

Distinctives of Biblical Christianity

Part 1—A Biblical View of Scripture

1. Inspired—2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21

John MacArthur: *Inspiration describes the process of divine causation behind the authorship of Scripture. It refers to the direct act of God on the human author that resulted in the creation of perfectly written revelation. It conveys the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit whereby he used the individual personality, language, style and historical context of each writer to produce divinely authoritative writings. These works were truly the product of both the human author and the Holy Spirit...[This describes] divine superintendence...[in that] God produced the Scriptures by influencing the human author's own thoughts.¹*

2. Inerrant—Ps. 119:60; Matt. 5:18; John 17:17

Robert Reymond: *By it we assert that the Bible is true, that is to say, devoid of, and incapable of teaching, falsehood or error of any kind in all that it intends to affirm [Both inerrant and infallible]. It is internally noncontradictory and doctrinally consistent. Its assertions correspond to what God himself understands is the true and real nature of things.²*

3. Authoritative—Deut. 28:1-2, 15; Ps. 138:2; John 12:48-49

Robert Reymond: *The sole reason why the Bible ought to be believed and obeyed [is] because God, who is truth itself, is in a unique sense its author, and therefore because it is the very Word of the one living and true God. In sum, it receives its authority from heaven; it requires no earthly advocacy in regard to the issue of its authority. Its authority is intrinsic and inherent; that is, it is self-validating. In no sense is its authority derived from human testimony.³*

¹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds, *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 77-78.

² Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 70.

³ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 73.

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4. Understandable (Perspicuity of Scripture)—Dt 30:11-14; Ps 103:7; 2 Tim 2:7

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly [put forth in Scripture], that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means [of acquiring knowledge], may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. (WCF, I/vii)

-God's word is revelation and he knows how to communicate to his creation.

-The Holy Spirit intended one meaning for each passage, which can be accessed by applying the literal, historical, grammatical method of interpretation:

Literal—using normal rules of language to determine what the author literally meant

Historical—what are the details surrounding the writing? (who, what, when, where, why)

Grammatical—specific words were used to convey the intended meaning (definitions and syntax)

-What are the prerequisites to understand the Bible?

i. Fear of the Lord—Ps. 111:10; Prov. 2:1-5

ii. Illumination—1 Cor. 2:14-16

iii. Desire for obedience— James 1:21-25; 1 Pet. 2:1-3

5. Sufficient—Ps. 19:7-14; 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Wayne Grudem: *We can define the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: 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 all the words of God we need for salvation and for trusting him and obeying him completely...This definition emphasizes that it is in Scripture alone that we are to search for God's words to us. It also reminds us that God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us, and that we should rejoice in the great revelation that he has given us and be content with it.⁴*

6. Living (or spiritual)—John 6:63; Heb. 4:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:22-25

7. Powerful—Ps. 33:6; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 1:3 (Also refrain in Acts)

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994), 127.

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Part 2—A Biblical View of God

I. GOD'S GREATNESS (TRANSCENDENCE) Is. 43:10-13

1. Self-sufficient (Independent/Aseity)—Ex. 3:14; John 5:26; Acts 17:25

He is perfectly self-sufficient, not depending on anything outside himself for anything, and is therefore the eternal foundational being, the source of life and sustenance for all other beings.⁵

As the self-existent God, He is not only independent in Himself, but also causes everything to depend upon him.⁶

2. Eternal—Ps. 90:2; Is. 44:6; John 1:1, 8:58; Rev. 1:8

God perfectly transcends all limitations of time, so that he is without beginning, without ending, and without succession of moments in the experience of his being...God's eternity means that he is distinct from time. Nevertheless, he is not completely separate from it; rather, he is present (immanent) in every moment, controlling every moment for his purposes and glory.⁷

3. Unchanging (Immutable)—Num. 23:19; Ps. 102:25-17; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17, 13:8; Js 1:17

The perfection of God by which he is devoid of all change, not only in his being, but also in his perfections, purposes and promises...[and is] free from all...growth or decay in his being or perfections.⁸

4. Sovereign—Is. 43:13, 46:10; Dan. 4:34-35 Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:36; Rev. 4:11

The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy. Infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth; subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him.⁹

God retains all rights and exercises supreme and ultimate authority over everyone and everything.¹⁰

5. Holy—Lev. 20:26; Is. 6:3; Rev. 4:8, 15:3-4

God's holiness denotes that he is absolutely distinct from all his creatures and is exalted above them in infinite majesty [and moral purity]... [Furthermore, it is] that perfection of God, in virtue of which he eternally wills and maintains his own moral excellence, abhors sin, and demands purity in his moral creatures [his jealousy].¹¹

⁵ John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 168.

⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 58.

⁷ John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 171.

⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 58.

⁹ Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Nature of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 37.

¹⁰ Dr. Mike Fabarez, *Partners: One on One Discipleship*, 33.

¹¹ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 73, 74.

