

THE NATURE OF THE BIBLE (Part One): Revelation, Inspiration, Illumination

Job 11:7

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

God is the Incomprehensible One. According to this verse, *it is impossible for anybody to have a perfect knowledge of God.* Man can know many things about God by virtue of what He has revealed about Himself, but all of man's knowledge will never be a perfect knowledge. It is impossible for a *finite* being like man to have a perfect knowledge of the *infinite* God.

The *Ruach haKodesh* is the divine agent of numerous ministries, but let's focus on:

I. THE MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATIONSHIP TO SCRIPTURE

There are three key ministries of the Holy Spirit in relationship to Scripture: *revelation*, *inspiration*, and *illumination* (first two are completed works). Let's consider a brief overview of each of these and set the stage for our main topic today... **The Nature of the Bible.**

A. The Ministry of Revelation

By way of definition, the word "revelation" comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means "the unveiling." It refers to a divine act of communicating to man what otherwise could not and would not be known. The source of Divine Revelation is the Holy Spirit: *In the OT, this is taught by II Samuel 23:2-3; Ezekiel 2:2; 8:3; 11:1, 24; and Micah 3:8. NT, John 16:12-15; I Corinthians 2:9-10; and II Peter 1:21.*

There are two main modes or types of Divine Revelation: *General Revelation* and *Special Revelation.*

General Revelation refers to the way God reveals Himself generally to all men, to anyone anywhere in the world. GR is embodied in things. It has been defined as "*the embodiment of divine thought in the phenomenon of nature, in the fact or experience of history, and the general constitution of the human mind.*"

Nature: The concept of creation. (Psalm 19:1-6) Providence: The coming of snow in the day of battle. (Job 38:22-23) Preservation: The atom should explode, but holds together. Scientists call this phenomenon the "atomic glue." (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3) Conscience: Throughout humanity, and in every society whether primitive or civilized, a certain basic set of laws are kept. (Rom 2:14-15)

Summary: GR appears to all men. It supplies man's need for spiritual answers and persuades the souls of men to seek after God. However, it is limited as to just how much it can reveal. *It insufficient to lead man to salvation...* but it is sufficient to condemn sinful humanity (Rom 1:20).

The second major mode of Divine Revelation is Special Revelation. Whereas GR is embodied in things, SR is revelation embodied in words. In SR, God makes Himself known at *specific times*, through *specific people*, and in *specific ways*.

Through GR, it is possible to learn only so much (Science, the finite probing the infinite), and the truths from GR can be misinterpreted (drives men's psyches and souls to seek for answers). *That's*

why SR is needed, so the truths of GR can be correctly understood. Most importantly, the Gospel is not available through GR, only SR furnishes man with a complete revelation and clear explanation of salvation.

SR harmonizes what appears to be contradictory elements in GR, which shows both the goodness of God and the severity of God. For instance, the same gentle rain that causes the seed to grow, at other times becomes a destructive rainstorm that wipes out the entire crop. This seems to contradict the nature of God. "Old Saw"... *SR allows us to harmonize these seeming contradictory truths from GR.*

Hebrews 1:1-3

GOD, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

The author of Hebrews points out that God has revealed Himself in a number of different ways throughout biblical history. These various ways or forms of SR include:

- 1) Theophanies, visible manifestations of God. Remember Abraham's tent visitors? Jacob wrestling?
- 2) Miracles, extraordinary events inexplicable in terms of ordinary, natural facts which happen in concert with prophecy or a spiritual leaders command to provide validation.
- 3) Direct Communication, this is God's primary *modus operandi* of SR. God spoke to the prophets. In fact, that's the concise definition of what a prophet is... *one who receives direct revelation from God!*
- 4) Angels, 10 commandments were written with God's finger, other 603 mediated unto Moshe via angels (Deu 33:2, Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19, Heb 2:2). How did the shepherds learn of Messiah's birth (Luk 2:10)?
- 5) The Incarnation, wow... talk about a SR! *God became a man and said "here I AM!"* When Philip asked the Lord in John 14:9 to "show us the Father..." what did Yeshua say? *Have I been so long with you, and yet you don't know Me?* That's denotative definition, VS connotative.
- 6) The Scriptures, by far the most important SR. The Scriptures are the written revelation of God by which, and only by which, all other forms of revelation (GR, plus the 5) can be rightfully interpreted. Explain example.

