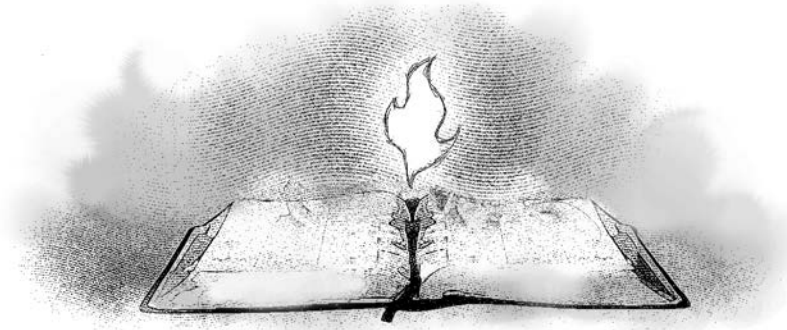


The Spirit and the Bible



SABBATH—DECEMBER 31

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Peter 1:19–21; 1 Corinthians 2:9–13; Psalm 119:160; John 17:17.

MEMORY VERSE: “God has breathed life into [the whole Bible]. [The Bible] is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using [the Bible], a man of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NlrV).

THE BIBLE SAYS THE FOLLOWING ABOUT ITSELF: “God has breathed life into [the whole Bible]. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using [the Bible], a man of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NlrV). The Bible can do all these wonderful things because it is the Word of God. God made His Word known to humans through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit shows God's plan of salvation to us in the Bible. The Spirit also shows us how to live a life pleasing to God.

The Holy Spirit helped create the Bible. It is true this great work took place long ago. But the Holy Spirit is just as involved with the Bible today and in many other important ways. He helps us understand what we read in the Bible. In fact, helping us understand God's Word is one of His most important jobs. It may be His most important job today. This week we will study how the work of the Holy Spirit relates to the Bible.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND REVELATION¹ (2 Peter 1:19–21)

How does God make sure that fallen humans receive and understand His plan for their lives? He helps them understand His plan through the work of revelation and inspiration.²

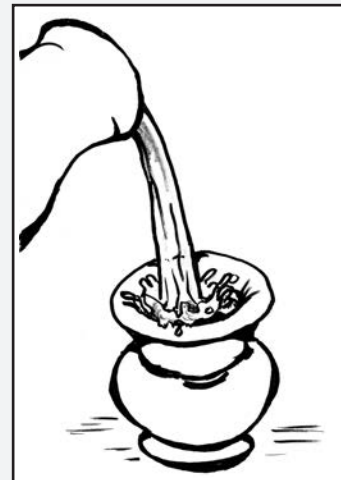
Here is how revelation works between God and people. In revelation, Someone outside of ourselves makes truth known to us. This Person is God. In this way, God makes things known to us that we cannot know on our own. This is because God created us, but we have fallen. And so, we need the Holy Spirit to teach us these truths. (For example, read Daniel 2:19–23.)

Through revelation, God makes Himself and His holy plan known to humans. *Revelation* means an “unveiling [to open; make known]” or an “uncovering.” It is the making of something known that otherwise is hidden. When thinking about revelation, we must remember we are fallen. Our sin separates us from God. And we greatly are limited in what we can learn on our own. We are dependent upon God to know His plan. In other words, we are not God. And we have only a very limited knowledge of Him. So, we are dependent on God’s revelation.

Read 2 Peter 1:19–21. According to these verses, where do Bible prophecies³ come from? What does the fact that the messages come from God tell us about the authority of the Bible?

According to Peter, the prophecies of the Old Testament did not come from humans. The prophets (special messengers) were moved by the Holy Spirit in such a way that they received messages that came from God. These men did not create the messages. These men were used by God to carry the messages. Peter makes it very clear that the Holy Spirit made the prophecies known to men. It is true that prophecies were written down by men. But “prophecy never came simply because a prophet wanted it to” (2 Peter 1:21, NIV). God is the divine Source (starting point) who gives the Bible its final authority over our lives.

God used humans to share His Word with the world. How can we let the Holy Spirit use us to share with others what has been written in the Bible?



The writers of the Bible were only containers of the message that God poured into them.

DEFINITIONS

1. revelation—a sign or message from God.
2. inspiration—being moved by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God. *Inspiration* is the word used to describe how God works through the Holy Spirit and humans to give His message to the world. For example, holy men were inspired (led; moved) by the Holy Spirit to write the Bible.
3. prophecies—special messages from God to His people.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND INSPIRATION (2 Peter 1:21)



God guided the mind of each Bible writer to know what to write.

Inspiration is the word used to describe how God works through the Holy Spirit and humans to give His message to the world. The work of the Holy Spirit is the reason we find an agreement between all the truths in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; John 15:26; John 16:13). So, He will lead us into all truth.

