*, InterVarsity.  
Young, E. J., *The Word is Truth*, Eerdmans.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Psalm 19:1 – “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork.”

# **Definition & Importance of Biblical Inerrancy - Part 1**

## *Volume 4 - Unit 2*

### **I. Definition**

God so supernaturally directed the writers of scripture that without waiving their human intelligence, literary style, or personal feeling, His complete and coherent message to man was recorded with perfect accuracy, the very words of the original scripture bearing the authority of divine authorship.

A. Sometimes Called Inerrancy.

B. Sometimes Called Verbal, Plenary Inspiration.

1. Verbal - the very words inspired.

2. Plenary - all the words inspired.

### **II. What Inerrancy Does Not Demand**

A. Mechanical dictation

B. That the writers of scripture be sinless or that they be free of many of the erroneous views of their day - but God did not permit their imperfections to infiltrate the scripture they wrote.

C. That the New Testament writers always quoted the Old Testament verbatim, or even that they quoted the Hebrew text at all.

Acts 15:17 (from Amos 9:11-12)

AV (LXX, substantially) – “that the residue of men may seek after the Lord . . . ”

Masoretic (Hebrew) Text - "that they (Israel) may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations that are called by my name."

D. That the Biblical writers always used conventional grammar and syntax.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - II Peter 1:21 – “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit.”

## Definition & Importance of Biblical Inerrancy - Part 2

Volume 4 - Unit 3

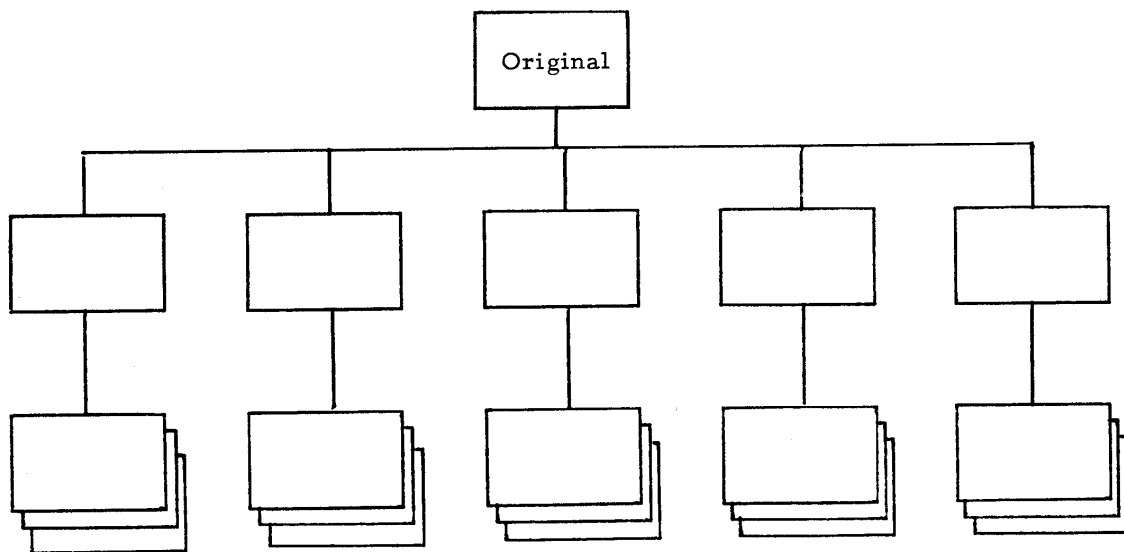
### *(II. What Inerrancy Does Not Demand cont.)*

E. That the Biblical writers did not use figures of speech, phenomenal language, poetic forms, common expressions of the day, etc.

F. That genealogies and chronologies were always presented in the full and orderly manner that scholars would use today.

G. That parallel accounts of the same event must be verbally identical.

H. That translations or copies of the original manuscripts be inerrant. (But textual criticism has given us an extremely accurate text today - particularly in the New Testament.)



### **III. What Inerrancy Does Mean**

That we can trust the scriptures absolutely and not be deceived - theologically, historically, geographically, or scientifically.

#### **IV. The Importance of Inerrancy - *The Question of Ultimate Authority***

A. Reason

B. Church

C. Revelation

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - II Timothy 3:16 –17 – “All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be full-grown, completely equipped for every good work.”

