

DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

Inspiration

Lesson #6

John Walvord has said, The importance of the inspiration of the Scriptures, while tacitly denied by some in modern times, is easily demonstrated. It is a matter of tremendous import whether the Scriptures are a supernaturally produced Word of God or whether they are a collection of the works of men, containing errors one must expect in any human work. ¹ In this lesson we will look at the inspiration of Scriptures and see how that practically applies to our lives today.

I. DEFINITION OF INSPIRATION

- A. A proper statement of the meaning of inspiration is, therefore, that God so supernaturally directed the writers of Scripture that without excluding their human intelligence, their individuality, their literary style, their personal feelings, or any other human factor, His own complete and coherent message to man was recorded in perfect accuracy, the very words of Scriptures bearing the authority of divine authorship.²

- B. The word *inspiration* comes from the Greek word *theopneustos*, a word found in 2 Tim. 3:16, which the King James Version rendered inspiration of God. The Revised Standard version did little to improve this and translated the word Inspired of God. The word literally means *out-breathed* rather than *in-breathed* by God divinely *ex-spired*, rather than *in-spired*. Scholar B. B. Warfield showed decisively that the sense of the word can only be passive. The thought is not of God as breathing through Scripture, or of Scripture as breathing out God, but of God as having breathed out Scripture. Paul's words mean, not that Scripture is inspiring (true though this is), but that Scripture is a divine product, and must be approached and estimated as such.³

- C. Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His message to man in the words of their original writings in the Bible. God superintended but did not dictate. His superintendence was sometimes very direct and sometimes less direct but always active, so that He guarded the writers from writing inaccurately. He used human authors including their own individual styles. They were not stenographers receiving dictation. The result of this combination of human and divine authorship was a record that in the original manuscripts was without error.⁴

¹John Walvord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 55.

²John Walvord, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 58.

³J. I. Packer as quoted in the *The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible Software under inspiration.

⁴Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 42.

II. DEFINITION OF VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION

Up until the mid 1900's, it was common for people to speak of the Bible as inspired, infallible, and the soul rule of faith and practice. It was understood that the Bible was the Word of God and that all of it was true. Yet, as liberalism began to grow, the Bible came under attack in very subtle ways. Men started to affirm that the Bible was the soul rule of faith and practice but what they meant by that was something far different than the previous generation. What they meant is that the Bible was full of errors and faulty texts but what was true and genuine in the Bible was to be used as our rule of faith and practice. Others began to adopt some of the higher critical views of the German and Swiss theologians who argued that the Bible was not actually the Word of God itself but that it contained the Word of God or became the Word of God when we experienced it in our life. Soon, the phrases used of the Bible in the past, such as infallible, inspired, and soul rule of faith and practice meant something radically different than before. This made conservative, Bible-believing Christians realize that a new phrase or definition had to be employed which more accurately defined what conservative Christianity believed about the Bible. This led scholars to employ the phrase, verbal plenary inspiration.

- A. What is meant by *Verbal* inspiration is that, in the original writings, the Spirit guided in the choice of the words used. However, the human authorship was respected to the extent that their own characteristics are preserved, their style and vocabulary are employed, but without the intrusion of error. What is meant by *Plenary* inspiration is that the accuracy, which verbal inspiration secures, is extended to every portion of the Bible so that it is in all its parts both *infallible* as to truth and final as to divine authority. This, as has been stated, is the traditional doctrine of the church and that set forth by Christ and the Apostles. This teaching preserves the dual authorship in a perfect balance, ascribing to each that consideration which is accorded it in the Bible.⁵
- B. [Verbal Plenary Inspiration is] the view that the inspiration of Scripture extends to the actual words (verbal) and to every part of the entire (plenary) Bible. In past usage verbal plenary inspiration was equated with *inerrancy*.⁶
- C. The position maintained by orthodox theologians is variously designated as plenary, or verbal inspiration. Frequently the two words are coupled together to avoid any ambiguity. It is held that the entire Bible in its every word is the Word of God and inerrant in the original writings. This means that what the Bible says, when correctly understood grammatically and in its historical setting, is absolutely true in the sense that the meaning of every word is true.⁷

⁵Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 94:376 (Oct 37) pg. 407

⁶*The Moody Handbook of Theology*, pg. 623.

