

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
written by Lewis Sperry Chafer and revised by John f. Walvoord

The Bible: Inspired of God

- Introduction
 - God directed the human authors such that, without destroying their own individuality, literary style, or personal interest, His complete and connected thought toward man was recorded.
 - Although passages of the Bible may differ greatly in their character, every word of Scripture is equally inspired.
 - Various opinions have been advanced as to the extent of divine control over the human authors.
 - Because the view of inspiration is the foundation upon which all Bible interpretation is built, careful attention must be given to understanding how God inspired the Bible.
- Theories of Inspiration
 - Verbal, plenary inspiration
 - Verbal inspiration means that the Holy Spirit guided the human author in the choice of words used in the original manuscripts.
 - Plenary inspiration means that every word of the Bible is as God intended even though the personalities, writing styles and vocabularies of the human authors are preserved. Keep in mind that God chose the people who would write down His word.
 - Scripture is infallible meaning there were not any errors in the original manuscripts: every word is faithfully recorded even when citing false teaching and statements of men which are untrue.
 - Inspiration applies to the original manuscripts only and, although none are in existence today, their content can be derived from the numerous copies that are available.
 - Mechanical or dictation theory
 - God dictated the Scripture to the writers who were effectively nothing more than stenographers.
 - The writing styles and personalities evident in the various books of the Scripture are difficult to explain.
 - The fears, feelings, emotions, prayers, etc. of the human authors which are included in the Biblical record are difficult to explain.

- Certain passages, such as Paul's heartfelt prayer for Israel in Romans 9:1-3, lose their meaning and significance if merely dictated by God.
- Some portions of the Bible were indeed dictated by God, but these passages are recorded as such.
- Concept theory
 - God inspired concepts only and the precise words were chosen by the human authors.
 - This opens the door for human error in the authors' attempts to restate God's message in their own words.
 - This doesn't line up with Scripture which asserts that words are very important (John 6:63; 17:8; 1 Cor 2:13; Gal 3:16).
 - The grave warning in Rev 22:18-19 about adding to or taking away from the words of the prophecy of that book does not make sense if the words are those of the Apostle John rather than God.
- Partial inspiration theory
 - Only portions of the Scripture are inspired.
 - Examples:
 - The portions dealing with divine truth are accurate, but we cannot depend upon statements in Scripture that refer to history, geography, science, etc.
 - The N.T. gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are inspired, but the epistles are simply the writings of men.
 - This leaves it up to the reader to decide which portions of the Bible are divine truth inspired by God and that which may not be true and can simply be ignored.
- Neo-orthodox view
 - The Bible contains errors and cannot be taken as literally true.
 - The Scriptures are merely a channel of revelation and, though errant, become truth only as comprehended by each individual.
 - This again leaves the reader as the final authority concerning what is true and what is false.
- Naturalistic view
 - The Bible is like any other book written without divine guidance.
 - It is just another book about religion, expressing ancient views of spiritual experiences of men in the past.
 - Under this theory the Bible can be lumped in with the Koran, Veda, Five Classics, Tao-te-ching, etc.
- The Testimony of Christ
 - Whenever Christ quoted Scripture (and He did so frequently) He quoted it as having authority and in full recognition that it had come by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

- In Matt 5:18 Jesus states that not one jot or tittle of the Law would go unfulfilled, thus affirming the authenticity of the O.T. Scripture as well as its accuracy even down to the finest detail.
- In John 10:35 Jesus affirmed that “the Scripture cannot be broken”.
- His quotations from the O.T. extend throughout (frequently from books that are most disputed by liberal critics) making it impossible to question the inspiration of O.T. Scripture without questioning the character and veracity of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus predicted the writing of the N.T.
 - He spoke of the truth that would be delivered to the disciples in John 16:12-13.
 - He told His disciples they would be witnesses to the truth (John 15:27; Acts 1:8).
 - He gave authority to His disciples in their speaking of the truth (Luke 10:16; Heb 2:1-4).
- Other evidence of the inspiration of the N.T.
 - In 1st Tim 5:18 both Deut 25:4 and Luke 10:7 are quoted as equally inspired Scripture.
 - In 2 Pet 3:15-16 the writings of Paul are classified as Scripture which should be received as the word of God.
- Important Passages on Inspiration
 - 2 Tim 3:16 states that “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” where Scripture refers to the sacred writings mentioned in 2 Tim 3:15.
 - The phrase “inspired by God” is literally “God-breathed” from the Greek word θεοπνευστος.
 - In 2 Pet 1:21 we learn that the men who wrote the Scripture did not come up with the words through their own will, but were “moved by the Holy Spirit.”
 - Many passages plainly state that “the word of the Lord came to” the author (Jer 1:2; Hos 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; ...).
- Qualifying Considerations
 - The Bible is true and inspired by God even when it documents a lie as a lie (Gen 3:4) since this is an accurate record of the lie.
 - This is also the case where the Bible documents the experience and reasoning of men such as in Job and Ecclesiastes since these things are also accurately represented.
 - Even though such passages do not reveal the deep things of God, He has nonetheless inspired the writing of these passages for our instruction and growth.
 - Some critics have tried to negate the veracity of Scripture by highlighting difficult passages in the Bible, but in every case such passages can be understood through careful study.

- Questions
 - Define what is meant by the inspiration of the Bible.
 - To what extent is the Bible inspired?
 - What is meant by verbal, plenary inspiration?
 - To what extent is the Bible infallible?
 - How can you explain that the Bible records the false statements of men?
 - To what extent does inspiration extend to copies and translations of the Bible?
 - Define the mechanical or dictation theory of inspiration and explain why it is inadequate.
 - What are some problems of the concept theory of inspiration?
 - What are some problems of the theory of partial inspiration?
 - How does the neo-orthodox view of inspiration differ from the orthodox view?
 - Why must the naturalistic view of the Bible be rejected?
 - What did Christ teach concerning the inspiration of the Bible?
 - How do quotations of the Old Testament uphold its inspiration?
 - What indications are given in the New Testament that it is also inspired of God?
 - Discuss the importance of 2 Timothy 3:16.
 - What does 2 Peter 1:21 contribute concerning the method of inspiration?
 - Explain the extent to which the Bible affirms its own inspiration.
 - How does inspiration relate to the truth of human experience and reasoning as illustrated in the Book of Job and Ecclesiastes?
 - What should be our response to what seem to be difficult passages in the Bible?
 - Taking the subject of inspiration as a whole, why is it so important?