

# The Origin and Nature of the Bible

## Memory Text

### 1 Thes 2:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

- How did the Thessalonians receive the gospel that Paul preached to them?
  - They welcomed it and received it as the word of God rather than as the word of men.
  - Was Paul's gospel of righteousness by faith in Christ the word of men or the word of God?
  - It was spoken by him as a man, but it came from God to him.
  - He says here that what he preached to them was, "in truth, the word of God."
- In writing to the Galatians, how does Paul say he received his gospel? ([Gal 1:11-12](#))  
**Galatians 1:11-12 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <sup>12</sup> For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- **Q1: Where did the apostle Paul get the gospel that he preached?**
  - He got it from Jesus.
  - He didn't get it from Peter, James, or John.
  - He didn't get it from some other apostle or from other men.
  - He got the gospel through direct revelations from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Q2: So when Paul preached the gospel, was it the word of man or the word of God?**
  - Paul spoke the words but the message came from God.
- **Q3: Is that similar to what we see in the inspiration of the Bible?**
  - Men wrote the words, but the message comes from God.
- What is the message of this verse for us as we approach the Bible?
  - Even though the words of the Bible were written by men, it conveys the message that God wants us to know.
  - When God speaks through biblical inspiration, the words of men convey the word of God.
  - That's why we call the Bible the Word of God.
  - We would do well to follow the example of the Thessalonians.
  - We should welcome the Bible and receive it, "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."
- What does the word of God do for those who believe it?
  - It works effectively in them.
  - Paul ends this verse on a practical note.
  - As we receive the word and believe the word, it becomes effective for us: it makes a difference.
  - It shows us the way to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and be saved in His kingdom.
  - I think of Paul's words to Timothy when he wrote:  
**2 Tim 3:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
  - That's the way God wants His word to work effectively in our lives.
  - Are you thankful for the word of God?
  - Has it made a difference in your life?
  - Let's follow Paul in the opening words of this verse and "thank God without ceasing" for giving us the word of God. The B-I-B-L-E...

## Overview

- The nature and source of truth in the Bible
  - Divine Revelation and Inspiration.

## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson 2 - The Origin and Nature of the Bible

- Written Word and the Word made Flesh
- Reading with Faith

#### Divine Revelation and Inspiration

- Why do we need divine revelation?
  - Because we live in a fallen world where direct communication with God is no longer possible.
  - We can no longer meet with God face-to-face and get answers face-to-face.
  - We cannot see God with our physical eyes or hear Him with our physical ears, or know His physical presence.
  - Without the divine revelation of scripture, we would know precious little about God.
  - Yes, we still would have the book of nature, that declares the power and glory of our creator.
  - But without understanding the Fall and the curse, nature does not always give a clear picture of a God whose greatest relational attribute love.
  - So we need divine revelation to know what God is like, to know how He created, to know His purpose for His creation, to know right from wrong, to know His will for us, to know how He loves us, to know that He has sent a Savior to save us, to know how our sins can be forgiven, and to know how we can find eternal life in His kingdom of glory.
  - Without divine revelation we would be in darkness, in ignorance, in error, living a life that ended in hopelessness, death, and destruction.
  - God reveals His truth to us because He wants to save us and give us eternal life.
- How does Peter describe the process of divine inspiration that God used to reveal Himself through the prophets? (1 Peter 1:21)  
**2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV)**  
*<sup>21</sup> for prophecy [of the Scripture] never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*
  - **Q1: What is the moving force behind divine revelation?**
    - It is the HS that moves holy men of God, the prophets and writers of Scripture, to speak and write.
    - Divine revelation does not come from the will of man.
    - It is God providing the message through the HS and chosen men speaking and writing the words that communicate God's truth to the people.
  - **Q2: How should we approach the scriptures if we know the Holy Spirit "moved" those who wrote it?**
    - We should approach it in faith, knowing that, as God's word, it is trustworthy.
    - We should approach it in humility, willing to learn, accept, and obey what it says.

## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson 2 - The Origin and Nature of the Bible

- What does the apostle Paul add to our understanding of divine revelation in 2 Tim 3:16-17?

#### 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- **Q1: What are some of the key words that we should emphasize as we try to understand and apply this text?**

- These verses are really rich in instruction and meaning.
- First, **“All.”** All scripture, not just some scripture.
  - All of the original writings that make up the Bible are inspired.
  - If we go back to the original manuscripts written by the original writers, everything is inspired.
  - Copying errors, additions, deletions, misspellings, embellishments, etc., are not inspired.
  - Scholars make it their life’s work to try to trace the texts of scripture back to the oldest and most reliable manuscripts.
  - We can have confidence that this Bible, the Bible we hold in our hands, is God’s word.
- Second **“Scripture.”**
  - How do we know that the books in our Bible are the inspired books, and the ones left out are not inspired?
  - For the OT, the inspired books were well recognized in the times of Jesus.
  - Protestant Christians accept the same inspired books of the OT as the Jews of Jesus’ day.
  - These would be the same OT books that Jesus accepted and quoted from.
  - The Jewish OT has only 24 books, but they are numbered differently than in our Bibles: They count 1 & 2 Kings as one book, etc., but their 24 are really the same as our 39.
  - The Catholic Bible has 46 books because they accept the apocryphal writings of the intertestamental period like 1 & 2 Maccabees.
  - Neither the Jews nor the Protestants accept these books as inspired.
  - So when Jesus referred to the scriptures, He referred to the same 39 books of the OT that we have in our bibles today (although the Jews of Jesus’ day numbered them differently).
- Third, **“Inspiration of God.”**
  - In Greek this is all one word that literally means “God breathed.” (*theopneustos*)
  - Somehow, God is at work in all scripture breathing into it divine truth.
  - This makes the Bible unique, a one-of-a-kind book.
  - It is in the Bible that God reveals to us the truth that He wants us to know about Himself, His creation, the fall, the plan of redemption, the gift of His Son to pay the price for sin, forgiveness, the resurrection, and life everlasting, and many other things.
- Fourth, **“Profitable.”**
  - It is useful, helpful, and advantageous.
  - It will be to our advantage to allow the word of God to teach us.

- **For what kind of things can scripture be useful?**
  - Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness.
  - Doctrine means simply teaching what is true and right.
  - Reproof means to point out what is wrong.
  - Correction is to show us what is right.
  - Instruction in righteousness is again teaching us how to live right.
  - We NLT paraphrases it this way:
    - Scripture is “useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”
  - The doctrines of scripture include all that the Bible teaches about the character of God and of His Son, Jesus, and the HS.
  - It is through the inspired word that we can fall in love with Jesus and trust Him as our Savior.
  - It is the scriptures that make us wise unto salvation as they did for Timothy.
  - A love letter from God inviting us to find eternal life in Jesus our Lord.
  - Let us not neglect it!
  - God’s word equips us to do what is right and good and find true success in life.

**Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup>This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

- **What are some of the methods God uses to communicate divine truth through human agents?**

**Visions and Dreams.**

- We saw this clearly last quarter as we studied the book of Daniel.
- God revealed Nebuchadnezzar’s dream to Daniel and its interpretation.
- The four beasts out of the sea was a dream given to Daniel, and the remaining revelations in the book were by vision.
- God used these same methods of communication with other prophets as well.
- We have mentioned already how Paul received the Gospel by revelation from Jesus, presumably by a vision.
- And the apostle John attributes essentially the entire book of Revelation to a vision.

**Direct Quotation:**

- When the prophets quote God, that is also divine revelation.
- “Thus saith the Lord...” And then they quote the words God has given them.
- The message they give is what God has revealed to them.
- They are speaking the very words of God, not their own words.

**Divine Transcription:**

- This occurs only once in scripture where God wrote with His own finger on tables of stone the ten commandments.

