

God's Inspired Book #1

Introduction. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that scripture originated with God. In fact, New Testament writers identified the scriptures they possessed with the voice of God (Matthew 19:4-5; Acts 4:24-25; 13:34-35; Romans 9:17; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 3:7).

Humanistic philosophy has been successful in diverting people away from a high concept of scripture. Several years ago, Western Reserve University sent a questionnaire to 10,000 clergymen in five major U.S. denominations and asked them to answer the question, "Do you believe the Bible is inspired of God?" and 89% of the Episcopalians, 82% of the Methodists, 81% of the Presbyterians, 57% of the Baptists, and 57% of the Lutherans answered, "No."

In an article entitled, "Belief and the Bible: A Crisis in Authority," Walter A. Elwell reported the results of a survey in which this question had been asked: "What is the nature of the Bible?" 42% of those responding said that the Bible is the word of God and is never mistaken; 30% said the Bible is the word of God but is sometimes mistaken; 23% said the Bible is a collection of ancient religious writings, and 5% said they did not know.

These surveys show that the majority of the American people do not accept the Bible as God-given and without error. On the other hand, I am convinced that the vast majority of our brethren still believe the scriptures came from God. However, there are several symptoms of the development of a loose attitude toward the scriptures. Too much preaching in our day is man-centered, weak and shallow, with too little scripture and too much psychology and human interest stories. The person in the pew is hungry for the Bible, and crying to be fed.

In this lesson and the next, we are going to see why we can accept the Bible as an infallible, inerrant, and inspired revelation from God. In order to establish our proposition, we will examine the nature of inspiration, the nature of prophecy, and the revelation of the mystery.

I. ***The Nature Of Inspiration***

A. The word "inspired" literally means "God-breathed."

1. The apostle was not making a statement about "inspired men." Our concept of "inspired men" comes through the Latin word which literally means "to breath in."
2. Carl F. H. Henry observed, "Precisely this conception of inspired writings, and not simply of inspired men, sets the biblical conception of inspiration pointedly over against pagan representations of inspiration in which the heavy stress is placed on the subjective psychological mood and condition of those individuals overmastered by the divine inspiration."

- B. Inspiration emphasizes the origin of scripture, that is, they were "breathed from the mouth of God."
1. When you speak, breath is passed over your vocal cords, controlled by your mouth and tongue, and your words are "breathed out."
 2. The Bible speaks of words proceeding "from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4) and the word is "gone out of my mouth in righteousness" (Isaiah 45:23).
- C. The extent of inspiration.
1. According to scripture every part of the Bible is inspired. Jesus and the apostles frequently appealed to the Old Testament books as "scripture" to settle a controversial point. To their minds such an appeal was equivalent to an appeal to God. Hebrews repeatedly cites passages from the Old Testament as the words of God or of the Holy Spirit. Peter placed Paul's letters on a level with the writings of the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:16), and Paul said that all scripture was inspired (2 Timothy 3:16).
 2. We may go a step farther and say that the inspiration of the Bible extends to the very words employed.
 - a) This is called verbal inspiration (1 Corinthians 2:11-13). The NASB translates vs. 13, "... which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." The idea is that the Holy Spirit revealed both the content of the revelation and the words through which that revelation was imparted (cf. Matthew 10:19).
 - (1) Some have a hard time accepting this truth because they see different styles of writings in the scriptures.
 - (2) However, acknowledging this fact does not remove the truth that our God knows man better than man knows himself and it is no problem for the Spirit to dictate His words in the words or styles characteristic of the prophet He spoke through.
 - b) In many cases we are explicitly told that the Lord told Moses and Joshua exactly what to write (Leviticus 6:1; Joshua 1:1). The prophets speak of God as putting His words into their mouths (Jeremiah 1:9), and as directing them to speak His words to the people (Ezekiel 3:10-11). In fact, Jesus and Paul base arguments on a single word (Matthew 22:43-45; John 10:35; Galatians 3:16).

