



Foundations of

FAITH

The Inspiration of the Bible

Lesson 5

The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “It is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” (Jer. 10:23) Truly, man needs the help of God – whether it be in meeting the problems of everyday life or in preparing for a home after death. God gives the direction through his word. Sometimes that word has been in spoken form as when the Old Testament prophets cried out their warnings to the kings of Judah and Israel. Many times God has presented his work in writing. The sound of the spoken word of the prophets of old has long since died, but we still have God’s word in written form in those sixty-six books which we know as the scriptures or the Bible. In fact, since we no longer have prophets to speak to us by word of mouth, the written form is the **only** way in which God’s word is made known to us today. It is the purpose of this and succeeding lessons to show that these writings are entirely inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

WHAT IS INSPIRATION? The Greek word which is translated “inspired of God” (See II Timothy 3:16) literally means “breathed into by God.” Inspiration, then, may be defined as a supernatural influence exerted on teachers of God by the Holy Spirit which enabled them to teach, by speaking or writing, exactly what God wanted taught. Consequently, the inspired writers of the books of the Bible were not susceptible to error in their writing, and the things which they wrote, whether dealing with historical facts or moral principles, are completely true. Of course, the writers of the Bible are not to be charged with any copyist’s mistakes which have crept in since the scriptures were originally penned. There have been some mistakes of this nature by uninspired transcribers and translators,

but in proportion to the entire Biblical text the errors are few and no vital Biblical truth is affected. The students of God’s word may be certain that we have the holy scriptures substantially as they were originally inspired by the Holy Spirit.

INSPIRATION AND REVELATION. There is a difference between inspiration and revelation. All writings that have been divinely revealed have also been inspired, but not all that has been inspired has been revealed. Revelation concerns the making known to man of truths and facts not previously known, while inspiration has to do with the accurate recording of (1) things revealed and (2) events which the writer observed first hand. Thus, God revealed the creation story to Moses, and by inspiring him in his writing enabled Moses to accurately record the things he had learned by revelation. Other things Moses knew from personal experience. God did not have to reveal them to Moses, but by inspiration he guided Moses in his writing so that he truthfully recorded what he had observed. Paul shows how divine knowledge was imparted to Biblical writers when he says, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the **revelation** of Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 1:11, 12)

The Bible includes quotations from evil men and even the devil himself. Of course God does not endorse these statements, but they have been included for a purpose and the scripture writers were guided by inspiration to accurately record what these evil individuals said.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

More than 3,800 times the Old Testament writers use such expressions as “thus saith the Lord.” These authors claim that they wrote the words of God at his command. Consider a few of the passages that teach this. Yahweh spoke to Moses, the writer of the first five books of the Bible. “Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say.” (Exodus 4:12) This clearly teaches that Moses was inspired. Again, II Samuel 23:2 declares the inspiration of David, author of most of the Psalms. “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue.” Jeremiah records, “And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.” (Jer. 1:9)

Not only do the Old Testament writers declare their own inspiration, but the New Testament also asserts the inspiration of the Old Testament. Paul writes, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Tim. 3:16-17) In its primary sense “scripture” means “writing”, but the word is obviously used by Biblical writers to refer to that special group of writings which we know as the Bible. In this passage Paul is declaring that the Old Testament was given by divine inspiration. Thus if the New Testament is inspired, the Old Testament must also be since the New Testament makes this claim for the Old.

Jesus himself speaks of the inspiration of the Old Testament when he says, “How then does David **in spirit** call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool!” (Matt. 22:43, 44) The expression “in spirit” clearly implies that David spoke by inspiration.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. It has already been observed that the word “scripture” is used to refer to a special body of writings which was regarded as divinely inspired. Over and over again the word is applied in the New Testament to the Old Testament writings. But it is also applied to the New Testament writings. For example, Peter speaks of Paul’s letters as “scripture” when he says, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also **the other scriptures** unto their own destruction.” (II Peter 3:16) The expression “other scriptures” shows

that Peter regarded Paul’s writings as on a par with the Old Testament. Furthermore, Paul writes, “For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.” (I Tim. 5:18) The first of these quotations is from the Old Testament; the second is the statement of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:7. Paul calls both of them scripture. And since the New Testament writers considered the scriptures to be inspired, this necessarily included their own writings.

Jesus promised inspiration to the apostles, saying, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.” (Matt. 10:19, 20) Later Jesus promised again, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26) Notice that this promise includes both revelation and inspiration – he would teach them all things (revelation), and bring all things to their remembrance (inspiration).

In accordance with the promise, the New Testament writers often claim that their messages are the word of God. Peter writes, “But the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (I Peter 1:25) Paul states, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the **word of God** which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (I Thess. 2:13) “The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (I Cor. 14:37) These passages should convince us that the New Testament writers believed that they were inspired.

