

Essentials of Christianity (pt 2)
2/28/2010

*Introduction*_____

(slide) Good morning to everyone! Today we will be jumping headlong into our new study on the **”essentials of the Christian faith.”**

If you were not here last week for the introduction, I urge you to please listen to the teaching.

We know from the that there are essentials of the Christian faith; core beliefs that people must believe in order to call themselves Christian.

People are not going to know all there is to know about these things at the moment of conversion. But when the Holy Spirit regenerates a human heart, and makes a person a new creation; that person will begin moving in a Spirit led direction of becoming knowledgeable in **Christian essentials**.

They will grow in their understanding of who God is and what we need to know about Him, about His word, and about what *He says* is “essential.”

(slide)

By “essential” we mean doctrines that are non-negotiable. These are doctrinal hills that Christians must be ready to die on (and many have).

These distinctives determine whether something is orthodox or not.

Systematic theology helps us to arrive at our goal of understanding the essentials. For our purposes, we are going to use a very basic outline which will consist of topical headings that you'll find in the vast majority of books on systematic theology.

Here are the categories that are typically used for outlining essential Christian theology.

Here is how we'll break things down. We'll cover: **(slide)**

1. Bibliology: a compound word-- *biblio*: derived from the Greek word for book.

Study of the doctrine of the Bible; what the Bible teaches about itself.

2. Theology: **the doctrine of God.**

3. Christology: doctrine of Christ.

4. Pneumatology: *pneuma* comes from the Greek for Spirit in the NT.

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

5. Anthropology: *anthropos*-- Greek word for man.

Doctrine of man.

6. Hamartiology: comes from *hamartia*-- Greek word for sin.

Doctrine of sin.

7. Soteriology: *soteria*-- Greek word for salvation.

Doctrine of salvation.

8. Ecclesiology: *ecclesia*-- Greek for church.

Doctrine of the church

9. Eschatology: *eschaton*-- meaning *last things*.

Doctrine of last things.¹

All of these categories contain essential elements. There's our broad view, now let's look at each one individually.

***Bibliology* _____**

The first category we are going to cover is **bibliology**. Why would we cover this subject first? Why not cover **theology** first since that seems to be the most basic? Let me explain.

Of all doctrines connected to the Christian faith, none is more important than the one that has to do with the basics of our religious knowledge.

For anyone who professes the Christian faith the root question is: from where do I get my knowledge on which my faith is based?

The only true and dependable source lies in the book we call the Bible--because the Bible is **the Word of God.**²

¹ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

² Harold Lindsell, *The Battle For The Bible* (Calvary Chapel Publishing; Second edition, 2008).

As simplistic as this truth may seem, it is the foundational stone to all Christian belief. If we remove this stone, or we stand in doubt of it, everything we say we affirm about Christianity comes crashing down like a house of cards.

A proper view of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, salvation, etc... *begins* with a proper view of the Bible.

Was it not the Word of God that was called into question in the garden?

The serpent only had to cast doubt into the minds of Adam and Eve about **what God said**, and then he could manipulate them accordingly.

The reason why so many liberally-minded Christian denominations are so wishy-washy about their view of Christian essentials is because of their view of the scriptures.

There are many outspoken critics of the Bible, both outside and inside the church.

I could spend a month of Sunday's talking about the different types of attacks (**slide**) that are leveled against the historicity of the Bible, its origin, its authority, etc...

These attacks should not surprise us.

Satan will do whatever he can to discredit the testimony of scripture.

But instead of spending a lot of time on that, I'd like to point out some of the essential elements about the Bible.

(slide)

What *is* **essential** to believe about the Bible?

The Bible is, first and foremost, the **Word of God (slide)**. It's not enough to say it "contains" the Word of God. That could imply that parts of it do not. The Bible *is* the Word of God.

Turn to **2Timothy 3:16-17**.

The Bible is a collection of 66 books penned by over 40 authors over a period of about 1500 yrs.

These books are the scriptures that Paul speaks of in 2Timothy.

The scriptures are God's self disclosure of Himself.

Some of you may recall the study we did a couple of months back in Psalm 19. We talked about the need for God to reveal Himself to us.

Here's a quote from what we covered. **(slide)**.

Christianity originates in revelation. Had God chosen NOT to reveal Himself, mankind could never had known Him.

And man can never know more about God than God chooses to disclose. Whatever knowledge of God is available exists solely because God has chosen to make it known.³

And so, **2Timothy 3 tells us,**

³ Ibid.

^{NAU} 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

These verses tell us two things: **the origin of scripture; and what its purpose is.**

The operative word for our purposes today is **”inspired.”**

This term is translated even better in the NIV as **“God-breathed (τηεοπνευστος)”**

This compound word means that the scriptures are of divine origin. They are ’breathed out” by God.

(slide) Back in 1978 a group of Christian ministers came together for the purpose of drafting a statement to establish the centrality of this truth for the Christian faith: that the scriptures are **God-breathed** or God-inspired.

I’m going to be using some excerpts here and there from that statement in what I present today, because I found it to be very helpful for providing a summary of what the scriptures plainly teach.

