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B0511 – March 13, 2005 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 02 - The Bible: Inspired of God

- I. Definition of Inspiration
 - A. God superintended (or carried along) the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings. (Ryrie, Basic Theology, 627).
 - B. Two elements
 - 1. Divine Elements
 - a. The exact words were determined by God (verbal)
 - b. The entire content was determined by God (plenary)
 - 2. Human Elements
 - a. individual personalities
 - b. literary style (poetry, narrative, drama, etc...)
 - c. vocabulary
 - d. intelligence (Paul was hard to understand 2 Pet 3:15)
 - C. Means of Inspiration
 - 1. Through research (Luke 1:1-4)
 - 2. Through dictation (Exod 20:1-17)
 - 3. Through stimulation of memory (John 14:26)
 - 4. Through visions (Dan 8:1ff). Conscious and awake.
 - 5. Through dreams (Gen 37:5, 9). Unconscious and asleep.
 - D. It is supernatural

*How can a human author, recording his own thoughts and knowledge, be guided to write exactly what God directs him to write? What was the extent of divine control over the human authors? Whatever theory of divine inspiration we accept becomes the foundation upon which we build our interpretation.

II. Six Theories of Inspiration

A. Verbal, plenary inspiration

*That wondrous miracle wherein the Spirit of God superintended the process of writing Holy Scripture, keeping fallible men from erring and assuring that the words they wrote were only the words of God.

1. Verbal – God guided the exact choice of words in the original
2. Plenary (full) – every word in contrast to partial inspiration
 - a. Infallibility
 - i. The Bible is the final authority not only in matters of faith and practice, but in any subject to which the Bible addresses itself. The Bible is **unfailingly accurate** in every topic to which it speaks. Anything the Bible affirms to be true *is* true. If it says something about science, it can be trusted, If it says something about geology, it can be trusted. If it says something about archaeology, it can be trusted. If it says something about sociology, it can be trusted (**John 3:12**; Col 2:2-4, 8; 2 Cor 10:5)
 - b. Inerrancy
 - i. The Bible does not contain any error as a statement of fact. Although the Bible may record on occasion the statements of men which are untrue or even the false teaching of Satan as in Genesis 3:4, in all these cases, while the statement attributed to Satan or men is faithfully recorded, it is clear that God does not affirm the truth of these statements. What the Bible guarantees in such instances is an inerrant record of what was said. Similar examples include; Job’s 3 friends, Stephen’s speech in Acts 7.

*Issue: Verbal plenary inspiration extends to the original manuscripts but we have no original manuscripts. So, what do we have and why is it crucial to believe and teach verbal plenary inspiration? First, why is it crucial to affirm the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture? There are at least three reasons. 1) The word of God itself attests to the verbal plenary inspiration. The Bible teaches that it is the “words” themselves, not just the “concepts”, are God’s (**Jer 11:6-10**; over 60 times the Bible says the “words of God” are

important. It never says it is a record of the “concepts of God”), and the Bible also teaches that “all Scripture” not just parts of it are inspired (**2 Tim 3:16**). 2) The character of God. If God did not breathe out a perfect document in the originals then God Himself is not perfect, infallible, true, etc...God’s character is at stake. 3) If there was never an inspired, inerrant, infallible original then we have no standard document that we can attempt to restore. It’s important that we have a perfect original to work back to. So, those are the three reasons we must affirm this doctrine. The word of God teaches it, God’s character demands it, and we need to restore it.

That brings us to the second question.

If we have no original manuscripts then what do we have? We have a lot of copies. For the OT we have hundreds of copies dating from as early as the Qumran Scrolls which date from 250BC-70AD. We have OT copies in Hebrew, we have the Greek translation of the OT, known as the Septuagint (LXX), we have Aramaic commentaries that contain OT Scriptures, we have Latin versions of the OT (e.g. Jerome’s Vulgate), we have Syriac Versions (e.g. Peshitta and Hexapla), and other less important copies in other languages. So, for the OT we have hundreds of copies dating very close to the originals. What about the NT? For the NT it’s even better we have over 25,000 copies dating from as early as the 2nd century. We have 5,600 Greek manuscripts, we have over 8,000 Latin manuscripts, and then we have about 13,000 manuscripts from other languages. Compare these numbers with that of...

