

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GREAT BIBLE LESSONS “The Inspiration of Scripture”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“All scripture is inspired of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). Welcome to our study of the inspiration of Scripture. One of the most-fundamental Christian doctrines is that of the inspired Word of God—the fact that the Bible is not the writing or ideas of men, but is instead the Word of God. Every word in the Bible was breathed by God. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:160 by way of summarizing what inspiration is all about, “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” By “inspiration,” we mean that from Genesis 1:1 to the last verse of the Book of Revelation, the Bible is the absolute truth on all matters that relate to religion. The subject of inspiration is a very important topic because many people think of the Bible as merely a “good book of moral suggestions.” To them, the Bible is like a philosophy book or a book dealing with moral issues—simply a good book of moral suggestions. But the Bible does not claim to be “just a good book of moral suggestions.” While its teachings are indeed moral in nature, the Bible is much more than just a moral guide. In John 6 Jesus made some hard statements to His followers when He referred to how they would have to “eat His flesh” and “drink His blood.” He was talking, of course, about how His followers needed to incorporate His life and teachings into their own lives. But the statements He made were so difficult that the Bible tells us that some “walked with Him no more.” Jesus then turned to those who were left and said, “Will you go away also?” Peter responded in John 6:68 by saying, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” The Bible is a book that contains “words of eternal life.” If we want to know how to live forever spiritually, and if we want to make it to Heaven, then we must acknowledge the Bible as the Word of God. It will be our final judge. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48). The Bible is full of “spirit and life” (Jn. 6:63).

Inspiration also is important because of the gross amount of evolution and humanism that is being taught in schools, or pushed by those within politics and the media today. If you do not think that inspiration is important, then stop and think about the young age at which children today are being taught the principles of evolution and humanism. In kindergarten, the library books that children can check out to read contain teachings about dinosaurs having lived on the Earth millions of years ago. From the very earliest level, our children are taught that they live in a humanistic world where “might makes right,” and where “what makes you feel good **is** good.” Such teachings, however, are in direct opposition to the inspiration of Scripture. A person cannot accept both evolution/humanism **and** inspiration. The two are diametrically opposed. The Bible says in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The psalmist said in Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” The Bible teaches us that what is right is not necessarily what **we** want to do, but that it is only by following the way and the will of God that we can be saved.

Inspiration also is important because of the mass amount of religious confusion and skepticism regarding the Bible. Several years ago a “Jesus Seminar” was held. At that seminar, religious leaders took a certain-colored bead and dropped it into a jar in order to indicate whether they thought that the words of Jesus were real and inspired, or whether the words attributed to Christ had actually been “invented” by a writer who came many years after Christ. This teaches us that there is much skepticism even among religious people in regard to the Bible. We need to understand that the Bible and the Bible alone contains the answer to life’s greatest questions. In Jeremiah 37:17 the question is asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” The Bible **is** that “word from the Lord,” and we need to look to the Scriptures to see what they are teaching us.

The inspiration of Scripture is important because if the Bible is not inspired, then everything we are doing in religion is worthless. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:14 concerning the resurrection of Christ that “if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.” We could say the same thing concerning the inspiration of the Bible. If this book is not the inspired Word of God, then we may as well “close up shop and go home,” since everything we do is contingent upon the inspiration of Scripture. In Psalm 19:7 we read, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

Inspiration also is important because the Bible itself demands that we prove all things. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 Paul wrote, “Test all things; hold fast what is good.” Hebrews 11:1 teaches us that true faith is evidence based. Thus, it is our responsibility to prove (or test) all things, and to “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Thus, today I want to discuss why we believe the Bible is God’s inspired Word.

As we begin, let us examine the Bible’s claims for its own inspiration. The Bible itself claims to be of divine origin. In 1 Corinthians 14:37 we read, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” A test for true spirituality is that we recognize the Bible as being from God. Paul said that the things he wrote were not the teachings of men, but were instead the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we see the importance of inspiration. Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” **Every** Scripture is from the mouth of God. In 2 Peter 1:20-21, we see the human input into the process of inspiration, as well as how God guided the men who wrote His words. Peter wrote, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The word “moved” in that verse is from a Greek word that frequently is used to indicate how a ship is moved or guided by the wind. The idea is that the force behind the writers of the Bible was the Holy Spirit—so that the end result was not the words of men, but the very words of God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:13, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual [words].” So, the Bible does indeed claim to be inspired.

But what is meant by the term “inspiration”? In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read that all scripture is “inspired of God.” That phrase comes from a combination of two Greek words—*theos* (God) and *pneustos* (breathed). Literally, the phrase then means “God breathed.” From the very breath of God came the words that we find in the Bible. Thus, when we talk about inspiration, we are talking about God breathing the Scriptures. The Bible teaches that God’s Word is full and complete. When we speak of the inspiration of the Bible, we are refer-

ring to the fact that we have within the Scriptures everything we need to get to Heaven. In 2 Peter 1:3 Peter wrote, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." Peter said that in God's Word, we have everything we need to live the best life possible and to be a better person "through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." In John 16:13 Jesus promised His disciples, "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." We have within the Bible everything we need to know God and get to Heaven.

