

The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

Its inspiration

“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.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Also; 2 Pe. 1:19-21, Rev. 22:18-19.

A doctrinal statement on Scripture:

“The Bible is the Word of God. It is inspired and inerrant in its original autographs. It is a complete and final revelation of God.”

The correct direction

Some years back, I watched a documentary regarding an aircraft which lost its navigation system while on a long flight in the hours of darkness in north Africa in about the 1950s. The option to land at a small airport was rejected in favour of continuing to their intended destination. The navigator set the course as best he could and was confident that when the sun rose, they would see land marks close to where they needed to land. When the first rays of the sun appeared above the horizon, the cabin crew were shocked. The sun was not supposed to rise in the direction of the port side of the aircraft. They had been travelling most of the night in the wrong direction!

The mistake had serious consequences. They corrected their course, but ran out of fuel and crash-landed in the desert. The copilot died because of a severe bump to the head, and the others suffered much hardship before they were finally rescued. For those who take the wrong course in spiritual matters, the consequences are far more serious. The question regarding the trustworthiness of the Bible is not something that can be ignored. We will now look at how God’s Word came to us and why it can be trusted.

Its human agents

God worked through men who wrote down what they were inspired by God to write, but not in such a way as to obliterate the natural writing style of the author. This becomes more obvious when reading scripture in the original language. Paul was a scholar and Peter a fisherman. Those facts are reflected in their different writing styles.

The use of human agents does not diminish the authority of scripture. Lets put this in military terms. A high-ranking military officer gives an order. It is typed out by a low ranking person, and then distributed by people of low rank. Then, when for instance, a Sergeant presents the order to men under his command, they obey the order as not coming from the Sergeant, but as coming directly from the high-ranking officer. Likewise, we obey scripture, because it comes from God.

Scripture authenticated

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, known collectively as the Pentateuch. He wrote about himself in the third person as did Julius Caesar when he mentioned himself

in the memoirs of his military campaigns. God presented Moses to the people with spectacular signs and wonders. He did this because Moses is the first author of the Bible, and therefore, Moses is foundational to all sixty-six books of the Bible.

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you....’” (Exodus 19:9).

The people consecrated themselves for two days, then “On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.” (Exodus 19:16-19).

God spoke very loudly. We learn from the book of Hebrews, “At that time his voice shook the earth,....” (Heb. 12:26). Not surprisingly, “Everyone in the camp trembled” (Ex. 19:16).

In addition to the above testimony, God did something very special with Moses; he made his face radiant.

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.” (Exodus 34:29-30). Also in another spot we read, “But whenever he entered the Lord’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. ...” (Exodus 34:34-35a).

Quite clearly, the Israelites would need to be wilfully rebellious against God to ignore what Moses said and wrote. Moses did not need to rely on oral tradition to know what was said in the verbal communication between God and Adam. He was informed directly by God. The situation is the same with the apostle Paul.

The **apostle Paul** did not learn the gospel message from other men, he was taught through a special revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul states, “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.” (Galatians 1:1-12).

We know that the apostle Paul can be trusted because , just as God did extraordinary miracles through the Apostles (Acts 5:12, 15-16) “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.” (Acts 19:11-12).

The tent of meeting

The Bible informs us that "... Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the 'tent of meeting'.... As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses." (Exodus 33:7).

"The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young assistant Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent." (Ex. 33:11).

The tent may have had a partition, so that God spoke with Moses on one side, while Joshua was on the other side, even so, Joshua would have heard everything that God told Moses. This is important because he could testify to the people that the message from God to Moses was true, furthermore, he had the role of carrying the message on after Moses died.

Lets summarise some important points

- The voice of God speaking from Mt. Sinai to the whole nation of Israel bears witness (Exodus 19:9,19).
- The pillar of cloud at the tent of meeting bears witness (Ex. 33:7).
- Moses bears witness through a face to face encounter with God (Ex 33:11).
- The radiant face of Moses bears witness (Ex. 34:35).
- Joshua son of Nun bears witness (Ex. 33:11).

