

Understanding The Bible

Holy Men Wrote God's Word



A. The Meaning of Inspiration

The word "Inspired" comes from **2 Timothy 3:16**, using the Christian Standard Version:

"All scripture is inspired by God..."

The words "inspired by God" can also be translated as "breathed out" [ESV] or "God-breathed" [NIV] or "Inspiration of God" [KJV]. This means that although the Bible was written by men, its real Author (or writer) was God himself. It was God who moved the prophets to write His word. It is God who backs up what they wrote. The help which God gave to the writers made their writings "inspired." That is why these writings are reliable and

**"Profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."
- 2 Timothy 3:16**

"Inspiration" does not mean that the writers knew as much as God or did not have human limitations. It just means that what they wrote was exactly what God wanted written. He helped them to write correctly.

B. The Word is Written in Our Language

In the time of the Old Testament writers, God's people (the Hebrews) spoke a language called Hebrew. Almost all the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language. Scholars who wish to read the Hebrew Old Testament must first spend years of hard study to learn the Hebrew language. But we are very fortunate to have the whole Bible in our own language! Scholars who have studied a long time to learn Hebrew and Greek (the New Testament was written in Greek) have put the whole Bible in many of the languages of our time. How glad we should be that this has been done! We can read in our own

language what God wants us to learn about Himself, and about the salvation which He has made possible for us. God is using human language to tell us that He knows us, that he loves us, and that our future is safe with Him. He assures us that if we will repent of (turn away from) our sins, He will accept us as His children.

C. The Bible Contains Human Elements

However, the Bible is not only God's Word to people, but also many other things. Some parts of the bible give us human history, such as how Isaac got his wife [**Genesis 24**]. Other parts tell us of the sins of people, like the adultery and murder committed by King David [**2 Samuel 11**]. In other places, we read of how godly people overcame temptation, like Joseph in the land of Egypt [**Genesis 39**]. Some passages tell of the struggles with doubt and discouragement, such as **Psalms 73**. These parts of the Bible are not less important than those in which God Himself is speaking directly to us, as in the prophets. These human elements in the Bible make it meaningful to us. They tell us how God's people will have to overcome temptation and doubt. They warn us of the results of sin if we do not turn away from it. We learn how God wants us to live, not only from the passages which say, "This is what the Lord says", but also from stories which show the sad results of sin. We also learn from the friendly letters written by New Testament church leaders (the apostles) to the churches in the years 45 to 96 A.D. (after Christ's birth). These letters are called "the epistles". They contain rich help for us today.

D. The Central Purpose of the Bible

The Bible has many values, but some of them are not as important as others. For example, the Bible contains much history, but its greatest value is not in the field of history. The Bible contains beautiful poetry, but its greatest value is not as literature. The Bible answers some questions scientists have, such as, How was the world made? But it is not mainly a book of science. What is the main purpose of the Bible? One of the best answers is given in **2 Timothy 3:15**. The writer, the Apostle Paul, reminds Timothy that he has known the Holy Scriptures since he was a child. Then Paul says something remarkable about the Scriptures. He says that they

"are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

So if a person misses faith in Christ, he misses salvation. If we miss salvation, we have made a total failure of life. The purpose which God has for us is not to put money first in our lives, or clothes and other possessions, or pleasures which our bodies enjoy. It is God's will for us to turn from sin, put our faith in Christ and be saved. God wants His saved children to live to help build His kingdom. He wants them to bring other people to faith in Him. He wants them to help other members of the church become strong in faith and holy living.

The Apostle John, who wrote the fourth gospel, says that he wrote about the things Jesus did so

"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." - John 20:31

Even parts of the Bible which tell how the writer loved the Lord or trusted in Him can help us greatly in our faith. Suppose a person has not been a Christian. Through reading the Bible or hearing a sermon, God speaks to that person about his or her sin, and the need for forgiveness. This person decides to give up his or her sins and put his faith in the Lord Jesus. When he or she does this, God accepts him or her as His son or daughter and forgives all his past sins. Then this new Christian will read the Bible and get much help from it. He will read **Psalms 23**, for example, and make the writer's experience his own. He will claim the Lord for his Shepherd, just as the writer did thousands of years ago. Although the Bible is very old, God still uses it to speak to human hearts, and to help them on their way to heaven.

Lesson Questions

1. Write **John 20:31** _____

2. In what language was most of the Old Testament first written?

3. In what language was the New Testament first written?

4. Inspiration of the Bible means _____

5. Why does the Bible tell of the mistakes and temptations which people had a long time ago?

6. What name do we give to the leaders of the church in the time of Jesus? (The men who wrote letters to the different churches in 45-96 A.D.)

7. What does the Apostle Paul tell Timothy that the Scriptures are able to do for him?

8. What does a person have to give up to become a Christian? _____

9. What does a person need to do to be saved? (**Acts 16:31**)
Believe in _____
10. Who is it who speaks to human hearts when they read the Bible?

11. Do you think God's truth could have been kept alive in the world by word of mouth, if it had not been written down? _____