For now, the Bible contains *all that God has chosen to reveal about Himself* (READ Deu 29:29). Romans 8:18 states that further revelation will be given in the future, and Jude 3 tells us that final revelation will come only in the glorified state. In the present state, *Scripture is the final revelation*. Therefore, Paul admonishes believers *not to go beyond the things which are written* (I Cor 4:6).

B. The Ministry of Inspiration

The second ministry in relationship to Scripture is the work of inspiration. *Inspiration concerns the recording of truth. When men recorded what was revealed to them, they were able to record it totally free of error by virtue of this ministry of the Holy Spirit.*

Not everything that was revealed was necessarily recorded. READ: Rev 10:4 The Apostle John received a revelation of something which the seven thunders uttered. But when he tried to write it down, he was

immediately told, "**Do not write it.**" This is an example of **revelation... without inspiration**, and John was not allowed to record it.

So just like revelation, the source of Divine Inspiration is the Holy Spirit. In the OT, this is taught by Isaiah 59:21. NT, by Matthew 22:43-44; Mark 12:36-37; Acts 1:16; 4:25-26; 28:25-28; and II Timothy 3:16.

Definition of Biblical Inspiration: "God superintended the human authors so that, by using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded **without error** His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs."

Overall, God did not dictate the writings. Certain portions are dictated word-for-word... *the Ten Commandments for example.* But for the most part, God SUPERINTENDED the writers so He could have "quality control" of the end product. The relationship is this: God is the source, and *man is the recorder - the instrument - the means* by which God produced His Scriptures. The Bible is NOT exclusively divine or exclusively human; but it is ALSO NOT partly human or partly divine. *The Divine and human don't impair each other, but both are present in every word, from beginning to end.*

God used HUMAN AUTHORS and their own individual styles, otherwise the entire Bible would sound the same, which it does not. He directed the writers so that in any way feasible to them (incorporate ancient records, Luke 1:3 did research), they produced His very words without error. *The Bible is God's message to man.* It does not merely **contain** the Word of God; **it is the Word of God.**

How did God do this exactly? Through a Biblical concept called DUAL AUTHORSHIP, which means simply that *on the one hand,* God wrote it; *on the other hand,* man wrote it. Let's illustrate this with one example (there are several) from Scripture:

Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Who said that? According to Matthew 15:4, God said it; but according to Mark 7:10, Moses said it. *Is this a contradiction?* Not at all. God is the primary source, and man is the secondary source. God did say it, but He **chose** to say it *through* Moses. *Moses did the actual writing under the inspiration of God.*

It is this concept of *dual authorship* that both God and man produced the Scriptures that has led to a number of theories of inspiration. All of the theories are false and fail to give the **high view** of the Scriptures that the Bible demands, except one...

PLENARY VERBAL INSPIRATION of the Scriptures: which means that the Bible is completely inspired; it is at the same time the Word of God and the words of human authors. *God is the source, but He used humans to write the words.*

The word "plenary" means "full and complete" and that the inspiration of Scripture extends to every portion of the Scriptures. *The Bible is the final authority not only in matters of faith and practice, but it is authoritative on any subject to which the Bible addresses itself.* Anything the Bible affirms to be true is true. If it says something about science, geology, archaeology, sociology, or whatever, it can be

trusted. It is the final authority as to truth on all the subjects it addresses.

