

Lesson 3

“The Bible: the Book God Wrote—Part 2”

2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21

Purpose:

Your students will learn the biblical truth that the Bible is God’s Word, the book God wrote. They will become familiar with the many works of God that gave us Scripture, the divine nature of Scripture, and what is necessary to correctly use Scripture as a rule of faith and practice.

In a Nutshell:

We learned in Lesson 2 that the Bible is one form of special revelation. In this lesson we will study the truth that the Bible is the book God wrote. Three works of God touch our lives each time we pick up a copy of the Scripture and are blessed by it.

First, God accomplished a work of revelation that gave mankind the original copies of Scripture, called *the autographa*. This supernatural direct act of God prepared human authors for the production of the books of the Bible, moved upon them to bring their work to an intended result, and breathed out their written Word as His own breath (inspiration).

Second, the Lord accomplished a work of providence that has allowed many to have a copy of His Word that they can read. Not everyone has been so blessed. Our Bible is actually a collection of 66 books, and the Lord guided His church to understand which books belonged to this category of Scripture (canonization). He disbursed His Word through the diligence of copyists and translators over many centuries, some of whom were martyred in their struggle for a readable copy of the Bible (preservation and translation).

Finally, the Lord’s work of salvation in our lives includes His use of Scripture to sanctify us and to make us more like Christ (illumination). His Spirit enables us to correctly understand the meaning of Scripture (hermeneutics), as He assures us that the Bible was written for each of us to understand (perspicuity) and for each of our needs to be met (sufficiency). With the Book God wrote, we have all we need for faith and practice.

To the Testimony!

God’s Work of Special Revelation Gave Mankind the Bible

Exod. 4:10-16	1. Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul have in common that they were all used of God to author Scripture. After reading the passages noted, describe what else they had in common as authors of the Scriptures.
Jer. 1:4-5	
Gal. 1:15-16	

Answer: These authors of Scripture also had in common the fact that God had created them specifically for their task as prophets. God made their mouths (Exod. 4:11) and formed the

rest of them in their mothers' wombs (Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15) with their future task of authoring Scripture in mind. Moses's experiences in Pharaoh's Egypt, Jeremiah's melancholy personality, and Paul's education in Judaism all prepared each of them to be the right author at the right time for the right part of God's book He wanted them to produce.

Application: There is a sense in which it required an author like David, a shepherd, to write a psalm like Psalm 23. God prepared authors to write exactly what He wanted us to have in His Word. He did not have them simply take dictation. Like the God-man, Jesus Christ, who is the Living Word, the written Word of God is both divine and human, each in the fullest sense. Just as Christ has two natures as one person, the Bible has two authors as one text. We do not understand how this was done, but we do know that both God and Paul are the authors of Romans. Tertius is the one who took dictation (Rom. 16:22), not Paul. The Holy Spirit would not have dictated what Paul authored in 1 Cor. 1:16, because the Holy Spirit could remember just fine whom Paul had baptized. The Holy Spirit moved Paul to write the verse.

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2 Pet. 1:16-21 2. Peter remembers his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration in this passage, especially that he and the others with him heard a voice from heaven or from the excellent glory, a reference to God the Father (vv. 17-18). That was a form of special revelation. Continuing in the same category as this voice from heaven, Peter describes what he calls *a more sure word of prophecy* (v. 19), *the prophecy of the Scripture* (v. 20), and *the prophecy that came in old time* (v. 21). His concern especially is to tell us how Scripture did not come, and then how it did come. How did Scripture not come, and how did it come (vv. 20-21)?

Answer: Scripture did not come from any prophet's personal ingenuity (*private interpretation*, v. 20), nor merely by the will of man (v. 21). The way it did come is that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (v. 21).

