

# A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

# Phenomena of Scripture vs Didactic Material

- The Phenomena: how Scripture appears or what it seems to present
  - “God changes his mind” (Ex. 32:14)
- The Didactic: what Scripture teaches about itself and/or a specific topic
  - “God does not change his mind” (Num. 23:19)
- The central question within the methodological debate is where to “start” in formulating our theology.

# Phenomena of Scripture vs Didactic Material Cont.

- We will base our doctrine of inspiration *primarily* on the didactic portions of Scripture and only secondarily on the phenomena of Scripture. Clear, didactic material cannot be “overturned” by phenomenal material, though phenomena is important for fleshing out the spectrum allowed by the didactic (i.e., what it looks like, what’s compatible with it). This is particularly the case if the didactic material *isn’t* clear.
  - *Authorial intent* is much clearer in didactic teaching.
  - Didactic material communicates *conceptual* precision and nuance more effectively than narrative.
  - Jesus and the Apostles *primarily* used didactic material in the OT for *instruction*, with phenomenal material as *examples and/or illustrations*.

# “God-Breathed” | Textual Grounds for Inspiration

- 2 Tim. 3:16-17

- The word “inspiration” comes from the King James Version’s translation of *theopneustos* (lit. God-breathed), a word that to all appearances Paul coined just for this passage, having no other instances in the New Testament or early Greek literature.
  - The emphasis in verse 16 is the *source* of Scripture; only derivatively is it a verse about inerrancy.
  - Regardless if *pas* is understood as “all” or “every,” Paul is still communicating that anything that can be rightly be called Scripture (Gr. *graphe*) has the ensuing properties (to be discussed further elsewhere).
    - Thus, the *text* itself is said to possess the property of “being inspired.”
- The *hina* clause in verse 17 indicates purpose (“in order that...”).

# “God-Breathed” | Textual Grounds for Inspiration

- 2 Pet. 1:19-21

- Here we see both *divine* and *human* authorship (prophecy “of Scripture”). Traditionally, theologians have called this phenomenon *confluence*.

- 2 Cor 2:12-13

- Paul mentions that he (and others, apparently) *impart* what they are *taught* by the Spirit, and thus, the resulting words are given “by God” (vs. 12).

- This seems to suggest that there was a kind of supernatural teaching by the Spirit that was then communicated in one way or another to others, making it not human wisdom, but the words of God.

- A plausible understanding is something like, “matching or combining spiritual concepts or truths with spiritual words and language.”

- Notice here that the *words*—as opposed to concepts or ideas—are imparted after (presumably) being taught by the Spirit.

# “God-Breathed” | Textual Grounds for Inspiration

- Rom. 3:1-2
  - That Paul is almost certainly using the “oracles of God” here to refer to the OT Scriptures is not only contextually likely but is also confirmed by Philo’s use of “the sacred *oracles*” (*ta logia*) referring to different parts of the OT.
    - Thus, the takeaway is that the Jews believed that they had in their possession the *very words God*.

# Summary

- In sum, the doctrine of inspiration as found in Scripture describes the prophetic word and the Scriptures as both having God as their primary/ultimate source as opposed to human philosophy, convictions or desires. Despite being spoken or written by humans, they are ultimately God's words.

# Excursus | Can We Get NT Inspiration from 2 Pet. 1:19-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17?

- “All scripture” as a description vs. “All scripture” as a designator (2 Tim. 3:16)
  - Superman vs. Clark Kent
- Peter explicitly describes Paul’s letters as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15).
- Paul appears to quote Luke 10:7 in 1 Tim. 5:18 as Scripture.
- Paul understood his written and spoken words as the “words of God” (Thess. 2:13).
- Paul commands his letters be read in the churches alongside the established OT Scriptures (Col. 4:16). He obviously had a very high view of their importance/authority.
- Paul indicates that he writes the commands of the Lord (1 Cor. 7:10; 14:37).



# Excursus | Can We Get NT Inspiration from 2 Pet. 1:19-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17?

- Peter seems to equate the authority of the OT prophetic teaching with NT apostolic teaching, both having God as their source (2 Pet. 3:2).
- Paul indicates that he and his associates impart the words of God as they have been taught by the Spirit (2 Cor. 2:12-13).
- John indicates that listening to his/the apostolic teaching is the standard for whether one knows God (1 Jn 4:6)
- John invokes an OT-like imprecation at the end of Revelation to anyone who adds or subtracts to what he has written (Rev. 22:18-19), articulating what he saw and was commanded by God to subsequently write (Rev. 1:18).
- Jesus says that after he leaves, the Spirit will work in a special way to remind his apostles of his words (Jn. 14:26). In context, this isn't a promise to us.

# Summary

- The apostles and their associates believed their teaching, articulated largely in the NT documents, to be the words of God and to carry authority equivalent to the OT Scriptures. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that the NT was and should be considered inspired Scripture alongside the OT.