When we speak of "inspiration," we also mean that the very words of the Bible are inspired by God. There is an idea today that the **words** are not actually inspired, but that the writers' **thoughts** are. That is not the case, however. David said in 2 Samuel 23:2, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." In 1 Corinthians 2:13 Paul said, "These things which we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The Holy Spirit chose the words that the writers used. Words are very important. In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus said that not one jot or tittle would pass away from the law until all was complete. Even the smallest pen stroke was important to God. In fact, in Galatians 3:15-17 Paul based his whole argument on the matter of the singularity or plurality of a single word! Not only are the words important, but the actual singularity or plurality also is important. Thus, even to the most-minute degree we can say that the Word of God is inspired.

When we speak of "inspiration," we likewise mean that God's Word is infallible. It does not contain errors. It does not contain mistakes. It is 100% perfect as God originally gave it to us. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Truth, by its very nature, does not contain errors or anything that is false. Jesus Himself claimed that the Word of God was perfect and infallible. James said in James 1:25 that we have "the perfect law of liberty." The word "perfect" carries with it the idea of completeness, or "lacking in nothing."

When we refer to the fact that the Bible is "inspired," we also mean that God's Word is authoritative. It is the final word on all matters related to God and salvation. In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul wrote, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." Look again at what Jesus said in John 12:48—"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." When we stand before God, we will not be judged by what men have written or what men thought. There will be only one authoritative standard by which we will be judged. On the Day of Judgment, God's Word will be opened, and my life will be compared to that Word. This, then, is what we mean by "inspiration."

But how can we know that God's Word is inspired? We know that the Bible claims to be inspired, but what are some proofs that the Scripture actually is inspired? One thing that helps us understand that the Bible is inspired is its uniqueness. The Bible is undoubtedly the most-unique book ever produced. It is composed of sixty-six individual books written by no less than forty different men over a period of more than 1,500 years. Can you imagine that? Many of the writers were from different countries and different parts of the world. They spoke different languages, and rarely knew each other. They also had different vocations. Luke was a physician. Amos was a shepherd. Yet all of the authors wrote things that were in agreement. Not once did they contradict one another. How could men who were separated by culture, by intellect, and by language all speak in agreement on some of the most-profound subjects in the world? The unique nature of the Bible helps us see that it is from God. There is only one way that a book like the Bible could come into

existence: God had to be the divine force behind every one of the writers. He is the One Who inspired them. If men were to write a book today over a period of 1,500 years, even on a single topic, what kind of agreement do you think you would find? The publication would undoubtedly be marked by sharp **disagreements**. Yet throughout the Bible, the writers agreed on the subjects on which they wrote.

Prophecy also provides another proof of the Bible's inspiration. Prophecy can be defined as the ability of a person to predict future events, or to speak in minute detail of past events of which he had no knowledge. Unlike fortune tellers, palm readers, or others who claim to be able to predict the future, inspired prophets could predict matters with such minute detail that it was obvious that God had given them the information. People in the past have predicted things, but their predictions were so generic as to be worthless. If you listen to people today who claim to be fortune tellers, they use generic predictions. But the prophets in the Bible spoke with amazing accuracy. For example, in Jeremiah 25:9-12 and in Jeremiah 29:10-12, God promised that the Israelites would go into Babylonian captivity for seventy years under the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar. Later in Jeremiah and in 1 and 2 Kings, we learn that in the year 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar took the Israelites captive, and until the year 536 (when King Cyrus allowed them to return home) they were in Babylonian captivity. How could the writers of Scripture predict with such minute detail things like who would be captured and how long such captivity would last? There is no way that mere men could do such things. People today cannot predict with any precision what will happen five years down the road.

Another amazing prophecy of Scripture is that of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Isaiah the prophet wrote 750 years before Jesus was born. Yet look at the prediction he made in Isaiah 7:14—"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isaiah said this 750 years before Christ was born. Not only was this an amazing prophecy, but it also was something that flew in the face of all medical knowledge. Virgins do not bear children! Yet Isaiah prophesied that that very thing would happen—and that the baby would be a boy! When we open the New Testament to Matthew 1:21, we see an angel of the Lord saying about Mary, "She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Mary, as a virgin, gave birth to a son. How could Isaiah have known this 750 years earlier? There is no way that Isaiah, on his own, could have known such a thing. There is no way that the writers of the Bible could have said the things they said, or made the predictions that they made, without God being the Driving Force behind their words.

Think about the events surrounding the death of Christ. Psalm 22 was written roughly a thousand years before Christ went to the cross. Yet when you compare that psalm with Matthew 27, you see in great detail certain things that were to happen to Jesus. For example, look at Psalm 22:16, where we find, "Dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet." The New Testament tells us that, indeed, Jesus was nailed to the cross. How could David have known that—one thousand years before Christ was even born? How could Old Testament prophets have known that Christ's side would be pierced, that people would make fun of Him and mock Him, and that those around Him would gamble for His garments? In Zechariah 11:12-13 the prophecy was made that Jesus would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and that the money would be used to buy a potter's field. In the New Testament we learn that Judas Iscariot did indeed betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and that the money eventually was used to purchase a potter's field. How could the Old Testament prophets have know that—thousands of years earlier?