⁷ James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, pg. 186.

III. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT INSPIRATION

- A. *Man's part in the producing of Scripture was merely to transmit what he had received.* Psychologically, from the standpoint of form, it is clear that the human writers contributed much to the making of Scripture—historical research, theological meditation, linguistic style, etc. Each Biblical book is in one sense the literary creation of its author. But theologically, from the standpoint of content, the Bible regards the human writers as having contributed nothing, and Scripture as being entirely the creation of God. This conviction is rooted in the self-consciousness of the founders of biblical religion, all of whom claimed to utter—and, in the case of the prophets and apostles, to write—what were, in the most literal sense, the words of another: God Himself.⁸
- B. Behind the human writers was the divine author of revelation, the Holy Spirit. Peter, referring to the Old Testament prophecy, declared that men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21). The agents were men; the source was God; and the single author moving the human instruments was the Holy Spirit. The word *moved* indicates that the Spirit bore the human writers along as He directed their writings. The same word appears in Acts 27:15 of the strong wind that irresistibly carried and directed the ship on which Paul was being taken to Rome.⁹
- C. According to 2 Tim. 3:16, what is inspired is precisely the Biblical writings. Inspiration is a work of God, whereby He allows men to express themselves freely, but at the same time uses them to produce an inspired text. It is Scripture *graph*, the written text—that is God-breathed. The essential idea here is that all Scripture has the same character as the prophets' sermons had, both when preached and when written (2 Pet. 1:19–21, on the divine origin of every prophecy of the scripture; see also Jer. 36; Is. 8:16–20). That is to say, Scripture is not only man's word, the fruit of human thought, premeditation and art, but also, and equally, God's Word, spoken through man's lips or written with man's pen. In other words, Scripture has a double authorship, and man is only the secondary author; the primary author, through whose initiative, prompting and enlightenment, and under whose superintendence, each human writer did his work, is God the Holy Spirit.¹⁰
- D. Many are confused about inspiration because the books of the Bible themselves often give the name of their author e.g., Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, to. . . We can wonder in our minds, Did Paul write this book, or did God write this book? The answer is yes to both.

⁸*The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible Software under inspiration.

⁹Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 43.

¹⁰*The New Bible Dictionary*, Logos Bible Software under Inspiration.

IV. KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS DESCRIBING INSPIRATION

- A. Deut. 5:31 But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess.
- B. II Sam. 23:2-3 The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God,
- C. II Kings 17:13 Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.
- D. Neh. 9:30 However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, Yet they would not give ear. Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.
- E. Isa. 51:16 But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess.
- F. Jer. 1:9 Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.
- G. Ezek. 3:24-27 The Spirit then entered me and made me stand on my feet, and He spoke with me and said to me, Go, shut yourself up in your house. 25 As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them. 26 Moreover, I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute and cannot be a man who rebukes them, for they are a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, Thus says the Lord God. He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.
- H. Mk. 13:11 When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.
- I. I Cor. 2:10-13 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we

may know the things freely given to us by God, 13which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

- J. I Thess. 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.
- K. II Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
- L. II Pet. 1:20-21 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
1. In your own words, how would you summarize what the Scriptures above teach about inspiration?
 2. Based on the Scriptures above, what would be the consequences of rejecting the inspiration of the Scriptures?
 3. When it comes to essential doctrines of the Bible, do you feel inspiration is an essential doctrine? Why or why not?
 4. Let's say you are on a secular college campus taking a course and the Bible comes up and the professor glibly says, "The Bible was written by men over several thousand years and contains historical, textual, geographical, and ethical errors, but nevertheless is a great literary work, probably the greatest of all times."
 - a. Why do educated people say things like that about the Bible?
 - b. What would be the consequences of the professor admitting that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God?
 - c. How should a Christian student respond to such a statement?

V. **INSPIRATION REVEALED BY COMPARING NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT**

One of the interesting Scriptural proofs of the inspiration of the Word of God is to examine how the New Testament authors speak about the Old Testament authors and specifically their writings. The chart below compares what New Testament authors said about the Old Testament authors and their words.

