

Sunday, November 8, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 7: Understanding Basic Terminology: Inspiration and Illumination

Introduction

- Last week, in Lesson 6, we summarized two different approaches to New Testament textual criticism identified by Dr. Edward F. Hills; the *naturalistic* and *consistently Christian* methods. According to Dr. Hills, “These two methods deal with the same materials, the same Greek manuscripts, and the same translations and biblical quotations, but they interpret the materials very differently.” (Hills, 3)
 - *Consistently Christian Method*—“. . . interprets the materials of New Testament textual criticism in accordance with the doctrines of the divine inspiration and providential preservation of the Scriptures.”
 - *Naturalistic Method*—“. . . interprets these same materials in accordance with its own doctrine that the New Testament is nothing more than a human book.” (Hills, 3)
- Also in Lesson 6, we began our study of some basic theological terminology as it related to God’s Word. I stated in part:
 - “. . . before proceeding any further with this course we need to thoroughly study the following basic terminology: revelation, inspiration, illumination, and preservation. . . Grounding ourselves in these basic concepts will help us wade through the manuscript and textual issues later on. Possessing the ability to judge the textual and historical information from the vantage point of what the Bible teaches about itself is the only source of clarity on these difficult issues. In short, if our doctrine is correct it ought to commend itself to us in both history and our experience.” (Lesson 6, 2-3)
- Revelation was the only term of the four identified above that we had time to consider in Lesson 6. Essentially we defined revelation as, “*the content of God’s communication to man*. Revelation is God’s disclosure of Himself to mankind. Mankind cannot know anything about God apart from God choosing to reveal Himself to mankind.” (Lesson 6, 3)
- In addition to identifying the prerequisites or preconditions that make God’s disclosure of himself possible, we also considered the following three types of revelation:
 - *Natural Revelation*—is the revelation that God has provided of Himself in creation as well as in man. All men have access to the revelation that God has placed in creation.
 - *Special Revelation*—this is what Hebrews 1:1 is referring to; God making Himself known to particular people in specific ways throughout Scripture (Genesis 18, Matthew 16:17, Galatians 2:2)
 - *Written Revelation*—is not something that God has placed innately in man, or in nature, as a testimony. It is not a special time when God communicated with somebody, but it is what God caused to be written down.
- In this lesson we will touch upon the mechanism that makes written revelation possible i.e., inspiration. If we have time, we will also discuss illumination.

Inspiration

- With revelation the information comes from God to man; in inspiration the information moves from man to paper. Man writes that which God wants written down.
- II Timothy 3:16—the Greek word for scripture is *graphē*, and it means “that which is written down.” Inspiration has to do with what is written down. Inspiration is not God just giving the information to man. That is revelation. But inspiration is man putting the thing on paper, and the issue is what is written down on that paper.
- The phrase “is given by inspiration of God” is a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*. This is the only time the Greek word *theopneustos* occurs in the New Testament.
- *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* offers the following relevant meanings for the English word inspiration:
 - 1) The act of drawing air into the lungs; the inhaling of air; a branch of respiration, and opposed to expiration.
 - 2) The act of breathing into anything.
 - 3) The infusion of ideas into the mind by the Holy Spirit; the conveying into the minds of men, ideas, notices or monitions by extraordinary or supernatural influence; or the communication of the divine will to the understanding by suggestions or impressions on the mind, which leave no room to doubt the reality of their supernatural origin.
All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. 2 Timothy 3:16.
- Please note that in 1828, the definition of the English word inspiration had nothing to do with the original writings. Rather it was referring to the supernatural process whereby God the Holy Spirit infused into the minds of men the ideas of almighty God.
- Then the dictionary gives II Timothy 3:16 as the verse to illustrate the concept. In other words, inspiration is the supernatural process whereby God the Holy Spirit moved upon human authors to have them record in writing those aspects of God’s revelation (written revelation) that He wanted mankind to possess forever (Isaiah 30:8).
- II Peter 1:21—it was the supernatural force of God the Holy Spirit that caused the prophets of old to speak.
- Job 32:8—the giving of the Scripture is not the only thing God did by inspiration. *Nēshamah* is the Hebrew word translated inspiration in Job 32:8 and it occurs 24 times in 24 verses in the Hebrew text supporting the KJB. It is variously rendered as ‘breath’ seventeen times, ‘blast’ three times, ‘spirit’ two times, ‘inspiration’ one time and ‘souls’ one time.
- Given the fact that Job was the first book of the Bible written, it is not possible that Elihu is using the word inspiration here in reference to the giving of the Scriptures as in II Timothy 3:16. Rather, Elihu is referring to the fact that there is something unique about man; via inspiration, God has given mankind the capacity for understanding.
- Job 33:4—mankind was created by “the breath of the Almighty.”

