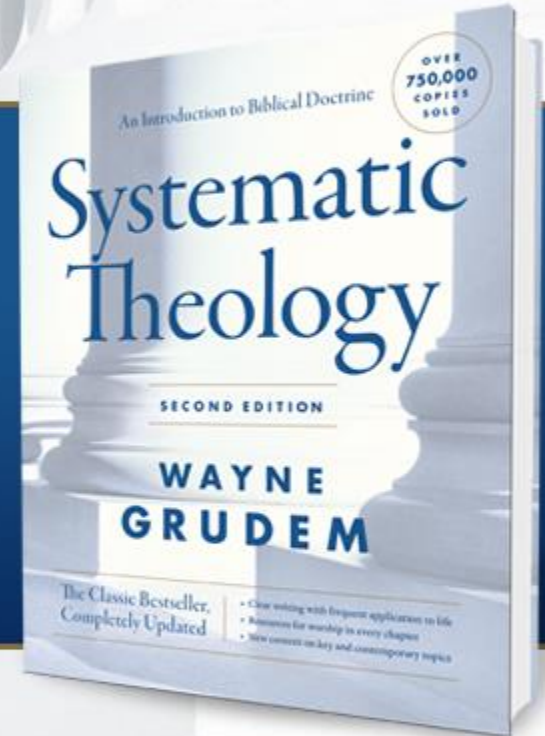


The Four Characteristics of Scripture: Necessity

Chapter 7



Explanation and Scriptural Basis

- 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.

The Bible Is Necessary for Knowledge of the Gospel

- **Rom 10:13–17:** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The Bible Is Necessary for Knowledge of the Gospel

- **Acts 4:12:** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
- Although people can know that God *exists* and can know something of his *laws* apart from Scripture, it seems that there is no possibility of coming to *saving faith* apart from specific knowledge of God's words of promise.

Different Views of How People Can Be Saved

- *Universalism*: All people who ever lived will be saved.
- *Religious pluralism*: All sincere religious people from all religions will be saved.
- *Inclusivism*: People can only be saved through the redeeming work of Christ, but all people who ever lived will still be saved, because after people die they will find out that they were saved by Christ's work (they were "included"), even people who had never heard of him or believed in him.

Different Views of How People Can Be Saved

- *Annihilationism*: People who have not believed in Christ will not be saved, but after they die they will not be punished (or not for very long) because they will be annihilated and cease to exist.
- *Postmortem evangelism*: After unbelievers die, they will be given another opportunity (or a first opportunity) to trust in Christ, and most or all of them will be saved in this way.
- *Exclusivism*: Only those who have heard of Christ and trusted in him will be saved.

The Bible Is Necessary for Maintaining Spiritual Life

- **Matt 4:4:** But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”
- **1 Pet 2:2:** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation...

The Bible Is Necessary for Certain Knowledge of God's Will

- All people ever born have *some* knowledge of God's will through their consciences. But this knowledge is often indistinct and cannot give certainty. In fact, if there were *no* written Word of God, we *could not* gain certainty about God's will through other means...at least in a fallen world where sin distorts our perception of right and wrong, brings faulty reasoning into our thinking processes, and causes us to suppress from time to time the testimony of our consciences.

The Bible Is Not Necessary for Knowing That God Exists

- **Rom 1:19–21:** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The Bible Is Not Necessary for Knowing That God Exists

- **Acts 14:16–17:** In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

The Bible Is Not Necessary for Knowing Something About God

- **Rom 2:14–15:** For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...

Special Terms

- general revelation
- natural revelation
- necessity of Scripture
- special revelation