

Week 1

The Bible: Inspiration, Revelation & Authority

Key Verse

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

+ Introduction

Pontius Pilate asked arguably the most profound question in the history of the world when he asked Jesus: "What is truth?" (John 18:38). What makes Pilate's question even more powerful is that he was asking the One who said that He *was* the Truth! (John 14:6).

It has been estimated that as high as 70% of today's generation (both church and un-church) believe that absolute truth does not exist. Many would say that truth is negotiable and cannot be known except by personal experience. Our culture has dethroned God as the ultimate source of truth and put man in His place. Post-Modern culture says: "what is true for you may not be true for me" and vice-versa. So, we return to Pilate's question: What is truth?

We believe that truth is found in God's Word, the Bible, and that the Bible is uniquely inspired by God and provides THE authoritative guidelines for Christian faith and practice. Everything we will teach in this class originates from the Bible. What we know and believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Christian life, sin, Satan, heaven, or hell comes from the Bible. *The Baptist Faith and Message* says this about the Bible: "It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy."¹

+ What is the Bible?

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word biblos, which means "a book." Actually, the Bible is a book made up of 66 books: 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. It was written

over 1500 years by 40 different authors from different cultures and backgrounds. And yet, the Bible has remarkable unity! It is indeed God's inspired Word, even though written by human authors.

1. The Sender: the Doctrine of Inspiration

How did the truth get from God to us? A key concept in the process is called the doctrine of inspiration. Shakespeare had inspiration resulting in some of the greatest literature known to man. Michelangelo, da Vinci, and Mozart were inspired to produce incredible works. This type of inspiration means "stimulation of the mind or emotions to a high level of feeling or activity."² This is *not* what is meant by the doctrine of inspiration in producing the Bible.

The doctrine of inspiration with regard to the Bible means that it was "divinely inspired." The key Scripture for the doctrine of inspiration is 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The word for "inspired" in Greek literally means "God-breathed." God breathed out His truth to us through the human writers of the Bible, but those human writers did not take dictation from God like robots. One of the beautiful things about the Bible is that it is written in the style of the human writers. It is also written using different types of literature: narrative, poetry, prophecy, letters, etc.

The New Scofield Reference Bible states, "Without impairing the intelligence, individuality, literary style or personal feelings of the human authors, God supernaturally directed the writing of Scripture so that they recorded in perfect accuracy His comprehensive and infallible revelation to man."³

But how do we know that those men did not corrupt/change that truth in the process? 2 Peter 1:20-21 answers this question:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

These verses use the word "prophecy" to mean *foretelling* as well as *forth-telling* the Word of God. In other words, "prophecy" does not always mean predicting the future. It can also mean simply presenting God's truth about any topic. Let's dig a little deeper into each verse:

2 PETER 1:20 – The Scriptures did not come from the prophets themselves; their writings came from God through those prophets. The source was God; the instrument was the human writer.

2 PETER 1:21 – This verse elaborates on verse 20. The writers were "moved" (NASB) or "carried along" (NIV) by the Holy Spirit. This word for "carried along" is a fascinating term in the Greek language. It is the picture of a sailing vessel under full sail carried along by the wind. Luke uses this word in Acts 27:15 & 17. The NASB translates it as "driven along," as does the NIV. Meaning, the human writers of the Scriptures did not dream up the message. They were carried along/controlled by the Holy Spirit in writing the Scriptures.⁴ The Scriptures are the very words of God!

2. The Receiver: The Doctrine of Revelation

We receive God's truth by *revelation*, meaning "the disclosing to others of what was before unknown to them." ⁵ *The Baptist Faith and Message* says that the Bible "...is God's revelation of Himself to man." ⁶ Essentially, we cannot understand God's truth unless God reveals it to us. We cannot figure it out for ourselves. "Without this divine self-disclosure, we would have no certain knowledge of God, and humanity would be left groping for answers in the dark." ⁷ In other words, spiritual truth would be up for grabs. God is the *sender* of truth through the human writers of the Bible, but He also reveals Himself to us so that we can *receive* and understand the truth He has sent.

3. The Question of Authority

Because the Scriptures are God-breathed, and
Because God reveals Himself to us through the Scriptures,
Then the Scriptures should be *the supreme authority* over our lives!

The Baptist Faith and Message explains that the Scriptures are "...the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried." ⁸ We do not judge the Bible, it judges us.

In Luke 6:46, Jesus asks the people, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Jesus is exposing their inconsistency and hypocrisy. If He is Lord, then we do what He says. If the Bible is God's Word, then it is the authority over our lives. It is not a series of suggestions or guidelines – it is ultimate truth from God. Entire church denominations have fallen into unbiblical and ungodly practices because they long ago abandoned the authority of the Scriptures. Individuals can do the very same thing.

4. The Written Word

The Bible is the written Word of God, and it is powerful! In Matthew 4, before Jesus began His public ministry, He was tempted by Satan. He went one-on-one with the Devil. Satan tempted Him in three different ways. In all three, Jesus answered with the phrase, "...it is written..." and quoted specific verses from the book of Deuteronomy: 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13. This is amazing! As the Son of God, He had all the power of heaven at His disposal, but He resisted the Devil by quoting specific verses of Scripture! This tells us two things:

- The written Word of God is powerful.
- This same written Word of God is available to us.

✦ Why Study the Bible?

There are many benefits of reading and studying God's Word. Here are a few:

1. For Spiritual Growth

1 PETER 2:1-3 "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you

| *may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”(NASB)*

As a baby grabs for the bottle, so you and I should grab for the Book! Our spiritual growth is in direct proportion to our intake of the Word of God – not just sermons or Bible Study lessons as valuable as they are – but our own personal reading/study of God’s Word.

2. For Spiritual Maturity

| **HEBREWS 5:14** *“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”(NASB)*

“Solid food” is God’s Word. This gives us a pattern for maturity in the Christian life.

God’s Word + practice + time = distinguishing between good and evil. This is the goal of the study of God’s Word: Christian growth and maturity.

3. For Spiritual Effectiveness

| **2 TIMOTHY 3:16 -17** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 is our key passage for this lesson. Notice the four ways that we can profit from God’s Word:

- Teaching – we never stop learning
- Reproof – telling us what is wrong
- Correction – telling us how to get back on the right track
- Training in righteousness – thus, we as believers are equipped for every good work.

The ultimate purpose of Scripture is not to make us “smarter sinners” but to transform our lives and equip us to serve the Lord!

+ Conclusion

In answer to Pilate’s question to Jesus, truth is found in God’s Word, the Bible. Divinely inspired, provided by revelation, it is the supreme authority to govern our lives. The Bible is God’s message to man, His instructions, directions, and guide. It is God’s guideline, plumbline, and bottom line for living; and therefore, it is our lifeline!

Psalm 119 is by far the longest Psalm – 176 verses! In almost every single verse, the Psalmist gives tribute to the Word of God. We have been talking *about* the Word of God; now, let’s wrap up by simply listening to God’s Word and let Him speak to us from Psalm 119:

PSALM 119:1 "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD."

PSALM 119:89 "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven."

PSALM 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

PSALM 119:142 "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth."

PSALM 119:151 "You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are truth."

PSALM 119:160 "The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting."

PSALM 119:176 "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments."

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¹ *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000.

² *The American Heritage College Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1993, p. 704.

³ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, New York, Oxford Press, 1967, p.1304.

⁴ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, eds. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1989, p. 869.

⁵ *Bible Doctrine I Study Graph*, 1965, Moody Bible Institute.

⁶ *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000, p. 7

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.