

# What Are the Essentials of the Christian Faith?

## Lesson # 1 – How Do We Know What We Claim to Know? <sup>1439-1</sup>

**Attachment for this Lesson:** File #1534, What is Biblical Hermeneutics? (Section I C.)

**The First Doctrinal Essential:** How do we know what we claim to know? This is the doctrinal field of study known as “**Epistemology**”. This word comes from a combination of two Greek words:

1. *Knowing* **ἐπιστημῶν epistemon** (Str. 1921) 44x in NT; meaning - “knowng, understanding”
2. *Communicating* **λογος logos** (Str. 3056) 330x in NT; meaning - “an account or statement of”

<p style="text-align: center;">The 1<sup>st</sup> Essential from File #0442 <b>1</b> Source of Truth Epistemology</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>God has revealed Himself to man<sup>1*</sup> through General Revelation (cosmos<sup>2*</sup> &amp; conscience)<sup>3*</sup> and through Special Revelation (Scripture)<sup>4*</sup> both of which are without error<sup>5*</sup>. Both can be and often are misinterpreted by man resulting in error<sup>6*</sup>.</b> Ps 19:1-4; Ps 119:14-16; Matt 5:18; Jn 14:25-26; Acts 17:11; Rom 1:18-20; Rom 2:14-16; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:19-21</p>
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\* The superscripts reflect separate elements of this essential listed numerically below:

### I. “God has revealed Himself to man” throughout all of History:

**1<sup>st</sup> Element\*:** **God has revealed Himself to man** – God is a personal God. He is not just a principle or a force. Being a personal God implies that he has relationships with the persons of His creation. In fact God created men and women as persons in order to have relationship with Him. Anytime you have a relationship with another person, you have certain expectations of how to live and how to act and how to respond (communicate) with that person. It is the nature of being a healthy person psychologically to understand the need to communicate.

The very nature of being a person is grounded in empathy towards others in a unique relationship. To not have empathy in relationship is **to be a sociopath** which is serious failure to be a psychologically healthy and productive person.

“The **definition** of a **true sociopath** is a person who shows no remorse or guilt for their actions and who has very little concern for the welfare of others. Sociopathy is also known as antisocial personality disorder and it is a well-documented mental health condition affecting a surprisingly high number of people, typically men.” They don’t have the normal need to communicate or explain themselves to others.

God as a “personal” being has communicated with Adam’s descendants and has empathy with men and seeks to be known by men!

**Rom 1:18-20** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup>because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

**All Scripture in this series is from the NASU unless other wise indicated.**

#### A. General Revelation (Nature & Conscience)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Element\*:** **through General Revelation (cosmos)** – All men are born with an innate knowledge of God. They observe the evidence for God in His innumerable creative works throughout all of nature. The Scripture says:

**Ps 14:1 & Ps 53:1** *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.*

**Consider:** The Scriptural charge towards the unbeliever in God as being a fool is a very serious charge! There is no doubting that the atheist is just a good man who doesn’t know or doesn’t understand.

**Read Psalm 14:1-6** to get the context of this horrible accusation of unbelief. There is sufficient evidence that any rational person would actually believe in God if he were not willingly in denial of the evidence. These two Psalms 14 & 53 are almost identical in the wording. This constitutes an amplification of a point in Scripture. These two Psalms are here to make an important point. God’s

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revelation to all men is sufficient to any rational person. Fallen men, reprobate men, servants of Satan, are not rational men. They are at enmity with God. They are not good men misled by circumstances!

**Rom 8:4-8** *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. <sup>8</sup>So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. **KJV***

So the lost man chooses to ignore the evidence of God,

**Ps 19:1-4** *The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. <sup>2</sup>Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. <sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup>Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world.,*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Element\*:** Through Conscience – Men are born with a conscience. This is part of being human and it can be a great Grace from God, but all men in their depraved state soil and corrupt their own conscience so that it no longer speaks about God’s law, but rather now corrupted, justifies our own sin. We in our sin nature corrupt God’s great and gracious gift to us. We are not just passive enemies of God in our original depraved state, but are rather actively at enmity towards the God of Scripture.

**Rom 2:14-16** *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup>in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, <sup>16</sup>on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*

### B. Special Revelation (Scripture)

**4<sup>th</sup> Element\*:** through Special Revelation (Scripture) – Special Revelation is that authoritatively written Word of God given supernaturally to select men (Prophets and Apostles) to write specific words inerrantly, superintended by the Holy Spirit of God to ensure that these fallible men wrote only that which the Father has ordained using the words of the writer’s own vocabulary, grammatical style, and historical context, such being also superintended throughout their life such that the actual words, grammar, and meaning are that which is written in the original writings (the autographs which are inerrant and perfectly represent God’s message to his followers without any error.

**2 Tim 3:14-17** *You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup>and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

**5<sup>th</sup> Element\*:** both revelations are without error (inerrant) – Men before Moses wrote the Pentateuch and before whoever wrote the book of Job (Moses?? Solomon?? Other??) knew of God only by oral tradition from ancient times, but they also knew of a supreme God of the world from the evidence of nature and His design and purpose as the Creator of and Sovereign over that nature/cosmos.

Such knowledge today in a “scientifically explained world” consists a massive accumulation of hard scientific evidence that constitutes irreputable apologetic evidence for the existence of God and much about His identity, His works, His nature and His purpose.

**Matt 5:17-19** *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup>For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*

**2 Tim 2:14-18** *Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. <sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself*

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approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, <sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup>men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

**Job 26:7-14** "He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing. <sup>8</sup>He wraps up the waters in His clouds, and the cloud does not burst under them. <sup>9</sup>He obscures the face of the full moon and spreads His cloud over it. <sup>10</sup>He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness. <sup>11</sup>The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at His rebuke. <sup>12</sup>"He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. <sup>13</sup>By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent. <sup>14</sup>Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?"

