

Lesson 2 – How We Got The Bible –Inspiration

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Review:

The process of communicating DIVINE TRUTH, which is the Bible, from God to us required six steps.

1. Revelation

2. Inspiration

3. Preservation

4. Canonization

5. Translation

6. Illumination

The first of those six steps, Revelation, is God's unveiling of himself to man, God revealing himself to humanity. We learned that there are two kinds of revelation.

A. General Revelation. General revelation comes to us in two ways.

1. Through Creation. God unveiled Himself first by creation, the things which He has made. In other words as we look at creation we see the work, which implies the existence, of a creator. - **Romans 1:20.**

But not only does God reveal his existence through all of creation, He also revealed Himself through:

2. Through Conscience. Romans 2:14-15 The conscience is the vague remnant of God's moral nature that is left in man after that fall. God created man in His image, and part of that image was a moral nature.

B. Special Revelation. The second way in which God revealed Himself, we call Special Revelation.

In **Hebrews 1:1-2** the Bible says "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*"

The point of emphasis is "*God...spoke...and ...has spoken.*" This is **Special Revelation**, God revealed himself not through mediators like creation and conscience, **but in WORDS directly to man.**

Definition: "Special Revelation is the communication of Divine truth from God to the mind of the prophet." The Bible is itself the product of this kind of revelation.

The process or the instrument that God used to communicate divine truth to the mind of the prophet, or as often in the New Testament, the apostle, was sometimes through visions. Sometimes divine truth was communicated through dreams. Sometimes God spoke audibly or appeared to the prophet and spoke face to face. Usually however, Revelation was given simply by God causing the prophet to know the Word of God. God sovereignly and supernaturally, placing divine truth into the mind of the prophet.

New:

The 2nd step in the process of bringing divine truth from God to man is called:

II. INSPIRATION:

Definition: (Keep in mind that this is an orderly process), and the first step, **Revelation**, is the communication of divine truth from God, to the mind of man. The second step, (Inspiration), can be defined as: "**The transmission of divine truth from the mind of the prophet to the paper**". Now that might not sound like a

big deal, but believe me, it is the biggest deal. God communicated his truth to the biblical writer, who in turn, (under the direction, the influence, the guidance of the Holy Spirit), wrote it down on paper.

Now the first note of importance here is to understand that it is the writings and not the writers who were inspired. **By this I mean the divine authority is not with the persons who wrote it, but in the writings themselves....** The great question about which volumes have been written is, how did God accomplish this? Let me list and give a brief explanation of some of the theories.

A. Mechanical Dictation. This is probably the most widely known and perhaps the explanation that the majority of Christians believe. (That doesn't mean it's correct.) Mechanical Dictation sees the writers of scripture as simply stenographers. God dictated word for word exactly what he wanted them to say without that truth passing through the life and experience of the writer.

The problem with this view is that as we read Scripture we find the personality of the human author who penned the writings. We see David speaking to us from his experience as a shepherd in **Psalms 23**. In Amos, we see the agricultural background of the prophet bleeding through the text. James, who was the pastor of the Jewish church in Jerusalem addresses his epistle to "*the 12 tribes...*" and is very Jewish in presentation of practical Christian concepts.

There are, of course, places where it is specifically stated by God to the writer that he is to write exact words. But this is an exception not the rule and is not a basis by which to evaluate all of inspiration.

B. The Concept Theory. This is another very popular view. This view sees not all words of scripture being directed by God through the writer to the paper, but only the concepts. Scripture then is simply a book written by men with spiritually enlightened minds. It would be much like an employer telling the secretary to write a letter to someone, to communicate certain information, but to put it in her own words.

The problems with this view are many.

1. This view would require a redefinition of the word inspiration.

No longer could it be said that inspiration means to communicate truth, but that inspiration means to simply communicate an idea much like a musician is inspired to write a song.

2. This view denies the authority of the writing.

If God said to Moses, "Write some instructions to my people for living a moral lifestyle", and Moses writes, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, etc.," where is the authority? When reading these "commandments", someone might simply say, "Well, that is only Moses' opinion of what God meant and therefore it's not binding upon my life."

3. This view perpetuates inspiration. After all, a Christian is a spiritually enlightened person. As a believer I've been redeemed and indwelt by God's spirit. Why then can I not write explanations of the concepts of truth that move me in my life and they be equated with Scripture? If the concept theory is true, then I could.

C. The Partial Inspiration Theory. According to this view only those portions of Scripture dealing with matters of doctrine, faith, and practice were clearly communicated to the human authors. The portions of the Bible however that deal with historical, scientific or geographical subjects are not inspired. When I was going to Seminary in the early 80's this is the kind of inspiration that was being taught in many Southern Baptist schools.

Now "The Bible not written to tell us how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven." That is, God's purpose was not to teach science or history, or geography. But is that justification to deny inspiration of portions of

scripture that speak about those subjects? No! As a matter of fact, the evidence is quite opposite. Though we do not need to depend upon external sources to prove the Bible, it is never-the-less valuable to use historical, scientific and archeological discoveries to demonstrate the inspiration of scripture. There was a period of time when men believed that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Old Testament because they thought language had not been reduced to writing in the time of Moses. That idea was disproved when archaeologists unearthed clay tablets that were **written** 1000 years before Moses.

The identity of Belshazzar the King who saw the handwriting on the wall in **Daniel 5** was once denied as fictitious. But it was later proved that the Bible was correct as historical evidence of Belshazzar was found.

