

Basic Christian Doctrine #1

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

I. Facts about the Bible

- (1) The Bible is unlike any other book because it is divine in nature.
- (2) Its 66 books were written by 44 authors over a period of some 1500 years.
- (3) The Bible was written in everyday language.
- (4) The Bible’s record of predictive prophesy testifies to its inspiration and trustworthiness.
- (5) Archeology continues to confirm the historical accuracy of the bible.
- (6) The pragmatic test of the Bible’s fulfilled promises in people’s lives.

II. Definition of Terms:

1. Revelation. God’s self-disclosure. Revelation precedes inspiration.

(a) *General Revelation.* The revelation of God in nature and creation.

(b) *Special Revelation.* God’s supreme revelation is by Jesus Christ through the scriptures.

2. Inspiration. The supernatural moving of the Holy Spirit upon chosen individuals who receive divine truth from Him and communicate that truth in written form.

(a) *The Purpose of Inspiration.* To ensure that the writers were infallible in their teaching.

(b) *Plenary Inspiration.* Inspiration extends to the *entirety of scripture*, all 66 books, so that the bible is fully and verbally inspired in all its thoughts, sentences, words, syllables, and letters.

(c) *Verbal Inspiration.* This means that God not only gave the thoughts but the very words expressed by the writers

(d) *Key text:* 2 Tim.3:16: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

(e) *Key word: Inspiration* (gk. *theopneustos*) = “God breathed,” or lit. “*that which is breathed out by God.*” “All Scripture” refers to the written words, not simply to the divine meaning. The very words of scripture are inspired, or breathed out, by God.

3. Authority. Inspiration contains the divine authority of God so that scripture is binding upon the mind, heart, and conscience as the only rule of faith and practice for the believer.

(a) *Sola Scriptura* (Latin for: the bible alone) is an enduring principle of the Reformation, but it is also biblical.

4. Illumination. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who enlightens the minds of people as they read the scripture.

5. Infallibility and Inerrancy. These terms are synonymous. The ordinary meaning of them is “unerring” or without error.

III. The Bible’s Internal Evidence

The Bible claims for itself the unique distinction of being the Word of God.

(a) The Old Testament. The phrase “Thus says the Lord,” or its equivalent, occurs over 2000 times in the O.T., and claims divine inspiration (cf. Ex.34:27; Dt.31:24-27; Josh.24:26; Isa.8:1; 2 Sam.23:2; Jer.1:9;5:14;7:27;13:12).

(b) The New Testament.

- (1) The N.T. writers assert that the O.T. writers spoke the word of God (Heb.1:1).
- (2) OT prophesies concerning Jesus Christ were “what the Lord had spoken by the prophet” (Matt.1:22; 2:15).
- (3) The Holy Spirit spoke “by the mouth of David” (Acts 1:6).
- (4) The Holy Spirit spoke “to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet” (Acts 28:25).
- (5) The Jews of Jesus Day believed the OT to be the infallible Word of God.

(c) The Testimony of Jesus. Jesus claimed that the Word of God is inspired and infallible. (Matt.5:18; Mk.7:13; John 10:35; Lk.16:31; 24:27).

- (1) In Matt.5:18 Jesus was talking about the written O.T. when He uses the terms “iota” and “dot”, referring to the smallest character of the Hebrew alphabet and the tiniest part of any Hebrew letter, showing how highly Jesus regarded the O.T..
- (2) Jesus Pre-authenticated the N.T. (John 14:26).
- (3) So great was Jesus’ view of scripture that in two instances (Matt.22:43-45 and John 10:34,35), His whole argument rested upon a single word.

(d) The Testimony of the Apostles.

- (1) Paul. (2 Tim.3:16; 1 Cor.2:12,13; 14:37; 1 Thess.2:13).
- (2) Peter. (2 Pet.1:20,21).

IV. Myths

1. *The Bible contains the Word of God.* The Bible doesn’t contain the word of God, it is the word of God, according to its own testimony.
2. *There are errors in the bible and therefore it cannot be trusted.* The original autographs were inspired by God. There may be a scribal error or two throughout the centuries of transmission of the text, but God has overruled and seen fit to preserve the integrity and trustworthiness of His word through it all (Mt.24:35).
3. *The modern translations of the Bible are not accurate.* The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948 once and for all settled this issue.
4. *Higher criticism a legitimate test of the Bible’s accuracy.* The oxymoron of unbelieving theologians criticizing a book that requires faith to discover its truth and purpose.
5. *The Jesus Seminar serves a good purpose in testing the words of Jesus.* Again, this illustrates the age old error of attempting to study the Bible without using the proper tools.

V. Applications

- 1) Jesus viewed scripture as verbally inspired and wholly trustworthy. Do you? To deny His view is to deny His person and to accept His person is to accept His view of scripture.
- 2) In the end the Bible’s inspiration and infallibility must be accepted by faith. (Heb.11:6; Rom.10:17).
- 3) The written word of God is designed to lead us into a saving relationship with the living Word of God, Jesus Christ (John 5:38-40; 6:63; John 1:1).