# **Evidence for Inerrancy: The Biblical Testimony**

## *Volume 4 - Unit 4*

### **I. The Old Testament Writers**

#### A. Moses

1. Exodus 4:10-12

2. Exodus 34:27

3. Deuteronomy 4:2

4. Deuteronomy 18:20

5. Hundreds of references, such as "Thus says the Lord", "The Lord said", "The Lord spoke", "The saying of the Lord", "The word of the Lord", etc.

B. Isaiah - Some 20 times claims that his words are the word of the Lord (e. g. Isaiah 1:10).

C. Jeremiah - Almost 100 times - "The word of the Lord came unto me . . ." or similar statement (e. g. 1:2, 4, 11, etc.).

D. Ezekiel - About 60 times claims that his words are God's words (e. g. 3:10-11).

E. Daniel 10:9

#### F. The Minor Prophets

1. Hosea 1:1

2. Joel 1:1
3. Amos 3:1
4. Obadiah 1:1
5. Jonah 1:1
6. Micah 1:1
7. Nahum 1:12
8. Habakkuk 2:2
9. Zephaniah 1:1
10. Haggai 1:1
11. Zechariah 1:1
12. Malachi 1:1

G. David - Psalms 119:89

## **II. The New Testament Writers**

A. II Timothy 3:16-17 - Theopneustos

B. II Peter 1:20-21

C. I Peter 1:23-25 (Isaiah 40:6-8)



D. Hebrews 4:12

E. James 1:18

F. Acts 4:25, 28:25

### **III. Jesus Himself**

A. Treated the Old Testament Narratives as Statements of Fact.

B. Used the Old Testament as the Court of Appeal in Matters of Faith and Conduct.

1. Matthew 5:17-20

2. Matthew 23:2-3

3. Matthew 22:29

4. Matthew 22:31-32

5. Matthew 4 - "It is written . . . "

C. Viewed the Old Testament as Predictive of Himself.

1. John 5:39

2. Luke 24:27

3. Luke 4:21

4. Luke 18:31-33

5. Mark 14: 21

6. Luke 22:37

7. Matthew 26:53-56

D. Expressly Stated the Authority of the Old Testament and of His Own Words.

1. John 10: 3 5

2. Matthew 5:17 -18

3. Mark 13:31

E. Pre-authenticated the New Testament Scriptures, Which Would Be Written by  
(Or Under the Supervision of) His Chosen Apostles.

1. John 14: 2 6

2. John 16:12-14

3. Matthew 16:18f. (cf. 18:18, John 20:23)

4. John 20:21

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - John 10:35 – “The scripture cannot be broken.”

# **Evidence for Inerrancy: The Christological Argument - Part 1**

## *Volume 4 - Unit 5*

### **I. Circular Reasoning?**

### **II. The Historical Reliability of the Gospels**

*Note: I am here reproducing (in summary form) a paper which I presented to the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Santa Barbara, California.*

*The plan is to subject the New Testament documents to the same canons of criticism that are used to evaluate any other ancient document. The methodology to be used is taken from a standard text on the historical method, used in many graduate schools in courses in historical research: *Understanding History* by Louis Gottschalk, Professor of History, The University of Chicago, Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, New York, 1964. Dr. Gottschalk categorizes the evidence as external and internal.*

#### **A. External Evidence**

1. Is the document genuine? Does it actually come from the time period represented? What do we know of the author? Etc. No real problem here. Even the most liberal of critics credit Paul with several epistles, agree that Luke wrote the third gospel. No question that these documents arose from actual people writing in the first century A.D.

2. Do we have the original document or accurate copies? This is the problem of textual criticism. We now have approximately 5,000 N. T. manuscripts (not all complete, of course), and textual criticism has established an extremely accurate text. (Cf. works of Tacitus -only 2 manuscripts, Thucydides - only 8 manuscripts.) Sir Frederick Kenyon, foremost authority on ancient manuscripts: "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established. "

#### **B. Internal Evidence**

Gottschalk: "To him (the historian) any single detail of testimony is credible - even if it is contained in a document obtained by force or fraud, or is otherwise impeachable, or is based on hearsay evidence, or is from an

interested witness - provided it can pass four tests: (1) Was the ultimate source of the detail (the primary witness) able to tell the truth?, (2) Was he willing to tell the truth?, (3) Was he accurately reported with regard to the detail under examination?, and (4) Is there any independent corroboration?"

