

# ***THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE***

*by Bobby Duncan*

We are living in an age of great skepticism, agnosticism, and atheism. In our public schools, especially in the colleges and universities, it seems that a deliberate effort is being made by some to destroy faith in the Bible as the word of God. In many cases this effort is successful. It is easy to see why. A college professor, an expert in his field, skillfully argues against the integrity of the Bible. The young men and women whom he teaches, being unable to answer his arguments, think there is no answer, and their faith is shaken.

Believers have nothing to fear from an honest investigation of the question as to whether or not the Bible is the inspired word of God. It always has and will continue to stand the test.

This discussion will not enable the reader to answer all the arguments that may be presented by the unbeliever. It is our purpose rather to present evidence that will increase and sustain faith in the inspiration of the Bible.

## **THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION**

The word "inspiration" is variously used. Some who admit that the writers of the Bible were inspired mean only that they possessed superior insight in the realm of morals and ethics. Others say that the Bible is inspired in the same sense that the works of Browning, Milton, and Shakespeare are inspired. Still others say that the Bible is partly inspired, or that it contains inspiration.

The word translated "inspiration" in II Tim. 3:16 is a word compounded from two Greek words, *theos* 'God', and *pneustos* 'breath'. The Scriptures then are "God breathed." "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:21). In I Cor. 14:37 Paul said, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Paul also said concerning the things he preached and wrote, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit . . ." (I Cor. 2:10). And then in practically the next stroke of the pen he claimed for himself and other New Testament writers verbal inspiration: "Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13). That the very words of the Bible, not just the ideas, are inspired is seen from the fact that in Gal. 3:16 the writer stakes an argument upon the number of a noun: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Such an argument would have no strength if only the ideas of the Bible are inspired, and not the very words. The Bible, then, claims to be a revelation from God written by men who were divinely guided, even in the choice of words which they employed. This means simply that the writers of the Bible were rendered incapable of error in their reception and communication of God's revelation.

This does not mean that the Bible is a verbally dictated book. God did not dictate to the writers of the Bible as a man might dictate a letter to his secretary. If He had done so there would be no such thing as individual writers' having their own style or characteristics of writing. But as it is each writer wrote

in the style and with the vocabulary which were characteristic of him. Luke, for example, being a physician, used a vocabulary in describing certain of the healing miracles of Jesus that an ordinary person would not have used. Paul's writings can be identified by certain characteristic expressions. If a man spoke and wrote in the Hebrew tongue inspiration did not make him write Greek, and vice versa. Inspiration merely saw to it that, regardless of the style or vocabulary he might employ, each writer accurately received and communicated God's revelation. It seems obvious that inspired men occasionally used expressions not common to them and which they did not understand, but which were dictated to them by God. Peter's expression in Acts 2:39 concerning "all that are afar off" seems to be an example of such in view of the fact that it took several years and a miracle finally to convince Peter that the gospel was for Gentiles and Jews alike.

Inspiration has nothing whatsoever to do with sinless perfection. Inspired men sinned along with the uninspired. John, an inspired writer, wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I Jno. 1:8). Paul, another inspired man, wrote, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27).

A distinction must also be made between inspiration and omniscience. The fact that a man was inspired does not mean that he knew everything. The inspired man of God who prophesied against Jeroboam's altar at Bethel did not know that the old prophet was lying to him (I Kings 13:18). In Acts 15:36 Paul proposed to Barnabas that a visit be made to certain brethren to "see how they do." Paul was inspired, but he had no news concerning the welfare of these brethren. Paul also did not remember who all he had personally baptized at Corinth (I Cor. 1:16).

### **INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF INSPIRATION**

All that men may say about the Bible cannot prove nor disprove that it is inspired of God. And so we must turn to the Bible itself to see if it contains evidence sufficient to cause intelligent and informed men and women to believe its claim of inspiration. This discussion of such evidence will of necessity be brief in comparison to the amount of such evidence available.

The fact that the Bible teaches there is one God is evidence of its inspiration. Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees, surrounded by idolatry. He left that land and came into the land of Canaan where idolatry was rampant. He journeyed in and out of Egypt where many gods were held in reverence. After Abraham's death his descendants, few in number, migrated into Egypt where they were enslaved by an idolatrous people. Here they grew into a great nation numbering into the millions. When they came out of Egypt about the first thing they did was to build a golden calf and start worshipping it. As they wandered in the wilderness for forty years it was humanly impossible to restrain them from worshipping the gods of the nations around them. When they finally entered Canaan, despite all warnings, they adopted the worship of the gods of the Canaanite nations. If they nation of Israel, on its own, had produced a book concerning religion it is inconceivable that that book would have taught so emphatically from beginning to end that there is but one God.

