

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

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About the author...

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I want to begin this lesson by noting something of particular interest in the book of Exodus. In chapter 25 and verse 9, God is giving instruction to Moses about the building of the tabernacle. He said, *“According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”* And then in the first few verses of chapter 31, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, *“See, I have called by name Bezaleel...and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I have given with him Aholiab...I have put wisdom (in them) that they may make all that I have commanded thee.”*

We find in these verses that God did not make the tabernacle with His own hands. But He gave Moses the pattern, and He gave His Spirit to Bezaleel and Aholiab so that they may have the wisdom and the skill needed to make the furnishings and the items of that tabernacle which God had commanded Moses to make. If you read through Exodus you will find that those are the men who did the work of constructing that tabernacle. Here was God and man working together. And just as God didn't make that tabernacle with His own hands but gave His Spirit to certain chosen ones so that they might do the work, the same thing is true with the production of the Bible.

God did not write the Bible with His own hands, but He gifted certain, chosen individuals to be the hands and the minds to write His Word. This He did through the agency of the Holy Spirit. When it comes to providing things for the benefit of man, God works in this way. He and man work together. It is a pattern we see throughout the Bible.

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

When we talk about inspiration, what do we mean? I'm going to try to define inspiration and to understand, from the Word of God exactly what He means by this term. In 2 Timothy 3:16 the word inspiration can be found. Here, Paul teaches us that, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”* All Scripture! I've been interested to find out that in the Bible, when the word “Scripture” is used, it is used to refer to the Bible. Literally, the word scripture means anything that is written. But when the word is used in the Bible, it always has reference to something between Genesis and Revelation. It always has reference to what God has given us in this book. So “all scripture” that is, all of these 66 books is given to us; we received it, by the inspiration of God. To inspire means to breathe into. The

Greek word that Paul used here is a compound word. The first part of the word means “God.” And the second part of the word means “breathed into.” (Vine II:263) What Paul is literally saying is that all Scripture is given by the breath of God. And just as you are listening to the words that I am breathing right now, when we read the Scripture, the Holy Bible, we are reading the words that at one time, God breathed to those men who wrote them. And they are authentic, they are His Words. I need us to understand that point. When we read the Bible we are reading the Word of God. I hope as we go through this lesson, that point will become more apparent and we will begin to appreciate the full meaning of that phrase. It’s a phrase we have used a lot: the Word of God, the Scripture, the Bible, we use them interchangeably. But do we realize the full impact of saying, that volume, which you may be holding in your hands, is actually “God breathed?”

I like the way Jesus said it to Satan in Matthew 4:4, when He said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* What comes from my mouth are the things which I breathe out. And when we speak, we are breathing those words out. God breathed these words in the Bible.

I’ve heard some people say that you really can’t go to the Bible and read a verse that says the Bible is inspired and take that at face value. For I can say that I am inspired, and how would that prove that it was so? Well it’s really not the focus of my thinking in this lesson to prove that the Bible is inspired. But I will spend just a little time on that thought.

PROOFS OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The Bible Claims Inspiration

The Bible certainly claims to be inspired, in fact, I have read it through from beginning to end and counted the number of times that it claims to be God’s Word and not man’s word. And just using the Old Testament alone, which emphasizes that the words which were written down were not the author’s words but the words of God given to them, in such phrases as, *“Thus saith the Lord”* or *“The Lord spoke by me”* I have documented 1,904 times where this can be found. There are also passages in the New Testament that make this abundantly clear as well. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 Paul stated. *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”* The words which Paul was speaking and writing, Paul says that they were not his words. My wisdom didn’t invent them. I didn’t think about them and prepare them and then write or speak them to you, but the Holy Spirit gave me these words, he said. That was their source and where they actually came from.

Verses Which Describe Inspiration

Exodus 20:1	Isaiah 1:2
Exodus 24:4	Jeremiah 1:9
Exodus 35:1	Ephesians 3:3,4
2 Samuel 23:2	Revelation 1:1

The Bible certainly claims to be the Word of God.

Fulfilled Prophecy

We could spend time studying fulfilled prophecies and there are literally hundreds of them in the Old Testaments that have come true. There has been no other religion on earth that has been able to equal what God has done in the matter of prophecy. In fact it is prophecy that sets the religion of God apart from all other religions in this world. Because God knows the future and He can then foretell things that will come to pass.

Real prophecy, the foretelling of events that would not naturally occur, is found only in the Bible. Without God, man can only make guesses, some good but most wrong. A few examples of the prophetic accuracy of the Bible are here given.

