

WHAT WE BELIEVE

A SURVEY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON #3 – THE SCRIPTURES

Baptist Faith and Message Article 1

The Scriptures

“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”¹

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

MEMORY VERSES

19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:19-21, ESV).

INSPIRATION & AUTHORITY

What kind of book is the Bible? Is it a book by men about God? Or, is it a book given by God to men? The Bible claims to be inspired. What do we mean by inspiration?

First, how does special revelation relate to Scripture?

¹ The Baptist Faith and Message: A Statement Adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, June 14, 2000 (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000).

- A. Special revelation is not limited to the Bible. The Bible does not record every bit of special revelation ever given (John 20:30-31).
- B. Not everything in the Bible is special revelation (Luke 2:1-3).
- C. The Bible is not merely a record of special revelation.
- D. The Bible itself is a source of special revelation.
- E. The Bible is the only source of special revelation for us today (some groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Roman Catholics believe that their institutions are a source of special revelation; other groups like some Charismatics and cult leaders believe that individuals today can be a source of special revelation).

Inspiration
The breathing of God's Spirit on human speech and writing to produce the text of the Bible.

The Bible as originally given is inspired and authoritative because God providentially prepared the authors' personalities and writing styles, and supernaturally superintended the writing process so that their finite limitations and sinful biases did not corrupt anything God wanted written. Any biblical statements, whether reports of historical events or theological claims, are as true as portions dictated by God Himself. Whatever the Bible teaches on any subject is authoritative truth revealed by God.

Theories of Inspiration. When the Bible declares, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16, HCSB), what does that mean exactly? There are three theories that have emerged.

1. The dictation theory says that the human authors were passive instruments of the Holy Spirit, simply taking down divine dictation for the record.
2. The dynamic theory says that God merely inspired the ideas contained in the Bible, not the words of Scripture itself. The authors then wrote these ideas in their own ways.
3. The verbal, plenary theory says that the Bible's inspiration is verbal—extending to the very words not just the ideas—and plenary, or full, meaning all of the words are inspired.

QUESTION 1: What view of inspiration do the Scriptures themselves suggest?

ANSWER:

A. New Testament affirmations of the inspiration of the Old Testament

1. Zacharias' prophecy in Luke 1:70 says, "...He [God] spoke by the mouth of His prophets" (NKJV).

2. In Matthew 22:43 Jesus said, "...How is it then that David [in the Psalms], speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'?" (NIV).
3. In Acts 1:16 Peter said, "...the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David..." (NKJV).
4. In Acts 3:18 Peter said, "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (NKJV).
5. Again in Acts 3:21, 24 Peter said, "...God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began...Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these things" (NKJV).
6. Jesus said in Matthew 22:30, "...have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?" (NKJV).
7. In Mark 7:5-13 Jesus quoted from Isaiah and Exodus and refers to it as the "commandment of God" and the "word of God."
8. In John 10:34-36 Jesus quoted from the Psalms and referred to it as the "word of God."
9. In Romans 3:1-2 Paul said that the Jews were entrusted with the "very words of God" (NIV).
10. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (NKJV).
11. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:21, "...for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (NKJV).
12. Hebrews 1:1 says, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (NIV).
13. In Acts 13:32-35 Paul referred to two quotes from the Psalms and one from Isaiah regarding Christ by saying "What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us..." (NIV).
14. In Acts 28:25 Paul said, "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet..." (NIV).
15. Hebrews 3:7 begins a quote from the Psalms with the words, "So, as the Holy Spirit says..." (NIV).
16. Hebrews 4:3 begins another quote from the Psalms with the words, "just as God has said..." (NIV).
17. Hebrew 5:5 quotes another Psalm related to Christ with the words, "God said to him..." (NIV). Hebrews 7:21; 10:15; and 13:5 all contain similar statements.
18. Jesus referred to the entire OT as the "Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" in Luke 24:44. This corresponds to the Hebrew division of the OT as the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Hebrew canon is identical with the canon that Christians accept. The only difference is in the order of the books which are the Pentateuch, the historical books, the wisdom literature, the major prophets, and the minor prophets.

The NT clearly teaches that the OT books are inspired by God and are to be treated as the very words of God.