Read 2 Peter 1:21; Deuteronomy 18:18; Micah 3:8; and 1 Corinthians 2:9–13. What do these verses tell us about how the Bible writers were involved in making the Bible? What do these verses also tell us about how God was involved in the making of the Bible?

The process of being guided “along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21, NIV) shows how important the work of the Holy Spirit is in inspiration. In 1 Corinthians 2:9–13, the apostle (teacher; leader) Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit guides the work of revelation and inspiration. To us, Paul says, God made known the secret things that “no eye has seen.” Paul mentions these hidden things in verse 9. He also says that God has made them known through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10). The apostles have received this “Spirit who is from God. The Spirit helps us [the apostles] understand what God has freely given us” (1 Corinthians 2:12, NASB).

It is true that many parts of the Bible are a result of first-hand revelation from God. But not everything in the Bible was made known in that manner. Sometimes in the Bible God used the writings from other documents (Joshua 10:13; Luke 1:1–3) to show and communicate His message. So, all parts of the Bible are chosen carefully by God. They are inspired⁴ (2 Timothy 3:16). Because the Bible is inspired, Paul says, “Everything written in the past was written to teach us. The Scriptures [Bible] give us strength to go on. They encourage us and give us hope” (Romans 15:4, NIV). God chooses people to communicate in human words the inspired thoughts He gave them. We can trust that these thoughts are from Him.

“God has chosen to communicate His truth to the world by humans. By His Holy Spirit, He gives humans the skill and power to do His work. He guides the mind to choose what to speak and what to write. These messages were given to humans. But they come from Heaven.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 26.

DEFINITIONS

4. inspired—given to Bible writers through the power and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES SURE THE BIBLE CAN BE TRUSTED AND IS TRUE (Psalm 119:160)

Revelation is the way God uses to make truth known to chosen humans. Inspiration involves the work of the Holy Spirit in guarding God's truth that human writers wrote down. The Holy Spirit helps keep the words of the writers pure so that their words will have God's full approval. God hates false witness (lying) (Exodus 20:16). In fact, He cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). He is called a God of truth (Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). In the same way, the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17).

Read Psalm 119:160. What does this verse teach us about anything that God makes known to us?

Read John 17:17. What does Jesus say to us here about God's Word?

The Word of God can be trusted. It should be accepted completely. It is not our job to sit in judgment on the Bible. But the Bible has the right and the authority to judge us. "The word of God is alive and active. It is sharper than any sword that has two edges. It cuts deep enough to separate soul from spirit. It can separate bones from joints. It judges the thoughts and purposes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).

Of course, the Bible was written by those living in times and places and cultures that are different from ours. But we should not use that fact to weaken or dismiss (stop thinking about) the message of the Bible to us. Suppose that door to weakening or dismissing the Bible is opened. Then what happens is that humans put their wisdom and authority above the wisdom and authority of the Bible. They decide what is truth. The result is that many people turn away from truth while claiming to believe the Bible! They turn from such truths as a six-day Creation, a worldwide flood, the virgin birth,⁵ the resurrection⁶ of Jesus in a body, and the second coming of Jesus in person. These are just a few of many Bible truths that many people have turned away from. They do not believe these truths. Instead, they sit in judgment on the Bible. But that is not a path any of us should ever take.

Why is it so important to yield our own judgment to the Word of God rather than the other way around? Put another way, why is it so wrong for the truth of the Bible to give way to our idea of what truth is?



The Bible is sharper than any sword that has two edges.

DEFINITIONS

5. virgin birth—a virgin is a woman who has not had sex. The virgin birth describes the way Jesus was born. Mary, His mother, was visited by the Holy Spirit. He caused her to become pregnant without having sex. So, Jesus' mother was human but His Father was God.

6. resurrection—return to life from the dead.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS TEACHER (1 Corinthians 2:13, 14)

The Holy Spirit had an important part in giving us the Bible. And the Holy Spirit also helps us to understand it correctly. Sin darkens the minds of humans. We do not understand truth on our own. We are separated from God (Ephesians 4:18). So, we need the Spirit to help us to understand the Bible. The Spirit who helps us to understand the Bible is the same Spirit who made it known and caused it to be written down as God's Word. The problem is not that the Bible is difficult to understand. The problem is that our attitude toward God makes understanding the Bible difficult. God makes Himself known to us in the Bible. But our thoughts and feelings are so spoiled and ruined by sin that we fail to appreciate Him.

The Holy Spirit is a Teacher. He desires to lead us into a deeper understanding of the Bible. He wants us to feel joy in our appreciation of the Bible.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14. What does Paul say in these verses about the need to understand spiritual things in a spiritual way?