1. The succession of nations is foretold in Daniel 2:36-45. The meaning of the king's dream is said to foretell the kingdoms of Persia, Greece and Rome all after the kingdom of Babylon. History reveals that this did happen.
2. The work of Jesus' predecessor, John the Baptist is prophesied in Malachi 4:5 and its fulfillment is recorded in Matthew 11:14 and Mark 9:11-13.
3. But by far, the prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus are the most exciting. For example, His birthplace is foretold in Micah 5:2 as being Bethlehem. Its fulfillment is found in Matthew 2:6.

Historical Accuracy

The historical accuracy of the Bible, even though it is an ancient book, gives evidence that proves the inspiration of its words. Scholars, historians and archaeologists have never been able to disprove the facts that the Bible teaches.

For instance:

1. Unbelievers used to scoff at the mention of the nation of Sheba in the book of 1 Kings. They denied that such a nation ever existed. But about 100 years ago, archaeologists found Marib, the capital of Sheba in southern Arabia.
2. Archaeologists have also proved the existence of the Assyrian king named Sargon from his own records found in ancient Assyria. Sargon even mentions the battle which Isaiah records in Isaiah 20.
3. The Bible also reveals that the Persian Empire allowed the nation of Judah to return to Judea when Persia conquered Babylon. On the "Cyrus Cylinder" this policy is stated and was applied to all conquered peoples. This policy had formerly been in dispute.

Impossible For Man Alone

And I would ask you to consider this: man could not write the Bible if he wanted to because of all the prophecy and the historical accuracy which it contains. Man has written many histories and many mistakes have been found in them but not when it comes to the Bible. In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, the Bible reveals to us that when man tries to prophesy, or to write the Bible without the help of God, he will make mistakes. This in fact is the way God wants us to distinguish the inspired writers and speakers from those who are uninspired. God says in this passage that when man makes a mistake and says something which is wrong, then that man is not speaking the words of God. He is

only speaking his own words. The Bible is far above all of the words which man has written alone. So man couldn't have written the Bible if he had wanted to, neither would man write the Bible if he could. The Bible speaks against so many of the sins which are dearly loved by man. Things which men desire to practice, the Bible condemns. Mankind wants to live for himself and for pleasure and for profit, engaging in all kinds of sin. It is very difficult to believe that man would write the Bible even if he could.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE?

Well when we say inspiration, what exactly do we mean? There are a lot of different theories, but if you boil them down, they all fall into one of three categories. Some people believe that there is really no inspiration at all in the Bible, other believe that part of the Bible is inspired and part of it is not, then there are those who believe that it is completely inspired. Let's spend a few moments looking at each of these three theories.

No Inspiration At All

There are some who say that the Bible is not inspired at all, that it is just a good book. You could put it on the shelf with the other great works of literature. It is the same as all the other books in the library, it is just one of the good books that man has written. Or there are some who really would say, "Well it's inspired all right but it's kind of like the inspiration of Shakespeare, Milton or Keats." Now, we will admit that in one sense, they were inspired in the writing of their works. But that is not at all what the Bible means when it says that it is inspired. If the Bible was only inspired like that, then it wouldn't be inspired at all, at least, not by God.

Partial Inspiration

There are also some who claim that the Bible is only partly the Word of God, that is, a partial inspiration. Some would say that parts were written by God, therefore those parts are inspired and that other parts were not written by God, therefore those parts could not be inspired by God. This is a very popular notion. Many in the religious world hold some kind of view in this category.

I first discovered this view when I was in high school. I was talking to a friend about what the Bible said. We were discussing things when I used a verse from the Bible. His response was something like; "I don't care if the Bible says that." I said, "Why not?" His reply was, "I don't believe that part is inspired." I was quite surprised. If you've ever heard someone say that or something like it to you, you might be startled. You then become tempted to ask them, "Well, which part is inspired and which part isn't?" You think that you can at least use "their inspired part" to teach them. But when you think about it, if you're going to believe that part of it is inspired and part of it isn't, how are you ever going to tell which part is inspired. I asked my friend that. He couldn't answer me. Basically, I think that his answer would have been, "Whatever I want to be inspired, is inspired and whatever I don't want to be inspired, is not."

For if part of it is inspired and part of it isn't, there would be no way to know. You would have to be inspired yourself to know which part of God's Word is inspired and which part isn't. How could anyone know which part is inspired? The verse that was read a moment ago, teaches us that the

Bible came *“not by the will of man.”* In Romans 3:4, Paul wrote, *“Let God be true, but every man a liar.”* That ought to tell us, if it’s not God’s Word, then it’s man’s word and compared to God, all we can do is lie, for God is the One Who speaks the truth (John 17:17).