Verbal inspiration *emphasizes the words themselves* in that the Holy Spirit guided the words to be chosen and used. God allowed the authors to use their own characteristics, style, and vocabulary... but, as they were composing *He directed them in their choice of words.* (Divine Thesaurus, Copy Editor)

Two other key terms that round out this concept: *infallible* and *inerrant*.

Infallibility means “unfailing accuracy.” **Inerrant** means there is no false statement or fact in the original writings. SO... **Plenary Verbal Inspiration** *means that the Bible is fully inspired in every part, down to the very words chosen.* It is infallible with unfailing accuracy and therefore trustworthy; it is inerrant in that it contains no false statement, no error, and is therefore truthful.

Two key passages clearly spell out the fact that the Bible was plenary and verbally inspired:

II Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture (*graphai*) is given by inspiration (*theo-pneu-stos*) of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The emphasis in this passage is on *plenary inspiration*, meaning “full inspiration.” Every *written revelation* is given by inspiration of God. The Greek word (*theo-pneu-stos*) which is translated as *INspired* literally means “God-breathed,” or more correctly, it is the “out-breathing of God.” And the result of this *out-breathing* or *OUTspiring* of God is that all Scripture is profitable in four areas: first, *teaching*; secondly, *reproof*; thirdly, *correction*; and fourthly, *instruction... in righteousness*.

II Peter 1:20

...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture (*graphai*) is of any private (*idios* - belonging to one's self) interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved (*phe-ro*) by the Holy Spirit.

The emphasis in this passage is on the **means** of inspiration, and Peter makes several points here:

*There is only **one correct interpretation** of any passage of Scripture... the interpretation God intended!*

No prophecy ever came by the will of man; the primary source of revelation was always God, while man was always merely a secondary source or the means of the writing of Scripture.

Men spake from God; when the prophets spoke, they spoke the words of God. They were only the secondary sources; God was still the primary source.

Finally, this verse states: *being moved by the Holy Spirit*. The Greek word for moved (*phe-ro*) means “to bear” or “to carry along.” It is the same word found in Acts 27:15, 17 that speaks of a ship at sea being “borne along” or being carried along by water. The picture here is that the prophets were **borne along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote** and what was out-breathed was transcribed by men. *These men were transcribing as they were being borne along, moved along, carried along, by the Holy Spirit.*

Inerrancy in regards to Copies, and Translations

Inerrancy means that, **when these original writings were produced**, they were without error. *So the inspiration of the Scriptures concerns only to the **original autographs** of the Scriptures. Copies are not inspired, and translations are not inspired. There is some slight human error in both, but fortunately, the errors are not significant, and what the original writings were trying to say is very clear to us.*

C. The Ministry of Illumination

The third ministry of the Holy Spirit in relationship to Scripture is the work of illumination. *Illumination means "to understand the truth."* While the ministries of revelation and inspiration are works of the Holy Spirit which are limited to the prophets only, *the work of illumination is something He does with all believers.*

According to I John 2:20, all believers have an anointing from the Holy One at the time of their salvation, which makes the Holy Spirit's work of illumination possible.

Illumination has to do with the understanding of the truth. When the Holy Spirit did the work of **revelation**, *He revealed a truth to a prophet.* When the Holy Spirit did the work of **inspiration**, *He caused that prophet to write, free of error, that truth which was revealed.* Then comes the work of **illumination**, *by which the Holy Spirit helps believers to understand what the prophets wrote.*

The indwelling Holy Spirit gives believers the ability to understand the Scriptures in two ways:

- 1) By **illuminating the believer's mind** during personal Bible study, and...
- 2) Through the **Gift of Teaching** which is given to certain believers who, in turn, help other believers to understand the Word.

Ephesians 4:11

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...

Bottom Line?

*When a believer understands spiritual truth, he understands it **because** of the Spirit's ministry of illumination.*

In the **OT**, this is taught by Nehemiah 9:20. **NT**, I Corinthians 2:14-16; and Ephesians 1:15-18.