

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

By
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John 5:39—"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me."

2 Timothy 3:16—"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."

Today many Christians believe that there is no possible error in Scripture. Inspired by God and written by men it must be perfect, consistent and without historical or natural error. Any errors or conflicts of Scripture, or inconsistencies must be explained away often by exegesis that sometimes stretches the imagination. Further, there is a tendency to interpret as factual what may in certain instances be metaphorical. If the earth has foundations then they must be literal supports and foundations as opposed to fact that God has set earth in time and space and supports the existence of the earth. I believe we have gone too far in being literal and eschewing the spiritual. We are in danger of becoming slaves to the law instead of having the freedom of the Spirit.

The argument against taking a more relaxed view of Scripture is that if a person writing Scripture ever wrote an error or made a mistake, historical or otherwise, then the whole framework of Scripture will tumble down because we are unable to separate the wheat from the chaff and truth from error. Such need not be the case.

Although Scripture is inspired by God; it is not a replacement for God. In John 5:39 we hear Jesus chiding his fellow Jews. John 5:38-40 says:

But you do not have his word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

There are a number of interesting things about this passage in John 5. First Jesus could have said that in the Scriptures "you have eternal life" but instead he said "for in them you think you have eternal life." The Pharisees and observant Jews had a high view of the sanctity of the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, the Pharisees, in particular, worked very diligently to comply with the law. However, interestingly, in this passage, there was a difference between the sanctity of the Holy Scriptures and Jesus himself. The written word, as important as it is, paled when compared with the Living Word. The Jews honored the written word and tried to keep it in all of its minutiae. However, in this instance, the Living Word, Jesus Christ, stood right in front of them and the Jews looked to the written word as opposed to the Living Word. We need to be careful not to deify the Scriptures, but to remember it is through Christ we are saved. Jesus was clear on many occasions that God's true word may from time to time exceed or even appear to go against the written commands. The Ten Commandments are not enough. Anger against a brother can be as bad as murder. Likewise, compliance with the dietary laws (as demanded by Scripture) were irrelevant but instead it was what came out of the heart that is important not so much what goes into the belly. Instead of strict compliance with Sabbath law, Jesus reminded us all that He was the Lord

of the Sabbath and the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath. Jesus was not always a literalist when it came to interpreting the Scriptures.

Below I set forth my own views and thoughts on infallibility and inerrancy (and, yes, they are my views; I do not claim an inerrant view on inspiration and inerrancy). Jesus sometimes used parables to set forth complex ideas on the Kingdom of God and therefore I have used illustrations to clarify my beliefs.

Written Scripture (roughly 66 books and 40 authors written over 1500 years) is like a treasure chest containing the wisdom, riches and word of God. This treasure is beyond value; however the treasure is of greater value than the treasure box in which it is stored. The treasure box is man-made and is gloriously crafted and covered with gold but the true treasure from God lies within. The treasure of God is that true Word of God quickened by the Holy Spirit. That treasure contains all that we as the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve need to know in order to experience eternal life through Christ Jesus and to live life in the here and now . In Scripture is contained all that we need to know for teaching, reproof, correction and for training in righteousness as promised by 2 Timothy 3:16..

Another illustration is that the Scriptures are like the Ark of the Covenant. Within the “Ark” lie both the Old Covenant and the promises of the New Covenant. The Scriptures are in a vessel made by man just as the Ark was made from Acacia wood and covered with gold. Man’s hands were involved in the construction of the Ark. Yet the Ark itself is not to be confused with the presence of God. As Israel sinned, God allowed the Ark to be captured by others including the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Babylonians and perhaps others. The Ark was beautiful and had great value. It contained what was holy including the Ten Commandments, the budded rod of Aaron and the plate of manna. However the true value was not the Ark but instead it was God’s presence residing between the two Golden cherubim and the mercy seat. It was the presence of the Spirit of God which added the true value.

The same is true of Scripture. Scripture without the Spirit of God degenerates into base legalism. Scripture has value not just because it is revered or covered with gold. It has value because it testifies to Jesus Christ (as Jesus said at John 5:39), who is the True Word of Life. Written scripture is not to be idolized or be considered to be a replacement to the True Word of God. Just as the Tabernacle was made “after the pattern” shown of the true Tabernacle in Heaven (Exodus 25:40), Scripture is to reflect the true Word of God. It is time for us to know and worship the True Word of God. All that we need to have in order to come to know and experience God and his Son, Jesus Christ is found in the word of Scriptures. Scriptures without the Spirit of God may be like Ezekiel’s dry bones in the wilderness (Ezekiel 37:1-10). Those dry bones are brought to life and quickened to us through the Holy Spirit. Just as a dead body came back to life after being thrown into the cave with the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:21), so we come back to life as we are touched by the bones of Scripture quickened by the Holy Spirit.

[NOTE: This piece on “Inspiration of Scripture” should be read in conjunction with my work entitled “Uncertainties in Scripture.”]