

Lesson 3

THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

- I. LOGICAL REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE
- A. The Apostles: The Apostles recognized that the Bible was inspired of God as seen in their writings (2 Tim. 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
 - B. The Early Church: The early church received the apostolic teaching (which included the words of Christ) and the Old Testament as two complementary parts of the body of divine revelation which Christ had given to them as the rule of faith and practice.
 - 1. Justin Martyr: “That we must not suppose that the language proceeds from the men who are inspired, but from the Divine Word which moves them.”
 - 2. Augustine: “Therefore we yield to and agree to the authority of the Holy Scripture which can neither be deceived nor deceive.”
 - 3. Irenaeus: “The Scriptures are perfect, inasmuch as they were uttered by the Word of God and His Spirit, though we want the knowledge of their mysteries.”
 - C. Fulfilled Prophecies: Hundreds of prophecies, given hundreds of years before, were made concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, and all were fulfilled to the letter in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.
 - D. Continuity of the Bible: This one volume, which exhibits the most perfect continuity of thought that the world has ever seen, is a collection of 66 books written by about 40 authors—kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, physicians, statesmen, scholars, poets, plowmen—who could have known but little of each other, since their lives were lived in various countries and their writings were distributed over 60 generations of human history, representing a period of about sixteen hundred years.
 - E. Output of the Bible: Thirty million copies of the Bible are printed each year, and it has been translated into around 800 dialects and languages.
 - F. Literature: As literature alone, both unsaved and saved must admit that it is supreme.
 - G. Unprejudiced Authority: This book is not prejudiced in favor of men. It unhesitatingly records the sin, the weakness of the best of men, and the doom of all who rely alone on these virtues and merits which are their own. Men do not so speak of themselves.
 - H. Victory Over Attack: No sooner was this book given to the world than it met the hatred of man, and they tried to stamp it out. For 2,000 years every means of destruction that human science, philosophy, wit, reasoning, brutality, etc., could bring to bear against a book has been brought to bear against the Bible to stamp it out of the world, but all has been in vain.
 - I. Ability to Produce Holy Lives: Every person who grows in grace does so as he gets nearer to the Bible. The Bible reveals God and, consequently, shows up man’s sinfulness.
 - J. Experience: Tens of millions of people have accepted this book as from God. The intelligent to the poorly educated have all known that this Bible has a Divine origin. The Holy Spirit has made the Bible real to true believers in Christ.
 - K. Inexhaustible Depths: In this book are hidden the infinite and inexhaustible treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. No man in a lifetime can master the Bible. After a period of 2,000 years of constant study, men are still taken back at the truths found in the Bible.
 - L. Power to Save: When the message of scripture (Jesus Christ and Him crucified) is preached, men are saved and changed by the power of God. All who are saved gain a love for the Bible.
 - M. Superiority of the Bible: The Bible on ethical and moral standards outshines all the other religious books of the world.
 - N. Subject Matter: The supernatural character of this book is seen in the fact that it deals as freely with the unknown and otherwise unknowable as it does with that which is known, and those who follow its teachings are unfailingly led in the paths of God’s eternal truths.

Likewise, as no other book, the Bible accounts for those who do not receive its teachings; they cannot understand it without the “new birth” and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14).

II. MAJOR ACCUSATION AGAINST VERBAL INSPIRATION

- A. Those who do not like the doctrine of verbal-plenary inspiration often accuse the evangelical of teaching the mechanical-dictation theory of inspiration. The mechanical-dictation theory assumes that God compelled the writers of scripture to write an inspired Bible. God simply told them what to write and they wrote it in a mechanical way.
- B. The mechanical-dictation theory has never been that of the evangelical, although some unlearned fundamentalists might hold to this viewpoint. The evangelical believes that God superintended the writers of scripture, using their backgrounds, personalities, etc., so that His complete and connected thought to man was recorded without error. This is simply the position of the Bible itself (1 Pet. 1:21). NOTE: When Moses received the Law from God, this was a form of mechanical-dictation but in other places there was simply a superintending by the Holy Spirit of the human authors of the Bible.

III. THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

- A. Introduction: Once one has determined that the Bible is inspired verbally by God, the next question concerns the authority of the Bible. Is the Bible the only rule of faith and practice? What is man’s authority for living?
- B. Reason: The liberal thinks the final authority for all faith and life is the verdict of reason, conscience or religious sentiment. Scripture must be studied in light of historical, philosophical, religious and scientific sources without acknowledging the Bible’s own claims on inspiration. If the Bible contradicts reason, then it must be wrong. Therefore whatever a person feels is God’s Word, after studying it, is God’s Word. A person can “pick and choose” what he likes and discard the rest of the Bible. NOTE: Even in evangelical circles there are Christian mystics who give lip assent to an inspired Bible but when the Bible contradicts his so-called Christian experience, then the Bible is given a secondary place and man’s emotions become the authority.
- C. Tradition: This view maintains that the final authority for faith and practice is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholics do not deny that the Bible is God-given and authoritative, but insist that the scripture is not sufficient as a rule for faith and practice. The Bible is not a safe and adequate guide for anyone but church tradition, which is also from God, supplied what is lacking in scripture. This church tradition is put on a par or above the Bible as authority. NOTE: Roman Catholics believe that God is still giving special revelation to the church today through the infallible Pope, Christ’s representative on earth. This additional revelation is called church tradition.
- D. Bible: The evangelical or conservative position is that the teaching in written scripture is the Word which God spoke and speaks to His Church, and is authoritative for faith and practice. Our Protestant heritage from our reforming fathers taught “the scripture only.” What scripture says, God says. The Bible is inspired in the sense of being word for word God-given. The Bible is the final authority and all church counsels, church creeds and church traditions must agree with the Bible or be rejected. NOTE: Christians must, therefore, seek to be helped and taught by the Spirit when they study scripture, and they must regard all their understanding of it, no less than the book itself, as a gift from God. The Holy Spirit must be acknowledged as the infallible interpreter of God’s infallible Word. NOTE: The Church collectively, and the Christian individually, can and do err, and the inerrant scripture must always be allowed to speak and correct them.