That God is the Author of the Bible is seen by the obvious absence of the human element in the nature of the Bible narrative. Books that are purely human do not relate with such absolute frankness the mistakes of their heroes. Abraham, Moses, David, and Peter are portrayed as spiritual giants and leaders of men. Yet the Bible does not hesitate to tell us that Abraham lied about the identity of his wife (Gen. 12:10-20), Moses took honor to himself which belonged to God (Nu. 20:7-13), David committed adultery and murder (II Sam. 12-7-14), and Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75). Books that are purely human in origin also seek either to stir up or to satisfy human curiosity.

The Bible does neither. What did Jesus write on the ground (John 8)? What about the boyhood years of Jesus before age twelve? What about the years from twelve to thirty? What happened to Paul after the Book of Acts closes leaving him a prisoner at Rome? The Bible tells us only that which we need to know. Chapters are consumed with endless genealogics which we prefer not to read, but not one sentence is written for the sole purpose of satisfying our curiosity.

The unity of the Bible is evidence of its inspiration. Some forty men writing over a period of sixteen centuries produced the Bible. In many cases the writers had no access to nor knowledge of each others' writings. Some writers were educated and other uneducated. Some were rich and others poor. Some wrote in one language and some another. Yet the Bible stands today as a complete unit, with no part missing and no superfluous part. Inspiration alone can account for this fact.

There is also no way to account for the prophecies of the Bible and their fulfillment other than by inspiration. Anyone can make predictions. But there is a vast difference between the prophecies of the Bible and mere prediction. Certain ones in modern times have been able to predict future events with phenomenal accuracy. But all admit, including the predictors themselves, that they sometimes err; and even when they are accurate the predictions themselves are quite vague. The prophets of the Bible, however, admit of no error, and their prophecies are detailed and completely accurate. They prophesied of events that would transpire, not only during their lives, but centuries after they were dead. Out of hundreds of such prophecies not one has failed of fulfillment, even in the minutest detail. It would be impossible to mention here a representative number of the prophecies of the Bible and their fulfillment, but the following are mentioned in order to illustrate the nature of Bible prophecy.

In Isaiah 44:28-45:4 there is this detailed prophecy: "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus said the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." This remarkable prophecy, spoken some 150 years in advance of its fulfillment, called Cyrus by name before he was born and told in detail what he would do. Secular as well as sacred history bears out the complete fulfillment of the prophecy.

In I Kings 13 we read of the man of God who was sent to cry out against the altar at Bethel. He prophesied after this fashion: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (I Kings 13:2). This prophecy was spoken some three hundred years before Josiah was born. But in II Kings 23:15-20 the detailed fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded.

When Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, overthrew Jericho Joshua spoke this prophecy: "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it" (Josh. 6:26). The fulfillment of this prophecy came about 550 years later when a man by the name of Hiel started rebuilding Jericho. The very things Joshua had said would happen came to pass in every detail (I

Kings 16:34). Only inspiration can account for the fulfillment of these prophecies in such minute detail.

The accuracy of the historical record contained in the Bible bears witness to its inspiration. Through the years from time to time historians have disagreed with the bible on some vital point. In each case when the matter was settled the historian was forced to admit that he had been mistaken and the Bible account is accurate after all. For example, it was argued for many years that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Old Testament in view of the allegation that writing had not been invented at the time Moses lived. But in 1901 a discovery was made of a set of laws, the "Code of Hammurabi," which dates back beyond Moses some five to seven centuries. The argument was also made that Palestine was never under Egyptian or Babylonian rule. Nowhere except in the Bible could evidence of such be found, and consequently the Bible record was denied. But in time the Bible record was vindicated by the discovery of some Tel El Amarna Tablets which contain records substantiating the Bible account beyond question. Another conflict between secular historians and the Bible developed after this fashion: Herodotus, who is known as the "Father of History," denied that the Egyptians grew grapes and made wine according to the interpretation of the butler's dream by Joseph. This conflict stood for many years. But in time archeologists uncovered in certain Egyptian cities murals portraying the making, the drinking, and even the effects of wine. These incidents serve to illustrate what has happened over and over again. That is, when secular historians have taken issue with the Bible, in every historical event which men have been able to verify the Bible record has been proved true and the record of secular historians false. If the Bible were a human production it could be expected to be right in some of the conflicts with modern historians. But no human basis can account for such complete inerrancy.

The fact that the Bible is in complete harmony with every known fact of modern science and our universe can be accounted for only by admitting that the Bible is inspired. So very little was known or knowable from the human standpoint during the time of the writing of the Bible. We are told that the amount of knowable information doubled between 1950 and 1960, and that it doubled again between 1960 and 1967. When men write books dealing with the knowledge of science and our universe these books become obsolete within a few years because of the phenomenal increase in the storehouse of human knowledge. With the bible such is not the case.

It is true that the bible was not written for the purpose of conveying scientific information, but it does contain a number of statements dealing with science and our universe. And not one statement contained in the Bible is out of harmony with anything known today. On the other hand the Bible contains many statements which can be understood only in the light of certain modern scientific discoveries.