In Matthew 24 the destruction of Jerusalem is predicted in great detail. When we examine secular history, we see that it occurred exactly as Jesus had predicted. The prophecies contained in Scripture are so minute and so exact that it would be impossible for men to create them on their own. This is proof of the fact that God is the Author of Scripture, and that every word of the Bible is God breathed.

Another way to prove that the Bible is inspired of God is to examine its scientific foreknowledge. For example, look at the Earth's suspension in space. People have not always believed that the Earth was suspended in space. But the Scriptures explained that this is indeed the case. In Job 26:7 we read that God "hangs the earth on nothing." The writers of the Bible never made the types of scientific blunders that many of their contemporaries made. How did Job know that God had suspended the Earth "on nothing"? Men throughout antiquity did not think such a thing. Some believed that the Earth was supported on the shoulders of Atlas. Others believed that it was suspended on the back of four elephants that stood on the back of a turtle. Talk about far-fetched ideas! The ancient Greeks and Romans were some of the most-advanced people of the time, but they believed such things as these. Yet all along it was true that God "hangs the earth on nothing." Another piece of scientific information found within Scripture deals with the spherical nature of the Earth. The fact that the Earth is round has been in the Bible all along. In Isaiah 40:22 Isaiah said of God, "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in?" Notice that God "sits above the circle of the earth." In Luke 17:31,34 we also see teaching confirming the spherical nature of the Earth. The Bible says that when Jesus returns, people on one part of the Earth will be sleeping (implying that it is nighttime), while others will be awake (implying that it is daylight). How could it be **both day and night** on the Earth **at the same time**—unless the Earth is round as both science and Scripture teach to be the case? It has been only a few centuries since people believed that the Earth was flat. Intellectuals at the time may have thought that the Bible was unscientific. Interestingly, the word translated "circle" in Isaiah 40:22 literally refers to something that is spherical or round. The same word is used in Proverbs 8:27 to describe God setting a compass on the Earth. When Isaiah 40:22 was written, and for years thereafter, people believed that the Earth was flat. Many people believed that if a person went too far in one direction or another, it was possible to actually "fall off the Earth." Yet all along God had said that the Earth was round.

Can a person know that the Bible is inspired? Yes, he can. The Bible claims to be inspired, and its unique nature proves the claim to be true. The prophecy found within the Bible proves its inspiration, as does its scientific foreknowledge. So, instead of being a critic of the Bible, we need to love the Word of God. The psalmist said, "Oh how I love your law; it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). We need to love the Word of God, and we need to live it out in our lives. We need to know that if we do not obey the Bible, there is no way for us to be saved. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6). Jesus said that it is only through Him that we can have salvation. Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we need to accept what it says regarding what we need to do to be saved.

If a person wants to be saved, he must believe in Jesus. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." A person almost must repent. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." A person also must be willing to confess Christ as God's Son. In Acts 8:37 the Ethiopian nobleman said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Upon that confession, a person then must be baptized in water. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be

saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). Then a person must live his life every day based on the principles of God’s Word, knowing that the Bible is inspired and that it one day will judge us. May God bless you as you strive to live your life according to the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE”

1. What does 2 Timothy 3:16 have to say about Scripture?
2. According to John 6:68, who has “the words of eternal life”?
3. According to John 12:48, what will judge us “in the last day”?
4. What important question is asked in Jeremiah 37:17?
5. What attitude is expressed in Jeremiah 37:17 that people today should adopt?
6. What one word, according to Psalm 19:7, describes “the law of the Lord”?
7. According to Psalm 19:7, what does the law of the Lord do for us?
8. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:21 teach us to do?
9. According to 1 Peter 3:15, what must every Christian be prepared to do?
10. According to David’s comment in 2 Samuel 23:2, where did he get the words he wrote?
11. According to Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 2:13, where did he and the other writers of Scripture get the words they wrote?
12. In 2 Timothy 3:16 what is the literal meaning of the two Greek words translated as “inspired of God” in English?
13. According to Christ’s statement in John 17:17, what is truth?
14. In 1 Corinthians 14:37, how did Paul describe the words he wrote?
15. In John 16:13, what did Jesus promise the disciples to whom He was speaking?
16. What important question is asked in Galatians 4:30 and Romans 4:3?
17. What principle is contained in Galatians 4:30 and Romans 4:3 that applies to us today?
18. What challenge was Isaiah issuing to the false prophets of his day on God’s behalf when he said, “Set forth your case; bring your proofs. Bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Declare to us the things to come” (Is. 41:21-22)?
19. What prophecy is given in Isaiah 7:14, and fulfilled in Matthew 1:21-23?
20. What prophecy is given in Psalm 22:16, and fulfilled in John 19:18 and John 20:25?
21. What prophecy is given in Zechariah 11:12, and fulfilled in Matthew 26:15?
22. What prophecy is contained in Matthew 24, and confirmed by secular historical records as having been fulfilled in A.D. 70?