

LESSON 2

INSPIRATION & VPP

(by Rev Dennis Kwok)

I. DEFINITION OF INSPIRATION

A. Meaning of Inspiration

1. The Bible is God-breathed. “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God...*” (2 Tim 3:16). The word *inspiration* is translated from a compound Greek word (theopneustos) which means ‘God-breathed.’ Thus this verse says that ‘all Scripture is God-breathed.’ God directly breathed out His words over about 1,500 years to approximately 40 specially chosen men of God who wrote them down to give us our Scriptures, the Word of God in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic & Greek).
2. With so many human writers, one is more inclined to think there would a total diversity or contrary opinions within the writings. However, there is an undisputable consistency of theme, a thread of continuity and unity from Genesis to Revelation. It is as though there were collusion among these writers, spanning nearly 1,500 years to produce something flawless and inspiring. The conclusion must be that there was a single mind and therefore the author behind the writings in which formed the Book is the Almighty God. The Bible is clear in revealing that God is the Author (see Ps 68:11; Heb 1:1; 1 Cor 2:13; Gal 1:11-12; etc).
3. The inspiration of the Bible was a direct and unique act of the Holy Spirit and cannot be duplicated by man. The process of inspiration is a mystery of the providence of God, but the result of the process is a Book preserved and authorized made available to us today.

B. Meaning of Verbal Inspiration

1. The Words of the Bible are God-breathed.

‘This [Bible] is the writing of the living God: each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips; each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit.’ – C. H. Spurgeon
2. The word *verbal* means ‘by means of words,’ or ‘word for word.’ As used of inspiration, it means the very words of the Bible were breathed out by God. In other words, God gave the **exact words** of Scripture (see 2 Sam 23:2; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor 2:13).
3. The testimony of Jesus in Matt 5:18 says, “*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*” A “jot” is the smallest letter of the Hebrew Alphabet (yod ך). A “tittle” is

a small appendage that differentiates between two similar-looking letters in the alphabet (beth ב as compared to kaph כ).



C. Meaning of Verbal Plenary Inspiration

1. *Every word of the Bible is God-breathed. “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4).*
2. The word *plenary* means ‘full.’ Of inspiration, it means that the ‘full’ Bible is inspired, or that every word is breathed out by God (see Prov 30:5).

‘That this inspiration should extend to the very words seems most natural since the purpose of inspiration is to secure an infallible record of truth. Thoughts and words are so inseparably connected that as a rule a change in words means a change in thought.’ – Loraine Boettner

II. THE MIRACULOUS WORK OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

A. Holy Men Set Apart and Prepared by God to Write the Scripture

1. *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet 1:21).* God would not trust His holy Word to unregenerate men, for how can they touch the Holy Thing of God without a clean hand and a pure heart? Although the 40 men were not perfect, they had a deep reverence for God and were considered spiritual leaders of their day (see the complete list of the writers of Scripture in the Appendix 1).
2. God prepared these 40 men, using and transcending their personalities, for the writing of His Word. Some of them were leaders, musicians, teachers, and from all walks of life. Since God is the Creator of language and the Master of all styles, He could give His Word in the styles of David, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul and the rest of them, all exhibit unique styles, when inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen down His Word.
3. And when they wrote, since it is the Holy Spirit who guided them, wrote exactly what men are: sinners in need of salvation. Sins were exposed, revealed, shamed and punished. The Bible did not ignore Moses’ anger, David’s sin of adultery, or Peter’s denial of his Lord three times. Sinful men left to themselves could never have written a book so revealing of human nature.

B. Non-eyewitnesses to Write the Scripture

1. In Genesis 1 God described the Creation of the world. He gave that information to mankind through Moses. But neither Moses nor any other human being was an eyewitness to Creation. God breathed into Moses the description of something Moses knew nothing about.

2. Daniel admitted that he did not understand what he was writing (see Dan 12:8-9). Certainly God does not require the writers to see or understand in order to pen down His Word since it is His Word which is to be written and not theirs.

