

BIBLIOLOGY & DISPENSATIONS

Grace Bible Institute

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Pastor Kevin Jeffrey, M.Div., instructor

INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of the last days of the Church is that men would not endure “sound doctrine”. Instead of enduring sound doctrine, it was said they “*after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears*”.¹ Paul also warned Timothy in that passage that they would “*turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables*”.² In a USA Today article, a Presbyterian pastor exemplified this problem when he said:

“I need to accept that today’s spiritual seekers want quality, clarity, convenience and community in their practice of faith, and they will choose the church that offers the programs that best meet their personal needs. Few people will join my church simply because it is Presbyterian, just as a shrinking number of people will buy a car because of loyalty to General Motors. Consumers today want a product with the best features, whether it is a church with a dynamic youth program or an automobile with an excellent crash-testing rating.”

Many of the aforementioned see the Bible as outdated and irrelevant for practice in life today. This belief did not start recently. The battle against Scripture in America began well before the 20th century. Historian George Dollar in his book, *The Fight for Fundamentalism*, wrote that the battle over the Word of God began in this country in the late 1800s. The effect has been a maligning of God’s communication to those in the Body of Christ.³

“Traditionally, religious institutions in general had respected and revered the Bible with an attitude akin to veneration. Its pages had been the object of national obedience and study. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a massive attack was raised against the Bible and against its time-honored place as the verbally inspired and absolutely authoritative Word of God. Slowly, but surely, that veneration was crumbling as scholars, teachers, denominational leaders, and educators within and without the Christian body joined to reject or redefine the historic truths of Christianity. In their place has come a new set of values, more scientific than Scriptural, more man-centered than God-centered, more accommodating to the culture and political climate than the sound doctrine demanded by the Apostle

¹ 2 Tim. 4:3

² 2Tim. 4:4

³ *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, copyright 1973 (pp. vii)

*Paul when he wrote to Timothy that the time could come when they would not endure sound doctrine”.*⁴

What we’ll see throughout this course, however, is that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, written centuries ago, but is as relevant today as it was the day the letters were penned.

We will discuss what it means to say one believes in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the 66 books of Scripture. That is, the Holy Spirit supernaturally enabled the human authors of the Scriptures to accurately pen in the original manuscripts the things that God wanted said.⁵ This enablement was consistent with the style, vocabulary and personality of each writer. Thusly, the words were inspired, that is to say, God breathed, not the writer. The writer was subject to sin as any other man.⁶ The Old and New Testaments comprise the Word of God. Though God did not reveal all He could in the Bible.⁷

We will see that there is a distinction between the original autographs and the many different translations of Scripture. Translations of Scripture reflect what God wanted known to the degree they accurately represent the original manuscript.

We will distinguish between the terms used concerning Scripture: revelation, inspiration, infallibility etc. Revelation is that supernatural presentation of truth that would not otherwise be known. Inspiration is the teaching that all Scripture originates from God, not man. And, infallibility is the teaching that all Scripture is reliable and can be counted upon for faith and practice.⁸ Scripture teaches there is no further revelation being given today. God has said all that He will to the Church in the canon of Scripture.

Believers today are illumined to the written Word. Illumination is that means whereby the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of believers to areas of Scripture⁹.

I. MEN THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF HISTORY HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIBLE.

A. President Ronald Reagan had this to say about the bible:

“I never had any doubt about it being of divine origin...point out to me any similar collection of writings that has lasted for as many thousands of years and is still a bestseller, world-wide. It had to be of divine origin.”

B. President John Adams is quoted as saying:

“So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens to their country and respectable members of society.”

⁴ A History of Fundamentalism in America, copyright, 1973 (pp. vii.)

⁵ 2 Pet. 1:19-21

⁶ 2 Tim. 3:16

⁷ John 21:25; Rom. 1:18

⁸ Deut. 29:29; 2 Co. 12:1-7

⁹ Eph.1:18; Heb. 10:32; 1 Co. 2:12-13

C. George Washington Carver attributed the course of his life to the bible:

“The secret of my success? It is simple. It is found in the Bible, ‘In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.’”

D. Horace Greeley stated:

“It is impossible mentally or socially to enslave a Bible reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom.”

E. Archaeologist Sir William Ramsey states:

“The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible (by certain schools of thought) has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of numerous details.”

F. Lewis Sperry Chafer states;

“It is such a book man would never write if he could, cause it condemns him; or could write if he would because it’s beyond him.”