HOW WERE BIBLICAL WRITERS INSPIRED?

Peter writes, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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 Spirit.**” (II Peter 1:20, 21) The word “moved” is literally “borne along.” These prophets, as well as all inspired writers, were under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, their words were controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul states, “Which things also we speak,

not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Spirit teaches; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." (I Cor. 2:13.) We may conclude that the Bible is verbally inspired.

However, inspiration was not mechanical. In inspiring their words, the Holy Spirit did not remove the vocabulary or the personality of the writers. It is evident to any careful student of the Bible that each writer has his own individual style of writing. The human feelings of each personality shine through the inspired words.

J.W. McGarvey gives an illustration to show how the inspired writers were under the complete control of the Spirit of God while at the same time maintaining their own diction and characteristics. He says, "It would be nearer the truth to compare the whole work of the Spirit to that of driving a well-trained horse. You draw the lines to the right or the left as you see that the horse needs guidance, you check him when he would go too fast, and urge him forward when he would go too slow; but he usually keeps the road and maintains the desired gait and speed of his own accord; still your hand is ever on the lines, and its pressure on the bit is constantly felt, so that you are

controlling the horse's movements when he is going most completely at his own will. Indeed, the horse is all the time going very much at his own will, and yet he is never without the control of the driver." (J.W. McGarvey, **Evidences of Christianity**, p. 213)

Any theory which takes away from the complete inspiration of the Bible is at variance with the teachings we have examined. This is true of the idea that inspiration consists only of extraordinary talent such as that possessed by gifted men like Shakespeare. This pulls the Bible down to human level and denies the miraculous nature of the Spirit's action. Another false theory contends that the Bible is not the word of God, but only contains it. Some teach that only in faith and morals were the sacred writers infallible, but that in reciting facts they were subject to error. This is obviously wrong since by denying the full (or plenary) inspiration of the scriptures each man is at liberty to accept or reject any teaching at his own fancy. Either all the Bible is inspired or none of it is.

In the lessons which immediately follow we will examine the reasons for believing that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

TEST ON LESSON 5

Fill in the blanks:

1. The expression "inspired of God" means
2. The inspired writers were guided in their writings by the
3. The making known to man of previously unknown facts and truths is called
4. The writings of the Old and New Testaments are often called by the Biblical writers
5. called Paul's writing "scripture".
6. In I Timothy 5:18 Paul quotes the statement of in Luke 10:7 and calls it "scripture".
7. Prophets of God spoke as they were moved by the
8. I Corinthians 2:13 teaches that even the of the Bible are inspired.

9. The scriptures also teach the
or plenary inspiration of the Bible.

Underline the phrase which correctly completes each of the following statements:

1. The Bible is divinely inspired in: (a) moral principles only; (b) historical facts only; (c) entirely.
2. Revelation concerns: (a) making known of previously unknown facts and truths; (b) recording events observed first-hand; (c) translation.
3. The term "scripture" is applied by Biblical writers to:
(a) the Old Testament only; (b) the entire Bible; (c) the New Testament only.
4. Jesus promised that the apostles would be guided by: (a) intuition; (b) common sense; (c) the Holy Spirit.
5. The word of God is directly expressed by the Holy Spirit to us today in:
(a) oral form; (b) written form; (c) both oral and written form.
6. The inspired writers were infallible in:
(a) their personal lives; (b) their understanding of God; (c) their Biblical writings.

In the following passages the inspiration of Biblical writers is implied or asserted. In the blank following each scripture write the exact words which are used to express this inspiration. First one is done correctly:

1. Isaiah 3:15 **"saith the Lord God of hosts."**
2. Exodus 24:4
3. Exodus 35:1
4. Isaiah 8:11
5. Jeremiah 36:4
6. Hosea 1:1
7. Luke 12:12
8. John 16:13
9. I Corinthians 2:13
10. II Timothy 3:16
11. Hebrews 3:7

The Inspiration of the Bible

Lesson 5

Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

Section 1 – (1) breathed into by God;
(2) Holy Spirit;
(3) revelation;
(4) scriptures;
(5) Peter;
(6) Jesus;
(7) Holy Spirit;
(8) words;
(9) full.

Section 2 – (1) (c)
(2) (a)
(3) (b)
(4) (c)
(5) (b)
(6). (c)

Section 3 - (Some answers may be longer or shorter than the following)

2. Moses wrote all the words of the Lord
3. These are the words that the Lord hath commanded
4. For the Lord spake thus to me ... and instructed me
5. Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord
6. The words of the Lord that came unto Hosea
7. For the Holy Spirit shall teach you
8. He will guide you into all truth
9. By which the Holy Spirit teacheth
10. All scripture is given by inspiration of God
11. The Holy Spirit saith

Enquiries to - graemestudy@gmail.com