

“20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 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).

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

Introduction

Loved ones, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul affirms the inspiration of the scriptures, "16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God," "...and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." (makes reference to the use to be made of the inspired scriptures), "17 ...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (showing the designed consequence of this inspiration and use).

Numerous are the verses which set forth the Bible's own claim to be miraculously inspired of God. But, what does the Bible mean in making this claim? What is the meaning of "inspiration" as the word is used in relationship to the Bible?

It is important that careful attention be given to answering this question.

"Inspiration" is a term which is currently being used in different senses. The modernist of the rankest sort claims to believe in God. But he does not believe in the God of the Bible.

He claims to believe in Christ. But he does not believe in the Christ of the Bible. Just so, he claims to believe in the inspiration of the Bible, but he does not mean by "inspiration" what the Bible teaches about inspiration.

He believes that the writings of Paul were "inspired" in the same sense as were the writings of Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, and Poe.

He hesitates not to explain the intellectual depth of the book of Romans upon the grounds that "Paul simply felt better that day!"

Many False Theories Of Inspiration

Many false theories of inspiration plague our world. We simply glance at a few.

(1) There are some who forthrightly deny that there is anything special about the Bible. To these, the Bible is just another book—a good book, perhaps—but a book of human origin.

(2) Modernism claims that the Bible is a compilation of previously existing human documents, brought together and edited by George—George Redactor, that is!

(3) Some claim that the Bible is miraculously inspired in some places, or in a measure, or to a certain extent.

We ask: in what places? In what measure? To what extent? Who decides? This clearly denies the inspiration of the Bible.

(4) Some hold the idea that God (somehow) bestowed upon certain men indefinite, nebulous thoughts, and allowed these men to place the "thoughts" in their own words.

So, we ask: What does the Bible say with regard to its inspiration?

Promise And Fulfillment

The Lord promised to certain ones miraculous inspiration.

The Lord said: “18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:18-20).

He said further: “13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13-14).

The Lord kept His promise.

On Pentecost of Acts 2, these very men to whom the promise had been made, “...were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (v. 4).

In verse 39 Peter said: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

This passage is a good illustration of the miraculous inspiration by which Peter spoke. Its significance certainly encompasses salvation of the Gentiles.

And yet, Peter himself—at that time—did not believe that the gospel was for Gentiles.

In Acts, chapter 10, God had to perform a miracle three times to enable Peter to understand that he was indeed to preach the gospel to Gentiles.

God thus helped him to understand the meaning of what he had preached approximately ten years before!

It was Peter who later declared that God's divine power, "...hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness..." (2 Peter 1:3).

Paul explains the matter: "11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

Clearly, the New Testament writers affirm that the Lord kept His promise.

God And Authority

All original authority is inherent in God the Father. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

"The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land" (Psalm 95:5).

He is the ..."living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15).

He is "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth..." (Acts 17:24).

He is the Creator—our maker and our sustainer. It is in him that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Because He is what He is, all original authority—source authority—is inherent in Him.

The Son And Authority

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written to convince men that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the Living God—the Messiah about whom the Old Testament message had been penned.

God said that Jesus was His Son. Jesus claimed that God was His Father. These writers set forth irrefutable evidences designed to prove His claim.

“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

But, what is so important about this fact? Why prove that He is the Son of God? The answer is: as such, He was (and He is) in position to be heir of all authority from the Father.

Therefore, shortly prior to His return to the Father He met with His disciples upon a mountain of Galilee and confidently affirmed that,

"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

God gave authority to the Son—the authority to deal with the problem of the sins of men.

The Apostles And Authority

The Lord knew that His life on the earth would be short, but that His message to men would continue. He called, He selected, He taught, He tutored, He trained, and He developed a small group of men upon whose shoulders He placed the responsibility of getting the gospel story to the whole world.

He promised to be with them in their work, and He was with them.

Acts of Apostles is the sacred story of how the Lord went with them in getting the gospel to every creature in the whole world (cf. Mark 16:19-20).

They preached the gospel by miraculous inspiration; their word was confirmed by miraculous demonstration.

These men sustained a special relationship to Christ, the King. In fact, they were the King's "ambassadors."

Paul writes: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The word "ambassadors" as used here involves the divine "embassy," and this divine "embassy" necessarily involved special authority.