<u>Author</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u># of copies</u>
Plato	900AD	20
Aristotle	1100AD	5
Caesar	900AD	10
Tacitus	1100AD	20
Pliny the Younger	850AD	7
Old Testament	250BC	100’s
New Testament	115AD	25,000+

This is impressive evidence.

How good are these manuscripts and what can we learn from them about the original manuscripts? These manuscripts are very good. Some better than others some more complete than others but all in all these manuscripts are very good. They are very helpful in restoring the original text of both OT and NT. The recent finds at Qumran in the late 1940’s have confirmed to an extremely large degree the earliest copies that we knew of

which dated around 900AD. Virtually no changes had occurred in the text for over a millennium. The NT is even better. However, there are variants; differences among the manuscripts. What do we do with these variants? Well, scholars known as textual critics study these manuscripts. You can get a Doctorate in Textual Criticism if you like. If you are a young person here maybe you'd like to become a textual critic. You'd get the joy and excitement of studying ancient manuscripts. The life long job of a textual critic is to compare variant readings in manuscripts by a set of criterion that helps determine the original text. Although there are a lot of variants (with 25,000 manuscripts that should be no surprise) the variants are extremely insignificant. Let me show you the twelve most common variants so you can see this:

1. *Haplography* – a single entry of a letter that should have been written twice (e.g. Bil instead of Bill)
2. *Dittography* – a letter written twice that should have been written once (marry instead of Mary)
3. *Metathesis* – transposing letters or words
4. *Fusion* – combining two words or parts of words into one word
5. *Fission* – splitting one word into two words (super script instead of superscript)
6. *Homophony* – substituting one homonym for another (balm instead of calm)
7. *Misreading* – similar letters confused (h instead of b, a instead of o)
8. *Homoeoteleuton* – deletion of the end of a passage because of similar endings
9. *Homoeoarkton* – deletion of the beginning of a passage because of similar beginnings.
10. *Accidental omission* – loss of a single word or letter (recive instead of receive)
11. *Vowel misreading* – reading a vowel as a consonant
12. *Vowel point variations* – misreading a weak vowel as a consonant which changes the meaning

Almost every variant fits into one of these categories and you can see how easily these can be corrected by looking at the context. The evidence says that the variants in copies have not corrupted God's revelation. We don't have any perfect copies but not one variant affects a single doctrine of Scripture. That's the bottom line. We don't have any one perfect copy but not one variant affects a single doctrine of Scripture. To see how this works turn over to **2 Tim 3:15-16.**

and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

He's talking to Timothy in verse 15 and he says **that from childhood** Timothy had **known the sacred writings** which were **able to give** Timothy **the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**. Now, we have to ask, 1) what are the **sacred writings** that Paul is referring to? Is this the NT or the OT? It's the OT. The OT Scriptures were able to give Timothy the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith. 2) What OT was Timothy reading? Was he reading the original OT manuscripts? or was he reading OT copies? He was reared as a child under copies of the OT, not original manuscripts. And the copies were **able to give** Timothy **the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**. We may also wonder if Timothy was reared on a translation? Perhaps the LXX. But we can't really answer this question. I would assume he was reared on a copy of the OT Hebrew. The point is that even though the copies Timothy had were not perfect copies they were sufficient. God Himself says through Paul that those copies were sacred and were sufficient to give wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

*But we still have to ask, does inspiration extend to copies of Scripture? Has God faithfully preserved the text? Inspiration only extends to the original manuscripts, not to copies, translations, or quotations. Because there are no original manuscripts scholars have restored the text as best as possible through the science of textual criticism.

*There are minor variations in our Bible versions but for the purpose of learning truth they are accurate reproductions of the original manuscripts.

B. Mechanical or dictation theory

*God dictated the words of Scripture to the writers who merely recorded His words

1. What are the problems with dictation or mechanical theory?
 - a. If this were true then the style throughout would be consistent and the vocabulary would be the same throughout
 - b. This is not the way Scripture is written

*Inspiration extends to every word of Scripture but this does not rule out human personality, literary style, or certain vocabulary usage.

