

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

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One of the important things I like about Bible study is the fact that when I open the Bible I am at the source! When I read the words of Jesus written by the inspired writers, I know that I am truly reading the words of Jesus. When I read the words of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, I know that I am reading trustworthy words given to them by God's Holy Spirit. This is greatly reassuring. After all, Jesus said "...take my yoke upon you and learn of me..." (Matthew 11:28ff.)

Hello, I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

The New Testament of Jesus Christ is our solid connection to Christ. The Old Testament is God's preparatory work that was needed to bring God's salvation into the world.

I cannot learn from Jesus by meditation. I will not be able to think through my own thoughts and come to the thoughts of Jesus. The old prophet Jeremiah spoke of this problem in these words: "²³I know, O LORD that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. [and then Jeremiah prayed:] ²⁴Correct me, O LORD..." (Jer 10:23-24, ESV.) This should be the prayer of an individual when he or she opens the Bible. "Teach me Lord. Correct me Lord. Show me the way, O Lord." Our God uses his word in exactly those ways, that is, to teach, correct, and guide.

The Bible's inspiration is the thing that makes the Bible **the** primary source of facts and information about God and His plan for human redemption. Because of its inspiration, all of the Bible's facts and information can have its wonderful affect upon my life. Even as David said,

"Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word! ¹⁷⁰ Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word. ¹⁷¹ My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes. ¹⁷² My

tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.”
(Psalms 119:169-172, ESV.)

Jesus' apostle Paul told the young Christian Timothy, "... you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:14-17, NKJV.)

Well, what about “inspiration”? What is that like? Isn't that like someone sitting down and meditating and coming up with ideas? No; it is not like meditation. In meditation you begin with your own thoughts and then expand upon them trying to come up with something new. However, by inspiration the writer is given new thoughts, thoughts that the writer never would have thought of by himself, thoughts that are not built upon human ideas or preconceptions.

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:6-9, ESV.)

The Old Testament king, David, was inspired. He described it this way: ² "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue." (2 Sam 23:2, ESV.) The apostle Paul called it “revelation.” ¹¹ “For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Gal 1:11-12, ESV.) Today you and I must receive the “revelation” through a different means. For instance, we read the words of Paul that were given to him by revelation. We receive our information by a completely

different means than the one described by Paul and David. Even Paul's journeys, his movements were sometimes dictated by revelation. Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 2 that fourteen years had gone by in between his visits to Jerusalem, but when he returned to Jerusalem, he did so because of revelation: "I went up because of a revelation and set before them [the apostles and elders in Jerusalem] ... the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain." (Gal 2:1-2, ESV.) On another occasion on the second missionary journey, this same apostle Paul wanted to turn north into the country of Bithynia, but the Spirit forbade him. So, he attempted to turn south into Asia. The Spirit also would not allow that. So, Paul assumed correctly that the Spirit wanted him to travel straight ahead till the road ended at the seacoast and the city of Troas. While there in that city Paul saw a vision of a Macedonian man saying, "come over and help us." So, Paul and those men with him set sail for Macedonia. They followed the leading of the Spirit. Paul called these kinds of interventions, revelations.

Paul told the Ephesians: "the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Eph 3:3-5, ESV.) Paul had obtained "insights" into the "mystery of Christ." The good news about Christ, that is the gospel, is called the "mystery of Christ" because the details were not known by people in earlier generations. A "mystery" is something that is not clear...the word literally means "hidden." Earlier godly people did not have an understanding or an insight into God's plan of salvation for the world. It was hidden from their view, from their knowledge. The Old Testament laid the foundation for it, but no one really understood the plan until the Lord Jesus came to earth. Jesus began to reveal the plan during his public ministry. But He told his disciples that they were not able to fully understand what he was telling them until the Holy Spirit came to guide them into all the truth. (John 16:12-15.) After His ascension Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of revealing what God wanted the world to know. The Holy Spirit gave "revelation" or "insight" into the mystery of Christ. The good news

about Christ was only revealed to Christ's apostles and prophets in the church of Christ, like Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These were the writers of the New Testament.

Didn't the first century Christians know the "mystery"? Yes, they knew it because God inspired the apostles and prophets in the church to tell them, either orally or in writing. We have in the New Testament what the inspired men wrote. Even as Paul said to the Ephesians, "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ...."

Friends, this is the way you and I receive our insight into the gospel of Christ. That's right! We get understanding by reading Paul's insight. We also get insight by reading Matthew's account of the life of Christ, or Mark, or Luke, or John. We learn of Christ by the written Word of God.

There have been many attempts through the centuries to discredit the Bible. None of them have successfully brought down the reliability of the Bible. There are those who have dug up spurious gospels, like the gospel of Thomas, or the gospel of Peter, etc. These spurious books were not written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The early church recognized these counterfeits and excluded them from the sacred selections.

Jesus intended that the church of Christ have these words that would guide and comfort our hearts. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples that he was going away. "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me;¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.¹² I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.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. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.” (John 16:5-15, NKJV.)

Friends, have you put your trust in the Word of God? Yes, what I like about Bible study is the fact that I am reading and studying the primary source. There is no other like it! There is nothing that can help us like sitting at the feet of the Holy Spirit listening and learning the words of God from the Holy Bible. The scriptures lead us to and contain the words of eternal life, and this life is in Jesus himself. As Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:39-41, ESV.) Friends, do you refuse the message of the scriptures. Will you continue to reject eternal life that is in Jesus Christ, the son of God?