**C. An Essential Qualifier of Both General & Special Revelation** – Men require a proper method of **hermeneutic**\* to arrive at the truth of Scriptural texts. Men also require a proper method of understanding nature's (cosmos) "hermeneutic". **Discuss**

**6<sup>th</sup> Element\*:** **Both can be and often are misinterpreted by man resulting in error** – Scripture and General Revelation can be and is often misinterpreted by men. Men in their fallen nature naturally, based on any one of a number of "Satanic" worldviews, hold to these corrupting worldviews that deceive and deny the true nature of God. Men in their fallen state are consistently deceived by Satan their master and lord.

**2 Peter 1:19-21** 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. <sup>20</sup>But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup>for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

\* **Definition of "Hermeneutics":**

1. "The study of the correct methods of interpreting texts." Grudem's Systematic Theology; Glossary p. 1224.
2. "The science and methodology of interpretation, especially of Scriptural text." New College Edition of The American Heritage Dictionary; published 1978; p. 617
3. See attached file #1534, "What is Biblical Hermeneutics?" From "Got Questions.org"

## II. Authenticity of the Record of Scripture Throughout History

**A. The Autographical Text:** The original writings of the prophets and apostles are the documents that are authentic. All documents derived from these are compared against the autographs with great effort and success. We don't possess any of these autographs directly, but we have sufficient evidence that many current translations of the Bible are becoming more and more accurate to the original autographs.

To say that Scripture is authentic means that the following attributes of Scripture directly reflect with high accuracy what the original writer intended under the supervision of the Holy Spirit in the actual writing of the text by the author. There are 7 critical points necessary to constitute authenticity. They are:

**1<sup>st</sup> Inspired by God** – Meaning God beathed which directly implies the individual words were spoken by God thus communicating the very message that God was revealing to men relevant through all of world history. These words also were inspired in their very grammatical forms. **2 Pet 1:19-21**

**2<sup>nd</sup> True/Inerrant** – The Scriptures communicate God's truth in all that they affirm as written by the human author directed in every detail by God's sovereign providence. **Ps 119:87-90**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Perfectly and Divinely Authoritative** – All the words of Scripture are God's communication of truth and are to be learned, studied, believed, and obeyed. Failure to believe and obey such commands and requirements is sinful. **Heb 4:12-13**

**4<sup>th</sup> Verbally Inspired** – The exact words in the Scripture autographs were chosen by God and delivered accurately through the Holy Spirit and the mind of God's chosen author who recorded such words with entire accuracy. **Matt 5:18**

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**5<sup>th</sup> Plenarily Inspired** – All the words from all the books of the Canon are inspired by God and are without error in what they affirm. This includes all of the books of the Canon and all texts of both the Old and New Testaments.

**6<sup>th</sup> Perspicuous** – “ - - - means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood without error by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.”  
From **Wayne Grudem’s** *Systematic Theology*; p. 108.

**7<sup>th</sup> Entirely Sufficient for the believer** – Scripture contains all the words that God intends for His people to have in order to seek salvation, trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying His commands. The Word is NOT exhaustive. It does not answer every question that we could possibly ask. We need no other wisdom to live in gracious communion with our God. **Dt 29:29**

### III. The World’s Claims

The world has appointed itself to be God’s critic regarding Scripture and all that it contains. The world makes such false accusations as:

Worldly Accusation	The Truth!
• Scripture is authored by fallible men so how could it possibly be without error?	Scripture is authored by divine inspiration, delivered to fallible men through God in the person of the Holy Spirit!
• The description of God is contradictory from the Old to the New Testament.	This is a patently false statement. The New Testament largely assumes the Old Testament descriptions of God!
• Scripture contains fables and historical errors.	False. The writing of Scripture falls into the categories of, and is the source of modern literary forms.
• It borrows myths from other cultures.	Other ancient cultures do record many of the events recorded in Scripture by God’s testimony. This is an expected form of inter cultural testimony of such events.
• We don’t actually have any of the original writings of Prophets or Apostles.	That is true, but we do have many thousands of ancient copies of the earlier manuscripts such that the autographs can be scientifically reconstructed to a very high degree of accuracy.
• Too many cumulative errors have been made in copying and translating Scripture text.	The newer translations are not made entirely sequentially, but rather reach back to older (recently discovered) manuscripts to correct and improve on the intermediate translations. This is a continuous process still going on today.
• Etc. etc. etc.	The lies of Satan continue through his servants.

### Important Quotes

Not only have we "lost the culture", but we continue losing even our own children. It's a familiar but tragic story that devout young people, raised in Christian homes, head off to college and abandon their faith. Why is this pattern so common? Largely because young believers have not been taught how to develop a biblical worldview. Instead, Christianity has been restricted to a specialized area of religious belief and personal devotion.

I recently read a striking example. At a Christian high school, a theology teacher strode to the front of the classroom, where he drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other. “The two are as divided as the two sides of the blackboard,” he told the class: “The heart is what we use for religion, while the brain is what we use for science.” An apocryphal story? A caricature of Christian anti-intellectualism? No, the story was told by a young woman who was in the class that day. Worse, out of some two hundred students, she was the only one who objected. The rest apparently found nothing unusual about restricting religion to the domain of the "heart".

**Nancy Pearcey**; from *Total Truth*; p. 19

"The Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message. It was based, not on a mere program of work, but upon an account of facts. In other words, it was based upon doctrine." **J. Gresham Machen**; quoted in *Christless Christianity*; by Michael Horton; p. 245