2. Importantly, a small portion of Scripture is the result of dictation (e.g. Exod 20:1-17)

C. The concept theory (this is what was taught in the movie "Rudy" at the Catholic university he attended).

*God inspired the concepts in Scripture but not the precise words. To do this God revealed concepts to the human authors who then expressed these concepts in their own words.

1. What are the problems with concept theory?

- a. The authors may not have understood God and therefore injected error
- b. The Bible emphasizes that it is the word of God not the concept of God. The words are the emphasis.

D. Partial inspiration theory

*Parts of the Bible are inspired and other parts are not. Typically spiritual truths are said to be inspired but the historical, geographical and scientific statements are not.

- 1. What problems do you see with partial inspiration?
 - a. How can we objectively say which parts are inspired and which are not?
 - b. It leaves man as the final judge in determining what is and is not God's words (what two people could ever agree?)
 - c. This is arbitrary and dishonest

E. Neo-Orthodox theory

*This view says that the Bible has errors in it but that parts of it become true to you as you realize and understand they are from God. The Bible contains but is not the word of God. The Bible becomes the word of God to you in an existential encounter with God (Kierkegaard→Barth).

- 1. What problems do you see with neo-orthodoxy?
 - a. It's a form of partial inspiration
 - b. Man becomes the final judge
 - c. This is arbitrary

F. Naturalistic inspiration theory

*The Bible is just like any other book. The authors were inspired to write the Bible like Michaelangelo was inspired to paint the Sistine Chapel. Naturalists claim that it is not the Bible that is inspired but the authors.

- 1. What problems do you see with natural inspiration?
 - a. It is anti-supernatural
 - b. It is unbelief
 - c. Doesn't explain the continuity and accuracy of the Bible

III. The Testimony of Christ

- A. If verbal, plenary inspiration is denied then Jesus Christ is also denied. The word of God and the Word of God go hand in hand. What one does with the written word one does with the Living Word.

IV. Important Passages on Inspiration

- A. 1 Tim 5:18

For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

The important thing about this passage is that Paul quotes from an OT passage and a NT passage and both are considered Scripture. "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING" comes from Deut 25:4 and "The laborer is worthy of his wages" comes from Luke 10:7. Both the NT and OT are considered Scripture.

B. 2 Tim 3:15-17

"and how from infancy you have known the holy [temple] Scriptures [gramma], which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture [*graphe*] is God-breathed [theo-pneustos] and is useful for teaching [+], rebuking [-], correcting [-] and training [+] in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

1. When you speak you are always breathing out. That's what inspiration means, words breathed out by God and captured in writing. Therefore, it is the words themselves that are inspired not the authors.

* This verse really only tells us that Scripture is God's word and not men's words. But 2 Pt 1:21 tells us about the human element.

C. 2 Pt 1:21

*Since humans are fallible then how could God inspire the words of Scripture and allow for human personality and style without admitting error in the text?

"²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved [phero; passive participle] by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

This word for **moved** is passive and means the authors were "carried along" as a ship is carried along by the wind. The human authors were carried along to the destination God intended.

Chafer says,

“Although passengers on a boat have some human freedom and can move freely within the boat, they...inevitably are carried to the destination of the boat itself.”

God-breathed out words and the words went into the human authors mind and from the authors mind through human pens and were perfectly recorded onto the original manuscript. God’s words out→God’s words into authors mind→God’s words through authors pen→God’s word perfectly recorded (this refers to the originals).

In conclusion, I want to quote from a Christian scholar of the early 20th century, Dr. Robert Dick Wilson. Dr. Wilson held several doctorates and was fluent in more than 45 Near Eastern languages, including all of the Semitic languages.

I have come to the conviction that no man knows enough to attack the veracity of the Old Testament. Every time when anyone has been able to get together enough documentary ‘proofs’ to undertake an investigation, the biblical facts in the original text have victoriously met the test.ⁱ

That is a powerful statement coming from the most brilliant linguist in world history. The famed William F. Albright, after over fifty years of scientific studies and research said that after all his research the Bible stands out as completely historically authentic. The Bible can be trusted in the same way as if God were standing here speaking Himself. The Bible is God’s word and is therefore inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient. We need nothing else. The Bible alone is the pure source of divine revelation.

ⁱ Wilson, Robert Dick, quoted by Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1992), 128.

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