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Sin can no more exist without demanding His punishment [through his wrath] than it can without requiring His hatred of it. God has often forgiven sinners, but He never forgives sin; the sinner is only forgiven on the ground of Another having borne his punishment; for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (Lev. 17:11/Heb. 9:22).¹²

6. Omniscient (All-knowing)—Job 37:16; Ps. 139:1-6; Matt. 11:20-27; Rom. 11:33-35

God's omniscience is his perfect knowing of himself, all actual things outside himself, and all things that do not become reality in one eternal and simple act.¹³

God knows whatsoever has happened in the past in every part of His vast domains, and He is thoroughly acquainted with everything that now transpires throughout the entire universe. But He also is perfectly cognizant with every event, from the least to the greatest, that will happen in ages to come. God's knowledge of the future is as complete as His knowledge of the past and the present, because the future depends entirely upon Himself. Were it in anywise possible for something to occur apart from either the direct agency or permission of God, then that something would be independent of Him, and He would at once cease to be supreme.¹⁴

7. Omnipotent (All-powerful)—Is. 40:26; Jer. 32:17; Eph. 1:19-21, 3:20-21

God possesses all power, having the ability to do anything that does not conflict with his own character.¹⁵

The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve ... As holiness is the beauty of all God's attributes, so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of the Divine nature. How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them. Without power His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere [false alarm]. God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature (Stephen Charnock).

8. Omnipresent (All-present)—2 Chron. 16:9; Job 34:21; Ps. 139:7-16; Acts 17:27

God is everywhere present, being cognizant of all things in every location [but is always distinct from his creation].¹⁶

The perfection by which he transcends all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with his whole being.¹⁷

¹² Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Nature of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 50.

¹³ John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 174-175.

¹⁴ Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Nature of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 23.

¹⁵ Dr. Mike Fabarez, *Partners: One on One Discipleship*, 34.

¹⁶ Dr. Mike Fabarez, *Partners: One on One Discipleship*, 35.

¹⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 60.

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II. GOD'S GOODNESS (IMMANENCE) Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15

1. Love—Deut. 7:7-8; Jer. 31:3; Jn 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 8:38-39; Eph. 3:17-19; 1 Jn 4:7-11

God freely and perfectly acts for the good and well-being of others [through the giving of himself].¹⁸

2. Gracious—Ex. 33:19; Ps. 51:1; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 5:10

Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in bestowing blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded; it is the favor of God to those who not only have no positive merits of their own, but also who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving. It is completely unmerited and unsought, and is altogether unattracted by anything in or from or by the objects upon which it is bestowed.¹⁹

3. Merciful—Ps. 145:8-10; Jer. 31:20; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5 1 Pet. 1:3

God's mercy describes him as perfectly having deep compassion for people, such that he demonstrates benevolent goodness to those in a pitiable or miserable condition, even though they do not deserve [this benevolence].²⁰

4. Patient (Longsuffering)—Neh. 9:17; Jonah 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:12-16; 2 Pet. 3:9

The patience of God is that excellency which causes Him to sustain great displeasure without immediately avenging Himself [He is slow to anger].²¹

5. Faithful (Truthful)—Ps. 89:1-8; Lam. 3:22-23; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Th. 5:24; Heb. 10:23; 1 Jn 1:9

God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised...He is the true God and all his knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.²²

6. Righteous (Just)—Ps. 89:14; 96:13; 119:137; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:23-26

God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself, the final standard of what is right.²³

7. Wise—Job 12:13; Dan. 2:20; Rom. 16:27; Eph. 3:10

God's wisdom is his perfect knowledge of how to act skillfully so that he will accomplish all his good pleasure in order to glorify himself.²⁴

¹⁸ Dr. Mike Fabarez, *Partners: One on One Discipleship*, 40.

¹⁹ Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Nature of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 78-79.

²⁰ John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 182.

²¹ Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Nature of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 74.

²² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 195, 196.

²³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 204.

²⁴ John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 180.

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Part 2 (con't)—A Biblical View of God

III. TRINITY

1. What are the stated objections to the doctrine of the Trinity?

a. The word "Trinity" doesn't appear in the Bible

Response—Many doctrines aren't found by name in Scripture, but like the Trinity, they accurately describe what is found in Scripture.

b. The 3-persons-in-1-being God does not make sense to the natural mind, so we can't expect people to believe in things they can't fully understand

Response—It takes the Holy Spirit's illuminating power to fully believe in the doctrine of the Trinity and all the implications of the doctrine (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 11:33-36).

2. The doctrine explained

a. We need to lay all the truths taught in Scripture about a particular topic side by side one another instead of using one to cancel out another or coming to the conclusion that the Bible contains contradictions (Deut. 12:28).

b. The truths that are equally true

i. There is one God—Deut. 6:4; Is. 46:9-11, 48:11; 1 Cor. 8:4b

ii. The Father is God (Eph. 5:20b), The Son is God (John 8:58; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13), The Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 3:17)

iii. The Father is not the Son and the Father is not the Spirit and the Son is not the Spirit. 3 distinct persons are found in Is. 48:16 and Luke 3:21-22.

iv. Each member of the Trinity has an intellect, emotion and will.