Application: The key phrase that tells us how Scripture came to be is the phrase *they were moved by the Holy Spirit*. That word *moved* means *to be carried along*, and it is used here and in Acts 27:15, which describes a ship carried along by a storm. This word says two important things about what happened to the authors of Scripture when they wrote Scripture. First, their natural abilities and circumstances, though heightened and used (rather than canceled out) by the Spirit of God, were not in ultimate control of the origination of their writings. Therefore, the writings were kept free from human error and ignorance (*inerrant*; see John 3:12). Second, the end goal of the Holy Spirit was unfailingly accomplished when the human author finished writing. For this reason, we can speak of the Scriptures as *infallible* (see John 10:35). Through the process described as *they were moved by the Holy Spirit*, the authors of

Scripture became the mouth the Holy Spirit used to speak God’s Word (see Acts 1:16, 3:18, 3:21, 4:24-25). When God speaks, it is called Scripture speaking (Gal. 3:8, Rom. 9:17). When Scripture speaks, it is called God speaking (Matt. 19:4-5, Acts 13:34-35; Heb. 1:6, Heb. 3:7).

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2 Tim. 3:14-17
Heb. 4:12
Ps. 19:7-11

3. The phrase *given by inspiration of God* is actually a single word in Greek (*theopneustos*). It is an adjective that means *God-breathed*. Were the authors of Scripture God-breathed, was Scripture God-breathed, or were both the authors and the Scripture God-breathed? With help from the passages listed, what are some consequences of this truth?

Answer: The adjective *God-breathed* applies to *all Scripture*. Paul’s desire is to highlight the power of the Bible as the breath of the God who spoke the worlds into existence. As a consequence of its God-breathed quality, Scripture can make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15, Ps. 19:7), pierce and change the heart because it is living and powerful and sharp (Heb. 4:12, 2 Tim. 3:16, Ps. 19:7-14), and thoroughly equip the man of God to accomplish every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). The Bible is the power of God’s breath in written form – His omnipotent Word.

Application: It takes the power of God to live the Christian life (Phil. 2:12-13). The Bible is the power of God, and we should not try to live the Christian life without depending on that power. It was second nature for our Lord to refer to the Scriptures when confronted with the need for help and strength. He answered the devil in the wilderness repeatedly with, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). In His darkest moment, Scripture was on His lips, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1, Mark 15:34) and “Into Your hands I commit My Spirit” (Ps. 31:5, Luke 23:46). If Christ needed the power of God’s Word, we certainly do too.

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Matt. 5:18, 22:32, 43-45
Gal. 3:16

4. In the previous passage, we learned that *God-breathed* is an adjective that applies to *all Scripture*. This is called *plenary inspiration* – God’s work of inspiration applies equally to every part of Scripture. That still leaves one question to be answered, namely, to what detail is every part of Scripture God-breathed? Is it just the thoughts or the very words themselves? Support your answer.

Answer: *God-breathed* describes the very words of Scripture, not merely the thoughts. Apart from getting into the question of whether thoughts can even be transmitted from God to man without words, many of the arguments found in Scripture hang on the features of a single word. The tense of a verb is important in Matt. 22:32, and the number of a noun is equally important in Gal. 3:16. A single word forms the basis of Christ's argument in Matt. 22:43-45 and John 10:34-35. Matt. 5:18 is explicitly clear. The *jot* is the *yod*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (י), and the *title* is the small stroke of a pen that can distinguish a Hebrew R (ר) from a Hebrew D (ד). Even these letters and parts of letters carry the kind of authoritative weight that requires fulfillment and precludes passing away. Scripture is *verbally inspired*.

Application: Our Bible study must recognize that the book we are dealing with is God-breathed in a plenary and verbal sense. That it is inspired in a plenary way means that all of it is an objective revelation that must be understood as equally authoritative to everyone. It is not that parts of God's Word become revelation to me when I see something meaningful to me; it is rather that God's Word in its entirety is the same revelation to everyone whether or not I see anything in one of its parts. It is altogether God-breathed in an objective sense.

That it is inspired in a verbal sense means that the words of the originals were especially chosen by God to communicate His truth to man. They were Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words. The study of the original languages should be encouraged for this reason, and translations are inadequately done that fail to transfer at the verbal level the message of the text from the original language to the receptor language. A translation is a good translation to the degree that it preserves the meaning of the original words themselves in the new language.

