

# A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

# Where are we at?

- Doctrine of Revelation
  - General/Natural/Original
  - Special Rev
- Canon
- Transmission
- Translation
- Inspiration
  - The Phenomena: how Scripture appears or what it seems to present
    - “God changes his mind” (Ex. 32:14)
  - The Didactic: what Scripture teaches about itself and/or a specific topic
    - “God does not change his mind” (Num. 23:19)
  - 2 Tim. 3:16-18
  - 2 Pet. 1:19-21

# Can We Get NT Inspiration from 2 Pet. 1:19-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17?

- Were the NT letters treated as Scripture (and therefore, inspired) as they were written and distributed or was that status only conferred upon them later?
- “All scripture” as a description vs. “All scripture” as a designator (2 Tim. 3:16)
  - Superman vs. Clark Kent
- Peter explicitly describes Paul’s letters as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15).
- Paul appears to quote Luke 10:7 in 1 Tim. 5:18 as Scripture.
- Paul understood his written and spoken words as the “words of God” (1 Thess. 2:13).

# Can We Get NT Inspiration from 2 Pet. 1:19-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17?

- Paul commands his letters be read in the churches alongside the established OT Scriptures (Col. 4:16). He obviously had a very high view of their importance/authority.
- Paul indicates that he writes the commands of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37).
- Peter seems to equate the authority of the OT prophetic teaching with NT apostolic teaching, both having God as their source (2 Pet. 3:1-2).
- Paul indicates that he and his associates impart the words of God as they have been taught by the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:12-13).
- John indicates that listening to his/the apostolic teaching is the standard for whether one knows God (1 Jn 4:6)

# Can We Get NT Inspiration from 2 Pet. 1:19-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16-17?

- John invokes an OT-like imprecation at the end of Revelation to anyone who adds or subtracts to what he has written (Rev. 22:18-19), articulating what he saw and was commanded by God to subsequently write (Rev. 1:18).
- Jesus says that after he leaves, the Spirit will work in a special way to remind his apostles of his words (Jn. 14:26). In context, this isn't a promise to us.
  - Summary
    - The apostles and their associates believed their teaching, articulated largely in the NT documents, to be the words of God and to carry authority equivalent to the OT Scriptures. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that the NT was and should be considered inspired Scripture alongside the OT.

# Theories of Inspiration

- The Intuition Theory
  - Inspiration is the functioning of a high gift, perhaps like an artistic ability, but nonetheless a natural endowment, a permanent possession. The inspired Scriptures, therefore, display the religious and spiritual insights of God's people.
- The Illumination Theory
  - On this view, inspiration is an influence of the Holy Spirit upon the authors of Scripture that intensified or heightened their normal powers and perceptive abilities. Thus, the authors of Scripture received a supernatural boost to their sensitivity and perceptivity in spiritual matters as they authored the Scriptures
- The Dynamic Theory
  - The Spirit of God works by directing the writer to the thoughts or concepts and allowing the writer's own distinctive personality to come into play in the choice of words and expressions; think "thought for thought" translation methodology except with inspiration—each thought communicated in Scripture is the thought God intended.
    - Example: The Spirit directs the author to the idea that God is loving
      - The biblical author then might write as a result: "God is love," "God is loving," "God shows love," or "Love is at the core of God's nature."

# Theories of Inspiration

- The Verbal Theory
  - The Holy Spirit influences the authors of Scripture in such a way that extends down to individual word choices, but the authors' various personalities, knowledge, writing styles and experiences nevertheless play a formative role in what is written.
- The Dictation Theory
  - Also called mechanical dictation, on this understanding of inspiration the Spirit gives the exact words of Scripture to the biblical authors, either through some internal voice or otherwise. The biblical authors serve functionally as secretaries, writing down exactly what God reveals to them.

# Toward a Verbal Theory of Inspiration

- Matt. 22:32
  - Jesus’s argument here depends on the tense of the verb in Ex. 3:6.
    - “... I *am* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob...” Ex. 3:6
      - Although the patriarchs had all died at this point, Jesus appeals to this verse to indicate that they are nevertheless very much alive, because God is “not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Matt. 22:32
- Acts 2:35
  - Peter’s argument (and Jesus’s use of the same verse in Matt. 22:44) depends on the possessive suffix tacked onto “Lord” in Ps. 110:1.
    - “The LORD said to *my* Lord...” Ps. 110:1
    - Additionally, Jesus says that David “in the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord,’ drawing attention to one particular word given by the Spirit (22:43).
- Gal. 3:16
  - Paul’s specifically mentions the redemptive importance of the word “offspring” (or “seed,” Gr. *spermasin*) in the singular as opposed to the plural in Gen. 12:7.
    - “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.” Gal. 3:16
    - “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’” Gen. 12:7a



# Toward a Verbal Theory of Inspiration

- The New Testament writers attribute to God statements that in the original context are not ascribed to him at all, indicating they believed those Scriptures to be the very words of God.
  - Matt. 19:4-5 | Jesus says that the Creator *said* Gen. 2:24.
  - Acts 4:23-26 | Those to whom Peter and John report ascribe Ps. 2:1-2 to the “Sovereign Lord” who “said by the Holy Spirit...”
  - Heb. 1:6-7 | The author of Hebrews considers Deut. 32:43 and Ps. 104:4 what God *says*.
- Matt. 5:17-18
  - While not to be overinterpreted in its context, in saying that not an iota or dot (likely referring to the smallest marks within Hebrew script) of the Law or Prophets will pass away apart from their fulfillment, Jesus implicitly endorses the authority of even the minutiae of OT Law and Prophets.
- *At this point, we have argued for inspiration down to the verbal, as opposed to the thought, level. This, however, does not settle the dispute between those who hold to a verbal theory and those who hold to a dictation theory, as both hold that inspiration extends to the very words.*