II. THE BIBLE HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME.

A. The writing of the bible took over 1000 years (approximately from 950 b.c. to 95 a.d.) to complete.

B. The writing of the bible took more than 40 authors. They were men from varied backgrounds. From David, a king to Amos a shepherd, to Luke a doctor and many of the New Testament writers who were fishermen by trade.

C. The writing of the bible possesses more manuscript evidence than any other piece of literature in the history of the world. Military historian Chauncey Sanders asserts that there are *three ways* of testing the reliability of any historical document¹⁰:

1. The Bibliographical test (i.e., the textual tradition from the original document to the copies and manuscripts of that document we possess today). The Manuscript evidence for the New Testament alone is far and away superior to any other piece of literature that has ever been produced. “There are now more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions and we have more than 24,000 manuscripts copies of portions of the New Testament in existence. **No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers and attestation.** In comparison, the Iliad by Homer is second with only 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of

¹⁰ Chauncey Sanders, Introduction in Research In English Literary History, copyright 1952 (pp. 143)

- Homer dates from the thirteenth century.”¹¹
2. Internal evidence (what the document claims for itself). **Scripture itself makes the claim for the Bible’s authenticity.** The Lord Jesus quoted from numerous Old Testament prophets and from the books of Moses. The Lord also referred to quotes from Jonah, Malachi.¹²
 3. External evidence (how the document squares or aligns itself with facts, dates, persons, from its own contemporary world). The writing of the bible **possesses more archeological evidence than any other literature in the history of the world.**
- D. The bible offers the only comprehensive insight into the origins, purpose and the future of life known to man. Scripture proclaims that it was in the beginning that God created the heavens and the earth.¹³ Scripture also teaches that events between the beginning and ending of the world are all for the glory of God.¹⁴ Scripture also informs of life in the future for all of mankind. The description of things in the future is taught with exacting and authoritative detail.¹⁵
- E. The validity of the bible is attested to by facts.
1. The bible has survived an onslaught of attacks against it to remain the most popular pieces of literature that has ever been written.
 2. The claims of Scripture are validated consistently through scientific and archeological discoveries. Scientist often discount the claims of Scripture from the assertion in Scripture of a universal flood to Pangaea. Many of the statements made in Scripture have come to be supported by Archeological discoveries.
 3. The fulfillment of prophecy validates the authenticity of Scripture. The Lord’s prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem happened exactly as he prophesied that it would in his Mount Olivet Discourse.¹⁶

III. THE BIBLE IS DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN.

- A. All of Scripture is *inspired*¹⁷ by God.¹⁸
1. Inspired is the Greek word “*theopneumatos*” which is literally translated God-breathed. The word is used in Scripture to emphasize *communication that has been ordained by God’s authority and produced by the enabling of his Spirit.*¹⁹
 2. Inspiration is limited to the original manuscripts, not the translations of Scripture. Inspiration is limited to the words of Scripture, not the authors.

¹¹ Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, copyright 1993, (pp. 43)

¹² Matt. 11:10; 12:39; 19:5; 21:42; 24:15; Mk. 9:12

¹³ Gen. 1:1

¹⁴ Rom. 9:22-23

¹⁵ 2 Pet. 3:9-13

¹⁶ Matt. 24:1-3

¹⁷ Freiberg Lexicon -- *of the Scriptures as communication that has been ordained by God’s authority and produced by the enabling of his Spirit; strictly God-breathed.*

¹⁸ 2 Tim. 3:16.

¹⁹ Friberg Lexicon

- B. The verbal plenary inspiration of the 66 books of Scripture is evident.
 - 1. Verbal plenary means that *the Holy Spirit supernaturally enabled the human authors of the Scriptures to accurately pen in the original manuscripts the things that God wanted said*. This enablement was consistent with the style, vocabulary and personality of each writer. Thusly, the words were inspired, that is to say, God breath, not the writer.
 - 2. The writer was subject to sin as any other man.²⁰ God did not reveal all he could in the Bible.²¹

- C. The New Testament use of the word “*borne*” is essential to understanding that Scripture is God inspired. To say the writers were “*borne*”²² along is to say that they were moved inwardly, by the Holy Spirit to write the things that they wrote.²³ Peter contrasts the writing of Scripture to “*private interpretation*”. The word private is *idios*, one’s individual. The term interpretation is *epiluo*²⁴.