II. ***The Nature Of Prophecy***

- A. The concept of scripture proceeding from the mouth of God is involved in prophecy. Both of the testaments say that the prophets spoke the words they received from God.
- B. Peter affirmed that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).
 - 1. The word translated "moved" means "to move by bearing." It is used in Acts 27:15, 17 to refer to a ship being driven by the wind.
 - 2. Peter does not deny the right of someone to "interpret" the scriptures for himself. He explains "private interpretation" by showing that prophecy never came by man's will.
- C. A prophet was not so much a foreteller of future events, as he was a forthteller of what had been revealed to him. A prophet was a mouth through which God communicated with man, and there were several of them in the Bible.
 - 1. Aaron (Exodus 4:14-16; 7:1-2).
 - 2. David (2 Samuel 23:2).
 - 3. Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:9).
 - 4. The prophets (Zechariah 1:5-6).
 - 5. Jesus (Deuteronomy 18:15-20; John 12:48-50).
 - 6. The apostles (John 17:7-8; Mark 13:11).

III. ***The Revelation Of The Mystery***

- A. "Mystery" refers to something previously unknown. There were several characteristics of the mystery.
 - 1. Foreordained before the world (1 Corinthians 2:7).
 - 2. Not made known to men in other ages (Ephesians 3:5).
 - 3. Kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25).
 - 4. Hidden in the mind of God (Ephesians 3:9-11).
 - 5. Made known by revelation (Ephesians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10).
- B. Hence, Paul declared that the gospel he preached was "neither received of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12).
 - 1. The word "revelation" literally means "to uncover, to lay open what has been veiled or covered up." Metaphorically it means "to make known, make manifest, or disclose what was before unknown." The book of Revelation was intended to reveal the truth to the saints in Asia, not to hide it.
 - a) Man's limitations are the main obstacle in understanding God's plan (Isaiah 55:8-9).

- b) God is without limitation, but man is limited both in knowledge and in time (James 4:14).
 - c) Therefore, God's revelation had to remove man's limitations and bridge the gap between human wisdom and divine wisdom. However, there are a few ways in which we can never know God.
 - (1) We cannot know God by nature (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20).
 - (a) This is known as "general revelation." The general revelation of God is prior to His special revelation in point of time.
 - (b) It is revealed to man in the facts, forces, and the laws of nature.
 - i) The insufficiency of general revelation.
 - (1) General revelation does not convey the knowledge of God relating to spiritual matters, and therefore does not furnish us a foundation on which we can build for our eternal future. The religious confusion of those who would base their religion on a purely natural basis clearly proves its insufficiency.
 - (2) While it conveys some knowledge of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, it conveys no knowledge of Christ as the only way of salvation (John 14:6).
 - ii) The value of general revelation.
 - (1) General revelation accounts for the true elements that are still found in heathen religions. Due to this revelation Gentiles seek after Him and feel themselves to be the offspring of God (Acts 17:27-29), and they see in nature God's everlasting power and divinity (Romans 1:19-20).
 - (2) General revelation also forms the background for His special revelation. The latter could not be fully understood without the former. Science and history illuminate the pages of the Bible.
 - (2) We cannot know God by intuition (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 16:25).
 - (3) We cannot know God by human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:21; 3:19).
2. The mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit, and it was made known by the apostles both in oral form (1 Corinthians 2:13) and in written form (Ephesians 3:3-5).

- a) Special revelation is the truth which is now embodied in scripture. The Bible is God's special revelation, a revelation in which facts and words go hand in hand, the words interpreting the facts and the facts giving substance to the words.
 - b) This special revelation became necessary through the entrance of sin into the world. Man was stricken with spiritual blindness, it was necessary for God to pull back the veil and reveal the plan of salvation and redemption to the mind of man.
- C. Our faith today is based on the same evidence that produced faith in those who heard the apostles and prophets of the first century (John 20:30-31)!

Conclusion. Since the Bible is "breathed of God," we must accept it as the word of God, and not the word of man (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It alone must serve as our standard of right and wrong. An appeal to a misinformed conscience, or to the voice of the majority, will not set its authority aside. Let us believe that the Bible is God's revealed word, and let us teach it and preach it so that souls that are lost in darkness may be able to come to the light.