The foundational events of false religions

Hinduism

Hinduism developed around 1,500 BC when Arians from central Asia invaded India. Hindus worship many gods which represent different sides of Brahman, or pure spirit. One of several gods which Hindus can worship is **Ganesh**. According to legend, he has an elephant's head because his father beheaded him, and then promised to replace his head with the first creature he saw, which was an elephant - poor Ganesh!

Hinduism has no supernatural foundational event which it can point to. Furthermore, it has no clear set body of truth. The Hindu can believe in a handful of gods, or a thousand gods.

Buddhism

The founder of Buddhism is prince Siddharta **Gautama** (563-483 BC) the Buddah (Buddha is a title meaning 'enlightened one') he sat under a Bodhi Tree (or bo tree) and allegedly received a revelation. There was no spectacular sign, just a man sitting under a tree. Furthermore, there was not much to see because the thoughts that came to his mind did so during the hours of darkness.

Islam

Mohammed (c. 570-632 AD), is the founder of **Islam** or Mohammedism as it was often called in its early days. He sat in a cave in a state of meditation at night on Mt Hira where he received thoughts that greatly alarmed him. He thought he was being attacked by a Jinn (evil spirit). Several books speak of the fear he experienced, and his mental state, including, "*The First Muslim*" by Lesley Hazleton (see page 19 of his book).¹ Mohammed spoke to **Khadija** (his wife)

about the matter. She convinced him with the help of her aged cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal that the thoughts were from God and that he should go back for more. By Christian standards, or even by secular western standards, women are treated badly by Islam, but where would Islam be without the actions of this woman? Clearly, Khadija (who was senior to Mohamed in age and financial standing) is foundational to Islam. She has a place of significance in the founding of Islam, even though she is not an eye witness to what took place on Mt Hira.

No spectacular signs and wonders accompanied Mohammed's experience on the mountain. The Bible is the only book to be founded with powerful signs and wonders from God.

Atheism

Atheism is the belief that there is no God. Atheism is a religion because it has a set of beliefs, and will at times persecute those who do not hold to the beliefs. The universe got here because of what is loosely termed the 'Big Bang'. The sun, and the earth came into existence because of random chance events. Furthermore, the earth is teeming with life because of random chance events. The atheist must accept the above points on blind faith. No person heard or saw the 'big bang', and no scientist has been able to create life. Given that the atheist must believe his brain is based on an *accidental* arrangement of the genetic code. Logically speaking, he can't be sure of anything! His belief (the brain based on an accidental arrangement of the genetic code) destroys the value of his thinking process.

In reality, the atheist can be sure of many things because it was God who created his brain. He doesn't believe because he has a sin/moral problem. Consequently, he suppresses the truth (Romans 1:18-19). The many problems of atheism are dealt with in my paper, "*Can The Theory of Evolution Survive The Attack of Science?*"

The powerful work of God on Mt Sinai in support of Moses was witnessed by a whole nation, numbering at least in the tens of thousands. Even though the Scriptures have that great testimony, they have an even greater testimony.

Authenticated by Jesus

Jesus walked this earth as one who is fully God and fully man. It was in his authoritative position as God and man that he made the statement, "... your word is truth" (John 17:17). God bore testimony to the fact that Jesus is his Son, by raising him from the dead "... who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 1:4).

Scripture has two powerful witnesses that it is from God. At the beginning, it has the powerful testimony of the signs and wonders given by God to the whole nation of Israel on Mt Sinai. At the end of the Old Testament, and at the beginning of the new, we have the statement from Jesus who was raised from the dead that God's word '*is truth*'.

Some might wonder about the many authors of the Bible who had no spectacular signs accompanying their ministry. So I will explain what happens when I go on a bus trip. I want the brakes to be in good order, however, I don't need to personally check the brakes. I only need to trust the reputation of the bus company to be assured that the brakes

are in good order. Similarly, I don't need to check every man who penned the words of God to know that what is stated is true. I only need to trust one man, the holy righteous Son of God - Jesus Christ - and that is sufficient. He states "**Your Word is truth**" (John 17:17). He says it, therefore I believe it.

For the moment, let's summarise the above.