The eighth Psalm refers to the "paths of the sea." It is a fact in history recorded that Matthew Fontaine Maury searched for and found the great sea lanes traveled by modern vessels, and that the statement in the Psalm is the thing which started him on his search. From merely human knowledge how could the psalmist in his day have said that there are paths in the sea?

Job 26:7 says, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." Modern astronomers can turn their most powerful telescopes in any direction and see a solid mass of stars surrounding the earth with the exception of one small area over the north pole. Job had no such telescopes with which to make such a discovery. How did he know there is an "empty place" in the sky, and that this empty place is in the north? How could Job say in his day that the earth is hanging "upon nothing?" Five hundred years ago man knew nothing about gravity and the fact that the earth is suspended in space. And yet in the very early morning of time this sage was able to make a

pronouncement that would not be fully understood until thousands of years after his death. He could have made such a pronouncement only under the guidance of Him who knoweth all things.

In the thirty- eighth chapter of Job are recorded certain statements attributed to God. In verse seven reference is made to the fact that the "morning stars sang together." Do stars make any sound at all? In Job's day men would have said they do not. But today we are aware of the fact that light possesses a certain tonal quality. Verse twenty-two refers to the "treasures of the snow." Adam Clarke, in writing his comment on this phrase, was able in his day to say only that "snow covers and defends vegetables from being destroyed by too severe a front." But in our day we know that snow places into the soil a particular element which is valuable to crops, especially to wheat crops. But what did Job know about it and how was he able to make such a statement?

Isaiah 40:22 mentions the "circle of the earth." But in the days of Isaiah man did not know that the earth is circular. Two statements of Jesus show that he knew something about the rotundity of the earth. The first is in Matt. 24:40, 41: "Then shall two be in the field; the one will be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." The second is in Luke 17:34: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left." You will observe that in the first of these passages Jesus, in discussing events connected with His second appearing, mentions things transpiring during the daylight hours. In the second he refers to His second coming as being in the night. We know today that while it is day on one side of the earth it is night on the other side. Jesus' statements would be contradictory if such were not the case. No sensible explanation to this seeming contradiction could be given until hundreds of years after Jesus died. But in the light of modern knowledge about our earth it is easy to understand how it will be both day and night when Jesus comes again.

One of the greatest difficulties to the evolutionist is the fact that human blood is different from the blood of lower animals. There are, of course, different blood types among humans, but every type is distinctively human. The evolutionary theory cannot account for this distinction. Only within the last century has this distinction been discovered by man. But in Acts 17:26 the inspired apostle stated that God "hath made all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bound of their habitation." How could Paul make a statement like this nineteen long centuries before man discovered that there is a distinction to be made between human blood and all other blood?

These few passages are far from being all the passages in the bible which allude to certain scientific facts which were not known to man at the time the bible was written. But God, the Author of the Bible, knew these truths long before man ever discovered them. The only way to account for the fact that such statements as these appear in the bible is to admit that God is its Author. If such were not the case, not only would the Bible be lacking in such statements, but it would be filled that contradict modern scientific truth. From time to time there may be conflicts between science and what some think the Bible teaches. There may also be conflicts between what the Bible actually teaches and what some think science has proved. But there is absolutely no conflict between what the Bible actually teaches and what science has actually proved.

### ***SUMMARY***

With the many attacks being made against the integrity of the Bible we need to consider evidence of its inspiration that our faith may be strengthened. The proper view of inspiration is that the Bible writers were rendered incapable of error in the reception and communication of God's revelation to

man. The following things prove that the Bible is not a human production: (1) it was produced by a nation given to many gods but reveals only one god, (2) it is not written in the style characteristic of human writings which appeal to man's curiosity and minimize the mistakes of their heroes, (3) it is one complete unit in spite of the fact that it was written by some forty writers over a period of sixteen centuries, (4) its prophecies are completely accurate, (5) its historical record is authentic, and (6) it is in complete harmony with every known fact of modern science and our universe, even stating certain scientific truths which were not otherwise known to man until many years after the Bible was completed.

### *The Bible*

*"Last eve I paused beside a*

*blacksmith's door*

*And heard the anvil ring the*

*vesper chime,*

*Then looking in, I saw upon the*

*floor*

*Old hammers worn with beat-*

*ing years of time.*

*"How many anvils have you*

*had," said I,*

*"To wear and batter all these*

*hammers so?"*

*Just on," he said; then with a*

*twinkling eye,*

*"The anvil wears the hammers*

*out you know."*

*And so, I thought, the anvil of*

*God's word*

*For ages skeptics blows have*

*beat upon;*

*Yet through the noise of falling*

*blows was heard,*

*The anvil is unharmed — the*

*hammers gone!"*

– AUTHOR UNKNOWN–