C. Eyewitnesses to Write the Scripture

However God did inspire some of these men to write those things which they had been eyewitnesses. *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; ... That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us”* (1 John 1:1-3).

III. THE FALSE VIEWS OF INSPIRATION

A. Natural Inspiration

This false idea teaches that man can reach high levels of creativity like Shakespeare, Bach or Beethoven and equate with ‘inspiration’ to write the Bible. This modernistic idea teaches inspiration without God but exalts man to develop inspiration naturally on his own. This type of ‘inspiration’ is certainly fallible since it is derived from sinful man.

B. Partial Inspiration

1. This false teaching claims that the Bible merely ‘contains’ the Word of God. It claims that some of the Bible is inspired, and not all; the Bible may be accurate in morals and doctrine, but unreliable in areas of science, geography and history.
2. This view ultimately makes man the final authority in determining which passages are inspired and which are not. Anytime a fallible human being becomes the judge and final authority, the Bible in his hand becomes no more his supreme and the only authority. If the Bible is truly God’s Word as it claims, then it must be perfect by definition (since the product of a perfect God can be nothing less than perfect).
3. If the Bible is accurate in areas of major importance, why should it not be accurate also in areas of minor importance? We realize that all of the Bible is important, but those who believe in this teaching say that we can only trust it on the issues of eternal life, salvation, etc. Don’t fall into the trap of the evil one! If we can trust the Bible for our eternal destiny, we can also trust it to be accurate in every area of life and thought.

C. Conceptual Inspiration

1. This unscriptural idea says that God only inspired the thoughts of the Bible and man wrote those thoughts down in his own words. It rejects verbal plenary inspiration, saying it is unbelievable to imagine God dictating every Word. But whose words is greater, God’s or man’s; the Creator’s or the creature’s? God said it, I believe it, that settles it!

2. Thoughts were not written down, but words. It is impossible to have wordless thoughts. If the words were not from God, how could we be sure the thoughts were from God? Very slight changes in words or grammar cause dramatic changes in the thought of a sentence.
3. Some of the writers themselves did not understand what they were writing (see Dan 7:15-16; 12:8-9). How could the human writers put God's thoughts into their own words if they did not understand what they were writing? The only solution to this is that God had to dictate to them every word and they simply wrote them down accordingly.

IV. PROOFS OF INSPIRATION

A. The Bible Itself

1. Some would argue that it is circular reasoning to use the Bible's claim as a proof of its inspiration. They say that any book could make such a claim. But the fact is that very few other books have claimed to be written by God Himself. And those which have made such a claim either did not stand the test of time or are of obviously inferior quality (contains historical inaccuracies and inconsistencies).
2. There are many powerful statements of inspiration in the Scriptures (see 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21; 2 Sam 23:2; Ezra 1:1; etc). The phrase "*Thus saith the Lord*" and similar phrases are found over 3,800 times in the Old Testament.
3. Christ placed His stamp of approval on the Scriptures (see Matt 4:4).

B. Indestructibility

1. The Roman emperor Diocletian (AD 245 – 313) decreed in AD 303 that every Bible should be destroyed. He had been told that if he could destroy the Bible he would destroy Christianity because 'Christians are a people of the Book.' Feeling he had succeeded, Diocletian raised a column with the inscription in Latin saying, 'the name of Christian is extinguished.' In AD 312, Constantine succeeded him and replaced all the pagan symbols with the symbol of the cross. This remarkable change took place in less than ten years.
2. Fourteen hundred years after Constantine, the French atheist Voltaire (1694 – 1778) boasted, 'One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian (one who study into relics of the past) curiosity seeker.' Just twenty years after the death of Voltaire, the Geneva Bible Society purchased his house for printing the Bible. It later became the Paris headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society, which stored and distributed Bibles throughout Europe. "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever*" (Isa 40:8).
3. The indestructibility of the Bible was promised (see Isa 55:11; 59:21; Matt 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17; etc).

