

The Scriptures II: The Doctrine of Inspiration

Introduction

In the previous lesson we established that in order to know God and His truth, it is necessary for God to reveal Himself to man. And, that even when God has revealed Himself in a general way through creation, it is through the Special Revelation that we can be reconciled to, and enjoy intimate communion with God.

We said that in the Scriptures, we have God's personal selection of what He wanted to leave in writing about His special revelation, but this demands that we accept that those who wrote Scripture, did it inspired by God. We will therefore consider the **Doctrine of Inspiration** under the following headings:

I- A Definition about the Doctrine of Inspiration.

"It is the truth that God moved some men to write, in such manner, that the result of their writing is the very Word of God" (Quoted by Sugel Michelen). (2Tim 3:16)

Even when in this text from 1 Timothy, the primary reference is the Old Testament, we will see later on that it applies to all of Scripture (OT & NT). The word that is translated as "inspired" can be rendered as "breathed out" or "exhaled" *geo,pneustoj theopneustos (God + breath/wind) hence exhaled*

Therefore we should not confuse the term used here as "inspired" with today's common conception for the word. (e.g. when a song writer gets an inspiration to write a song). In fact, some theologians and commentators avoid the term "inspiration" precisely to prevent this type of confusion about the meaning of the concept of inspiration when applied to the Scriptures.

Addition of translation: *"Inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of some select men which rendered them the organs of God, for the infallible communication of His mind and will. They were in such a way the organs of God, that what they said is what God said."* Charles Hodge. *Syst Theol Vol 1, pag 153*

II- Characteristics of Inspiration.

1- **It is organic**: this means that the Holy Spirit acted upon the Biblical writers without changing their individuality nor the circumstances under which they wrote. (2 Pet 1:20-21 Note: translation: “they were driven (given impulse) by the Holy Spirit”) *φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ* “they were carried or borne to speak from God”

José Grau comments about this: *“The Holy Spirit acted upon the writers, but in harmony with their personal, cultural and circumstantial idiosyncrasies. He helped their minds and memories, He controlled the influence that sin and error could have had upon their writings, but He let them express themselves in their own styles. The style of Amos, is not that of Isaiah, nor that of Moses or Ezra. Paul and John express themselves very differently; however they all give us the Word of God.”* (How did Bible come to us? Pg.141)

The result is that even though it is true that men wrote, it can be stated with all propriety that it is God who speaks and this does not mean that the Scriptures are a mere mechanical dictation from God to men.

The OT reads...	The NT quotes it as...
The Psalmist says (Ps 95:7) The Psalmist says (Ps 45:6) The Psalmist says (Ps 102:25, 27) Isaiah says (Is. 7:14) Hoseah says (Hos 11:1) The narrator comments (Gn. 2:24) The words of Eliphaz (Job 5:13)	The Holy Spirit says (He. 3:7) God says (He. 1:8) God says (He. 1:10-12) The Lord spoke through the mouth of the prophets (Mt. 1:22-23) The Lord spoke through the mouth of the prophets (Mt. 2:15) God says (Mt. 19:3-6) The Word of God (1Cor. 3:19)

2- **It is a plenary inspiration**: it encompasses the whole of Scripture: 2Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1Tim 5:18 comp Lk 10:7; 1Cor 14:37; Jud 1:17-18

Addition of translation: “Plenary is opposed to partial. The church doctrine denies that inspiration is confined to parts of the Bible; and affirms that it applies to all of the books of the sacred Canon” Hodge – Syst Theol. Vol 1 – Pag 165

3- It is a verbal inspiration: this means, “... that God in His Sovereignty chose the precise words and phrases that were to be included in the Scriptures, while using the vocabulary and grammar of the human authors” (JS). (1Cor 2:13; Gal 3:16; Mt 5:18; 22:32; Lk:16:17 etc.)

Addition of translation: “The thoughts are in the words... this is the very idea of inspiration as understood in the ancient world. The words of the oracle were assumed to be the words of the divinity and not those selected by the organ of communication” Hodge op cit. Pag 165

III- Some derivative implications from the Doctrine of Inspiration

1. Truth & Inerrancy: If the Bible is the Word of God, then whatever it states it is true, because God can never lie. Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18 This truth from the Word of God abides forever. Ps 119:89; Mt 24:35

And yet the Bible is not only true, but it is the supreme standard of truth. Scripture is not gauged by any standard, Scripture is the standard. Jn 17:17 (In this text “truth” is a noun; it is not that the Word is truthful, but that it is the truth)

This opposes what has been denominated as pluralism. The connotation given to this term many times is that everybody has his own truth and each person’s truth is as valid as that of the one who states the exact opposite. There is no absolute truth according to this. This conception of pluralism is part and parcel of our postmodern society.

However the Bible affirms to be, as Christ Himself states it, God’s truth. No true data can contradict the Bible, because the God who inspired Scripture knows all things from eternity.

Note of translation: *this is circular reasoning, but we have to remember the initial premise, we are establishing this doctrine from*

what the Bible states, and not from apologetic evidence. We are aware that our argumentation presumes faith in Scripture

In the Scriptures we find historical, astronomy, biology and other types of information and when they are articulated, they are true because what is written is inspired by God, even though the explanation of events is many times explained from the vintage point of the observer. (**Job 26:7**)

Note of translation: the sun stopping at Gibeon is not more of a scientific error than the weather man speaking of sunrise and sunset

That is why the veracity of Scripture includes the fact of **inerrancy**. Grudem explains this as follows: *“The definition... simply means that the Bible always states the truth, insofar as it is stating the truth about the issue being considered... it does not mean that the Bible states everything that can be stated about a given topic exhaustively but that whatever it states about a given subject, is true.”* (Biblical Doctrine, pg.42)

If any research from an investigator contradicts what we believe the Bible teaches, there are only two alternatives: either the data is false, or our understanding of the Scriptures must be reviewed, but the Bible continues being the truth.

For example, before astronomers demonstrated that the earth rotates around its axis, people took for granted that the Bible taught that the sun rotated around the earth. This astronomy demonstration of a fact, led people to reexamine the Biblical passages.

The result was to confirm that the Bible has never taught that the sun rotates around the earth, but that certain descriptions are given from the vintage point of an Observer and not from the vintage of a fixed point in space.

Quoting W. Grudem again: *“...whenever we face any data that contradicts the Bible, we should not only examine the information that supposedly demonstrates the issue, but also we should reexamine the Biblical passages to determine whether or not the Bible teaches what we thought it taught. We can do it with confidence, because no*

true fact will ever be able to contradict the words of the God who knows all things and who never lies.” (Biblical Doctrine Pg.42)

This does not mean that the primary purpose for which God gave us the Bible is that we learn math, astronomy or medicine. The Bible is not – in this sense – a science book, and that is why it is not concerned with providing a scientific description of things. The Bible was given so that we may know the God who made all things and that we may glorify Him, in the manner He has prescribed for us to do it.

2. Authority

If all Scripture is inspired by God, and it is therefore the Word of God, then everything it states must be authoritatively to us, even in those things that may seem trivial to us (Mt 5:18-19) To despise what is written in Scripture, it's to despise the very voice of God. Obedience is the only adequate response to the Scriptures.

If all Scripture is inspired by God, it follows then that whatever it is written in it happens or will be fulfilled (**Acts 1:16-17**)

In our next lesson, we will consider the topic of Canonicity, that is, how did the people of God recognize which books were inspired, and should therefore conform what we call the Word of God.