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God's Work of Providence Gave Us a Copy of the Bible

Luke 24:44 5. We affirm that the Bible God wrote is comprised of 66 separate books. 39 of these belong to the Old Testament, and 27 belong to the New Testament. There were, of course, other religious works circulating at the various times the books of the Bible were written that are not included in our Bibles. The process by which God providentially enabled His people to understand which books were inspired and which were not is called *canonization*. *Canon* means *standard*. The standard a book had to meet to be included in the canon of Scripture is that it had to be God-breathed. God guided His people to recognize which books met this standard. When it comes to our Old Testament canon, the views of the Lord Jesus Christ on this matter are especially conclusive. What three divisions of books did Jesus recognize as His Old Testament according to Luke 24:44?

Answer: Jesus recognized the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms as the divisions of

His Old Testament. *The law of Moses* is Genesis through Deuteronomy. *The prophets* would have included most of the historical books and the major and minor prophets. And *the Psalms* was the first book of what was often called the Writings, which included the books of poetry and some historical books. These three divisions of books contain the same books our different divisions contain today. Only the order and categorization are different. The divisions of our English Old Testament are the law (5 books), historical books (12 books), poetical books (5 books), major prophets (5 books), and minor prophets (12 books).

Application: The 39 books of the Old Testament comprised the accepted canon of Judaism and the Christian church until the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563). At that time the 14 books of what had been known as the Apocrypha, dating to the intertestamental period of Jewish history, was declared by the Council to be authoritative Scripture. In the same breath, the Council also declared the unwritten traditions of Christ passed on to His apostles and still preserved in the Roman Catholic Church as equal in authority to the Scripture. Jesus never recognized either as such.

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John 14:25-26 16:12-15	6. Just as the practice of Jesus Christ confirms for us the canon of the Old Testament, His promise assures us that the canon of the New Testament would be equally confirmed. What does Jesus promise His apostles about New Testament truth in these passages from the Upper Room Discourse?
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Answer: Jesus promises that the coming Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” and bring “all things” He said to them to their remembrance (14:26). He also promises that the apostles would be guided into “all truth” (literally, “all *the* truth”; 16:13). Prior to the passing of the last apostle (John, the author of Revelation), they would possess the entirety of NT truth.

Application: That Jesus was fulfilling this promise to give the apostles the entirety of New Testament truth in the canon of Scripture was apparent to them as they and others wrote the New Testament books. In Eph. 2:20-3:10, Paul affirmed that the NT church was built on the foundation of the apostles and NT prophets (v. 20). When he said this, he was referring to a written NT revelation (3:3-5). John understood the same to be true of his writings (John 21:24-25, 1 John 5:10-13, Rev. 22:18-20). Peter speaks of the letters of Paul as authoritative Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16), and Paul did the same with the Gospel of Luke (1 Tim. 5:18; see Luke 1:1-4). In 1 Cor. 2:6-13, Paul claimed to be the recipient of the revelation of “all things, yea, the deep things of God” (v. 10) in the form of “words . . . which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (v. 13). He would later write of the anticipated close of the completed canon (13:8-12).

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Deut. 4:2, 12:32
 Prov. 30:5-6
 Rev. 22:18-19

7. The Scripture is clear that the passages it contains were written not only for their original readers, but also for future generations as well (Deut. 29:29, Rom. 4:23-24, 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:6, 11, 1 Pet. 1:10-12). But God nowhere guaranteed that every person would have an accurate copy of God’s entire written Word to read. In fact, it speaks of times when many did not (2 Kings 22:8). We know that kings (Deut. 17:18-19) and local churches (Col. 4:16, 1 Thess. 5:27) were to make copies of Scripture. In recognition of the need to make copies, the Scripture includes a twofold warning we find throughout the Bible. What is that warning, why is it necessary, and what does it say about the nature of making copies?

Answer: The twofold warning is “do not add” and “do not subtract.” This warning indicates that when it comes to making copies, it is possible to add words incorrectly or to subtract words incorrectly from the original source. We have already learned from our study of the Holy Spirit’s moving on the authors of Scripture that no such warning was necessary for the *autographa*. They were supernaturally kept free from error (2 Pet. 1:20-21). But when it comes to preservation—the work of copying—a warning about the potential for error was necessary.