B. What the New Testament says about the inspiration of the New Testament

1. In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (NIV).

2. John 6:68 says, "Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (NIV).
3. John 7:16 says, "Jesus answered, My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me" (NIV).
4. In John 8:26, 28 Jesus said, "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world....When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (NIV).
5. In John 12:48-50 Jesus said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say" (NIV).
6. In John 14:10 Jesus said, "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words that I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (NIV).
7. In John 14:26 Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (NIV).
8. Acts 22:13-15 says of Paul, "He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him. Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard'" (NIV).
9. In Romans 16:25 Paul said, "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past" (NIV).
10. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 Paul said, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (NIV).
11. In 1 Corinthians 7:10 Paul said, "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord)..." (NIV).
12. In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul said, "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command" (NIV).
13. In Ephesians 2:3-5 Paul said, "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets" (NIV).
14. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul said, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the

word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (NIV).

15. In Titus 1:2-3 Paul said, "...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior...." (NIV).
16. In 1 Peter 1:23-25 Peter said, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.' And this is the word that was preached to you" (NIV).
17. In 2 Peter 3:15-16 Peter said, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (NIV).
18. In 1 John 1:1-5 John said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (NIV).
19. In Revelation 1:1-3; 1:10-11; 1:17-20; 19:9-10; and 22:6-19 are many references to the inspiration of the book of Revelation.

The NT contains many references to its inspiration by God.

C. Jesus' View of the Bible

Jesus affirmed the historicity of the OT. Jesus mentioned many OT characters as historical. Among these are: Abel (Matt 23:35), Abraham (John 8:37-58), Daniel (Matt 24:15), David (Luke 6:3-4), Elijah (Luke 4:25-26), Elisha (Luke 4:27), Isaac and Jacob (Luke 13:28), Jonah (Matt. 12:39-41), Lot (Luke 17:28-32), Moses (Mark 10:2-5), Noah (Matt 24:37-39), The Queen of the South and Solomon (Matt 12:42), and Zechariah (Matt 23:35).

Jesus mentioned the historicity of OT practices, places, objects, events, Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch, and Isaiah's authorship of the book of Isaiah. Jesus affirmed the fulfillment of OT prophecies (Matt 26:23; Luke 4:16-21; Luke 24:25-27). Jesus affirmed the authority of the OT and used the OT authoritatively. Jesus used the OT in ethical discussions (Matt 22:37-40), in refutation (Matt 4:4; Matt 15:3-6; John 7:21-24), in teaching (Matt 13:10-16), and in prophecy (Matt 24:15-16). Jesus saw Himself as the fulfillment of the OT (Mark 14:61-62; Luke 4:16-21; John 6:32-58).

D. Other characteristics of the Bible mentioned in the NT

The Bible is active (Heb 4:12), alive (1 Pet 1:23), all-sufficient (Luke 16:29-31), efficacious (2 Cor 7:8-9, 10:9-11), enduring (Luke 16:16-17, Luke 21:33), eternal (Matt. 24-35), for all believers (1 John 2:12-14), good (Rom 7:12), holy (2 Tim 3:15), illuminating (1 John 2:8), inspired (2 Tim 3:16), instructive (2 Tim 3:14-17), perfect (Jas 1:25), powerful (Heb 4:12), pure (John 15:3), life-giving revelation (Jn. 20:30-31), reliable (Luke 24:44), righteous (Rom 7:12), the standard of truth (Mark 7:7-13, Acts 18:28), true (2 Tim 2:15, Jas 1:18), and trustworthy (Rev 22:6).

The New Testament affirms that the Bible is God's Word.

SUMMARIZE:

EXPLANATION

"All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16, HCSB). The word translated "inspiration" means literally, "God-breathed." It means that God breathed out (expiration) the words of Scripture. Thus, the words of the Bible (not the authors) are inspired. Scripture, though written by means of human authors, ultimately finds its source or origin in God.

Evangelical Christians believe in verbal, plenary inspiration. "Verbal" refers to the words; "plenary" refers to all of the words. Every word of the Bible is inspired by God, not just the thoughts, ideas, or concepts. It's a fact that you cannot have thoughts without words any more than you can have music without notes or mathematics without numbers. So the words are very important.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4).