- God spoke with Moses and great signs accompanied the event.
- God the Father spoke through Jesus. The Father authenticated everything Jesus did and said by performing great miracles through him, and by raising him from the dead. This Jesus testified to the truthfulness of Scripture.

By contrast:

- **Budda** sat under a tree. No loud voice from God and no spectacular sign accompanied this foundational event for Buddhism.
- **Mohammed** sat in a cave. No loud voice from God and no spectacular sign accompanied this foundational event for Islam. In fact, none of the false religions of this world can point to an event which even remotely matches that which took place between God and Moses.

A few things must be stated about scripture which are not always clearly understood.

Scripture has rank

If I was addressing a large crowd of Christians and asked them to put up their hands if they had heard their pastor or Bible teacher bring up the subject of the ranking of scripture. My guess is that few would put their hands up, and yet it is an important doctrine (teaching) in certain circumstances. Let's look at this doctrine from both sides.

(a) Scripture does not have rank:

This view looks quite good, after all, it is God who inspired the original autographs. If he inspired every passage, then every word must have equal value. If we start placing rank on Scripture, where will it end? We may simply place a low ranking on the passages of Scripture we do not like.

(b) Scripture does have rank:

This view says some passages of Scripture are of higher value or rank than others. At the same time, it affirms the inspiration and authority of all Scripture.

When I talk with someone about Scripture having rank, I sometimes get a strange look as though I have gone soft on the inspiration and authority of Scripture. So I usually ask the person if he can quote John 3:16 from memory. The answer is usually yes. I then think of an obscure passage such as Leviticus 3:16, and ask him if they can quote it. It is at that point that "the penny drops" - to coin an old phrase. The person may have thought he believed all Scripture to be of equal value, but he had been practising a different belief system.

It may be helpful at this point to ask a related question.

Does God rank some doctrines more highly than others? Fortunately for us, someone asked Jesus this type of question, he said, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:36-40).

The first thing we can note is that God *does* rank doctrine. Loving our neighbour is important, but loving God is more important. It ranks above every other teaching. If doctrine has rank, then it follows that passages of Scripture which mention the high ranking doctrines must be ranked highly.

The great reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546), ranked Scripture according to how clearly it proclaimed Christ. Those passages of Scripture which clearly proclaimed Christ were given the highest ranking. So he, like many Christians today, would have memorised John 3:16. I will urge my readers at this point to commit to memory scriptures which have high rank.

Scripture is self-authenticating

Scripture is not reliant upon the opinions of men or any branch of science to be validated. The fulfilment of statements from God's prophets regarding the future - from their point in time - show that they were inspired of God. For instance, it was predicted that Jesus would go quietly to his death like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7) which is exactly what happened. Furthermore, the Scriptures predicted what would happen to the garments of Jesus after his crucifixion. "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." (Psalm 22:18). The soldiers fulfilled that prophecy when they said, "'Let's not tear it,' they said to one another. 'Let's decide by lot who will get it.' This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, 'They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.' So this is what the soldiers did.'" (John 19:24). For more information on the fulfilment of Scripture, see my paper, *The Witness Of Prophecy*, a free download from: www.defenceofthefaith.org

Economical with revelations

All around the world, parents might say to their child, "I have told you once, and I am not going to tell you again" or something similar. In such instances, the parent is being economical with his or her revelation to the child regarding what should be done. Likewise, God is economical with regard to his revelation to his people. There is just one Mt Sinai type of revelation. God does not keep repeating himself to those who choose to be somewhat hard of hearing to the message he is proclaiming.

When the people of Israel made an idol in the form of a golden calf, God did not give them another revelation on another mountain; he gave them punishment. "And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made." (Exodus 32:35).

An incident recorded in 1 Kings chapter thirteen serves as a warning that a clear revelation from the Lord, once given, must be obeyed. A prophet was told by God to go to an altar

at Bethel and deliver a message to King Jeroboam. The king was angered by the message and commanded those with him to seize the prophet, but God afflicted the arm of the king which was stretched out toward the prophet so that he could not draw it back to his side (13:1-4).