Scientifically the life giving quality of the blood wasn't discovered until 400 years ago. Yet the Bible says that *"the life of all flesh is in the blood."* **Leviticus 17:11**

The Hydrologic Cycle - The water cycle consists of three processes: evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. The sun evaporates the water in lakes, streams and oceans, and transforms it into vapor. Then condensation returns it to a liquid state, and then it falls back to earth in the form of precipitation, (rain, snow, hail...) Now look at **Ecclesiastes 1:6-7** *"The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again".*

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

The Second Law of Thermodynamics: The quality of matter/energy deteriorates gradually over time. That is everything in the universe is running down, deteriorating and becoming less organized. **Psalm 102:25-26** *"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded."* That by the way is a result of the fall, caused by man's sin in the garden and God's resulting curse on creation. Man's sin didn't only affect humanity, but it affected the entire universe. That's why your car breaks down. It's also why the speed of light is decreasing. The universe is running down. **(You would learn about that in Hamartiology, the study of sin.)**

In **Leviticus Chapters 12-14** you find all sorts of scientifically accurate information about Health, Sanitation, and Sickness

Those examples are not intended to be exhaustive in anyway, but they make it obvious that to say the Bible is not inspired in areas of history, geography and science is itself in error.

IV. The Neo-Orthodox Theory. This view is a subjective view of inspiration. It denies that the Bible is not the Word of God, but declares that the Bible "becomes" the Word of God when it speaks to my heart. This view confuses the doctrine of inspiration with the doctrine of illumination, which we will discuss later. So in this model it is actually the **reader** who is inspired. So the words in the Bible aren't God's words, but they are fallible words written by fallible men, and the Bible is only "inspired" in that God can sometimes use the words to speak to individuals. So the Bible is not objective truth, it's subjective, and experiential, and it can't really be called truth, because it has not source of authority.

So if none of these theories are adequate where do we turn? Well there is another possibility. It is called:

V. Verbal Plenary Inspiration. The best understanding of inspiration is found in the verbal plenary model of inspiration. What is Verbal Plenary Inspiration? Well, let's break it down. **"Verbal"** refers to the words of the text - meaning that every word of the Bible is inspired by God. That has enormous importance. Because if you can't trust **every** word in the Bible, then you can't trust **ANY** word in the Bible. And if every word is inspired, then it's necessary for us to read and digest every word. And it's important for pastors to expound every word,

and to explain the nuances of meaning that are in the words, including the grammar, which we are blessed to have. Phillip does that as well as anyone I've ever heard and better than most. We believe in **Verbal** inspiration.

The word "**Plenary**" means "**full**" or "**complete**" and when applied to the scriptures it means that all of the Bible is fully inspired. Every passage of scripture is **equally** inspired. **Joshua 3:16** is just as inspired as **John 3:16**. The historical portions are equally inspired with the spiritual portions. The passages that deal with **scientific** matters are no less inspired than the **soteriological**, (salvation) passages. "Verbal Plenary Inspiration" - God inspired every word equally.

Now let me see if I can anticipate a question that some of you may have. I hope someone is wondering about this, because it reveals an inquisitive mind. And the question that might be asked is, "Isn't verbal inspiration the same as mechanical dictation?" Let's discuss that briefly.

First, **II Peter 1:21** says, "*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit.*" Notice the words "*carried along*". Now what does it mean that they were carried along? We can gain some insight into this word by its use elsewhere in scripture. The same Greek word, (*phero*), is used in **Acts 27:17** when Paul was traveling to Rome aboard a ship. A storm swept down on them and the wind blew with such force that control was impossible. So in order to keep from running aground at some point and destroying the ship, they let down the anchor and allowed the storm to take its course.

The text says, "*When the men had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along.*" The words "*driven along*" are translated from that same Greek word. So what's the point?

The wind exerted absolute control of both direction and destination. At the same time with certain limitations, inside the ship they could move around at will. The control of the Spirit in the lives of the human authors was similar. They were guided to a destination not of their own choosing, yet within a certain context they had freedom in their writing. That context was their own language, vocabulary, culture, personal history, vocation, education, etc. They wrote in a language that they had learned as toddlers. When they wrote, they used words and idioms that they were accustomed to using in their everyday conversation.

As I mentioned earlier, much of their culture and personal history and vocation can be seen in what they write. So how is that possible? How can they write out of this personal context and still write the exact words that God wants them to write? It must be understood, that even this personal context was influenced by the providence of God.

Jeremiah 1:5 says "*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.*"

Other prophets reflect the same thought, namely that their call and preparation for ministry started long before they preached or wrote the first word.

Isaiah 49:5 "*And now the LORD says, **he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him...***"

The apostle Paul indicates that he was set apart from birth for his work.

Gal. 1:15-16 "*But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,*"

How is it possible that God could allow human authors to reflect their own personality and personal history in their writing and still accurately state every word as God planned? The answer is that God's plan for writing the text did not begin as the author sat down to write. The plan of God for the words of the Bible began with the

shaping of these words in the life of the writer. It was no accident that David was a shepherd. It was no accident that Amos was from Tekoa. It was no accident that Peter was a fisherman. But it was by divine design, that each author of the scripture should be born in a particular location, learn a particular language, and have a certain occupation. It was by God's plan that they would bring that background with them to the writing of the text. So when they wrote it, it was through the context of a life completely and intentionally developed by the Holy Spirit. In other words, it was for that very point in time, and purpose in life that God prepared them as he did. So that they might use that preparation to write the words of God. That every word be equally true.