For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled (Matt 5:18).

God chose to reveal Himself by words of human language. We affirm the verbal or propositional nature of biblical revelation. God decided that verbal communication is an adequate means of conveying information about God.

But language has two parts: words (or symbol) and meaning. Some words have more than one meaning and God inspired the meaning of the word in its particular context as well as the word itself. Symbols exist solely to convey meaning. [Illustration: Boxcar/train/meaning = word/sentence/meaning.] In translation, one must translate sentences, not just individual words to adequately convey the meaning.

QUESTION 2: How can the Bible be written by men and at the same time be the Word of God?

ANSWER: John 14:26; 15:26; 16:12-15; Heb 1:1; 2 Pet 1:21

SUMMARIZE:

EXPLANATION

An analogy from the doctrine of Christ helps us understand the human/divine relationship in writing of Scripture. The Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D. sought to understand the humanity of Jesus and His divinity. That is, Jesus is fully man and fully God. We may say that as a human and divine nature united to form a single person in Jesus, so a human and divine nature joined to produce the Bible.

John Wesley set forth the options we must consider as it relates to the authority of the Bible. He said the Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

1. It could not be the invention of good men or angels for they neither would or could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, "Thus saith the Lord," when it was their own invention.
2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.
3. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by divine inspiration.

QUESTION 3: Can a person honor God/Jesus without honoring His Word?

ANSWER: Deut 6:1-2; Job 23:12; Matt 4:4; 7:21; 21:28-31; Luke 6:46; John 14:15,21,23-24; John 15:10

SUMMARIZE:

EXPLANATION

God governs man by His Word (revelation). Man was created to live under the authority of God's Word (Gen 2:15-17). Man's obedience was tested by God's commandment (Gen 2:17).

"When God supernaturally directed the writers of Scripture, He did not suspend their personalities, literary styles, or emotions. But He communicated His truth by guiding their thoughts, guarding them from error, and producing a totally reliable message. Thus, every word of the original manuscripts [autographs] bears the authority of divine authorship. This means that the Bible is accurate in all it says, and it does not deceive its readers theologically, historically, chronologically, geographically, or scientifically."

James T. Draper Jr.
1935 –
President Emeritus, LifeWay
Christian Resources;
president, Southern Baptist
Convention, 1982-84

The curse came by God's Word (Gen 3:11, 14-19). The promise of redemption came by Word (Gen 3:15, 21). The human race was preserved by one man's obedience to God's Word (Gen 6:9-8:19). The human race was reconstituted by God's promises (Gen 8:20-9:17, the Noahic Covenant). Abraham was called and given promises (Gen 12:1ff, the Abrahamic Covenant). Israel was told to keep every command of God (Deuteronomy 4:1-14; 5:30-33; 6:1-9; 7:11-16). The Words of Jesus and His apostles are also authoritative as God's Word (Matt 7:21-29; John 6:63-68; Rom 1:16ff; Gal 1:1, 8ff; 2 Pet 3:16; Rev 1:11).

So we see that God's Word is paramount in His dealings with man. "I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Psalm 138:2). You cannot separate God from His Word. How you relate to God's Word is how you relate to God Himself.

APPLICATION

1. Some Christians say they trust and worship the God of the Word, not the Word of God. How do you respond to those who drive a wedge between God and His Word? Is a high view of Scripture to be equated with book worship?

2. How should a belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture affect one's relationship with God?

3. How are you presently honoring God by honoring God's Word in your life? In your home? What are three ways you can demonstrate a love for the Word of God?

"If you read the Old Testament, you will find phrases like 'the Word of the Lord' or 'the Word of God' or 'God spoke' or 'the Lord said' used 3,808 times. If the Bible is not the Word of God, it's the biggest bundle of lies that has ever come to the planet Earth. The Bible is truth, absolutely."

Adrian Rogers
1931-2005
Pastor, Bellevue Baptist
Church; Memphis,
Tennessee; president
Southern Baptist
Convention, 1979-80, 1986-
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Next lesson: Canon, inscripturation, transmission, translation, and interpretation of Scripture.