The king asked the prophet to call upon God to restore his arm. The prophet did so, and the king's arm was restored. Out of gratitude, the king said, "Come home with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift." But the man of God answered the king, "Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.'" (13:7-9).

An old prophet in Bethel was informed by his sons about the dramatic events which had taken place. He then rode on an ass in search of the prophet and caught up with him. When the old prophet extended an invitation to the man of God to come and receive some hospitality, the invitation was declined on the ground that he was forbidden by God to eat or drink in that place. But, "The old prophet answered, 'I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.' (But he was lying to him.)'" (13:18). The man of God went back and ate and drank with the old prophet. Afterwards, judgment was pronounced against the man of God that he would not return home. When he tried to return home, he was killed by a lion (13:24). The man, instead of keeping the word of God, was distracted by another man to follow a false message, and suffered the consequences.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man calls out from Hell to Abraham, "... 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:27-31).

From this passage, it becomes clear that the Bible is a complete thorough and sufficient revelation. The reason for not believing, lies at the feet of the person who refuses to believe.

Because God is economical with his revelation to mankind, we need a self-imposed vigilance against moving away from the teachings of Scripture.

Terrible history forgotten can mean terrible history repeated. The false teaching of the documentary hypothesis has had a damaging influence on trust in the Bible for many, but there are other negative influences as well.

Scripture endures

- Jesus states, "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." (Matt. 5:18).
- "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the

least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." (Luke 16:17).

- "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Luke 21:33).
- "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands for ever." (Isaiah 40:8).

The message of the Bible:

- The message of the Bible is faultless and unchanging.
- **Unchanging.** It is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- It is **unparalleled.** No other message equals the Bible message.
- It is **powerful.** The work of the Holy Spirit accompanies the proclamation of the bible's message to bring the spiritually dead to life.
- It is **transforming.** It convicts of wrong-doing and encourages good works.
- It both **unites and divides.** It unites those who were once sinners and the fellowship of the saints. More importantly, it divides from the Devil and his kingdom of darkness, and unites to God and his kingdom of light.
- Brings **close fellowship.** To those who heed its message, it brings about a close fellowship with God, and his Saints.

A man had a message in his Bible which read:

"This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book"

Its message matters. Those who heed its message will be blessed in this life and in the age to come. Conversely, those who reject its message suffer loss, both in this life and the age to come.

Key doctrines of the Bible

- God is holy, righteous, sinless (Psalm 11:7, Deuteronomy 32:4, Ps. 97:2, Isaiah 51:8).
- Through the sin of one man (Adam), every human is a sinner (Rom. 5:17, 3:23, Jer. 17:9).
- The entrance of sin into the world is total in its scope of destructive effect on mankind i.e. physical, mental, emotional and in relationships. Hence the doctrine, 'The total depravity of man' (total in every aspect of life).
- Because God is perfect/sinless, the redemption of man must be a perfect redemption.
- Those who are saved through Christ are viewed by God as perfect.
- The Bible is inspired by God.
- Jesus took on human flesh and was fully God (100%) and fully (100%) man.
- The resurrection of all mankind (Hebrews 9:27). Some after a very fair and thorough trial (Jer. 17:10, Psalm 9:8, Matt. 12:36) will face a just judgment/punishment. Those who are redeemed through Christ look forward to a new heaven and earth in which there is no suffering, sin, or death (Rev. 21:1, 4).

Key passages on the authority of Scripture

Exodus 19:9

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you. ...’”

This verse points to that great event on Mt Sinai which is foundational to our respect for Scripture.

Psalms 99:7

“He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.”

2 Timothy 3:16

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

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 2:15

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Matt. 24:35

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Isaiah 40:8

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands for ever.” Also Psalm 119:89, Matt. 5:18.

John 17:17

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

Jeremiah 30:2

“This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.’”

Psalms 119:105

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Colossians 3:16

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, ...”

Acts 17:11

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Psalms 12:6

“And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”

End Notes

1. *The First Muslim* is available in digital format. See also, *What Every Christian Needs To Know About The Qur'an*, by James R White.

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