Application: God has providentially preserved His Word. But it is the nature of God’s providential dealings in this world that this work is accomplished in the midst of an epic struggle with evil. His Word warns us about that evil. While God’s providential preservation of His Word did preclude doctrinally significant variation in the work of diligent copyists and translators, so that we can say with Paul, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4), we must also remember that God’s Word contains a warning about the errors of copyists. God’s work of providential preservation has not prevented copying and translating errors. Continued diligence of copiers (textual criticism) and translators is necessary to deal with the variation caused by these minor errors over time. In addition, while the original languages as found in Scripture stay the same, receptor languages do change over time, and this also can necessitate further diligence on the part new translators to publish a readable copy of the Bible for people to use with understanding in their own tongue.

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God’s Work of Salvation Helps Us Understand the Bible

Ps. 119:18
 Eph. 1:17-18
 2 Tim. 2:7
 Eph. 4:11-16
 2 Tim. 2:15

8. It is a great blessing to have a copy of the Bible, God’s Word, to read. Yet reading the Bible is not very helpful unless we understand and apply correctly to our lives the meaning of what we are reading (Acts 8:30-31). Whom should the believer ask first for help with this correct understanding and application? Once asked for how does this help typically come to the believer?

Answer: The believer must ask the Lord for help with his eyes and heart. That help will normally come in three ways. First, the Holy Spirit will enlighten our understanding (Ps. 119:18, Eph. 1:17-18, 2 Tim. 2:7). Second, He will give strength to be diligent in study (2 Tim. 2:15). Finally, the Spirit’s help understanding and applying God’s Word comes from God-given teachers, including their writings (Eph. 4:11-16).

Application: Does the Word of God have its God-intended role in your life? Do you read it? Do you pray for enlightening help as you diligently study it? Do you embrace all the opportunities you have to hear it faithfully taught? Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.” Growing in grace and Christlikeness does not get very far without the power of God’s Word in our lives.

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Six key principles of Bible Interpretation (Hermeneutics):

Authorial intent	We understand the meaning of the Word of God by ascertaining the original intent of the human author. We take the author literally or normally (i.e., we recognize his normal use of literary devices, such as symbols and metaphors).
Context	We understand the meaning of the Word of God by keeping its statements in the context in which they were given. The context is both grammatical and historical.
Analogy of Scripture	We understand the meaning of the Word of God by allowing clearer passages of Scripture to help determine the meaning of less-clear passages of Scripture. We affirm that the Scripture is without contradiction and its own best interpreter.
Dispensationalism	We recognize that God has worked through different means in different ages. In the Old Testament, He used primarily the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, He uses primarily the local church. Ecclesiastical applications of Scripture change accordingly.
Perspicuity	We recognize that, although much of Scripture can be challenging, it is intended for everyone to read with profit. While we appreciate the ministry of teachers, we affirm that there is no priesthood that has an exclusive right to interpret correctly the Word of God.
Sufficiency	We recognize in the Scriptures our entire rule of faith and practice. Nothing more is needed for the man of God to be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:17). We affirm the Protestant principle of Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone).

NBBC Doctrinal Statement

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration, Divine authenticity and authority of the Old and New Testaments—66 books in all. We hold to the Divine inspiration, by the Holy Spirit through holy men of old, of each book, of every word and of every letter down to the smallest particle of a letter in the original manuscripts. We believe this revelation is accurate and all-sufficient for both faith and practice (Jeremiah 36:2-6, 17-18; Matthew 5:18; Mark 12:26, 36; Luke 24:24-27, 44; Acts 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21).

Notes: "I resolved, therefore, to direct my mind to the Holy Scriptures, that I might see what they were. And behold, I saw something not comprehended by the proud, not disclosed to children, something lowly in the hearing, but sublime in the doing, and veiled in mysteries. Yet I was not of the number of those who could enter into it or bend my neck to follow its steps. For then it was quite different from what I now feel. When I then turned toward the Scriptures, they appeared to me to be quite unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Tully. For my inflated pride was repelled by their style, nor could the sharpness of my wit penetrate their inner meaning. Truly they were of a sort to aid the growth of little ones, but I scorned to be a little one and, swollen with pride, I looked upon myself as fully grown" (Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 3, Chapter 5).