**Divine Appearances:**

- The Lord appears to Moses in the burning bush and on Mt. Sinai where He hides Moses in the cleft of the rock and passes before Him and declares to him the character of the Lord God.
- He shows Moses the pattern for the sanctuary and instructions for building it.
- The Lord appeared to Joshua as the Captain of the Army of the Lord.

**Angelic Appearances:**

- Gabriel appeared to Zachariah, Mary, and Joseph, with revelations of what would happen in the future.

## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson 2 - The Origin and Nature of the Bible

#### Thought Inspiration:

- This is probably the most common form of inspiration and revelation used in the Bible.
- The HS inspires the writers with thoughts or brings events to their remembrance.
- They then write them down to provide a trustworthy and true account of events.
- We see this method of communication especially in the NT and in the historical books of the OT.
- How did Luke say he assembled the historical events recorded in his gospel?

#### **Luke 1:3 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup>With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

- So here we see God's guidance of Luke in the investigation of the life of Christ, helping him to select the historical facts and eyewitness accounts to be included in inspired scripture.

#### The Word

- **What are some advantages of having the word of God written down rather than just communicated by word of mouth?**
  - **Have you ever played the game of "Telephone?"**
    - In a group of people, one person thinks of something secret to say, and whispers it to next person. That person whispers it to the next person, who whispers it to the next, until finally the last person says to everyone what he or she heard.
  - And why is that a fun game to play?
    - Because what comes out at the end is seldom what was said at the beginning.
  - Human transmission by word of mouth has a way of losing information.
  - Writing it down ensures that everyone who reads it gets the exact same message.
  - God wanted His word to be transmitted with accuracy to His people.
  - Why do you think that God wrote His commandments on tables of stone?
    - He wanted them to be a permanent record to transmit them accurately to His people.
  - Now writing on parchment is not nearly as permanent as writing on stone.
  - So what do we have to do when the scrolls and parchment and paper wear out? (Make copies.)
  - And we talked about this last week about the meticulous rules that the scribes followed in copying scripture.
  - So now that we have the printing press and we can make 100 million copies of the Bible to buy or give away each year, what advantage does that give us?
  - Everyone, all over the world, someday soon, can have access to the written word of God in his own language, to read it and study it to his heart's content.
  - No wonder God commanded His prophets and apostles to "write" it down.

- **How does John introduce Jesus to the readers of his gospel? ([John 1:1-3,14](#))**

#### **John 1:1-3 (KJV)**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>The same was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

#### **John 1:14 (KJV)**

<sup>14</sup>And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

- **Q1: Who is the Word made flesh?**
  - It is Jesus Christ who became incarnate and was born of Mary in Bethlehem.
- **Q2: Who was the Word before the incarnation?**
  - He was in the beginning with God. He was God. He was the creator of all things.

## How to Interpret Scripture

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- The best way we have of understanding this is to understand the godhead as a plurality of persons.
- Scripture identifies Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as divine persons in one God.
- The Son, the Word, steps down from His throne in glory to become Emmanuel, God with us.
- The Son becomes flesh to minister the love of the godhead to mankind.
- **Q3: Why do you think John calls Him the Word?**
  - The word of God is an expression of God that reveals the mind of God.
  - We think of the word of God expressing the will of God, the plan of God, the love of God, the grace of God.
  - We see in Jesus the ultimate expression of God's goodness toward His people.
  - For God so loved the world... How did He express that love? He gave His only begotten Son.
  - God's word of love to the world was Jesus, His word of grace was Jesus, His word of forgiveness was Jesus, His word of acceptance was Jesus, His word of salvation was Jesus, His word of deliverance was Jesus.
  - What happens when God speaks?
  - God's word is creative. "He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and [the world] stood fast."
  - And in Jesus, the Word of God, God creates new creatures with new hearts, new directions, and new destinies.
  - Let's remember the opening words of Hebrews:  
**Hebrews 1:1-2 (KJV)**

