

KNOW THE TRUTH

Lesson 2 - Scripture

Outline is drawn from pages 34-49 of *Know the Truth - A Handbook of Christian Belief* by Bruce Milne.

KEY CONCEPTS CONCERNING SCRIPTURE

I. The Bible: The Material Form of Special Revelation

"The special revelation of God comes to us in and through the Bible. There we learn about and meet Jesus Christ. It is the basis and norm for all Christian preaching and teaching, and can therefore be described as the material form of special divine revelation." (p. 34)

A. God's Condescension

1. "Our knowledge of God arises from his condescension in Communicating with us." (p. 34)

B. The Possibility of Verbal Inspiration

1. "The claim that God has spoken through the words of the Bible fits the Christian presupposition of an uncreated personal God. Such a God is well able to communicate with his rational, verbalizing creatures on their own level, i.e. by language." (p. 34)

C. Analogical Truth

1. "In making himself known to humankind, God uses the principle of analogy, whereby something in one area of experience and language is used to explain something in another area." (p. 34-35)

D. God's Purpose

1. The Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper notes four advantages of a written record:
 - a) "It achieves durability. Errors of memory, deliberate or accidental corruptions over a long period are minimized.
 - b) "It can be universally disseminated through translation and reproduction."
 - c) "It has the attributes of fixedness and purity."
 - d) "It is given a finality and normativeness which other forms of communication cannot attain." (p. 35)

II. Grounds for Receiving the Bible as God's Written Word

A. Jesus' View of the Old Testament

1. "Jesus accorded divine authority to the OT Scriptures." (p. 36)

B. The Apostles View of the Old Testament

1. "The apostles also appealed directly to the letter of the OT to authorize their teaching and consistently presented the Christian faith as the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Acts 2:16-35; 3:22-25; 4:11; 7:2-53; 13:29-37; Rom. 1:2; Gal. 3:16-18; etc.)." (p. 38)

C. Jesus' Words and Teaching

1. "Jesus clearly believed in the unique power and authority of his words (John 6:63; 15:3). They will not pass away (Mark 13:31) and must be heard and obeyed (Matt. 5:21f.; 7:24; John 8:31f.)." (p. 39)

2. "The apostles recognized their divine authority (Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 7:10; 11:23f.). 1 Timothy 5:18 is particularly significant, combining an OT verse (Deut. 25:4) with a NT verse from Jesus' teaching (Luke 10:7)." (p. 39)

D. The Special Authority of the Apostles

1. "Jesus deliberately chose certain men to be his immediate disciples (Luke 5:27; 6:12–16; John 17:6) and gave them a special endowment of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22, cf. Acts 1:5)." (p. 39)

E. God Himself Addresses Us in Words

1. "For many Christians the supreme reason for according the Bible the status of God's Word written is simply the fact that God himself addresses us in it... All other testimony such as historical evidence or philosophical deduction can at best possess only secondary value." (p. 40)
2. "Multitudes of Christians in every generation have testified that, as they read the Bible and hear it expounded, they are moved to recognize its inherent authority." (p. 40)
3. "Christians who know the reality of this 'inward witness' can, in the last resort, simply bear testimony that it is so. The Bible comes to them with the authority and conviction of God's Word searching them to the depths; there they encounter a majesty, an ultimate and unconditional summons which they can only describe as the voice and Word of God, their Creator and Redeemer." (p. 40)

III. Inspiration

"Inspiration" refers to the way in which God's self-revelation has come to be expressed in the words of the Bible. It is that activity of the Spirit of God whereby he the human authors of Scripture so that their writings became a normative expression in human language of God's Word to humanity. To call the Bible 'inspired' is simply another way of saying that it is God's authoritative self-revelation." (p. 41)

A. The Method of Inspiration

1. Three important New Testament Passages
 - a) "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)
 - b) "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:19–21, ESV)
 - c) "Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (John 10:34–36, ESV)
2. The Old Testament Prophets
 - a) "Insight into how this divine inspiring activity came to bear upon the biblical authors may be gleaned from a study of the OT Prophets." (p. 43).
3. Theories of Inspiration

