

The Bible

The Church at Gun Hill

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. None may add to it or take away from it except at his peril.

The word Bible comes from the Greek **τα Βιβλία** (ta Biblia) which means 'the books'. That is just what the Bible is - a collection of books, 66 in all (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New), written by a number of men over some sixteen centuries. Yet the books have a marvellous unity of theme and purpose, demonstrating the undeniable truth that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Note carefully as we look at what the Bible says of Scripture that we are not just saying that the Bible contains the Word of God - that would allow for the human mind to sift through and to choose what it considered to be Divinely given. No, our affirmation is that the Bible, Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelation, every word as given in the original languages, IS the inspired Word of God. How else could fallen man know so completely and reliably about God except God reveal Himself.

God-breathed

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...." II Timothy 3 v 16. The Greek literally means 'all scripture is God-breathed,' that is, breathed out by God. If man is to know anything about God, it must be because God has revealed Himself. God spoke to Adam and the patriarchs. Then to Moses He gave commandment that the spoken word should be written down. Through subsequent prophets and men of God He has spoken (Hebrews 1 v 1) and lastly through His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Make no mistake, the Scripture is the revelation of God's will and purpose; not simply inspiring but inspired, (Latin in + spirare = to breathe into), God-breathed.

More light is thrown upon the matter in **II Peter 1 vv 20,21**; **"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of 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."** Although human agents have been used and there are differences of style and expression (for God does not suppress but sanctifies personality), yet every word is God-breathed. There is not the slightest error; nothing is of human invention or personal opinion. The Greek means that holy men of God spoke as they were being 'borne along' by the Holy Spirit. To be sure, Peter could reassure us that **"We have not followed cunningly devised fables."** (II Pet 1 v 16). Again and again, men like David and Jeremiah could testify that the word of God was in their mouth. (See **Jeremiah 1 vv 4 - 9**; **II Samuel 23 vv 1,2.**)

Further it can be said that nothing has been left to chance. The written word, the revelation of God's will and purpose, is unchanging and sure because it is written in heaven. From eternity to eternity it is sure, but in the course of time it has been revealed to us, not, however, imperfectly but perfectly. **"Forever,"** said the Psalmist, **"Thy word is settled in heaven."** (Psalm 119 v 89). Daniel was shown **"that which is noted in the Scripture of Truth"** by his angelic visitor. (Daniel 10 v 21.)

It is written

The Bible is often referred to as the Scripture, i.e. that which is written. This permanent, written record of God's Word gives us a sure reference point. Certainly, God still speaks to us by His Holy Spirit, but this should not lead believers to neglect the written word. Peter said, **"We have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto you do well that you take heed...."** (II Peter 1 v 19.) There are many voices in the world but God has given us the Scripture of Truth which **"Cannot be broken"** (John 10 v 35) so that we know the voice of the Shepherd when He speaks to our heart. This surely is demonstrated beyond all doubt by the fact that Jesus, God manifest in the flesh (I Tim.3 v 16), having recently come from His baptism, where the Holy Spirit had come upon Him in bodily shape like a dove, did not rely simply upon an inner voice to resist the temptations of Satan, but stated emphatically on three occasions, **"It is written...."** (Matthew 4 vv 4,7 & 10).

Here is a final and absolute authority. How can one preach with authority unless one believes so? In fact, so complete are the Scriptures that every word is important. In **Galatians 3 v 16**, Paul bases an argument upon the fact that a word in the Old Testament is in the singular and not in the plural. Jesus does a similar thing in **John 10 v 34**. Indeed, did not the apostle confess in **Acts 24 v 14**, that he believed all things which are in the law and the prophets? The attitude of Jesus and New Testament writers alike is that the Old Testament Scriptures cannot err or fail to be fulfilled. Jesus emphasised, **"But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."** (**Mark 14 v 49**). James appeals to the same idea when he challenged, **"Do you think that the Scripture says in vain...?"** (**James 4 v 5**) Here, we can derive great assurance of the veracity of Scripture when we discover how much Biblical prophecy has been literally fulfilled, and is being fulfilled. Why? Because it is the inspired word of God which CANNOT fail. Again and again, the prophets lay claim to this fact when they testify, **"Thus saith the Lord.."** or, **"The word of the Lord came to me.."** or when they speak as God in the first person. If one wants to dispel any doubts about the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures once and for all, then examine the words of Jesus in **Matt. 5 v 18**. Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Not just words but little letters and spelling marks are all there in the original by the inspiration of God.