1. Was the primary witness able to tell the truth?

a. Nearness

(1) In space. Eyewitness best. Geographical nearness. 3 of the gospels give eyewitness accounts. Luke did research among eyewitnesses. Even re John's gospel -Israel Abrahams, noted rabbinical scholar: "My own general impression, without asserting an early date for the Fourth Gospel (many do today), is that the Gospel enshrines a genuine tradition of an aspect of Jesus' teaching which has not found a place in the Synoptics. "

(2) In time. Chronological nearness, i. e. how soon recorded after the event? N. T. attestation excellent here. Manuscripts begin shortly after end of first century. Complete manuscripts from 4th century. (Cf. Caesar's Gallic War, earliest manuscript. 900 years later. Tacitus, 2 manuscripts, 9th and 11th centuries. Herodotus, 1, 300 yrs. to earliest manuscript.)

b. Competence. Degree of expertness, state of mental and physical health, age, education, memory, narrative skill, etc. Again, no doubts re N. T. writers. Take Luke, for example. Sir Wm. Ramsay (and others since) found Luke to be careful scholar, accurate historian. -Paul, great rabbinical scholar, etc.

c. Degree of attention. Possibility of distraction, deception, unbalanced account, etc. Was witness aware of what was really happening? No historical evidence has ever been brought forward to demonstrate any such thing re New Testament writers. Everywhere there is evidence of genuine eyewitness testimony, local color, etc.

d. Danger of leading or loaded questions. Forced or guided testimony is suspect. No evidence of any such thing in N. T. Luke states that he did careful, original research - after the fact.

e. Reasoning in a circle? Gottschalk applies mainly to unsigned documents, assigning them to certain witnesses on questionable bases. No real problem in N. T. Gospels are all unsigned, but doesn't affect historical witness.

f. Egocentrism. Overplaying one's own role in a historical event. Just the opposite in N. T. usually. Note anonymous gospels, etc. Writers frequently present themselves in bad light.

## 2. Was the primary witness willing to tell the truth?

a. Interested witness? Stands to profit from deliberate perversion of truth. Some have charged this - cf. Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768), disciples decided to perpetuate "a good thing" in spite of Christ's death. Evidence is strongly against such a view. None ever recanted - even when facing martyrdom. Psychologically impossible. Their "best interest", humanly speaking, would have been to renounce Jesus as Christ.

b. Bias? Unknowing perversion of truth, arising from religion, politics, race, nationality, region, family, other ties. Natural bent of an orthodox Jew would have been against Jesus - cf. Saul of Tarsus. Becoming a disciple involved ostracism from Jewish community. Thus if there was bias, it would have been against Jesus. Belief meant nothing but trouble.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Mark 13:31 – “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

## **Evidence for Inerrancy: The Christological Argument - Part 2**

### *Volume 4 - Unit 6*

#### *(2. Was the primary witness willing to tell the truth? – cont.)*

c. Intended hearers. Desire to please, displease. Political rallies, war dispatches, etc. No evidence of this in N. T. writings. Take Luke, again. Did he try to please Theophilus? Tried to show him the real nature of Christianity, but did not trim the message. Luke-Acts hardly designed to "please" either Jews or Romans. Christ as Lord (kurios), not Caesar, etc.

d. Literary style. Cliches, slogans, "picturesque speech" may distort facts. Most N. T. documents written in the very plainest of speech. Cf. Mark, - short, terse, to the point. Paul, no "excellency of speech", etc.

e. Laws and conventions. Fear of libel, courtesy, tact, diplomacy, etc. Hardly the case with N. T. Cf. Jesus' and Paul's denunciation of Jews, pagan gods, etc. "Narrowness" of Christianity - hardly tactful. John 14:6.

#### 3. Is the primary witness accurately reported with regard to the detail under examination?

Basically, this has to do with the transmission of information to secondary sources when there is no eyewitness testimony. Much of N.T. witness is eyewitness testimony. Even Mark reported Peter's eyewitness testimony (per Papias, et al -generally accepted as true). No problem here.

