LESSON 31

The Inspiration of the Bible

Introduction

The author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit; the pages of the Bible are an authoritative revelation in written form of God's nature and purposes.

The Bible is the source book of our knowledge of God; it is the textbook of divine truth; the guide book to everlasting life.

The word "Bible" is derived from the Greek word "biblos" meaning "a book".

The volume is known by other titles such as "the Scriptures"; "the Writings"; The Word of God; Luke 4:17; II Cor. 3:14; Mark 12:10; Matt. 22:29; Heb. 4:12.

The Bible is a library of 66 books, divided into two main sections; the Old Testament containing 39 books and the New Testament containing 27 books.

The Bible was written by 36-40 authors over a period of 1600 years and by different types of people in different parts of the world.

The unique design of the Bible is one of the best proofs of its divine inspiration. For so many different men to write a book without contradictions is a miracle.

The miracle can only be explained by the Master Author's guiding hand.

The cardinal theme of the Bible is Christ who becomes the key to understanding it.

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, with parts of Daniel and Ezra being written in Aramaic; the New Testament was written in Greek.

I. Meaning of Inspiration

"By inspiration we mean the supernatural control by God over the production of the Old and New Testament." - Robert Lee

The Bible is "theopneustos" (God-breathed), II Tim.3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration. . . and is profitable. . ." "Inspiration is the strong conscious inbreathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to truth. It is God speaking through men. " - William Evans II Pet. 1:21, Literal translation, "For not by the will of man was prophecy brought at any time, but being borne by the Holy Spirit, the holy men of God spoke. " The Holy Ghost was miraculously present, preserving accuracy in the writings.

Holy men of God, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, wrote at His command; thus they were kept from all error as they recorded things known or unknown to them.

II. Various Theories of Inspiration

We are curious to learn exactly how God the Holy Spirit gave the Scriptures. Some of the authors recorded history that they had witnessed; others wrote of things that had happened long ago (Moses and creation); others wrote prophecy.

A. Revelation. Some think the authors were in a trance and saw the Bible and simply copied it down word for word as it was revealed to them by the Lord.

We admit that many of the writers wrote prophecy but we reject this theory of inspiration for it would not allow the writer a choice of words at all.

The education and logical mind of Paul is evident in Romans and Galatians.

B. Illumination. The Holy Spirit illuminated them to see the events in a spiritual manner and then they wrote them down in their own words and style of writing.

We believe that not only the thoughts are inspired but also the words.

God allowed the writer to use his own words and education, revealing his personality. However,we reject this theory as being not specific enough for Bible inspiration.

The Bible is not the result of godly men meditating on God, but God Himself inbreathing man to record the thoughts of God.

C. Verbatim reporting. God dictated the Scriptures as an executive to a secretary. This would reduce inspiration to a mere mechanical process.

We reject this theory for the personalities or individualities of men like David, Moses and Peter are very evident in their writings.

Luke the doctor used a medical word in Luke 8:44 (stanched); David the shepherd wrote of sheep, sling shots, shepherd's equipment (rod and staff).

D. Natural inspiration. This theory magnifies human genius, denying the supernatural, the mysterious or peculiar in inspiration.

This would reduce the Scriptures to special writings like those of Shakespeare, Confucius or Jose Rizal.

Inspiration is more than this; it is actually "thus saith the Lord"; God speaking.

We reject this theory for it caters to the doctrine that "the Bible contains the Word of God?, whereas the Bible IS the Word of God.

E. Universal Christian inspiration. We are all sons of God and each at different times is inspired to write a book or poem; or inspired to do this or that.

If this theory were true we could expect a new Bible at any time. Bible inspiration is more than this; it was a definite, special inspiration for the special task of writing the Bible, God's message to mankind.

F. Mechanical inspiration. Men became machines and wrote under a strange compulsion things that they likely did not understand or comprehend.

We reject this for we see the loving nature of John in his epistles; the stern nature of James in James; the fiery emotional nature of Peter in his epistles.

G. Thought inspiration. This theory says that God gave the main thought to the writer and they were free to express these in their own words as they thought best.

We reject this for we believe that each word was scrutinized, censored and accepted by the author, the Holy Spirit.

H. Verbal inspiration. This theory claims that every word is inspired, some going so far as to say that even the punctuation marks were inspired by the Lord.

Actually there were no capitals or punctuation marks in the original languages.

I. Partial inspiration. Parts of the Bible are inspired, suggesting that the Bible contains the Word of God; we reject this theory for II Tim. 3:16 says, "ALL Scripture."

This theory leaves each person free to choose and judge the "truly inspired portions.?

This theory is rejected for it leads to doubt, uncertainty and utter confusion.

III. The True Explanation-Plenary or Full Inspiration

We believe that all Scripture is equally inspired basing its claim on II Tim. 3 :16.

The Revised version of II Tim. 3 :16 says, "All Scripture that is divinely inspired is also profitable." This is erroneous for it teaches partial inspiration.

We do not actually know the "how" of inspiration but we believe that each writer had the liberty to use his own personality, education, experience with certain limits.

The Holy Spirit guarded each thought, each phrase; each word to preserve accuracy.

IV. The Bible Claims Inspiration

1. For the writers. II Pet. 1 :21, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved."

2. For the writings. II Tim. 3 :16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration."

3. For the words. I Cor. 2:13, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. II Pet. 3:2, "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles."

Jude 17, "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before."

V. Things to Remember Regarding Inspiration

Translations are not inspired; there are copyist errors; none of the originals are in existence today; ancient copies being discovered are almost identical. The Bible records facts as they are: Ananias told a lie and the lie is recorded; the Scribes said Jesus had a devil and was mad and this lie is recorded.

Conclusion

We accept the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God; the canon of 66 books as complete; we do not recognize the Apocrypha or any other books to be inspired.

The original Scriptures will be the standard of judgment in the last day, John 12:48.

Let us read the Bible daily and obey its message in our daily lives.

God's people must handle this book carefully and reverently; it is "God's Book to us.

Let us rejoice that God hath spoken and endeavour by the power of the Holy Spirit t walk in the light of its revelation.

Review Questions

301. Who is the master author of the Holy Bible?
302. Give two important texts that deal with Bible inspiration.
303. Tell something about the Bible: (1) Various names (2) sections (3) writers (4) length of time to write it (5) theme (6) languages.
304. What is meant by inspiration?
305. List 8 erroneous theories of inspiration.
306. Tell in a sentence why we reject each theory presented in question 305.
307. Explain plenary or full inspiration.
308. Give a Scripture to show that the Bible claims inspiration for (1) its writers (2) writings and its (3) words
309. Is the King James version inspired? Why?
310. Why do we reject the Apocrypha? Give one Scripture.