

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Lesson 3

### The Inspiration of the Scriptures

#### A. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Scriptures

##### a. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Inspiration ]

###### 1. Standard Biblical Definition of Inspiration

- a) “By the inspiration of the Scriptures it is meant that the writers were so empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit in the production of the Scriptures as to give them divine and infallible authority.”

*Elemental Theology, Emery H. Bancroft pp. 29*

- b) “God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind...”

*Basic Theology, Charles C. Ryrie pp. 81*

- c) “The Holy Spirit so guided and superintended the writers of the sacred text, making use of their own unique personalities that they wrote all that he wanted them to write, without excess or error.”

*Lectures in Systematic Theology, Henry Clarence Thiessen pp. 65*

- d) The inspiration of the Scriptures needs to be considered in light of Dual Agency. This refers to both human and divine agents being involved in Biblical inspiration. This allows for human expression and literary style and also explains the divine origin and authority of its statements and claims.

###### 2. Scriptural Declaration

- a) 2 Timothy 3:16 – “**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...**”

1. The statement “...inspiration of God...” literally refers to the Scriptures as being “God-breathed” (theopneustos). This means that every Scripture is filled with the breath of God. This clearly teaches Divine authorship.

- b) 2 Peter 1:20-21 – “**... 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.**”

1. "...no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation..." The word private means "one's own." The Scriptures were not man's own personal explanation of God. It is further explained "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man..." it was not man's own determination to write Scripture, it was God's.
2. "But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This teaches the two agencies of inspiration: (1) "...holy men of God spake..." referring to human penmanship (2) "...as they were moved by the Holy Ghost..." referring to Divine Authorship.
3. The word *moved* means to be *borne along* by God. This can be likened to a ship (man) being controlled, driven and moved by the wind (God).

c) Other Scriptures teaching that the Holy Ghost spake through the prophets and Scriptures:

1. Acts 1:16-20 – "...this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which **the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake** before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." Cf. Ps. 69:25; 109:8
2. Acts 28:25 – "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well **spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias** the prophet unto our fathers..." cf. Is. 6:9-10
3. Hebrews 3:7 – "Wherefore (**as the Holy Ghost saith**, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:" Cf. Ps. 95:7-8

b. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Inspiration

1. Verbal, Plenary Inspiration
  - a) Verbal Inspiration: refers to the inspiration of words. This means that the *words* of Scripture are the very *words* of God. This goes beyond the concepts and message of Scripture to the exact words used by God as being important and inspired. God places an emphasis on his *words*, Matt. 5:18 (letters – tittle); 24:35; Jer. 1:9; Ps. 12:6; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 4:4; 1 Cor. 2:13
  - b) Plenary Inspiration: plenary means "extending to all parts alike." In reference to Biblical inspiration this means that *all* the Bible is inspired and *every* part of the Bible is equally inspired, 2 Tim. 3:16;

2 Pet. 3:15-16, 1 Tim. 5:17,18 – quote from Deut. 25:4 and Luke 10:7

2. Inerrant, Infallible Inspiration

- a) Inerrant Inspiration: means that the Bible was written down correct in every detail and it therefore is without error. Where Scripture speaks, God speaks and therefore the Bible cannot be in error because God cannot make mistakes. God needs no correction, His character is perfection.
- b) Infallible Inspiration: means the Bible is without error in its teaching Jn. 17:17; Ps. 119:160. God's Word will always come to pass and the "scripture cannot be broken" Jn. 10:35. The Bible is incapable of teaching deception because God cannot lie, Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19.
  - The extent of inspiration includes the entire words and claims of the Scriptures, teaching that they are without error and unfailing, concluding that they are of God.

c. **The \_\_\_\_\_: False Theories of Inspiration**

1. Mechanical or Dictation Theory:

- a) This view holds that the authors acted like robots, or dictating machines, writing God's revelation void of their own character. This would demand that all the styles and forms of the Scriptures would be uniform.

2. Partial Inspiration Theory:

- a) Inspiration is limited to the doctrinal portions of the Scriptures, the portion that man could not know from any other source. Therefore the Scriptures are authoritative in all matters of faith and practice, but not in areas of science or history.

3. Degrees of Inspiration:

- a) Some parts of the Bible are held to be more inspired than others. For example, the words of Jesus Christ are regarded as more inspired than the words of Job's three friends.

