*Session 19*

*The Role of the Holy Spirit*

1. **Inspiration and the Divine/Human Balance in the Bible**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

How does God breath into (inspire) the Bible?

How much was the Holy Spirit involved in the writing of the Bible?

* + 1. The Bible as God’s words
    2. The Bible as Human words

*The Source of Inspiration in the Bible*

*The Bible as Human The Bible as Divine*

* + - 1. Emphasizing the human element of the Bible:
* the Bible as a literary document formulated by people long ago
* Questions question the miraculous or claims of any divine revelation
* Meaning determined by authors and communities
* Stories and teachings modified over time
* Ethics are determined by whatever commands one chooses to follow.

1. Emphasizing the divine element of the Bible:

* Every word in the Bible came directly from God
* People wrote what God told them
* “dictation theory” argues no direct human involvement at all, authors wrote down each word as God directed.

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| *The Source of Inspiration in the Bible* | |
| *The Bible as Human*  “Liberal”  19th Century historical criticism  Evolutionary Science  Reason  Doubting the miraculous  Bible is a document “in history”  Wants an explanation for everything  Humans are the authors  Historical development of human documents  Jesus Seminar[[1]](#footnote-1)  Viewed as dangerous by some evangelicals  Sees problems in the Bible  Emphasis on human intellect  Faith must have a reason  Humans are the authority | *The Bible as Divine*  “Fundamentalist”  20th Century response with “Scope Trials”[[2]](#footnote-2)  “The Bible says it, I believe it, and that’s good enough for me”  Faith  The Bible gives accurate account of miracles  The Bible is the timeless word of God  Accepts the mystery of the Bible  God is the author  Dictation Theory  “Chicago Statement”[[3]](#footnote-3)  A safe place for assurance  All problems can be explained  Emphasis on divine revelation  Faith can stand on its own  God is the authority |
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We must have a balanced approach

Look at the Living Word: Jesus was both human and divine.

The Bible as the written word is also both human and divine.

As a human document, we use the tools of exegesis to explore the Bible as it appeared in history.

As a divine document, we believe that God is speaking through the Bible to us today.

Wesleyans say the primary response the Bible is to accept God’s offer of salvation in Christ.

The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to remind us of the words of Jesus (John 14:26)

Our interpretation is influenced by our community

1. **The Holy Spirit and the Christian Interpreter**
2. The Holy Spirit does not make valid interpretation automatic but expects us to use our minds, proper interpretive methods, and good study helps to interpret the Bible accurately.
3. The Spirit does not override common sense and logic.
4. The Spirit does not make all parts of the Bible equally clear.
5. The Spirit does not create new meaning or provide new information.
6. The Spirit does not give one person a new interpretation that someone else has never had (be aware of new “revelations”).
7. We can rely on the Spirit to help us grasp the meaning of God’s Word.
8. The Spirit does not change the Bible to suit our purposes or to match our circumstances.
9. The Spirit brings the meaning of the Bible to bear on the reader.
10. Our spiritual maturity affects our ability to hear the voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures.
11. Remember that you do not have to be a Bible scholar to read, understand, and apply the Bible.

Duvall and Hayes ask, Can we grasp God’s word apart from the Spirit?

1. “Yes” -- At the level of cognitive understanding, the Spirit appears to play a minimal role. You do not need to be Spirit-filled to have accurate interpretation.
2. “Yes, but Only to a Degree” -- At the level of meaning, a person without the Spirit can only have limited understanding. There is a deeper understanding that comes only through the Holy Spirit.

The limitations include:

1. Sin has dulled our ability to perceive scriptural truth.
2. Pre-text baggage will distort how an unbeliever reads Scripture.
3. Understanding is a whole person process. Unbelievers by definition do not accept the things of God.
4. “No” -- At the level of application. Unbelievers will not accept and obey the truth of Scripture. Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, our Bible study cannot lead to transformation.

The Holy Spirit gives light to those who trust in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 2:6-16; 2 Cor 3:15-18).

1. It is essential to be prepared spiritually to hear what the Spirit will say through the Bible.
2. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation according to Roy Zuck:
   * 1. The Holy Spirit does not give new revelation on a par with Scripture.
     2. He does not guarantee that our interpretations are infallible.
     3. He does not give one person new insights that no one else has.
     4. Many non-Christians can apply sound hermeneutics to understand the meaning of Scripture; without the Spirit, however, they refuse to apply it adequately to their lives.
     5. Understanding is not the exclusive domain of biblical scholars.
     6. Spiritual devotion on the part of the interpreter is crucial.
     7. Lack of spiritual preparation can hinder correct interpretation.
     8. There is no substitute for diligent study.
     9. The Spirit does not rule out study helps.
     10. He does not override common sense and logic.
     11. He does not normally give sudden intuitive flashes.
     12. The Spirit’s role in hermeneutics is part of the process of illumination.
     13. He does not make all of the Bible equally clear.
     14. He does not ensure comprehensive understanding.

**Big Ideas**

1. The Bible is both a divine and human document. It is challenging to see the balance between these.
2. How much authority we give the Bible will depend on how we believe God speaks through it.
3. Even though people have different interpretations of the Bible, this does not mean they do not have the Holy Spirit speaking to them. This means we must be discerning in what we hear and read to determine if and how God is speaking to people.
4. The Spirit will help us understand God’s Word but we also must do our part of careful study.

1. Jesus Seminar: A group of scholars from the Society of Biblical Literature graded the words of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels whether they believed the words came from Jesus or were modified by the early church. They voted that the majority of sayings in the Gospels were changed by the early church. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Scopes Trial: A legal trial in 1925 in the United States of *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes*. A substitute high school teacher, John T. Scopes, was accused of violating Tennessee's Butler Act, which had made it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school. It made a political statement about the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Chicago Statement: A conference held in Chicago in 1978 that issued a statement in support of biblical inerrancy. It was signed by over 200 evangelical leaders. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)