



Conducted by
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“I frequently hear preachers saying that they are preaching from the ‘Word of God.’ What is meant by the ‘Word of God?’”

I suppose a short answer would be to say that they are preaching from the Bible, but I am sure that such an answer, although true, falls short of what is really meant. We need to impress on our minds, and on the minds of others, that we are considering the Revelation of God, and as such it must be consistent with Himself. The Bible is under attack from those who purport to teach from it, and from those who say that it has no place in late twentieth century thinking. On the one hand, those who should be defending it say that large areas of it can be disregarded; on the other hand, the purveyors of materialism present it as a ludicrous irrelevance, contradictory in itself, and meaningless in its application. But I return to the major point; God’s Word must be an expression of Himself, and whatever is essentially His must also be present in His word, and on that premise we shall proceed.

It is Immortal

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul speaks about the appearing of Christ, and goes on, “which in his time he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which

no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:14-16). This God revealed His Word and consequently it must be as immortal as He is. The message is as ancient as the Ancient of Days. When time is no more, God's Word will stand. It is the great explainer of the everlasting past, and the signpost to the everlasting future. It is the unchanging, unchangeable Revelation of God. As Peter says, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:23-25).

It is Authoritative

Perhaps the most important thing which authority can do is to set a standard. In Amos we read of the Lord God standing by a wall which had been built true to plumb, and with a plumbline in His hand. Amos goes on, "And the Lord asked me, 'What do you see, Amos?' 'A plumbline,' I replied. Then the Lord said, 'Look, I am setting a plumbline among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer'" (Amos 7:7,8). I believe that the plumbline which God has put into the world is His Word; it is not only the Divine Standard, but it is the *inspired* standard, and what we are speaking about here is direct and verbal inspiration. What was written at first stands written today, and will stand forever. In the very last book of the Bible God makes Himself very plain. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the word of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Rev. 22:18,19). The Bible is not just a book which *contains* the Word of God. It *is* the Word of God.

The authority of the Bible is absolute because it is God who has spoken. What He has *said* to us of inestimable value and importance if we will but receive it as from Him. Jesus did, and so should we. When Jesus prayed for His disciples He said, "For I have given unto them the *words* which *thou gavest me*; and they have received them (the words), and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). The Eternal God has revealed the Eternal Truth in the Eternal Word, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

The Bible is authoritative because the consistency of God's Word is seen in the outworking of His plans. Men have looked *beyond* that which has been revealed, whereas if they have been content to be guided by Him they would have known better. Jesus illustrated this point quite well to the two on the road to Emmaus when He chastised them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:25, 27).

Pentecost should have taken no one by surprise. Peter reminded his bearers of things they should have known, "And he (God) shall send Jesus Christ, which was before preached unto you: Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20,21). Peter then goes on, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (v 24).

Now the point of all this is crystal clear; God has spoken *words* through the *mouths* of His messengers. It seems important to me that we should understand that we are

not dealing with the words of *inspired men*. Peter makes this clear when he says, "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 Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). As if to reinforce this, Paul writes to Timothy, "All scripture is given by *inspiration of God*" (2 Tim. 3:16). Which brings us to our next point.

The Self-testimony of Scripture

We can, I believe, read the Bible too superficially. I have heard some people say that the Bible needs to be *believed*, not explained. But when Jesus referred to the prophet Daniel He said, "whoso readeth, let him understand" (Matt. 24:15). It is vital to believe, but it is also extremely important to understand *what* we believe; the two go hand in hand.

However, the Bible does assert its own divinity. God in old times spoke by the prophets; in these last days He has spoken by His Son. If the Book is a product of the Divine Spirit and is a precise record of the revelation of Himself to us, then what it says of itself must be Divine also. When God speaks there is no argument; or there shouldn't be. Moses was the scribe, but *God* was the speaker.

There are two words used in the 2 Tim. 3:16 passage; "Graphe" — writing that, which is written; and "Theoneustos" — God-breathed. "Pasa Graphe Theoneustos" — every sacred writing is God-breathed. It is that which is left on the pages of the Bible which is God-breathed — the words. When Jesus was tempted by a certain lawyer, His question was, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" If we use a simple illustration I believe we shall see what is meant. In the recent bitterly cold weather I got into my car and breathed on the windscreen; almost immediately the frozen breath was etched in a pattern on the inside of the windscreen and was there to be seen. In like manner, I believe, the God-breathed words have been etched onto the parchments on which they were written and are there as a record for all to see. The reporters and writers are relatively unimportant; the words themselves are all-important and are inspired.

Search the Scriptures

There is not another book that I know which calls for the closest scrutiny that anyone can give it, except the Word of God. Any book written by man is at the Mercy of men to tear it apart, destroy it; nullify its effect. The Bible is not such a book; it calls for the minutest examination and investigation; through the ages it has been subjected to this, but it has emerged unscathed from the vicious invective that some have thrown against it, its splendour and majesty undimmed, its claims and message untarnished. But, you see, it is God-breathed.

The word 'search' is an interesting one. It has two applications. The word EREUNAO to search, to examine diligently. The word ANAKRINO is used in the forensic sense and means to analyse, to sift, and has the added meaning of examination by torture. It predicates the very closest investigation. There are those who say that we delve too deeply into the Bible; they say that there are some things that God does not want us to investigate too closely. But you know as well as I do that you cannot bring to it any investigation which is too penetrating. The more we delve the more we are convinced that it is the Word of God. The more precious gems we dig out, the more are uncovered. God wants us to dig. His God-breathed words invite us to investigate, because He knows that the more we uncover the more we shall learn of Him, whom to know is life eternal.

It is a new year. Let us resolve that we shall ever have the Good Book before us as we proceed on our journey through life. Let us cherish it, search it, investigate it, analyse it, but above all, understand it.

**“A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun;
It gives a light to every age;
It gives, but borrows none.”**