Thought Inspiration

There are others who teach an inspiration that is called “thought inspiration” and this is another form of partial inspiration. This is an idea that seems to be growing very rapidly today. This is the view that even some of our own brethren are adopting. Basically it says that God only put an idea into the mind of Moses or Paul or Peter and left them free as to how that idea should be stated in words. Brethren, that’s a very popular notion these days. But it is not what the Bible teaches about its own inspiration.

The Bible, as we read in 2 Samuel 23:2 has David saying, *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”* David was not speaking about ideas, he said it was God’s Word that was given to him. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, we shall live *“by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* Jesus is the one Who in Matthew 5:18 said, *“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* For those of you who don’t speak Hebrew, a jot is the smallest Hebrew letter. And a tittle is just a part of a letter like we might put a cross on a “T” or an “F.” Just a part of a letter, not one letter, not one part of a letter will pass from the law until it has all fulfilled the purpose for which God has given it. Does that sound like the Lord just put thoughts into people’s minds and left them free to choose which words and which letters to use in expressing those thoughts? Or does it sound like God was very careful about inspiration and that the words and even the letters were very important to Him? The impression that I get is certainly that God inspired the words and even the letters. Every one of them, for Jesus said, not *“one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law,”* until God is finished with it.

Thought inspiration is the idea that God inspired men by giving them the thoughts and leaving them free to find the words. But you know, I have never realized that a person could have a thought without having a word in their mind. Can you? Can you have a thought or an idea in your mind and it not be in the form of words? You might think, “I can see a picture in my mind.” But a picture is not an idea. And when you see a picture in your mind you think: tree, house, grass etc. You will put words with all those images you see in your mind. If you cannot have a thought in your mind without words, then how could God use something like thought inspiration? It isn’t possible!

There is another way to be sure that thought inspiration is not the method God used to create the Bible. When you look into the Bible you will find occasions when they wrote the Word of God but they did not understand what it was they were writing. In Daniel 12:8,9, Daniel says about a vision which he had just received, *“I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”* Now, here is Daniel who has received many such visions in this book and upon the completion of this one he doesn’t understand what it means. He asks the man in his vision to explain it for him but he is denied an explanation. Now how could a thought have been put into his mind and he be left to write it down if he did not understand the thought in the first place? Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:10-12 that when the prophets were writing about the coming salvation, they too did not fully understand what they were saying. He says that they *“inquired and searched diligently”* about

it. They wanted to understand what the *“Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified”* about the Christ who was to come. In verse 12 Peter tells us that they did understand that they were not writing *“unto themselves but unto us they did minister”* in the messages they were writing. Again, how could anyone explain to others in writing what he did not understand himself? This could only be accomplished by inspiration that included the very words God wanted revealed.

If thought inspiration were God’s method then the Bible would not be the Word of God at all, it would be the “Thought of God.” The Bible writers would have used their own fallible minds to decide how to reveal the mind of God. We would have no sure way to tell whether they succeeded or not. We could not know for sure if what they wrote was true or false.

But perhaps the best evidence against the thought inspiration idea is found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:18-20. Here Jesus is giving instructions to His apostles concerning the coming times when they would be arrested and put on trial for preaching the gospel. He tells them, *“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”* Notice that Jesus says they were to *“take no thought”* about what they would be speaking in their own defense. They would receive at that time the content of their message and the manner of its delivery. They were not to apply their own minds to their defense. They were not to give any thought to what they would say. And yet this is exactly the opposite idea that is found in the notion of thought inspiration, where only an idea is given to the speaker or writer and they are free to apply their minds to choose the words to speak or write in the Bible. Notice again what Jesus said, *“it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”* Words would come from their mouths but those words would be under the control of the Spirit of God. This also happened to these same men on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:4 when they *“began to speak...as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

In fact when you think about it, if thought inspiration were God’s method of doing it, then the Bible is not God’s word at all, it is man’s word. Because man’s own fallible mind was left free to choose the words that were written in the Bible. And how could you call that the “Holy Bible?” Is that what it says on your book, the “Holy Bible?” That word “Holy” is there because it means that it is from God and not from man. But if this is written and produced by thought inspiration, then we ought to take the word “Holy” off of the cover because it would then be man’s word. That is exactly what one Bible maker has done; it is called “The Book.” They have taken God out of the picture entirely. That is the difference between the “Holy Bible” and what man has produced in these modern days and called “The Book.”