3. The person of Christ

i. The significance of having a biblical view of Christ

a. What is lost if Christ isn't divine? (In other words, what's the big deal if he was just a prophet or an angel or a great man?)

Answer: There is no salvation unless Christ is God (John 8:24)

b. What is lost if there is no virgin birth?

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Answer: He could not have been born without the sinful nature if he was conceived the same as every man (Mark 1:24; 2 Cor. 5:21).

c. What is lost if Christ's physical body wasn't raised from the dead? (In other words, what's the big deal if Christ was just raised spiritually or if he was just a ghost in his post-resurrection appearances?)

Answer: If Christ wasn't raised physically from the dead, then we can have no hope of our body being raised from the dead since Christ was the first fruits or prototype of our resurrection (1 Cor.15:12ff).

d. What happened in the incarnation? How did Christ empty himself?

Answer: Php. 2:6-8—He did not empty himself of his deity or even his glory, but he emptied himself BY taking on the limitations of humanity, which veiled his deity, although he was always fully God and fully man. In doing this, he laid aside his privilege and position in heaven to come to earth to be born as a man in order to die on a cross for sinners.

ii. The biblical view of Christ explained

a. Jesus possessed the characteristics of a man—Luke 2:40, 52; Mark 4:38; John 4:6, 11:35

b. Jesus possessed the attributes of God—Matt. 28:18; John 1:1-2; Heb. 13:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Acts 3:14-15; John 14:6

c. Jesus is assigned titles of God—Matt. 1:23; Php. 2:10-11; Jn 8:58

d. Jesus is spoken of as being God—John 5:18, 12:41 in reference to Is. 6; Col. 2:9; Rev. 1:8, 22:13

4. The person of the Holy Spirit

i. He's assigned personhood in the NT—Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:10-11, 12:7, 11; Eph. 4:30; James 4:5

ii. He's assigned attributes of God—Is 40:13-14; Ps 139:7; Heb 9:14; Jn 16:13

iii. He's spoken of as being God—2 Cor. 3:17; Acts 5:3-4

iv. He was active in creation (Gen. 1:2) and will be active in consummation (Rev. 22:17)

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Part 3—A Biblical View of Man

I. The Origin of Man—Gen. 1:26-31

II. The Fall of Man—Gen. 3:1-19

Sin is any lack of conformity to God's will in attitude, thought or action, whether committed actively or passively. The center of all sin is autonomy, which is the replacing of God with self. Always closely associated with sin are its products—pride, selfishness, idolatry, and lack of peace.²⁵

III. The Condition of Man

Man in his raw, natural state as he comes from the womb is morally and spiritually corrupt in disposition and character. Every part of his being—his mind, his will, his emotions, his affections, his conscience, his body—has been affected by sin. His understanding is darkened, his mind is at enmity with God, his will to act is slave to his darkened understanding and rebellious mind, his heart is corrupt, his emotions are perverted, his affections naturally gravitate to that which is evil and ungodly, his conscience is untrustworthy, and his body is subject to mortality.²⁶

A. Spiritually Depraved—Rom. 1:21, 3:10-18, 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 1:18, 2:14, Eph. 4:17-18, Jer. 17:9

B. Spiritually Dead—Eph. 2:1-3

C. Spiritually Desperate—Jer. 13:23; Matt. 12:33-35

²⁵ John MacArthur, Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 454.

²⁶ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 450.

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Part 4—A Biblical View of Salvation

1. The Situation (Who man is)

- i. Because of man's innate sinfulness (Rom. 5:12), man is a helpless sinner at enmity with God, which culminates in eternal death (Rom. 5:6-11, 6:23).
- ii. This leaves man in a state of spiritual deadness (Eph. 2:1) and inability to either please God or come to God (Rom 3:10-12, 8:7-8).

2. The Motivation (Why God acted)

- i. His loving mercy (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4)
- ii. His redeeming grace (Titus 2:11-14)
- iii. His faithful vindication (Eze. 36:22ff; Jer. 31:35-37)

3. The Occupation (How Christ functions)

- i. Lamb of God (John 1:29; Rev. 5:9)
- ii. Ransom (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6)
- iii. Great High Priest (Heb. 7:26ff, 9:11ff, 10:11ff)
- iv. Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15ff; 1 John 2:2)
- v. First-fruits of the resurrection (John 11:25; 1 Cor 15:20-23; Col 1:18)
- vi. The Good Shepherd (John 10:11ff; Heb. 13:20)
- vii. Head of the church (Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18)
- viii. Exalted One (Acts 4:12; Php. 2:10ff)

4. The Implementation (What Christ accomplished)

- i. Dead-->Regeneration (Titus 3:4-7)
- ii. Condemned-->Justification (Rom. 5:18-19; Gal. 3:10-14)
- iii. Child of Wrath-->Adoption (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:4-7)
- iv. Defiled-->Sanctification (1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10; Heb. 12:14)
- v. Alienation-->Reconciliation (Rom. 5:6ff; 2 Cor. 5:18ff; Col. 2:21)
- vi. Sinful Nature-->Glorification (Rom. 8:23-25, 29-30; Php. 3:20-21)