

THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

The Origin Of The Bible

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2002

Introduction

Last week we considered:

1. The Uniqueness of the Bible
2. The Structure of the Bible
3. The Benefits of Reading the Bible

Today, we want to consider the origin of the Bible:

1. Its Inspiration
2. Its Canonicity
3. Its Translations

I The Inspiration of the Bible

Definition: “Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities (and even their writing styles), they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs so that what they wrote was precisely what God wanted written.”
(Dr. Charles Ryrie)

A. The Bible claims to be **divinely** inspired

1. It claims to be authored by God:

a. It is God-**breathed**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

God-breathed = “Inspired”

By the time 2 Timothy 3:16 was written, all of the New Testament books had already been written except for 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, and the apostle John's writings. In view of this, Paul was including both the OT and the NT books in the phrase "all Scripture is God-breathed".

b. It is God-**spoken**

Hebrews 1:1-2 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”

2. It claims to be authored by the Holy Spirit:

a. It is Spirit-**taught**

1 Corinthians 2:13 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

b. It is Spirit-**driven**

2 Peter 1:20-21 “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Carried along = Literally means to be "forcefully borne along."

This is the same phrase that Luke used in Acts 27:15-17 to describe a ship being driven along by the wind. It was so strong that even experienced sailors could not navigate it.

So, just as the sailors were active on the ship (though the wind, not the sailors, controlled the ship's movement), so the human authors were active in writing (using their own writing styles) as the Spirit directed.

Many Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament are said to have God the Father and the Holy Spirit as their author, even though a human prophet actually spoke the words in the Old Testament:

1. The Holy Spirit spoke through Moses - Heb 3:7
2. The Spirit of the Lord spoke through Samuel - Samuel 23:2-3
3. The Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of David - Mark 12:36
4. The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers - Acts 28:25
5. The Lord spoke through Isaiah - Matthew 1:22-23
6. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah - Acts 28:25
7. The Lord spoke by the prophet Hosea - Matthew 2:1
8. The Holy Spirit testifies about the new covenant - Heb 10:15-16

B. The elements of inspiration:

When you break the doctrine of inspiration down to its essential elements, there are seven key factors:

1. **Divine** *origin and causality* (covered in I.A. above)

2. *Human agency*

Theologian Robert Lightner concludes, "The Holy Spirit of God was the divine author of Scripture. Though he used erring humans as penmen, he supernaturally and miraculously superintended them as they wrote, keeping them from all error and omission."

3. *Written verbally* (in words)

Verbal inspiration emphasizes that the wording of the text, as well as the ideas conveyed, is supernaturally inspired by God through the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

a. Direct **dictation**

Deuteronomy 9:10 “The LORD gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly.”

b. Superintending human **research**

Luke 1:1-4 “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

c. Spoken **revelation**

Galatians 1:11-12 “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”

4. *Plenary*

Plenary = “Full or complete” meaning that each book, chapter, paragraph and word of the Bible is inspired by God.

a. All that is written is divinely inspired and authoritative

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed ...”

b. The very words are divinely inspired and authoritative

1 Corinthians 2:13 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

c. The verb tenses are divinely inspired and authoritative

Matthew 22:32 “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Galatians 3:16 “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.”

- d. The smallest parts of the words are divinely inspired & authoritative

Matthew 5:17-18 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

5. *The original "Autographs" are inspired*

Strictly speaking, only the "Autographs" (the original documents penned by the biblical authors) are inspired. (Copies of the original documents are VIRTUALLY inspired to the extent that they accurately reflect the original documents -- and the evidence indicates that they DO accurately reflect the original documents to a very high degree.) We'll talk about this more next week.

6. *Because Scripture is inspired, it is inerrant*

Inerrant = “Without error or mistake” (in the original autographs)

Psalms 19:7 “The law of the LORD is perfect ...”

Psalms 12:6 “The words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”

7. *Because Scripture is inerrant, it alone has final authority*

C. Defense for verbal, plenary inspiration

1. The **Bible** claims it - 2 Tim.3:16; 2 Pet.1:20, 21

2. The Prophets describe it - Zech.7:12

Zechariah 7:12 “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets.”

3. The teachings of **Jesus** affirmed it

Jesus said, “It is written” more than 90 times in reference to the OT writings. It is usually in the perfect tense, meaning, “it was written in the past and it still stands as the written Word of God.

Jesus affirms the character, nature and divine origin in 7 ways:

1. Divine Authority

Matt 4:4,7,10 “It is written ...” (Jesus’ wilderness temptations)

2. Indestructibility:

Matthew 5:18 “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

3. Infallibility:

John 10:35 “If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came-and the Scripture cannot be broken ...”

4. Ultimate supremacy

Matthew 15:3-6 “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ... Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

5. Factual inerrancy

Matthew 22:29 “Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

6. Historical reliability

Matthew 12:40 “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Matthew 24:37 “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

7. Scientific Accuracy:

Matthew 19:4-5 “Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?”