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
  - How has God spoken to us in these last days? By His Son.
  - No wonder John calls Him the Word of God.
- **What parallels do you see between the written word of God and the Word of God made flesh?**
  - There is an interesting parallel in the divine-human nature of each.
    - Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, but He was born into this world by a woman while the Bible has the Holy Spirit as its ultimate author, but it was written by human writers.
    - Both are a combination of the divine and human.
    - Jesus in His incarnation assumed the innocent infirmities of the human race yet lived without sin whereas the Bible assumed the liabilities and limitations of human language yet infallibly reveals the will of God.
    - Jesus stepped into human history at a particular time and place yet He is the only Redeemer for all history at all times and all places whilst the Bible was written about God's acts in human history at particular times and places yet it's message is applicable to all people in all times and all places.
    - Both Jesus and the Bible are God's absolute truth for all times and places.
- **Why can we never separate the written word of God from the Word made flesh?**

Everything we know for sure about Jesus, the Word made flesh, is in the written word of God. And the only way we can claim the promises and reach the destiny God has laid out for us in the written word is through the Word made flesh.

The written word leads us to Jesus, and Jesus makes is new creations in Him.

### Reading with Faith

- **What are some common activities in life where we exercise faith in someone or something?**
  - How about driving a car? How do you exercise faith when you drive down the road?
    - Let's say you're driving on a two lane road at 50 miles an hour, and the car coming in the opposite direction is driving at the same speed.

## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson 2 - The Origin and Nature of the Bible

- A head-on collision at a relative speed of 100 mph would bring almost certain death.
  - But you have faith in that driver that you never met that he will stay in his lane.
- What if that driver is out to commit suicide? What if he's texting on his phone?
  - You believe that chances of that are sufficiently small, and you can trust this driver to stay in his lane.
- You also have faith in your car and your mechanic that you won't cause an accident.
- What about getting on an airplane? Do you trust anyone there?
- How about trusting an elevator that takes you up to the 42 floor?
- How about trusting your doctor?
  - He gives you a prescription you cannot read; you take it to a pharmacist you have never met; he gives you a chemical compound you can't pronounce, and you go home and take the pills, all in sincere trusting faith.
- So what's the point?
  - We exercise faith every day in the little risks we take when we believe that someone or something is trustworthy.
- Faith is not something magical.
  - It simply comes from an intelligent evaluation of the facts that leads us to the conclusion that someone or something is trustworthy.
- Is faith in God any different?
  - I don't think so.
- Is the Bible true? Is it trustworthy? Is God trustworthy? Does He keep His promises?
  - Yes!! Then we can read the Bible with faith, believing it all as the infallible revelation of His will.

- **How does the great faith chapter (Hebrews 11) define faith? ([Heb 11:1](#))**

**Hebrews 11:1 (NASB)**

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- **Q1: What does this definition of faith say to you?**
  - Faith is being sure of the things we hope for and certain of things we don't yet see.
  - And the context of this verse and this chapter is that the things we hope for and the things we don't yet see are the things that God promises us.
  - So it is saying that we can trust in the word of God and the promises of God.
  - Believing in God and His promises with assurance and conviction is faith.
- **Q2: Is this a blind faith? Is this a leap into the dark?**
  - No. It's a step into the light.
  - "Thy word is a Lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."
  - Faith goes beyond the empirical evidence but not contrary to it.
- **Do we have reasons to believe the word of God is true? (Absolutely.)**
  - Last week we studied five good reasons for believing that the Bible is God's word.
    - (It's unity, historical accuracy, faithful transmission, fulfilled prophecy, and changed lives.)
- So we can have faith in the promises and plans of God even though we don't see them yet.

## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson 2 - The Origin and Nature of the Bible

- How important is our faith to God? (Heb 11:6)

#### Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup>And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

- **Q1: Why do you believe that God exists?**

- Two reasons:
  - First, the word of God says so, and I believe the word of God is true for the reasons we studied last week.
    - The greatest objective evidence of the truth of God's word is fulfilled prophecy.
  - Second, the creation of the cosmos and all it contains.
    - There is no other adequate explanation for the order, complexity, beauty, and functionality of created things especially the specified complexity of living things.
- God has placed unique information in the DNA of every living thing, and this complex information cannot arise by time, chance and random events.
- Look at creation, look at a newborn baby, and you can believe that God exists.
- You can have faith in God.
- And it is only a short step from there to believe that this creator God has revealed Himself to His creation in Scripture.

