

Your Word is Truth (John 17:17)

Session 1

The Structure, Theme & Inspiration of the Bible¹

In this session we will focus on three topics.

1. The Structure of the Bible.
2. The theme of the Bible.
3. The inspiration of the Bible.

Let's begin by looking at our first topic.

1. The structure of the Bible.

The English word Bible comes to us through a couple different languages. Dr. Norman Geisler says "The word Bible (book) came into English by way of French from the Latin biblia and the Greek biblos. It was originally the name given to the outer coat of a papyrus reed in the eleventh century B.C. By the second century A.D., Christians were using the word to describe their sacred writings."

Concerning the structure of our Bible we have two testaments or covenants.

- First you have the Old Testament which consists of 39 books.

The Old Testament has been arranged differently throughout history. By the time of Jesus it is clear from Jewish writings and Jesus, that the Jews accepted a threefold division of their books.

For example we read in Luke 24:44, "Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me."

The Jews today and in Jesus' day put our 39 books into 22 books and arranged them in a threefold division.

¹ Notes are based on lectures by Joseph Holden of Calvary Chapel Bible College.

Here's their three threefold division:

- The Law (Torah): The first five books of Moses which are Genesis-Deuteronomy.
- The Prophets (Nebhiim): The prophets are further divided into two sections. The former prophets which are, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings. The later prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets.
- The Psalms or writings (Kethubhim): The writings consist of three sections. First the poetical books: Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. Second the five rolls (Megilloth): Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes. Lastly the historical books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

The Jews refer to their entire Bible or our Old Testament as the Tanak. The word Tanak comes from taking the first letter of each of these sections and adding the vowel A.

The structure of our Old Testament is different than the Hebrew Scriptures. The reason the structure of our Old Testament is different is it is based on the fourfold topical arrangement that is found in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint (250-150BC.).

When Jerome revised the Old Latin version of the Bible he used the Septuagint as the basis for the arrangement of the Old Testament.

Our fourfold division is:

- The five books of Moses or the Pentateuch (Gen-Deut.)
- History (Josh.-Est.)
- Poetry (Psa.-Songs.)
- Prophets (Isa-Mal.

- Second there is the New Testament.

The New Testament consists of 27 books. The New Testament can also be broke up into four sections.

- Gospels: Matthew –John
- Acts
- Epistles: There are 21 epistles in the New Testament. The epistles can be divided into two or even three sections. First you have the thirteen epistles written by Paul which are Romans-Philemon. Second you have the eight General epistles which are Hebrews-Jude.
- Revelation

2. The theme of the Bible.

The Bible tells us its theme in five different places.

- Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.
- Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.
- Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me."
- John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."
- Hebrews 10:7 THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME— IN THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME— TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.' "

The Theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ and His redemptive plan to save mankind. This is important because though the Bible is historically and scientifically accurate it is not a science or history text book.

The focus of the Bible is how God brought His son into the world to save mankind. As a result of this the Bible is very selective in what it records regarding science and history.

3. The inspiration of the Bible.

The Bible is God's revelation. Revelation is how mankind knows God; if God didn't reveal Himself to man, then man could not or would not know God.

God's revelation can be divided into two categories, which are general or natural and special revelation.

- General revelation is God's revelation through the creation of the universe (Ps.19, Rom.1) and mankind (Gen.1:26-27). General revelation can also be seen in God's providence over history (Daniel 2:21) and in human conscience (Rom.2:15).
- Special revelation is God's revelation of Himself in the Bible. Special revelation is specifically for believers. Some of the ways we're told that God revealed Himself in the Bible are:
 - Dreams (Matt 1:20)
 - Visions (Acts 10:11-12)
 - Prophets and Apostles (Jer.1:9, 1 Thess. 2:13)
 - Angels (Luk.1:26-28)
 - The Lot (Pro. 16:33)
 - The Urim and Thummim (Exod. 28:30)
 - Theophanies /Christophanies (Gen.18:1)
 - Jesus Christ (Jon.1:18)

The doctrine of inspiration refers to the way in which God put His revelation into human writing. There are two New Testament scriptures which focus on inspiration.

- 2 Timothy 3:16 says, all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

Paul in this verse refers to the source of the writings of the scriptures. All the writings in the Bible are God breathed.

- 2 Peter 1:20-21 says,
20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,
21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

Peter also refers to the source of the scriptures, notice he says in these two verses that prophecy or God's words did not come from private interpretation or man's will. In other words Peter is saying that God's word did not come from or originate with the human authors.

Second Peter in verse 21 says that God in His sovereignty over saw the writings of the Bible. Peter said that as the authors wrote they were moved, this word can be translated driven, or carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In other words the Holy Spirit superintended over the writings so as the authors wrote, God made sure they wrote exactly what God wanted written.

Before we look at the correct definition for inspiration, let me first go over some false views of inspiration.

