

A. Verbal Inspiration

- Not just the thoughts but the very words are inspired – 1 Cor. 2:13

“Roger Nicole observed [that Jesus & his apostles] ‘did not hesitate... to base their whole argumentation upon one single word of the [OT] Scripture... or even on the grammatical form of one word.’” ~ TDOS, 102

- Jesus appealed to the word “my” in Ps. 110:1 (Matt. 22:41-45)
- Paul noted the singular “offspring” in Gen. 22:18 (Gal. 3:16)
- The author of Hebrews focuses on “today” in Ps. 95 (Heb. 4:7)
- Inspiration is properly applied to the original language and writings, but the authority does extend to correct translations.
- Greek translations of the OT are regularly quoted and read by the NT authors and Jesus – yet no distinction in authority is seen.
- NT translations of terms and the use of transliteration is seen – Matt. 1:23, 27:33; Mk. 5:41, 15:34; Jn. 1:41, Acts 9:36.

B. Plenary Inspiration

- 2 Tim. 3:16 has “all scripture” not “each scripture” – the idea is that all of Scripture is inspired, all parts equally – no degrees of inspiration “plenary” means “full” or “complete”
- We can’t pick and choose what is inspired to us
- No red letters – Jesus’ words and the Gospel authors’ are equally authoritative
- While different genres function differently, it remains true that legal material, proverbs, genealogies and historical records, are just as inspired as pastoral epistles (letters).
- How we apply and understand Scripture will change by genre (and the use of metaphors or phenomenological language – the sun setting, corners of the earth, etc.)

Goal: Grow in our understanding of the doctrine of Scripture, be equipped to answer objections, and to better learn how to read and understand the Bible.

Sources: Quotes indicated as “TDOS” are from Mark Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2022); quotes indicated as “SS” are from John Meade & Peter Gurry, *Scribes & Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible* (Crossway, 2022). Lesson 4 draws heavily from TDOS, chapter 3.

Scripture: Theology, Text & Transmission

Class 4: The Word of God Written

Review

We have been looking at what the Bible says about the Bible. We have looked at how starting with the Bible is not ultimately a case of circular reasoning – since we hold that the Bible is the final authority. We have seen how Jesus viewed Scripture and how his practice and beliefs have shaped our own beliefs about the Bible, as his followers.

Two weeks ago, we looked at how significant it is that the Living God *speaks*. God communicates as an outflow of who he is in the Trinity. He reveals himself by speaking – his revelation to Moses (who wanted to see God’s glory) was largely a proclamation of God’s attributes (Exod. 33:18-23; 34:5-8). Israel was not to make images of God to use in worship: God was to be heard but not seen. We also looked at how God used prophets to speak with his own authority. This was not typically by dictation – but was through or by the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself is the Unique Word of God – God speaking to us in person. Ultimately, God is so identified with his Word that how we respond to God’s Word is how we respond to Him. The Word is how we are in relationship with God.

II. The Writing of Scripture

Jesus testified to the authority of Scripture – the fact that “it is written” settled the matter, and he often rebuked religious leaders with the question “Have you not read?” (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31) He also taught that “all the Scriptures” spoke of him (Luke 24:27). The apostles likewise emphasized that all the Scriptures were fulfilled in Christ – see 1 Cor. 15:3, 1 Tim. 4:13, 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

Yet some have taught that Scripture at best can become the word of God when the Spirit speaks to us through it. (Karl Barth)

How are we to think of Scripture? Does it contain or become God's word? Can we identify all of Scripture as God's word?

If we follow Christ and the apostles and uphold the authority of Scripture, how are we to think of the transition from spoken to written word? What does the Bible say about this?

A. God's Instruction to Write (OT)

- God instructed Moses to write – Exod. 17:14
- Moses continued to write God's words – Exod. 24:3-4
- Moses' role was at the request of the people – Exod. 20:19
- God himself wrote the 10 commandments with "his finger" – Exod. 24:12, 31:18; 32:16 (they bore God's authority)
- Breaking these laws was such a tremendous thing that Moses illustrated the gravity of the sin by breaking the tablets – 32:16)
- God accepted Moses' intercession & rewrote the words – Ex. 34:1

"...it was God himself who gave the written word a place in the life of his people, and he did that very early on in his dealings with them. The written word was not a later development, replacing the charismatic leadership of... prophets, priests, and kings, or [God's] tangible presence..." ~ TDOS, p. 91

- After Moses, God promised his presence but also stressed the important role his written Word would have – Josh. 1:8-9; 8:34
- The prophets spoke God's word but also were instructed to write – Isa. 30:8; Jer. 30:2, 36:2-3; Ezek. 43:11
- Psalmists and later prophets referred to the written scripture – Dan. 9:11, 13; Mal. 4:4; Ps. 119:18, 130; Neh. 8:1-3

B. The NT Continued the Emphasis on Written Words

- We saw how Jesus saw his work as fulfilling what was *written*
- The apostles likewise saw the early church as fulfilling what was *written* – Acts 1:20; Rom. 8:36, 11:8; 1 Cor. 1:19, 14:21, 15:54
- The apostles saw what they wrote as written under Christ's authority – 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 10:8, 13:10; Gal. 1:1
- Same authority for Paul's spoken word or letter – 2 Thess. 2:15
- The NT presents the written words of the prophets as what was "said" – Matt. 13:14, Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Rom. 9:17, 25

"The written form does not obscure the fact that in these words we are addressed by both the human writer and God himself." ~ TDOS, p. 94

III. The Nature of Scripture

- Scripture is a **creaturely** artifact: normal words, ink on page, etc.
- Scripture is a **human** artifact: many authors are known from the text; many letters are signed with the author's and even the secretary's name; even when we don't know the author it is clear the book didn't drop from the sky published by Heavenly Press
- Scripture is also a **historical** artifact: the words have specific historic context, are from a specific time and have a place in the wider context of the Bible as a whole. Yet the specific scriptures have a wider significance – Col. 3:16; Rom. 15:4
- Scripture was created with **varied processes**: rarely dictation happened (Mt. Sinai, Rev. 2-3), orderly investigations (Luke 1:3), pastoral letters (Epistles), "word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22), an apocalyptic vision (Revelation)
- But even with its creaturely, human, and historical nature, given in varied times, ways, and places – it is more than that – it is also the **divine** Word of God (2 Pet. 1:21) – this is Scripture's dual agency – both "of God" and "of man".

IV. The Inspiration of Scripture

A. Inspiration "God-breathed" – 2 Tim. 3:16

- When we speak of inspiration we don't mean "inspiring"
- We mean literally "God breathed" – the written word (the text) has its source in "God's breath"
- We don't exalt the writings of the church fathers or reformers to a place equal with Scripture because they are not inspired writings.
- God controls all things (sovereignty), so as B.B. Warfield said:

"If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul's He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters." ~ TDOS, p. 101

- Yet more than that, God so moved so that the very words that Paul spontaneously wrote are God's words that he speaks to us.