
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPPING MINISTRIES
Institute in the Foundations of Church Leadership
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DEFINING REVELATION, INSPIRATION, AND ILLUMINATION
Basic Lecture 1

INTRODUCTION:

- A. What you think influences the way you live (Proverbs 23:7).
- B. Tradition and culture are two things that influence how we think about God and how we live (Mark 7:6-9).
- C. We should not allow the world (unsaved people and their beliefs and traditions) to influence the way we think and act. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, and the Bible should be used to transform the way we think about God and how we live (how we think about things) (Romans 12:2).
- D. When tradition and culture disagree with the Bible, we should follow the Bible, not tradition or culture.

I. REVELATION

- A. Definition: It is God making known (or revealing) to man who He is, what He is like, and what His truth is.
 - 1. Revelation can be either general or specific.
 - 2. God reveals Himself through His actions and through His Word.
- B. General revelation is defined as God revealing Himself in nature, the human conscience, and in His sovereign control of the world.
 - 1. Creation reveals God. (Psalm 19:1-6)
 - 2. God has placed the knowledge of Himself in every individual. (Romans 1:18-20)
 - 3. God reveals Himself in the human conscience. (Romans 2:14-15)
 - 4. The value of general revelation:
 - a. It shows the unbeliever that God exists.
 - b. It gives the believer confidence that his faith is not in vain.
 - 5. But, general revelation is limited. Special revelation is necessary for a person to be saved.
- C. Specific revelation is defined as God revealing Himself in Jesus Christ and in the Scripture. (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - 1. God revealed Himself through the acts and the words of Jesus. (John 10:36-38)
 - 2. Jesus was the revelation of God to individuals. (John 14:6-9)
 - 3. There is a relationship between the living Word of God (Jesus), and the written Word of God (the Bible). (John 1:1-2; John 5:39)

II. INSPIRATION

- A. Incorrect definitions:
 - 1. One view denies God's direct involvement and teaches that inspiration only means that intelligent people who were good writers wrote down their own thoughts about God.

2. Another incorrect view of inspiration teaches that every word in the Bible is directly from God and that the authors did not think about what they were writing. They were like mindless robots.
- B. The correct definition: God actively worked in the minds of human authors (like Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, David, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul) so that they still used their own individual personalities as they wrote what God wanted them to write. They did it without any errors or mistakes. The Holy Spirit is the one who actually worked inside of each Bible writer to assure that there would not be any mistakes. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

NOTE: This definition only applies to the documents that the original writers wrote. What we have today are accurate translations of the original documents in our own languages.

- C. Inspiration is how God guaranteed that His communication to man (His revelation) was written down without any mistakes or errors.
- D. Since inspiration guarantees that God's revelation was written down without errors or mistakes, then the Bible is inerrant (no errors) and infallible (never wrong).

NOTE: Some believe that the Bible is inspired, but still has errors. If the Bible is inspired, then it cannot contain errors. God didn't allow any of the authors to write something that was not true.

III. ILLUMINATION

- A. Definition: An ability which is given to the person who has received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, is born again that gives him the ability to understand spiritual truth.
- B. Illumination is limited to Christians.
- C. Insights:
 1. It is a permanent ability that increases over time.
 2. It is part of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the life of the believer. (John 16:13)
 3. The Holy Spirit removes the veil from the spiritual eyes of a person when they are saved (2 Corinthians 3:14-16).
 4. The more we meditate and obey God's Word, the more we will understand it (Psalm 119:130, 97-100, 104).
 5. It is like shining a light on the meaning of the Bible. (1 Corinthians 2:14-15)
- D. Caution: Unfortunately some Christians replace the reading and the study of the Bible with what they believe is "illumination." Example: If someone says, "The Holy Spirit said to me . . ." and they believe it came directly from God, then that person is replacing reading and studying the Word of God with seeking personal messages from God or some special insight or illumination. If that was possible, then the Bible would not be necessary. All we would need are people who receive direct, inspired revelation from God.
- E. The difference between inspiration and illumination:
 1. Inspiration is about how the Bible (God's special revelation) came into existence without errors or mistakes.

2. Illumination means that spiritual truth is made clear to the Christian, and makes it easier for the Christian to understand the Bible.

IV. WHY WE HAVE THE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE THAT WE DO

NOTE: There were other books and letters written that were not included in the Bible. The early church used several tests to determine what books and letters to include.

- A. Tests for Old Testament books
 1. Did the book indicate Divine authorship?
 2. Did it reflect God speaking through a mediator?
 3. Was the human author a spokesman for God?
 4. Was the human author a prophet or did he have the prophetic gift?
 5. Was the book historically accurate?
 6. Did it reflect a record of actual facts?
 7. How was the book received by the Jews?
- B. Tests for New Testament books
 1. Was the author an apostle or did he have a connection with an apostle? (e.g. Mark wrote under Peter's authority.)
 2. Was the book accepted by the church generally?
 3. Did the book reflect consistency with the doctrine that had already been accepted?
 4. Did the book reflect the quality of inspiration?

V. A WORD OF CAUTION

- A. Jude 3 says that the faith (the truth taught by the Christian faith) has been delivered once for all to the saints. That implies that God is not giving new revelation.
- B. When someone claims that God revealed something new to them, they are claiming that they received some new revelation which contradicts what Jude wrote (Jude 3 says the faith was handed down "once and for all.").
- C. According to Deuteronomy 18:20-22, if someone made that claim (above) and were ever wrong, then they were killed. It is a very serious thing to claim to have "a word from God."