- Mechanical dictation: This view says that the authors were like robots or machines that set aside their own literary styles and personalities.
- Natural inspiration: This view denies any supernatural element in inspiration.
- Ordinary inspiration: This view says that inspiration refers to human genius.
- Degree inspiration: This view says that there are levels of inspiration.
- Moral inspiration: This view says that the Bible is inspired in spiritual matters and not in material or historical matters. This view must be rejected because Jesus' death on the cross and Resurrection are both historical matter.

Dr. Norman Geisler also gives the following definition for inspiration.

"Inspiration is the **supernatural** operation of the Holy Spirit who, through the **personalities** and **literary styles** of the **human writers**, invested the very words of the **66 books** of Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very word of God without error in all they teach, affirm, imply or entail (including matters of history and science)"

From this definition we can say the following:

- 1. Inspiration:** refers to the source or origin from which the scriptures came.
- 2. Supernatural:** this means the origin or source is not of this world.
- 3. Personalities:** God did not set aside but used the personalities and literary styles of the authors.

4. Literary style: the Bible includes **narrative, poetry, letters, proverbs, law, wisdom literature, apocalyptic visions, parables and discourses.**

5. Human writers: God could have given the scriptures from His lips but God chose to use human writers and give us an indirect revelation.

6. The 66 books: no more or less.

- It is important to note that when Evangelicals talk about inspiration and inerrancy we are talking about the original writings of the Bible.

What about the copies of the Bible, since our Bibles are not the original manuscripts are they inspired?

The answer is yes! The copies are inspired in what is called the “box”, which is Latin for “voice.” When we talk about the copies of the Bible being inspired we are saying that it communicates 100% the message of the inspired and inerrant original manuscripts.

It’s important to note that when we talk about the words of our copies they are not 100% like the original manuscripts. The reason this is, is translators had to add words or change the word order in order to communicate the meaning of the original manuscripts in English. Though the translators have added words and changed the word order the message of the original manuscripts still comes through 100% accurately.

Recognizing that our copies are inspired in the voice is important because it makes it possible for us to translate the Bible into different languages and use paraphrases. To say our copies had to be 100% verbally precise causes a problem because then every person would have to read Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Also there is a problem because we don’t have the original manuscripts.

Let’s look at some internal evidences for the inspiration of the Bible

- The Bible claims to be God’s word.

A. Old Testament

Deuteronomy 18:18 says, I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

Here God told Moses that the Messiah would be like him in that He would speak the words of God. In other words Moses spoke and wrote the word of God.

2 Samuel 23:2, "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.

David claimed that the Holy Spirit used him to speak and write inspired scripture.

Jeremiah 1:9 says, Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

God told Jeremiah that he would speak and write God's words.

2 Chronicles 34:14 says, Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD *given* by Moses.

In this verse we see that another in the Old Testament confirmed that the books of Moses were God's word.

B. The New Testament

2 Timothy 3:16 all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

John 16:13-14

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. In other words the Holy Spirit would inspire their writings concerning Jesus and Christian doctrine.

2 Peter 3:15-16

15 and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,
 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

Peter in this passage put the writings of Paul on the same level as the Old Testament scriptures.

1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE AN OX WHILE IT TREADS OUT THE GRAIN," and, "THE LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS WAGES."

Paul in this verse quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7. Notice Paul used the Gospel of Luke as the authoritative word of God.

- Jesus claimed that the Bible was the word of God.

Jesus in Luke 24:44 claimed that all the 39 books of Old Testament were inspired and spoke prophetically about Him. Also Jesus in John 14-16 promised His Apostles that the Holy Spirit would lead them and inspire their writings.

Jesus proved that He was God through three acts of God.

1. Sinless and miraculous life.
2. Fulfilled prophecy
3. Resurrection from the dead.

Dr. Norman Geisler says,

9. Therefore Jesus was God in human flesh.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) affirmed as true is true.
11. Jesus affirmed the Bible was the word of God.
12. Therefore it is true that the Bible is the word of God and whatever is opposed to any biblical truth is false.

- The unity of the Bible.

The Bible was written over a period of 1400-1500 years by 40 different authors; yet there is one theme which is Jesus and His redemption of mankind.

- Fulfilled prophecy.

Prophecy scholars say that the Bible contains 2,500 prophecies. Two thousand of these prophecies have been fulfilled literally. Two amazing examples are:

A. The life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus fulfilled over a hundred prophecies at His first coming. Peter Stoner in his book "Science Speaks" says the mathematical probability of a man fulfilling just eight of the hundreds of prophecies is 1 in 10 to seventeenth power. For you non math students that is 1 in 10 with 17 zeros after it.

Peter Stoner gave an illustration of this probability. He says,
²"Suppose that we take 10 to the seventh power silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time providing they wrote using their own wisdom."

B. There are also two amazing prophecies concerning Israel. First Israel being re-gathered in her home land (Isa.66:8). Not only that, but the Bible says that all the nations will hate Israel in the last days (Zech.12:3).

In conclusion the Bible in its original manuscripts is the inspired revelation of Jesus Christ the savior of mankind.

² Peter Stoner quoted by Ron Rhoads, Answering the objections of Atheists, Agnostics & Skeptics. P.161.