#### 4. Is there independent corroboration? Historian prefers independent testimony of at least 2 witnesses, but frequently not available, so other tests are made:

a. What of author's reputation for veracity? Cf. Ramsay's evaluation of Luke, etc.

b. Independent witnesses? Synoptic problem makes this complicated, but all agree that some of the material is independent.

c. Lack of self-contradiction. Many authors contradict themselves. N. T. writers do not.

d. No contradiction from other sources. Secular sources, when available, have corroborated N. T. documents. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents - Are They Reliable ?*

Per Gottschalk, conditions which are particularly favorable to truthful reporting:

1. Indifferent witness, or, better still, information which is prejudicial to the witness. N. T. writers are not indifferent to their material, but they are frequently prejudicial to themselves and the other primary witnesses. Cf. accounts of Peter's denial (even in Mark, "Peter's gospel"), Paul's persecution of disciples, disciples' inability to comprehend Jesus's message, their selfishness, etc. Strong historical evidence.

2. The incidental and the probable. Information incidental to the main point is likely true, since writer is not emphasizing it. Cf. Jesus's statement in John 10:35 concerning the truthfulness of scripture - one of our key passages re His attitude toward scripture, yet not His major point in the passage.

3. That which is common knowledge at the time is probably true, because could be easily contradicted. Paul to Agrippa: ". . . these things were not done in a corner. " (Acts 26:26) Over 500 witnesses to resurrection, most still alive 25 years later (I Corinthians 15:6).

One final test, per Gottschalk: Is the testimony in conformity with known historical and scientific facts? Historically, no problem. But scientific facts? Herein lies the whole problem. We now "know" that miracles do not happen, that there are no evil spirits, etc., i. e. the supernatural cannot be considered as a source of phenomena. Therefore, regardless of the historical, unimpeachable testimony of the N. T., the unbelieving historian

must attempt some alternate interpretation in order to avoid the supernatural. The problem is not historical - but philosophical. Here is where the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is essential to break through the naturalistic a priori stance.

Additional note: With regard to the matter of Jesus's attitude toward scripture (apart from the truthfulness of Christianity generally) the historical evidence is clear and compelling. This is our present point.

### **III. The Christological Problem**

#### A. The Historical Evidence

#### B. The Scholarly Agreement

1. H. J. Cadbury
2. F. C. Grant
3. John Knox
4. Adolph Harnack
5. Rudolph Bultmann

#### C. The Inevitable Question

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - John 14:26 – “But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”



## **Evidence for Inerrancy (Other)**

*Volume 4 - Unit 7*

### **I. Continuity**

### **II. Fulfilled Prophecy**

### **III. Archeology**

- A. Ur
- B. Belshazzar
- C. Moses and Writing
- D. The Hittites

### **IV. Unique Content**

- A. Man's Depravity
- B. Plan of Salvation
- C. Graphic Portraits of Great Men

### **V. Agreement With The Facts of Life**

- A. Depravity
- B. Life and Death.
- Etc.

### **VI. Ability To Change Lives Bar The New Birth**

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

**Dealing with Biblical Difficulties - Part 1**  
*Volume 4 - Unit 8*

**I. Numerical**

- A. II Kings 8:26 - II Chronicles 22:2
- B. I Kings 4:26 - II Chronicles 9:25
- C. Terah's Age
- D. Jacob's Family
- E. Israel in Egypt

**II. Historical**

- A. The Hittites
- B. Belshazzar
- C. Date of the Exodus (I Kings 6:1)
- D. Luke 2
- E. "In the time of Abiathar" (VIA 2:25f.)
- F. "In Isaiah the Prophet" (Mark 1:2)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Isaiah 40:8 – “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever.”

## **Dealing with Biblical Difficulties - Part 2**

### *Volume 4 - Unit 9*

G. The Time of the Last Supper (Lu22:7-15, John 19:14, 31)

### **III. Doctrinal and Moral**

A. Destruction of the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Joshua 6:17)

B. Imprecatory Psalms (55, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137)

C. Slavery

D. Capital Punishment

E. Polygamy and Divorce (Matthew 19:3f.) - Did Jesus Contradict the Old Testament?

### **IV. Scientific**

A. Creation vs. Evolution

B. Miracles

C. Evil Spirits (Mark 1:25, Luke 11:20)

### **V. "Borrowings" From Other Traditions**

A. Babylonian Creation Account (Enuma elish)

1. "Waste and void" in both

2. Similar order of events - from watery chaos to deity at rest
3. Number 7 prominent - 7 days, 7 tablets (cantos)
4. But - monotheism vs. gross polytheism, spirit and matter confused in Enuma elish