- Genesis 2:7—Adam and, by extension, all of humanity owes their very existence to the breath of God.
 - Genesis 1:27-28—this helps explain how God created man in his own image.
- Please recall the second definition of the English word inspiration presented above, “the act of breathing into anything.” Life was brought to Adam through an act of inspiration on the part of God.
- Psalm 33:6—God used the same process to create the heavens and all the hosts thereof.
 - Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29
- The testimony of Scripture is that God inspired at least three things:
 - The creation of heaven and earth.
 - The creation of man.
 - The giving of the Scriptures.
- II Timothy 3:16—God exercised the same supernatural force to inspire His word that He utilized when He created heaven, earth, and mankind.
- Inspiration is the supernatural process whereby God recorded in writing (*graphē*) those aspects of His revelation that He wanted mankind to possess forever (Isaiah 30:8).
- Hebrews 4:12-13—this understanding of inspiration helps one understand how the word of God can be “quick and powerful.” God literally breathed His own life into His word just as He did into mankind and all of creation.
- Does anyone doubt that inspiration sets the Bible apart from any other book of antiquity? This is why taking a neutral or naturalist approach to textual criticism is out of step with God’s word for a Bible believer.

Illumination

- Illumination is a theological word that does not appear in the Bible, like Trinity or Rapture. Illumination is a term used by theologians to describe the process whereby the truth of Scripture gets off the page and into the soul of the believer.
- I Corinthians 2:9-16—Paul is talking about the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (Illumination) whereby He takes the words on the page and communicates them to your understanding, and then stores them in your soul, i.e., your inner man.
- I Corinthians 2:14—“Scripture is very plain that the natural mind of man does not receive and cannot know the things of the Spirit of God.” (Baker, 45)

- I Corinthians 2:12—“This same passage teaches that God has given us His Spirit, so that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. This work of the Spirit of God in making known to the individual the things which God has prepared for them that love Him is called Illumination.” (Baker, 45)
- “Revelation has been given to only a select few through whom God chose to give His Word. Illumination is available to every believer. Revelation has been completed . . . Illumination is a continuing process. Revelation has to do with the impartation of truth. Illumination has to do with the understanding of truth.” (Baker, 45)
- Ephesians 1:17-18—indicates that Paul recognized the need of all saints for illumination.
- Luke 24:45-46—Christ opened their understanding, thereby causing them to understand the Scriptures.
- John 16:7-15—even in time past in Israel’s program, one of the functions of God the Holy Spirit was to teach, instruct, and guide the kingdom saints.
 - I John 2:20, 27
- Lewis Sperry Chafer views these passages from John as the “seed-plot” for the doctrine of illumination that is later developed by Paul in I Corinthians 2:9-3:4. Regarding these verses Chafer states in part:
 - “It is not difficult to believe that the Third Person of the Godhead is in possession of all truth; the marvel is that this Third Person indwells the least Christian, and thus places that Christian in a position to receive and understand that transcendent truth which the Spirit knows. Within his own capacity, the child of God can know no more than “the things of a man,” which are within the range of “the spirit of man which is in him.” Amazing, indeed, is the disclosure that “the Spirit which is of God” has been received, and for the express purpose in view that the child of God “might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (Chafer, 111-112)
- Dr. R.B. Ouellette, pastor of First Baptist Church in Bridgeport, MI and author of *A More Sure Word: Which Bible Can You Trust?* summarizes illumination as follows:
 - “Illumination is when God “turns the light on” for us on a certain passage. This process is a work that is done by the Holy Spirit, the writer and interpreter of Scripture. This is a present-tense work accomplished by the Spirit. Whereas inspiration was completed in the past, preservation began in the past and carries through today; illumination is for us today in the present.” (Ouellette, 34)
- II Peter 1:21—God the Holy Spirit was the active agent in the process of revelation and inspiration.
- I Thessalonians 5:23—as humans we possess a spirit.
- Romans 8:9-11—the same Spirit of God that moved upon the Biblical writers thereby causing them to record God’s words dwells within the believer.

- I Corinthians 3:16
- II Timothy 1:14
- Essence communicates with essence. Illumination is the spiritual process that occurs in the inner man of the believer as God the Holy Spirit takes the written word of God that the Spirit wrote, and communicates it to the believer's inner man. This is how spiritual growth and learning take place and how sound doctrine is stored up in the believer's soul.

Works Cited

Baker, Charles F. *A Dispensational Theology*. Grace Bible College Publications, 1971.

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology Vol. I*. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1947.

Hills, Edward F. *The King James Version Defended*. Christian Research Press, 1956.

Jordan, Richard. *Manuscript Evidence 101*. Grace School of the Bible.

Ouellette, R.B. *A More Sure Word: Which Bible Can you Trust?* Striving Together Publications, 2008.