New Testament quoting Old Testament reference	Old Testament passage being quoted by New Testament author
Mark 12:36 David himself said in the Holy Spirit. . .	Psa. 110:1 A Psalm of David. The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.
Jn. 10:34-35 Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your Law, I said, you are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),	Psa. 82:1, 6 A Psalm of Asaph, God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. I said, You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High.
Acts 1:16 The Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David	Psa. 69:25 May their camp be desolate; May none dwell in their tents. Psa. 109:8 Let his days be few; Let another take his office.
Acts 4:25 The Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say	Psa. 2:1-2 Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His Anointed:
Acts 28:25-27 The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah	Isa. 6:9-10 And He said, Go, and tell this people: Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.
Heb. 3:7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts . . . (See 3:15; 4:3, 5). Heb. 4:7 He [God] again fixes a certain day, Today, saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, Today, . . .	Psa. 95:7-11 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness; 9 When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. 11 Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest.
Heb. 10:15-17 "The Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying	Jer. 31:33-34 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord, I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

VI. AFFIRMATIONS BY JESUS THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES WERE INSPIRED

Below are some of the New Testament Scriptures that help us to see Jesus theology of the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. As you read the verses below, ask yourself what each verse tells us about what Jesus believed concerning the Old Testament Scriptures.

- A. Mt. 5:17-18 Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
- B. Mt. 24:35 (also Lk. 21:33) Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.
- C. Mt. 12:40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- D. Mt. 19:4 And He answered and said, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,
- E. Mt. 26:54 How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?
- F. Mk. 12:23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?
- G. Mk. 13:14 But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.
- H. Lk. 16:17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.
- I. Lk. 16:31 But he said to him, If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.
- J. Lk. 17:26 And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:
- K. Lk. 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

- L. Lk. 24:25 And He said to them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!
- M. Lk. 24:44-45 Now He said to them, These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. 45Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
- N. Jn. 10:34-35 Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your Law, I said, you are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)
 - 1. What do all of the texts above tell us about Jesus view of the Scriptures?
 - 2. What would be the consequences of denying the inspiration of the Scriptures in light of the above texts?

VII. ERRONEOUS CONCEPTS OF INSPIRATION

- A. False The Scriptures were originally inspired but have become corrupted over the centuries and are no longer reliable.
- B. False The Scriptures are partially inspired by God.
- C. False The Scriptures are inspired by God but contain errors.
- D. False The Scriptures contain the Word of God.
- E. False The Scriptures become inspired when they make you excited and motivate you to change.
- F. False The Scriptures are outdated and no longer apply to our modern age.
- G. False The Scriptures are our sole rule of faith and practice but are not inspired in every word and part.
- H. False There are writings which are more inspired than others.
- I. False Denying what the Scriptures teach is not an attack on inspiration.

VIII. APPLICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT S ROLE IN INSPIRATION

- A. When you want to hear from God, all you have to do is open the Bible and have God speak to you. When the Scripture speaks, God speaks.
- B. When the Scripture speaks we can believe it because God, who is perfectly true, cannot lie when He speaks.
- C. Because God wrote the Scriptures, we know they will always be relevant and never outdated.
- D. Because God wrote the Scriptures, we can know that all the claims which the Scriptures make of themselves are true and accurate.
- E. Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, we can find answers for living for His glory by reading the Bible.
- F. Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, we can be sure about what the Scriptures say about our future, the future of the world, and the future destiny of those who reject Christ.

In Bunyan s Pilgrim s Progress, we read that at one point in his journey Pilgrim slept awhile and lost his scroll. Bunyan grippingly pictures the anxiety and trouble that ensued until Pilgrim retraced his steps and found his book. America has lost its belief in and emphasis upon the Bible. There was a time when it was read and taught in our public schools. Now reading from it and teaching it are said to be illegal. It used to be preached, memorized, quoted, studied, and believed. Now this is true only in restricted circles. America must return to the Bible. But we shall not return to the Bible as long as it is regarded merely as great literature. It is only when we receive it as God s holy and infallible Word that it will bring the promised blessing. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Rev. 1:3).¹¹

¹¹ R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures*, pgs. 53-54.