The apostles were the authoritative, official, representatives of the King.

The King reigned from heaven, but He had an embassy among men—the apostles to whom He gave authority to bind and to loose on earth that which had been bound and loosed in heaven.

The Gift Of Prophecy

There were miraculous gifts—spiritual gifts— in the early church.

The people of that day did not have the completed New Testament in written form, but there was a desperate need for divine guidance and instruction.

To meet these needs, God placed in the early church special gifts.

A wonderful discussion about these spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians, chapters 12, 13, and 14.

In chapter 12 Paul discusses nine of the miraculous gifts.

In the light of Acts 8:14-21 we confidently affirm that only an apostle could—by laying on of hands—impart a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit to someone else.

The evidence clearly is that each apostle possessed all nine of the spiritual gifts, and that each apostle was able—according to need—to impart any of the spiritual gifts.

One of the tremendously important spiritual gifts was the gift of prophecy. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul stresses the superiority of the gift of prophecy.

It is imperative that we understand this gift.

"To prophesy" does not simply mean "to foretell future events."

Its meaning includes this future aspect, but it includes far more than this.

The word literally means "to speak for, to speak in behalf of."

The prophets (whether Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets) spoke for—in behalf of—God. They were the ones through whom God spoke.

In Exodus 7:1, God said to Moses: “...and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.”

Moses would speak through Aaron. This is the meaning of the word. The prophets sometimes dealt with the past; they sometimes dealt with the (then) present; they sometimes dealt with the future.

But they were prophets because God spoke through them.

The gift of prophecy, therefore, is the authority underlying every word in the Bible.

Every word (every original word) is one which came as a result of the miraculous gift of prophecy. If Luke is one of

the writers of the New Testament, and if Luke was not one of the apostles, then Luke was a prophet in the early church—one through whom God revealed His will.

Let it be stressed that there is no prophecy without (1) direct revelation, plus (2) miraculous inspiration.

God revealed, then the one to whom the revelation came spoke or wrote the revealed message. The speaking and/or writing was done by inspiration.

There were inspired teachers in the early church, but they were not the same as the prophets.

The teachers dealt with the message which had come to the prophets by revelation.

A significant passage in this connection is 1 Corinthians 14:30: “If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.”

Pertinent Passages

One of the clearest and simplest passages on the inspiration of the Bible is 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.

In verse 9, Paul refers to certain "things" which God prepared for them that love him.

In verse 10, he says: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

In verse 12, Paul says: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Note: God revealed—by the Spirit—the "things." The revelation came to those encompassed in the word "us."

You and I are not in the word "us." We receive no direct revelation.

Question then: how does the revealed message come from those included in the word "us" on to the rest of us?

Answer: Paul says: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (v. 13).

This makes it plain enough!

God revealed the things to certain ones (who possessed the gift of prophecy), who in turn spoke it (and wrote it down) in words selected by the Holy Spirit.

This is the Bible's own definition of inspiration: the marvelous combination of the things revealed, couched in words selected by the Holy Spirit.

A similar, beautiful, affirmation and explanation is found in Ephesians 3:1-5. God, by the Holy Spirit, revealed the mystery, by words, to Paul, enabling Paul to understand the mystery.

Paul wrote (in words) the mystery which God revealed, for the Ephesian brethren (and for others), enabling them to read, and to perceive his (Paul's) understanding of the mystery of God—the gospel of Christ.

CONCLUSION

This, dear friends, is the Bible doctrine of inspiration.

We need to keep in mind that miraculous inspiration relates to the original words of God's book—the Hebrew words for the Old Testament, and the Greek words for the New Testament.

Translators are not inspired. But those original words are from God. They are the very words selected by the Holy Spirit.

They mean what God wanted them to mean; they say what God wanted them to say.

God gave authority to the Son. The Son gave authority to the apostles. The apostles (and others upon whom the apostles laid their hands) possessed the gift of prophecy.

The gift of prophecy was the vehicle by which God revealed His message. Those to whom the revelation came then spake it and wrote it "...not in words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Spirit teacheth."

**They combined "spiritual things"—the things revealed—
with spiritual words—words selected by the Holy Spirit.**

**Thanks be unto God for His verbally-inspired, inerrant,
infallible, all-sufficient word!**

Invitation