- **Q2: Now how do we earnestly seek God?**

- We can get a general picture of God in nature, but we earnestly seek Him through the word.
- God is not hiding.
- He will be found by those who earnestly seek Him through His word.
- Here's another promise:

#### Jeremiah 29:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup>And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

- What is the danger of sitting in judgment on the Bible, accepting some things as true and others as outdated myth?

- We put ourselves on a slippery slope that leads us to doubt God and the truth of His revelation.
- Disbelieving one part of God's word sets us up to disbelieve it all.
- That's what happened to Charles Templeton, a promising young evangelical preacher.
- Let's have a look at two preachers:
  - You all recognize this man: **Billy Graham**. Without a doubt, the most influential evangelist in modern times. Billy Graham believed the Bible as God's word and never wavered from accepting it as his authority.
  - Another promising evangelist, **Charles Templeton**. He started out like Billy Graham, but his end was much different.

#### Charles Templeton's Early Years

- Templeton rose to prominence as an evangelist in the 1940's.
- Listed among those "best used of God" by the National Association of Evangelicals in 1946.
- Became one of 3 VP's of Youth for Christ International in 1945.
- Nominated his friend Billy Graham as field evangelist for Youth for Christ.
- Was an effective and popular evangelist.

#### Templeton's Questioning Years

- Began to question the Genesis account of origins
- "But Billy, it's simply not possible any longer to believe, for instance, the biblical account of creation. The world wasn't created over a period of days a few thousand years ago; it has evolved over millions of years. It's not a matter of speculation; it's demonstrable fact."
- Finally his doubts became too great and he left the ministry.



## How to Interpret Scripture

### Lesson 2 - The Origin and Nature of the Bible

#### Templeton's End from *Farewell to God* (1996)

- He believes that the "entire resurrection story is not credible."
- "I believe that, in common with all living creatures, we die and cease to exist as an entity."
- "I believe that there is no supreme being with human attributes – no God in the biblical sense – but that all life is the result of timeless evolutionary forces ... over millions of years."

#### Summary

- Because we live in a fallen world where sin has separated us from God, we need divine revelation in order to know God, His acts in history, His character, His plans and promises, and His provision for our salvation.
- Revelation is the process God uses to communicate divine truth to selected individuals, in the form of visions, dreams, angelic messengers, direct appearances of the Lord, commandments, and prophetic messages.
- Inspiration is the process God uses to record His self-revelation in which human writers are moved by the Holy Spirit to accurately write down in their own words the thoughts inspired by the Spirit.
  
- The apostle Paul insists that all scripture is inspired by God, and we have every reason to believe that our Bibles today contain the same OT that Jesus accepted as inspired and the NT that the inspired apostles wrote.
- The Bible in written form was essential to maintain its accuracy through the ages, to provide copies in different languages, and wide distribution of its message.
- John in his gospel introduces Jesus as the divine Word of God made flesh to dwell among us.
- This title reminds us that Jesus is God's ultimate expression of love, grace, forgiveness, and salvation and this Word of God creates us as new creatures in Him.
  
- We can see a divine-human interaction through the power of the Holy Spirit both in the inspiration of the written word and in the incarnation of the Word made flesh.
- Jesus (the Word) and the Bible (the word) are inseparable. All the truth we know about Jesus comes from the Bible, and all the Bible offers us comes only through Jesus.
- We can have faith in the Bible knowing that it is the trustworthy record of God's acts in history, seeing how its prophecies have been fulfilled, and seeing how God is working out our salvation through the doing and dying of Jesus.
- Will you read the Bible this week accepting it not as the words of men but as it is in truth, the word of God?