

What We Mean When We Say the Bible Is Inspired by God

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

It's no surprise that Christians and non-Christians have radically different views of Scripture. Christians claim the Bible is the Word of God, while non-Christians disagree.

Unless the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of a non-Christian, this differing view of Scripture will always be the case. As 1 Corinthians 2:14 puts it, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

At the heart of the Christian view of the Bible is the concept of verbal plenary inspiration. There's a lot packed into those three words, so let me explain what it means and what it doesn't mean.

Verbal plenary inspiration is a way of saying that God the Holy Spirit inspired not only the thoughts of Scripture, such as the ideas, but the very words and details of Scripture.

Jesus Himself said, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one dot or one mark will pass from the law until all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). The English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible says this about the passage: “Jesus confirms the full authority of the OT [Old Testament] as Scripture for all time ... even down to the smallest components of the written text: the iota is the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet ... and the dot likely refers to a tiny stroke or

a part of a letter used to differentiate between Hebrew letters.”

God authored the entire Bible, down to every word. But God didn’t figuratively sit down at a desk, take out a pen and start writing down the Bible. Instead, he inspired writers throughout history to write down Scripture. These human authors retained their own style, voice, perspective and cultural distinctions, yet God uniquely inspired them to write down what he wanted recorded with complete accuracy. This is different from, say, the Qur’an or Book of Mormon, which adherents of Islam and Mormonism claim was the result of someone taking dictation.

2 Peter 1:20-21 explains it this way, “...no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation. For no prophecy at any time was produced by the will of man, but holy men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

Do you believe that the Bible is the literal Word of God? Why? Why not? {eoa}

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