4. The indestructibility of the Bible was fulfilled in the copying of the manuscripts. Almost as soon as the original manuscripts (Autographs) were written, copies began to be made. Just as a well-loved and used copy of the Bible soon begins to deteriorate, so the original manuscripts did not last long because of constant handling. But God preserved His Word by the hands of dedicated copyists. These men had such a high regard for Scripture that they went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of their copies. Minute regulations were laid down in the Talmud for their preparation. ‘A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals, prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew. These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals. Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex (manuscript). The length of each column must not extend over less than forty-eight, or more than sixty lines; and the breadth must consist of thirty letters. The whole copy must be first lined; and if three words be written in it without a line, it is worthless. The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any colour, and be prepared according to a definite receipt (receipe). An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least to deviate. No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him... Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; between every word the breadth of a narrow consonant; between every new parshiah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants; between every book, three lines. The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so. Besides this, the copyist must sit in Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink, and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him... The rolls in which these regulations are not observed are condemned to be buried in the ground or burn; or they are banished to the schools, to be used as reading-books.

Besides recording varieties of reading, traditions, or conjecture, the Masoretes (Old Testament copyists) undertook a number of calculations which do not enter into the ordinary sphere of texture criticism. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which itself deserves nothing but praise. The Masoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle – not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter – of the Law should pass away or be lost’ – Sir Frederick Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), pp 38-43.

C. Inerrancy

1. Inerrancy means the Bible is without error throughout, whether it is speaking historically, scientifically or morally. An inerrant Book indicates a perfect Author. Inaccurate writings or speeches would reveal a less-than-perfect author. Deut 18:21-22, “*How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken.*”

- Christ authenticated the passages which have most often been challenged as to their accuracy.

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| Matt 12:40 | – | Jonah and the whale |
| Matt 12:41 | – | Repentance of Nineveh |
| Luke 17:26-27 | – | The Flood |
| Luke 17:28-29 | – | Destruction of Sodom |
| Luke 17:32 | – | Lot’s wife turn into a pillar of salt |
| Luke 4:27 | – | Miraculous healing of Naaman’s leprosy |
| John 3:14 | – | The brazen serpent |

- Those who most often question the accuracy of the Bible are those who do not give it serious study. ‘The Bible got mistakes’ is an expression usually repeated by an individual ignorant of Biblical truth and has an extremely low view on the Bible.

D. Fulfilled Prophecy

- Here is a partial listing of Old Testament prophecies that have already been fulfilled in the New Testament.

| PROPHECY OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH | OT REFERENCE | NT FULFILLMENT |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| His Virgin birth | Isa 7:14 | Matt 1:20; Lk 1:30-35 |
| Birthplace in Bethlehem | Mic 5:2 | Lk 2:4-7 |
| His forerunner, John the Baptist | Isa 40:3 | Jn 1:6-8, 19-23 |
| His Triumphal Entry | Zech 9:9-10 | Jn 12:12-19 |
| His side pierced at Calvary | Zech 12:10 | Jn 19:34 |
| His cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” | Ps 22:1 | Matt 27:46 |
| Darkness at His crucifixion | Ps 22:2 | Matt 27:45 |
| Mocking at His crucifixion | Ps 22:6-8 | Matt 27:39-43 |
| His Hands and feet pierced | Ps 22:16 | Jn 20:24-29 |
| Casting lots for His vesture | Ps 22:18 | Matt 27:35 |
| His unbroken bones | Ps 34:20 | Jn 19:36 |
| Given vinegar to drink | Ps 69:21 | Matt 27:34, 48 |
| Buried in a rich man’s grave near the wicked | Isa 53:9 | Matt 27:57-60 |
| Christ’s Resurrection | Ps 16:10; Hos 6:2 | Lk 24:1-7 |
| Christ’s Ascension | Ps 110:1; Ps 24:3-10 | Acts 1:8-11 |

- There are many Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming.
- Many New Testament prophecies are fulfilled by historical events. The followings are two examples:

- a. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Jesus prophesied in Matt 24:2, “... *there shall not be left here one stone upon another...*” The Roman armies under Titus besieged Jerusalem for 143 days. Josephus records that Titus finally ordered the entire city to be burned to the ground. The city wall ‘was so completely leveled with the ground that there was no longer anything to lead those who visited the spot to believe that it had ever been inhabited.’
- b. The unnatural death of Simon Peter prophesied by Jesus Christ. Jesus says in John 21:18-19, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee,... when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*” Jerome states that Simon Peter (at his request) was crucified upside down. Peter felt he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Master.

E. Scientific Accuracy

Although the Bible was not written as a science book, yet when the Bible speaks concerning matters of science, it is scientifically accurate. The followings are some examples:

1. God created the universe ex nihilo (out of nothing) – Heb 11:3
2. Moisture in the atmosphere goes through a cycle of evaporation and condensation – Ps 135:7
3. The earth is spherical in shape – Isa 40:22
4. The earth rotates upon its axis – Job 38:13-14
5. The earth is suspended in space – Job 26:7
6. The stars cannot be numbered – Jer 33:22
7. The stars travel in certain paths – Jud 5:20
8. The stars differ in magnitude – 1 Cor 15:41
9. The blood sustains life – Lev 17:11
10. The chemical composition of man and earth is identical – Ps 103:14

F. Historical Accuracy

1. Archaeology has confirmed the existence of peoples who were once questioned by Bible skeptics (eg. The Hittites).
2. Archaeology has confirmed the accuracy of the names, times and places of reign of over forty different kings by means of documents contemporary with the Bible (Belshazzar as king of Babylon).

3. Archaeology has confirmed that writing was highly developed when Moses wrote Pentateuch (the uncovering of Sinai script revealed invention of alphabet well before 1,500 BC).

V. INSPIRATION & PRESERVATION

A. Inspiration and Preservation are Twin Doctrines of the Bible!

1. Non-VPPists or anti-VPPists do not believe the God who perfectly inspired His Word has also perfectly preserved His Word. They affirm Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI) but deny Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP). They believe strongly that we do not have an infallible and inerrant Bible TODAY and thereby their denial of the doctrine of VPP. By denying VPP, they might as well deny VPI, for what is the use of an infallible and inerrant Bible in the past but not today?
2. Dr Ian Paisley was absolutely correct to say, “The verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures demands the verbal Preservation of the Scriptures. Those who would deny the need for verbal Preservation cannot be accepted as committed to verbal Inspiration. If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished” (*My Plea for the Old Sword*, 103).
3. Dr Timothy Tow, founding pastor of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore and principal of the Far Eastern Bible College, likewise wrote, “We believe the preservation of Holy Scripture and its Divine inspiration stand in the same position as providence and creation. If Deism teaches a Creator who goes to sleep after creating the world is absurd, to hold to the doctrine of inspiration without preservation is equally illogical. ... Without preservation, all the inspiration, God-breathing into the Scriptures, would be lost. But we have a Bible so pure and powerful in every word and it is so because God has preserved it down through the ages” (*A Theology for Every Christian: Knowing God and His Word*, 47).
4. Dr Hills wrote, “If the doctrine of *divine inspiration* of the Old and New Testament Scriptures is a true doctrine, the doctrine of the *providential preservation* of these Scriptures must also be a true doctrine. It must be that down through the centuries God has exercised a special, providential control over the copying of the Scriptures and the preservation and use of the original text have been available to God's people in every age. God must have done this, for if He gave the Scriptures to His Church by inspiration as the perfect and final revelation of His will, then it is obvious that He would not allow this revelation to disappear or undergo any alteration of its fundamental character” (*The King James Version Defended*, 2).

B. Without Preservation, Inspiration is Meaningless!

1. If we reject the perfect preservation of the Bible today, then we concede that we do not have the inspired Word of God intact, as the words of the originals are not kept pure which the Westminster Divines believed otherwise in their Confession.