Verbal Inspiration; Total Inspiration

The Bible teaches that it was verbally or word inspired and that it was completely inspired. In 2 Peter 3:2 the apostle Peter there wrote, *“that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord.”* Notice that it is the words that we are to be mindful of, both of those written before, that is the Old Testament and of those written by the apostles, that is the New Testament. We are to be mindful of the very words! The Bible expresses this thought very well. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* But according to those who think that the Bible is

thought inspired, they have already passed away because as soon as someone wrote anything down, God's Words were gone and only man's words were left for us to read.

But not only does the Bible teach word inspiration, it also teaches total inspiration; that is, every part of it is inspired not just some parts of it. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it says "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God,*" all of it. And this verse leaves only one method for all of the scripture, not one method for one part of it and another method for another part of it, as if only part of it was inspired. "*ALL Scripture is inspired of God.*" And when we get that thought in our minds then it becomes apparent to us that this book is the Word of God! Brethren, I want you to understand that. If you have a Bible with you there and you are holding it, that is God's Word, that is the will and testament that He has left for us, that is the method by which we can hear God speak to us today. It is essential for us to believe this.

CONCLUSION

- And when we have established that, there are some things that this means to each of us.
- C *That the Bible is the Word of God means the authority of the Bible is established.* Did you ever think that if the Bible is not the Word of God, or if we couldn't tell which part might be inspired and which part wasn't inspired, that the Bible would actually be of no use to us at all? How could we use it in any authoritative manner? Someone else might say, "Well, I don't think that is one of the inspired parts." How could we say otherwise, if you accept that some is and some isn't inspired? The Bible is only useful to us if it is completely inspired and if it is, then it's authority is established. We have the responsibility of doing what the Bible says, since it is God's Word.
 - C *That the Bible is the Word of God means the inerrancy of the Bible is established.* If this is God's Word then there's no mistake in it. It's true from beginning to end. We should not argue about whether a verse means what it says, it is all correct since it is the Word of God (John 16:13).
 - C *That the Bible is the Word of God means the all sufficiency of the Bible is established.* That is what Paul taught in 2 Timothy 3:16,17. The Scripture "*is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" It is all sufficient to make me everything that God wants me to be in order to be pleasing to Him. This book is that, because it is God's Word. When you think about it, He says here that this book is useful for "*correction.*" How could I be corrected by something that wasn't the Word of God? Why would I follow that?
 - C *That the Bible is the Word of God means we have reason to study it like no other book.* The Bible is not just one of many books that are of equal value in this world. It is the book that is "on a shelf by itself." IT is the book that is like no other book in all the world. It is the book that we must, as 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" We need to know how to use the Bible. It is that important. It is by using this book that we please God and by no other book.

This book is like no other because its author is like no other. It is the Word of God.

C *That the Bible is the Word of God means we can all understand the Bible alike.* It is God's Word and it is the authority, in it is no mistake, it is all sufficient to make us the faithful children of God we ought to be. If in studying this book, we are studying God's Word, why would someone say, "Well you can understand it your way and I'll understand it my way and we'll both be right." That doesn't make any sense at all. Would God write a book for man that could not be understood by man? This doesn't sound like the God I serve. We can understand the Bible alike if we will study it properly, if we will apply ourselves with diligence to learn His will and not try to enforce our will upon the pages of His book.

C *That the Bible is the Word of God means we can trust it and obey it.* We can believe that the blessings that are promised within its pages can be ours if we will do what it says. It's just that simple. Some people make a contract here in this world, if it's an honorable contract, they can expect to receive what the contract stipulates if they do what is required of them in that contract. Well if this is the Word of God and there is no mistake in it then we can trust it, we can put our faith in it, we can be obedient to it and expect to receive the blessings that it promises us.

All of this is based upon the fact that this book is the Word of God. The doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is so basic yet so important. Because if our Bible is not inspired, then nothing it teaches or says is worthwhile. Why would I want to be obedient to a book that was written so long ago by some men? Many other books are even older than this one. Could a human author bless me today? No! But God can! I have to believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the God inspired Bible. This is the only book in all the world that teaches me what I must do to be saved and to live a faithful Christian life of service to God and to have any hope of eternal life in heaven. And that is where I want to go when this life is over. It is my hope and prayer that you have the same desire too and that you realize that you cannot obtain that without the use of the God inspired Bible.

Works Cited

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