4. Dynamic Theory:

- a) It is suggested that the thoughts of the Scriptures, and not the words, were inspired. It is sufficient to capture the thoughts or concepts of a text, and not to be too overly tied to the actual wording of the text. This philosophy has been adopted by many modern Bible translators who seek for a "dynamic equivalent" rather than an exact word for word translation. E.g. In the Good News Bible, the Greek word "haima," meaning "blood" is several times rendered as "death," indicating we are saved by the death of Christ, and not by the blood of Christ, as the Greek text states.

5. Natural inspiration Theory:

- a) This theory regards the writer to be inspired, and not his writing. The Scriptures were the result of inspired men and are on the same level as the writings of other inspired men, like Homer or Shakespeare.

d. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Inspiration

1. Internal Evidences

- a) The Claims of the Scripture:
  - 1. Paul's words received as the Word of God, 1 Thess. 2:13
  - 2. Jesus referred to the O.T as the Word of God and the Scriptures, Mar. 7:13; Lk. 24:27, 44
  - 3. "Thus saith the LORD" – used over 3000 times in O.T.
  - 4. Writers acknowledged that they were speaking the Word of God, Acts 20:27, Deut. 30:10.
  - 5. Authors acknowledged each other's writings as authoritative, Josh. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:15; Dan. 9:2, 11; Zech. 7:12; Acts 1:16.

b) The Character of the Scripture

- 1. The Doctrine of God: As explained in the Scripture is beyond human comprehension. The Trinity, Godhead, Deity of Christ, the extent of the attributes of God. How could someone invent that? How could 40 authors who many were unrelated say the similar things about God?
- 2. Doctrine of Sin: Natural man minimizes sin and exalts their natural behaviour. The Bible does the opposite. The Bible portrays man as vile, sinful, corrupt and depraved. This is not the tendency of natural man's writing. Even many "heroes" of the story have their sinfulness exposed.
- 3. Doctrine of Salvation: Man has always sought salvation through good works. If the Bible were a human book salvation would be by works. Salvation is truly all-wise God invented plan.

2. External Evidences

- a) Historical Trustworthiness: The scriptural record of the names and titles of the kings are in complete harmony with secular records. The record of Jesus by Josephus a Jewish historian is also accurate.
- b) Archaeological Findings: The excavating of Biblical sites have proven to be consistent with how the Scripture described them. Take for example the treasure city of Pithon, built for Ramses II, by the Hebrews during the time of their hard bondage in Egypt (Ex. 1:11). They excavated that site near Tel-el-Kebir and found that the walls of the houses were made of sunbaked bricks some with straw and some without straw. This is exactly in accordance to Ex. 5:7, written 3,500 years ago: "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make bricks..."

c) Scientific Claims: the claims of Scripture are consistent with scientific findings. For example:

The earth hangs upon nothing, Job 26:7	Wasn't discovered until space travel
The air has weight, Job 28:25	Discovered 17 <sup>th</sup> Century by Galileo
Life in the blood, Lev. 17:11	Bloodletting practiced up until 1880
Stars are without number, Jer. 33:22 You can 5,000 stars with naked eye.	The stars of all the galaxies combined can only be roughly estimated.

d) Prophetic Statements: The prophecies of Scripture strongly prove the inspiration of God's Word. Many specific prophecies were outside of human control or manipulation and were prophesied hundreds of years before their fulfilment. Here are some examples of prophecies with historical fulfilment.

City of Tyre destroyed, Ezekiel 26:1-14	Fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar 573 BC, by Alexander the Great 332 BC
Israel scattered and returning to the land, Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-5; Is. 11:11-12	Fulfilled May 14 <sup>th</sup> 1948
Fall of Ninevah by flood and fire, Nahum 3	Fulfilment recorded in Babylonian Chronicle. Tigris river flooded the city bringing down the walls. Early 1800s excavation showed sand covered by a layer of ash.
Fall of Babylon. It was never to be inhabited again. Creatures would infest its ruins, Is. 21:1-10; Jer. 50	Fulfilled by Cyrus the Great 539 B.C.

#### e. Problem Passages – Leave for Homework

1. How many fell? Compare Numbers 25:9 & 1 Corinthians 10:8
  - a) Numbers 25:9 – Records 24,000 deaths
  - b) 1 Corinthians 10:8 – Records only 23,000 deaths
2. Is Paul claiming he wasn't inspired? 1 Corinthians 7:12
3. How did Judas die? Acts 1:18; Matt. 27:5

#### Homework:

- Reading and Quotations: Bible Explorers Guide, J. Phillips – Part 1 – Ch. 3 - 4
- Simply answer two of the Problem Passages above.