2. For centuries, the Church has been upholding and still standing firm on the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration because without it the Church will surely fall. Inspiration of God's Word can only stand as long as Preservation of the same Word continues to be found in our hand today. Otherwise, what's the point of believing inspiration of the Scripture? We believe it exactly because God has preserved for us providentially all of His inspired Word today.

(Appendix 2 is the crossword puzzle. Fill in all the answers in the boxes and discover for yourself the twin doctrine of the Holy Scriptures)

VI. SUMMARY

Although the Preservation of God's Word was not taught till this century, it does not mean it is a new teaching. It is as old as the Bible. God's Word declared it, Jesus Himself affirmed it, let us believed it. To deem preservation of God's Word as a new teaching and insist it is a new path is an indirect attack on God and His character. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). Is not His Word the same yesterday, today, and forever? Will you tell me God has changed His mind and therefore His Word is not the same today as yesterday?

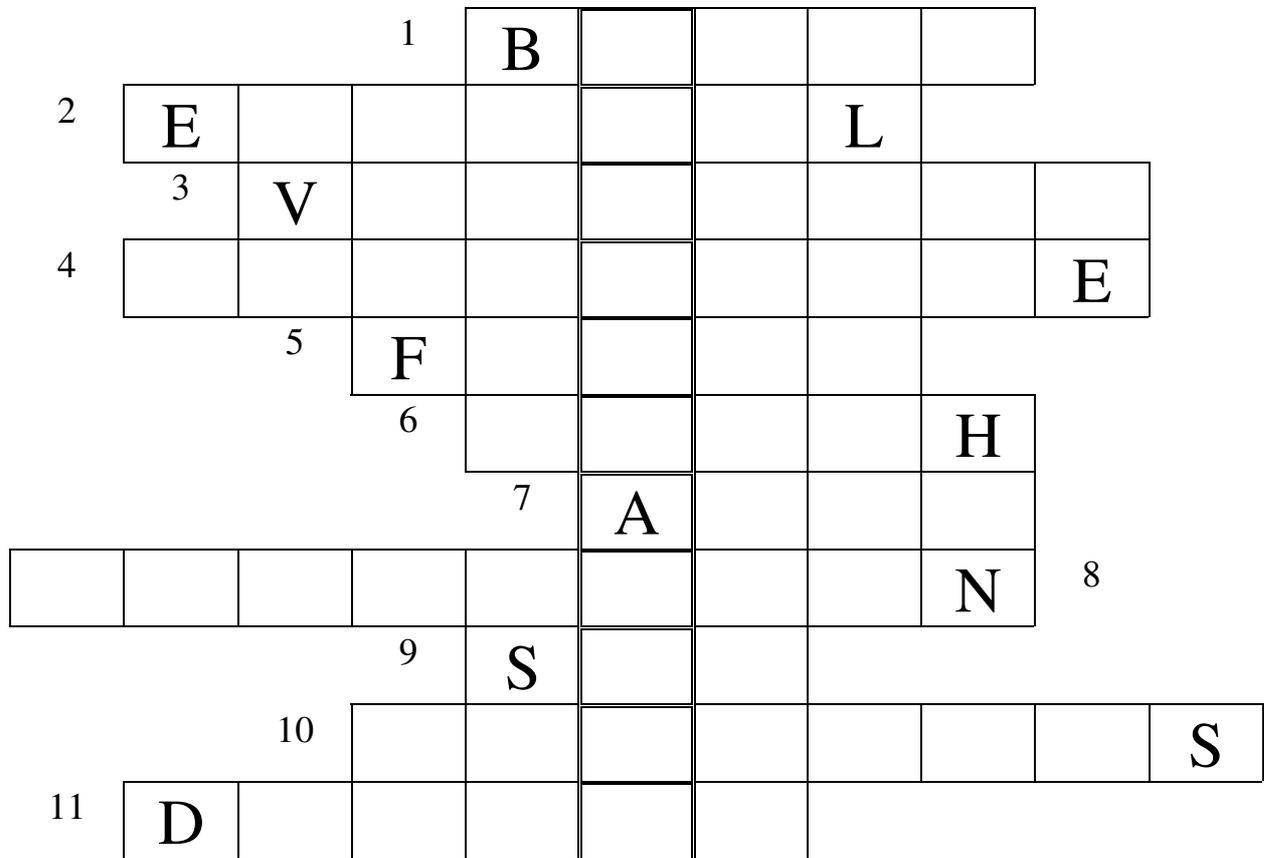
Let us remember that Satan is still the master of all deception and falsehood. He continues to undermine God's Word since in the Garden of Eden against Adam and Eve. Today his cunning method used is remarkably a 'fool-proof' plan that has turned conservative fundamentalists unknowingly to his side and attack God's providential preservation of His inspired Word. But God's Word stands unwavering, "*for we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth*" (2 Cor 13:8). Amen.