IV. GOD SUPERNATURALLY REVEALED TO THE WRITERS OF SCRIPTURE THE THINGS THAT HE WANTED THEM TO WRITE.

- A. There are two main revelatory words used in the New Testament to emphasize how God reveals things.
 - 1. “*Phaneros*” is a word used to emphasize *the manifestation of something in which the receivers are caused to see the thing revealed, but not necessarily understand it*. “*Phanero*” is used of the Lord being made manifest to Israel.²⁵ He appeared on the scene and Israel saw Him, but they didn’t know Him. Proof that they did not know Him is seen in their rejection of Him as Messiah.
 - 2. Revelation is the Greek word “*apocalypse*” which is a *supernatural presentation of truth that would not otherwise be known*. Revelation is different from *phaneros* in that *phaneros* makes a thing manifest, but doesn’t cause one to understand that which is manifested. For example, Paul wrote to Titus that the grace of God “*has appeared*”²⁶. Paul meant that the grace from God has been made manifest. Yet, there are many who don’t comprehend, nor understand God’s grace. Revelation, on the other hand, not only brings manifestation of a matter, but one is caused to understand the nature of the revelation²⁷.
 - a) God revealed a mystery to the apostle Paul concerning how He stabilizes the minds of believers in this Dispensation of Grace.

²⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21

²¹ John 21:25; Rom. 1:18

²² Freiberg Lexicon -- *to be moved inwardly, prompted*.

²³ 2 Pet.1:20-21 cf. Acts 27:15,17

²⁴ Joseph Thayer -- which means *to unloose, untie anything knotted or bound or sealed up*. cf. Mk. 4:34; Acts 19:39

²⁵ John 1:31

²⁶ Tit. 2:11 – *literally means has “appeared”; the words “to all men” is not read in the better manuscripts*.

²⁷ Synonyms of the New Testament – Richard Trench (pg. 331); cf. Dan. 10:1

There are 12 different mysteries revealed by the apostle Paul in the New Testament.²⁸ The mysteries revealed in the New Testament are written for the benefit of maturing believers. Revelation of the mysteries allows the maturing saint insight into God's plan and purposes that is not obvious to every believer.

- b) Before the completion of the canon of Scripture, believers would receive revelation from God concerning the direction of the church.²⁹
 - c) The Father would reveal things to certain ones during Christ's earthly ministry.³⁰ The Father revealed to Peter that Christ was not just a man, but in fact, He was the messiah whom the Jews were looking for. Revelation that contributed to the books in the canon was limited primarily to the apostles and prophets.
 - d) Believers receive revelation in the church today. The things revealed today by God pertain to an unveiling in the mind of the believer concerning truth contained in the Word of God.³¹ Louis Sperry Chafer notes in his work on Major Bible Themes: "*In place of special revelation, however, a work of the Spirit has especially characterized the present age. As the Spirit of God illuminates or casts light upon the Scriptures, this is a legitimate form of present tense revelation from God in which the teachings of the Bible are made clear and applied to individual life and circumstances*".³²
3. Scripture teaches that no further revelation is being given today exterior to the illumination given concerning the written word of God.³³
 4. God has said all that He will say to the Church in the canon of Scripture.³⁴
 5. God reveals things to believer consistent with that recorded in Scripture.³⁵
 6. Scripture used writers to record Scripture using:
 - a) God used first hand experiences.³⁶
 - b) God used situations called to formulate Christian doctrine.³⁷
 - c) God used the method of investigation. cf. Lk. 1:1-4

B. The men that God used to record Scripture were themselves fallible -- subject to failure.

1. Peter denied the Lord.

²⁸ Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:3-4; Col. 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 1:9-10; Col. 1:26-27; 1 Co. 15:17-24; 2 Thess. 2:6-8; 1 Tim. 3:9; Rom. 11:25-27; Eph. 5:27-32

²⁹ 1 Co. 14:6,26

³⁰ Matt. 16:17; Lk. 2:26

³¹ Eph. 1:18; Phil. 3:15

³² Major Bible Themes; copyright 1926 (pg. 33); cf. 1 Co. 2:10

³³ 1 Co. 13:8-10

³⁴ 2 Tim. 3:17 cf. Ps. 68:11

³⁵ cf. Eph. 1:18

³⁶ cf. Jer. 1:4-9; Rev. 1:10

³⁷ cf. 2 Co. 2:4-11; 1 John 2:12-14