#### B. Babylonian Flood Account (Epic of Gilgamesh)

1. Deluge divinely planned
2. Impending catastrophe revealed to the hero (Utnapishtim, Noah)
3. Flood connected with defection in the human race
4. Hero and family delivered
5. Huge boat - vehicle of deliverance
6. Special blessings on the hero afterward
7. But monotheism vs. polytheism, morality vs. immorality

#### C. Golden Rule

1. Hinduism
2. Buddhism
3. Confucianism

4. Taoism
5. Zoroastrianism
6. Judaism
7. Greek philosophy
8. Christianity

#### D. Supernatural Origin and Nature of Founder

1. Buddhism (Gautama)
2. Taoism (Lao-tze)
3. Jainism (Mahavira)
4. Zoroastrianism (Zoroaster)
5. Gnosticism ("Redeemer")
6. Christianity (Jesus)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Acts 24:14 – “But this I (Paul) confess unto you (Felix), that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.”

# **Canonicity - Old Testament**

## *Volume 4 - Unit 10*

### **I. Definition**

A. Greek kanon - Hebrew aq neh

B. Athanasius - c. 350 A.D.

### **II. The Masoretic Text - 24 Books, 3 Divisions**

A. The Law (5)

1. Genesis

2. Exodus

3. Leviticus

4. Numbers

5. Deuteronomy

B. The Prophets (8)

1. The former prophets (4) a. Joshua b. Judges c. Samuel d. Kings

2. The latter prophets (4)

a. Major (3)

(1) Isaiah

(2) Jeremiah

(3) Ezekiel

b. Minor (1)

Hosea through Malachi (the book of the 12)

C. The Writings (11)

1. Poetical (3)

a. Psalms

b. Proverbs

c. Job

2. Five Rolls/Scrolls (5)

a. Song of Solomon

b. Ruth

c. Lamentations

d. Ecclesiastes

e. Esther

### 3. Historical (3)

a. Daniel

b. Ezra-Nehemiah

c. Chronicles

(Josephus: 22 - combined Jeremiah -Lamentations, Judges-Ruth.)

### **III. When Collected?**

A. Complete At Least a Century Before Christ.

B. New Testament Evidence of 3-Part Canon Complete in Time of Christ

1. Luke 24:44

2. Matthew 7:12

3. Matthew 23:35 (Luke 11:51)

4. II Corinthians 3:14

C. Josephus (c. A.D. 90) Mentions 3-Fold Division.

D. Confirmation at Jewish Council of Jamnia (c. 90 A.D.)

E. Apocrypha Excluded



1. Never recognized in Hebrew scriptures (in some 4th century LXX manuscripts).

2. Not quoted in New Testament.

3. Content

4. Christ

#### **IV. Ultimate Authority - Christ**

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Luke 24:44 – “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

**Canonicity - New Testament**  
*Volume 4 - Unit 11*

**I. The Basic Problem**

**II. The Original Need**

- A. Heresies
- B. Persecution
- C. Absence of Apostles

**III. The Criteria is Inspiration - Evidenced by**

- A. Apostolic Origin
- B. Recognition by Leading Church (es)
- C. Agreement with Apostolic Doctrine

**IV. Recapitulation**

- A. Gospels
  - 1. Synoptics
  - 2. John
- B. Acts

C. Pauline Epistles

D. Hebrews

E. Catholic Epistles

1. I John

2. II, III John

3. I Peter

4. II Peter

5. James

6. Jude

F. Revelation

## **V. When Were Our 27 Books Formally Recognized?**

A. Eastern Church - 367 A.D., 39th Paschal Letter of Athanasius

B. Western Church - 397 A.D., 3rd Council of Carthage

Why were some questioned?

1. Doubtful authorship (Hebrews, II Peter)

2. Little known - written to private individuals, remote groups (II, III John)

3. Doubt as to content (Revelation, Jude, James)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - Jude 3 – “It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once-for-all delivered unto the saints.”

**English Translations**  
*Volume 4 - Unit 12*

**I. The Problem of Translation**

**II. The Use of Translations**

**III. Prominent Translations:**

A. Authorized (King James) Version

B. Revised Standard Version

C. American Standard Version

D. New American Standard Version

E. New English Bible

F. Amplified Bible

G. Living Bible

H. Phillips

I. New International Version

J. C. B. Williams'

K. Wuest's Expanded Translation

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE - John 17:17 – “Sanctify them through Your truth;  
Your word is truth.”