In the New Testament are the writings of the apostles, eyewitnesses of the very events and teachings, or of men like Luke or Mark, who were close to the apostles, and whose writings bear the stamp of Divine authority. From **Acts 1 vv 1 - 4**, it is apparent that Jesus spent forty days after His resurrection teaching the disciples. But far more important is the promise Jesus gave to His disciples that when the Holy Spirit had come upon them in that full, baptismal outpouring, then He would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said and taught. (**John 14 v 26**) Thus what they wrote was not the product of failing memories or excited imagination, some fantasy interwoven with poorly remembered fact. No! They wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Paul, and the other writers of the New Testament epistles wrote with apostolic authority. Perhaps this is best demonstrated in the Pauline epistles where the apostle always writes in a manner which shows that he is the human vessel conveying God's message. In the first few verses of every epistle except Hebrews (which does not bear the name of Paul in the text of the epistle either) he greets his readers with words like **"Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."** Such was Paul's authority. Indeed, concerning the gospel which he proclaimed, he says, **"I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."** (**Galatians 1 v 12** - see also **I Corinthians 2 v 13**). Be encouraged to receive Paul's preaching, **"not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe."** (**I Thess. 2 v 13**). Those that are spiritual will be able to judge that these writings are God's word. (**I Cor. 14 v 37**). The Divine inspiration of these letters as Scripture was recognised from the beginning. They were read not just in one but in several churches (**Colossians 4 v 16**). Peter confirms this when he refers to Paul's letters as Scripture (**II Peter 3 v 16**).

The Book of Revelation is, of course, the Revelation of Jesus Christ (**Rev 1 v 1**) which carries its own warning of the danger of adding to or taking away from it (**Rev. 22 vv 18, 19**). However, a similar warning applies to that sort of treatment of any of the revealed Word of God (**Deuteronomy 4 v 2**).

The Word

Before we come to a conclusion on this matter, it would be profitable to examine what is meant by the Word of God.

First, the Scriptures refer to Jesus as the Word: Logos - **"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."** (**John 1 v 1**) See also **Hebrews 1 v 1**. He is the Eternal One by whom God has spoken and revealed Himself, His will and purpose to us. This is a study in itself, but suffice it to say that this Word of God is the Living Word, because it is a Person...Jesus.

Second, there is the word which is proclaimed or announced. Preaching and teaching ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit also comes to us as the Word of God. Read **I Thess. 2 v 13**; **I Peter 4 v 11**. And this is the real context of **Hebrews 4 v 12**: **"For the Word of God is quick and powerful and**

sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But what is this proclaimed word? Again it is a Person - it is Christ, who indwells His people by His Spirit, being made manifest. **Ephesians 6 v 17**, if properly translated, reads, **"..the sword of the Spirit, WHO is the word of God."** Here, **ῥῆμα (rhema)** in the Greek means a spoken word or utterance. Thus the Word of God is living. It is this Word which we need to proclaim - Christ. The meaning of that well - known **Proverb (29 v 18)** is that where no such prophetic word is, people throw off restraint, rebel.

Third, the Word is given to us, as explained above, in written form, so that we might have a permanent, written revelation of the will and purposes of God. If it is read as any other book, it will be to us as a dead letter, but if we read it under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, then it will be life to us. (**II Cor.3 v 6**). The Holy Spirit, you see, will glorify Jesus (**John 16 vv 13 - 15**), He will reveal Christ, the Living Word. Jesus Himself said, **"Search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."** (**John 5 v 39**). Again, in **Luke 24 v 27**, when Jesus was with the two going to Emmaus, **"..beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself."** He opened their understanding that they might know the Scriptures. (vv 44 - 47). Although they knew the scriptures well, they had failed to possess them in the heart because until that time Christ had not been revealed to them in the Word. Now their heart burned within them.

Conclusion

Most of what has been said has pointed to the Divine and full inspiration of the Scriptures from the Bible's own claims. This is necessarily so. To attempt to prove such inspiration to unbelievers and doubters is fruitless. **"The natural (Gk = soulish) man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** (**I Cor.2 v 14**).

Realise the importance of the written word as an act of faith. Feed on it (**I Peter 2 v 2**) and grow; know it and resist all the works of the enemy just as Jesus did in the wilderness temptation. Failure to know and rightly to divide the word of Truth will lead one into error. When Jesus accused the Sadducees of error because they knew not the scriptures, He was careful to add, "neither the power of God." In the power of their own intellect they were expert in the O.T. Law but had not allowed God to interpret it to their hearts. (**Mark 12 v 24**) We, on the contrary, may study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need **"not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth."** (**II Tim. 2 v 15**).

In **Psalm 119** are many promises concerning that Word of God: for cleansing (v9) and victory over sin (v11); for guidance and direction (v105) and for increase in spiritual understanding (v130). That same Word of Truth brings sanctification, or setting apart to God (**John 17 v 17**). Read it! Learn it! Hide it in your heart! Respond to it in faith, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (**Romans 10 v17**). To be sure, this is why we need to be persuaded that the Bible is fully, in every word, the inspired Word of God, so that we may lay hold of all the promises of God to us and possess them, nothing doubting.

If you want to live a life of purity and power, an abundant life of health and victory, then you must have that assurance that the Bible is the Word of God, that it is absolutely true and that it will never pass away.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine (i.e. teaching), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly finished unto all good works." (**II Timothy 3 vv 16,17**).