4. The **apostles** confirmed it

a. The OT is confirmed

Rom 15:4 “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

b. The NT is confirmed

1 Corinthians 2:13 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

It is also highly significant that Paul refers to the Gospel of Luke as "Scripture" when only about three years had elapsed between the writing of the Gospel of Luke and the writing of 1 Timothy (Luke was written around A.D. 60; 1 Timothy was written around A.D. 63). Yet, despite this, Paul does not hesitate to place Luke on the same level as the Old Testament (the Book of Deuteronomy).

Peter also refers to Paul's writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16.

II The Canonicity Of The Bible

A. The definition of canonicity

Canon = A Greek word that means, "Rule or standard" (the root word = "reed" which was used for measuring)

Thus, the canon described the 66 books of the Bible that were officially accepted by the early church as the complete and divinely inspired Word of God.

It is important to note that the church did not create the canon. Rather, they merely affirmed as canonical what had already been long accepted as the authoritative, inspired Word of God.

B. The tests of canonicity

As the books of the Bible were composed, they were recognized by God's people as God's Word. The books were tested according to the following principles:

1. *Was it written by a prophet of God?*

A book in the Bible must have the authority of a prophet, king, judge, or scribe in the OT -- or an apostle or associate in the NT.

2. *Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?*

Acts of God were miracles that confirmed the Word of God given through a prophet of God to the people of God. It was a sign to substantiate his sermon and to confirm the authority of his message.

3. *Does the message tell the truth about God?*

Since God cannot contradict Himself (2 Cor 1:17-18) or speak what is false (Heb 6:18), no book with false claims can be the Word of God. So any teaching about God that was contrary to what his people already knew to be true was to be rejected.

4. *Did it come with the power of God?*

Something that is genuinely the Word of God will come with the power and the witness of the Holy Spirit such that those who study and apply it to their own lives will experience spiritual transformation.

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

2 Timothy 3:17 “... so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

5. Was it **accepted** by the people of God?

The scriptures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament were recognized by God’s people (Israel in the Old, the church in the New) immediately after composition and over time.

Thessalonians 2:13 “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

C. The formation of the canon

1. How the OT books were determined

a. The Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) recognized 39 OT books.

2. How the NT books were determined

a. The Council of Athanasius (A.D. 367) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) recognized the 27 NT books as inspired.

Although these councils formally ratified which books were canonical, they were merely affirming what had already become the unanimous judgment of the early church.

D. Why the Apocrypha is not in the protestant Bible

The Apocrypha (or “hidden books”) is comprised of 14 books that were written in the 3rd to the 1st century A.D. Most Bibles do not contain the Apocrypha for the following reasons:

1. The Apocrypha fails the “5 tests of Canonicity”

2. In addition, the Apocrypha was:

a. Never recognized by the Jews as part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

b. Rejected by Josephus, one of the early church fathers.

c. Never quoted by Jesus or recognized by Jesus - Matt 23:35

d. Never quoted anywhere in the NT

e. Never recognized by the early church as canonical or divinely inspired.

III The Translations Of The Bible

There is on-going debate about which translation of the Bible is the *best*.

As we consider this topic, it is important to keep in mind that all reputable Bible translations are produced by careful scholarship in textual criticism, linguistics, translation, grammar, vocabulary, style, and history.

A. **Formal** equivalence - KJV, NKJV, NASB

This is a *word-for-word* translation that stays as close as possible to the words and sentence structure of the original. But a strict word-for-word translation would often end up being incomprehensible to the intended reader. Actually, anyone who has ever learned a second language knows that a word-for-word translation is *impossible* much or most of the time.

For instance:

In a couple of places in the OT, the Hebrew text literally reads, "God's nostrils enlarged." But the King James has something like, "God became angry"-- which is what the expression *means*.

In Matthew 1:18 the King James says that Mary was found to be with Child. But the Greek is quite different--and quite graphic: "Mary was having it in the belly"!

And in many places in Paul's letters, the King James reads, "God forbid!" But the original has neither "God" nor "forbid." Literally, it says, "May it never be!" (as most *modern* translations render it!)

The main drawback of the word-for-word approach is that it is often wooden, difficult to read and hard to understand.

B. **Dynamic** equivalence - NIV, New English Bible

This is a *thought-for-thought* approach to translation. The intent is to translate in such a way that the readers get the equivalent meaning as the original readers.

It is not so concerned about the grammatical *form* of the original language as it is of the *meaning* of the original. A dynamic equivalence translation is more interpretive--but it is also easier to understand.

The reality is that each translation has both strengths and weaknesses. For Bible *reading*, a thought-for-thought translation is the best. For Bible *study*, more literal, word-for-word translation may be better.

Whether you prefer the literary beauty of the New King James, the complexities of the New American Standard, the concise clarity of the New International, or some other reputable translation, the text of the Bible we have today is essentially what was written.

Conclusion:

What you are holding in your hand is the divinely inspired Word of God!

More important than which translation you read is that you *read*, *study* and *apply* the Word to your life. Take a moment now to ask God for a renewed appreciation and hunger for His Word.

Resources for Overview of the Bible Series:

Halley, H. 1874-1965, (2000). *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Zondervan Publishing House.

McDowell, J. (1992). *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vols. I and II*. Thomas Nelson.

McDowell, J. (1999). *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Thomas Nelson.

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