We must depend on the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible. Without the Holy Spirit, the spiritual importance of Bible verses will not be understood. What is more, as sinful humans, we often are opposed to God's truth. We are opposed to God's Word because we fail to understand it. But we also are opposed to God's Word because we do not want to follow it. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no love for God's message. There is no hope, no trust, and no loving response (answer) from us. What the Spirit makes known is in harmony with the truth already shown in the Bible.

DEFINITIONS

7. prejudice—a feeling of like or dislike for someone or something that is not based on reason.

“There are many different opinions about what the Bible teaches. These differences do not come from any unclarity in the book itself. The differences are a result of the blindness and prejudice⁷ on the part of those who explain its meaning. Men ignore the plain truths of the Bible to follow their own wrong ideas.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 27, 1885. How has your pride kept you from living out the truth of the Bible in your life? In what parts of your life do your own desires keep you from accepting God's truth? How can you learn to surrender everything to God?

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BIBLE (John 5:39, 46, 47)

The Holy Spirit has made known and communicated the contents of the Bible to humans. He will never lead us against, or away from, the Bible in any way.

Read John 5:39, 46, 47 and John 7:38. What authority does Jesus refer to in these verses? How does the Bible prove that Jesus is the Messiah (the Chosen One; Savior)?

Some people claim⁸ to have received special “revelations” and instructions from the Holy Spirit. But often these messages and teachings go against the clear message of the Bible. For these people, the Holy Spirit is a higher authority than God’s Word. What happens when we do not value the Bible and do not follow its clear message? The answer is that we will walk on dangerous ground. And we will not follow the leading of God’s Spirit. The Bible is our only safeguard.

“The Holy Spirit speaks to the mind through the Bible. He impresses [puts] the truth in the heart. In this way, the Holy Spirit shows us error. He forces error from the soul. The Spirit of truth works through the Bible. In this way, Christ brings His chosen people under His loving control.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 671.

Ellen G. White has made it very clear: “The Spirit was not meant to replace the authority of the Bible. The Bible makes it very clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested [proven].”—Adapted from *The Great Controversy*,⁹ page 9.

As we can see, the Holy Spirit is not meant to replace the Word of God. Instead, He works in harmony with the Bible and through the Bible to draw us to Christ. This process shows us that the Bible is the only standard we have for spiritual truth. Suppose someone makes claims¹⁰ that go against the Word of God. Then we can be sure that person is not speaking the truth. We cannot judge hearts or motives (reasons for doing something). But we can judge theology.¹¹ And the only standard we have to judge theology is the Word of God.

What are some of the teachings that people are trying to promote (teach; push) in the church that clearly go against the Word of God? What should our response (answer) be to (1) the people promoting these errors, and (2) to the errors themselves?



Suppose that we do not value the Bible or follow its message. Then we walk on dangerous ground.

DEFINITIONS

8. claim—to say something is true that may not be true.

9. controversy—war between Christ and Satan.

10. claims—statements saying that something is true that may not be true.

11. theology—religious beliefs or ideas.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Scriptures [Bible] a Safeguard,” pages 593–602, in *The Great Controversy*. Read also Ellen G. White, “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,” pages 662–680, in *The Desire of Ages*.

Think about all the truth that we know only because it has been shown to us in the Bible. For example, think about Creation. There is a big difference between what the Word of God teaches about how we were created and what human wisdom teaches about how we were created. Human wisdom teaches that we were created through the process of what is now called “the neo-Darwinian synthesis.”¹² Look at how wrong humans have it! Think, too, about the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. These are truths that we never could have learned on our own. They had to be made known to us. Think about other truths that we know only because they have been told to us through the Bible. And here is an important fact: such important truths are found only in the Bible. What does this fact tell us about how the Word of God needs to be at the center of our lives?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Suppose we have spiritual questions. Why then is it safer to trust the Bible to guide us instead of our own thoughts and feelings? What happens when we do not accept the Bible as the standard of truth? Why must we test all teachings and even our spiritual experiences by the Bible?
- ② The word *truth* is often used in many different ways. In class, talk about the idea of “truth.” Talk about what it means when we say something is true and when something is not true. What does it mean for something to be “true”?
- ③ What should your church do and say if someone claims to have “new light [truth]”?
- ④ Talk more about the big difference between how the Bible teaches we were created and what human wisdom teaches. Human wisdom teaches that the theory of evolution is truth. This theory goes completely against the Bible message in every way. What should that difference tell us about why we must trust the Bible above every other source of knowledge?

DEFINITIONS

12. neo-Darwinian synthesis—*neo* means “new.” *Darwinian* refers to Charles Darwin, the father of the theory (unproved idea) of evolution. *Evolution* is a theory that teaches that the differences between modern plants and animals are because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time. Neo-Darwinian synthesis is a new theory of evolution that is made by combining some of Darwin’s old ideas on evolution with new ideas about evolution as well.