- a) **Dictation** - "This theory in its strongest form asserts that the human authors were in effect bypassed in the production of Scripture. They were simply the human keyboards through whom the Word of God passed on its way to eventual incorporation in the sacred canon." (p. 44)
- b) **Accommodation** - "This view expresses the thought that in the process of inspiration God accommodated himself to the limitations of the human authors. Scholars who hold that the Bible contains errors at numerous levels often champion this theory." (p. 44-45)
- c) **Supervision** - "This theory asserts that in the process of inspiration God sovereignly supervised and ordered the background, heredity and circumstances of the individual writers; as a result, when they recorded events, meditations or sermons in writing, the words used were consciously the free composition of the authors and at the same time the very Word of God." (p. 45)
 - (1) Verbal - "This adjective implies that the biblical authors were not merely inspired in their general ideas, but in the very words they used." (p. 46)
 - (2) Plenary - "This adjective indicates that the inspiration claimed extends to the whole Bible. God has caused all Scripture to be written, not only the sections which carry the marks of inspiration most clearly. This is not the same as claiming that all parts are equally significant in the unfolding of the Bible's message." (p. 46)

B. Three Final Comments

- 1. "The Bible teaches that it is directly and sovereignly inspired by God and is therefore to be submitted to as his living Word addressed directly to us. If we acknowledge its authority, we must bow to it at this point too: in its dual claim that it is God's inspired Word and that we should approach it with reverence and submission. To take another view is to stand in opposition to clear biblical teaching." (p. 46)
- 2. "Obviously there will always be an element of mystery about the precise way in which the Bible has been produced. This ought not to surprise us, for mystery inevitably accompanies all God's dealings with his creatures. The incarnation is similarly a 'mystery' to us, for we can never state with final precision how the divine and human natures are united in the one person of Jesus Christ. In neither case, however, need the 'mystery' of God's activity inhibit us from believing it and rejoicing in its truth." (p. 46)
- 3. "In the final analysis, the question of inspiration comes back to our doctrine of God. If we acknowledge God as the one 'who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will' (Eph. 1:11), who 'does whatever pleases him' (Ps. 135:6), then we shall encounter no essential difficulty. There is nothing incongruous in his having produced a book which, while arising out of the experience of his creatures, is also, through his sovereign ordering, his very word to them." (p. 46)

IV. Canonicity

A. Definition

- 1. "The word 'canonicity' comes from the Greek kanōn, meaning rule or **standard** of measurement." (p. 46)

regard

2. "Used in a general way of the Bible, the **dispute** refers to its literary limits, and deals with such questions as why we _____ these books alone as 'inspired' and why all of these books are included in 'inspired Scripture'." (p. 46)
- B. The Old Testament Cannon
1. "There appears to have been little _____ among the Jews at any period concerning the content of the canon. The Greek version of the OT included several apocryphal books, but none was apparently recognized in Palestine. Evidence that the Apocrypha was at any time recognized and accepted by official Judaism in either Palestine or Alexandria is lacking, and Jews today still regard only our present OT books as Scripture." (p. 47)
- C. The New Testament Cannon
1. "A full canonical extension to the OT was not a pressing **need** _____ in the apostolic period for at least two reasons." (p. 47)
 - a) "Firstly, the churches possessed a considerable body of **oral** _____ tradition concerning the happenings and teaching of Jesus' ministry." (p. 47)
 - b) "Secondly, a more enduring form of the apostolic teaching was relatively unnecessary as long as the apostles and their immediate disciples were **alive** _____." (p. 47)
 2. "Even in the apostolic period, however, certain factors pointed to the **eventual** _____ emergence of a body of authoritative writings." (p. 48)
 - a) "The church's concern to preserve the traditions about Jesus shows they recognized the normative nature of Jesus' mission, and hence of the preserved record of it; this was precisely what underlay the writing of the four Gospels." (p. 48)
 - b) "Further, the churches gave special respect to the letters of the apostles; Paul, for example, affixed his signature to confirm their apostolic authority (1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17) and directed that his letters be read in the churches." (p. 48)
 - c) "Another significant pointer towards the emergence of the NT canon comes from the Christian writers of the immediate post-apostolic period (known as the apostolic Fathers). They distinguished any authority possessed by their writings from that primary authority residing in the writings of the apostles." (p. 48)
 3. The Earliest Lists
 - a) "The earliest known attempt at a **list** _____ of received books is the Muratorian Canon of around AD 175." (p. 48)
 - b) "The earliest complete list is that of **Eusebius** _____ (died 340)" (p. 48)
 - c) "By the end of the fourth century **unanimity** _____ had been attained by the churches." (p. 48)
 4. "As with the OT, a number of **apocryphal** _____ writings had appeared by the time the NT canon was formulated." (p. 48)
- V. Other Issues (p. 49-61)
- A. Infallible
 - B. Inerrant
 - C. 'As originally given'
 - D. Difficulties

E. Hermeneutics

1. Literally
2. Scripture must be interpreted by scripture
3. Scripture must be interpreted dynamically