The name of this document is **“The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.”**⁴

⁴ **Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition**

Background

The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" was produced at an international Summit Conference of evangelical leaders, held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago in the fall of 1978. This congress was sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. The Chicago Statement was signed by nearly 300 noted evangelical scholars, including James Boice, Norman L. Geisler, John Gerstner, Carl F. H. Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, Harold Lindell, John

Inerrancy is a very important concept. It means, (**slide**) the teaching that since the Scriptures are given by God, they are free from error in all their contents, including doctrinal, historical, scientific, geographical, and other branches of knowledge.⁵

Inspiration of the scriptures is an essential teaching of the Christian faith. Inspiration (God-breathed) is (**slide**):

The act of the Holy Spirit in which He superintended the writers of Scripture so that, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, they produced God's Word written, authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original writings.⁶

What is inspired in the Bible? The scriptures are God-breathed in the whole, the parts, and even down to the individual letters.

* **Inspiration of the whole** is shown in Christ' use of the entire Old Testament.

He referred to the law and the prophets, a common phrase designating the entire Old Testament.

Warwick Montgomery, Roger Nicole, J. I. Packer, Robert Preus, Earl Radmacher, Francis Schaeffer, R. C. Sproul, and John Wenham.

The ICBI disbanded in 1988 after producing three major statements: one on biblical inerrancy in 1978, one on biblical hermeneutics in 1982, and one on biblical application in 1986. The following text, containing the "Preface" by the ICBI draft committee, plus the "Short Statement," "Articles of Affirmation and Denial," and an accompanying "Exposition," was published in toto by Carl F. H. Henry in *God, Revelation And Authority*, vol. 4 (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1979), on pp. 211-219. The nineteen Articles of Affirmation and Denial, with a brief introduction, also appear in *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix (Chicago: Moody Press, rev. 1986), at pp. 181-185. An official commentary on these articles was written by R. C. Sproul in *Explaining Inerrancy: A Commentary* (Oakland, Calif.: ICBI, 1980), and Norman Geisler edited the major addresses from the 1978 conference, in *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

Clarification of some of the language used in this Statement may be found in the 1982 Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics

⁵ Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*.

⁶ Ibid.

* Jesus confirmed **inspiration of the parts** by quoting from various "parts" of the OT. One example is His quoting from Deuteronomy when tempted by Satan.

* He affirmed the **inspiration of the words**. In defending the doctrine of the resurrection to the Sadducees, Jesus quoted from Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham." In this response Jesus' entire argument hinged on the words "I am."

* He also affirmed **inspiration of the letters**.

In a number of His statements Christ reveals that He believed the letters of Scripture were inspired.

In **Matthew 5:18** Jesus declared, *"not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."*

The term "smallest letter" refers to the Hebrew letter yodh, which looks like an apostrophe ('). The "stroke" refers to the minute distinction between two Hebrew letters.

An equivalent would be the distinction between an **O** and a **Q**. Only the little "tail" distinguishes the **Q** from the **O**.

Jesus emphasized that all the details of the Old Testament writings would be fulfilled down to the very letter.⁷

Another very important aspect of **inspiration of the Bible** is the fact that God used men to record it.

The Chicago statement has some excellent affirmations about this: (*excerpts*) (**slide**):

⁷ Ibid.

Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible (without error) divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

WE DENY that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

WE AFFIRM that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

This is where a lot of skeptics of the Bible get tripped up. They wonder how a series of books penned by human hands could be without error.

I've had many people tell me, "The Bible is just a book written by men..."

The Apostle Peter hits this problem head on, in his inspired revelation of defense for the divine authorship of the scriptures.

Turn to 2Peter 1:19-21

This portion of scripture is vitally important to understanding of how God inspired the authorship of the scriptures.

^{NAU} 2 Peter 1:19 *So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

²⁰ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*

²¹ *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

Vs 19-- in this verse, Peter is ending his reference about his experience with James and John at the Mount of Transfiguration.

He uses this as a segue into a discussion about the reliability of the scriptures.

The word of God is reliable- having been confirmed by eyewitness accounts of fulfilled prophecy. Not events in and of themselves- but verses from the scripture being fulfilled.

But even though eyewitness testimony is wonderful insofar as it can validate the scripture- the written word, which came through the prophets, is still the barometer from which all experience is validated.

Vs 20: *"but know this"* is stated emphatically. *"no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,"*

Own interpretation OR of any private interpretation (KJV).

The issue here is not the problem of how people are interpreting the scriptures.

His theme is the origin and reliability of the scriptures.

Peter is not talking about interpretation (*how we interpret them*) but authentication.

The same God whom the apostles heard speak in the transfiguration spoke also through the prophets.

The argument in verses 20-21 is a consistent and necessary conclusion to the preceding paragraph. Thus, we can rely on the apostolic account of the transfiguration because God spoke.

And we can rely on Scripture because behind its human authors God spoke.

The prophets did not make up what they wrote. They did not arbitrarily unravel it. 'They did not blab their inventions of their own accord or according to their own judgments.

They weren't taking their best stab at what they thought God may have said...

But true prophecy came from God and, men (the prophets) as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

This coincides with **2Timothy 3:16**.

This is the note I want to end on today. It is essential for us to believe the scriptures are the word of God.

I do have some more to share on this, and there are some more essentials to cover in this category.

But this particular one is THE essential one to begin with.

We'll close with a quote from the Chicago declaration.

(slide)

The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

Notes

Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

Harold Lindsell, *The Battle For The Bible* (Calvary Chapel Publishing; Second edition, 2008).