"False doctrine does not meet men face to face, and proclaim that it is false. It does not blow a trumpet before it, and endeavour openly to turn us away from the truth as it is in Jesus. It does not come before men in broad daylight and summon them to surrender. It approaches us secretly, quietly, insidiously, plausibly, and in such a way as to disarm man's suspicion, and throw him off his guard. It is the wolf in sheep's clothing, and Satan in the garb of an angel of light, who have always proved the most dangerous foes of the Church" (J C Ryle, *Warnings to the Churches*, 56).

Appendix 1

| WRITER | INSPIRED WRITINGS |
|----------------------|--|
| Moses | Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalm 90 |
| Joshua | Joshua |
| Ezra | Ezra, 1 & 2 Chronicles (probably; not certain) |
| Nehemiah | Nehemiah |
| Mordecai | Esther (?) Ezra and Nehemiah are also possible writers of Esther) |
| David | Psalms (wrote at least 73 of the Psalms) |
| Asaph | Psalm 50, Psalms 73 – 83 |
| Descendents of Korah | Psalms 42, 44 – 49, 84, 87 – 88 |
| Heman the Ezrahite | Psalm 88 |
| Ethan the Ezrahite | Psalm 89 |
| Solomon | Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Psalm 72 (?), Psalm 127 |
| Isaiah | Isaiah |
| Jeremiah | Jeremiah, Lamentations, 1 & 2 Kings (?) |
| Ezekiel | Ezekiel |
| Daniel | Daniel |
| Hosea | Hosea |
| Joel | Joel |
| Amos | Amos |
| Obadiah | Obadiah |
| Jonah | Jonah |
| Micah | Micah |
| Nahum | Nahum |
| Habakkuk | Habakkuk |
| Zephaniah | Zephaniah |
| Haggai | Haggai |
| Zechariah | Zechariah |
| Malachi | Malachi |
| Matthew | Gospel of Matthew |
| Mark | Gospel of Mark |
| Luke | Gospel of Luke, Acts of the Apostles |
| John the Apostle | Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John, Revelation |
| Paul | Romans, 1,2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1,2 Thessalonians, 1,2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews (?) |
| James | James |
| Peter | 1,2 Peter |
| Jude | Jude |

Twin Doctrines of Holy Scripture



1. Another word for the Word of God.
2. God's Word is _____ means it stands for ever and ever.
3. Today, there are many modern English _____ of the Bible.
4. "All _____ is given by inspiration of God ..." (2 Timothy 3:16).
5. "So then _____ cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
6. "And ye shall know the _____, and the _____ shall make you free" (John 8:32).
7. Westminster Divines has affirmed God's Word to have "kept pure in all _____."
8. God's Word reveals God's complete plan of _____ for sinful men through Jesus Christ.
9. _____ has separated man from God, and has caused man to rebel against His Word.
10. In the Old Testament, the _____ spoke God's message to His people.
11. Though the Bible is written by 40 different men, the intent is not human but _____.

