**Inspiration and Providence (2): The Revelation, Transmission, Integrity, and Canonicity of Scripture**

*Isaiah 55:10-11*

**Introduction**

1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – Scripture is the irreplaceable necessity for right living with God. It is from Him, and for our profitability in serving Him.
   1. Scripture – *graphē* – “a document, i.e. holy Writ” (STRONG)
      1. “a writing, thing written” (THAYER)
   2. God’s chosen method of preserved communication is the written word – **Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:15** (***“epistle”***); **2 Peter 3:16**
2. The writing of Scripture is the way God has chosen to save man – **2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:30-31**
3. Given the importance of the written will of God, a legitimate question and investigation arises as to the reliability and integrity of what we possess and believe to be the inspired Scriptures which completely reveal the will of God.
   1. Is the Bible (collection of books) the inspired and infallible word of God?
   2. Is what we have in our possession what God intended for us to have?
4. Perhaps the two most fundamental topics to be considered when seeking to understand the integrity of the Bible as the final, complete revelation of God’s will are the concepts of inspiration and providence.
   1. **Inspiration** – that God revealed His will using men through the written word with complete control over the message, and the very words used to convey that message.
   2. **Providence** – that God, as both omnipotent and omniscient, as well as having the greatest interest in the eternal welfare of mankind, was able by His protective care to reveal and preserve His will through the written word to this day, and for the rest of time.
5. **Isaiah 55:10-11** – God’s word is sent out by Him (truly an extension of Him) to accomplish His will.
   1. This cannot be thwarted by the obstinacy of man.
   2. This cannot be thwarted by time and chance.
   3. If it is God’s word by which He intends to accomplish His will, then it is only logical that His word, one way or another, would stand the test of time and be preserved throughout the ages to accomplish its stated purpose.
   4. **This does not provide room for corruption of the Bible, or missing/false books. If God is who He says He is, then His word must be what He says it is, and it must be preserved today – there is evidence for this as being so.**
6. Providence
7. What is providence?
   1. **Providence** – from Latin *providentia*, from *providere* ‘foresee, attend to’ (New Oxford American Dictionary)
      1. Pro – before; videre – to see
      2. To see before.
      3. “the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power; timely preparation for future eventualities” (ibid.)
      4. New Testament – **Acts 24:2** – Tertullus speaking of Felix the governor in making his accusation against Paul.
         1. ***“providence” (KJV, ASV, NASB)***
         2. *Pronoia* (2x) – forethought, i.e. provident care or supply (STRONG); thoughtful planning to meet a need, forethought, foresight, providence (BDAG)
            1. ***“make no provision (pronoia) for the flesh” (Romans 13:14)***
         3. Also – *pronoeō* (3x) – to consider in advance, i.e. look out for beforehand (actively, by way of maintenance for others; middle voice by way of circumspection for oneself) (STRONG)
            1. ***“Have regard (pronoeō) for good things in the sight of all men.” (Romans 12:17)***
            2. ***“providing (pronoeō) honorable things” (2 Corinthians 8:21).***
            3. ***“provide (pronoeō) for his own” (1 Timothy 5:8)***
      5. “When applied to God, the word means His foresight and forethought in creating the universe whereby He could be in control and carry out His purpose to its ultimate consummation.” (Hailey, Homer, *Prayer and Providence*, 115)
         1. It does not violate free will.
         2. It presupposes God’s creation of the universe, and His government in and over what He created – **cf. Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3**
   2. Creation is an expression of God’s will – **Psalm 33:6, 9**
      1. Word – vehicle of thought – creation was in the mind of God before the beginning, and its existence is the materialization of that will.
      2. **Laws of nature** – divinely created laws designed with forethought for God’s complete control over them and use to further His causes.
         1. Not just in the suspension of them – miracles.
         2. **But through the use of them.**
      3. **Mankind** – part of God’s creation, and therefore also subject to His use to carry out His will.
         1. Difference – free-will cannot be violated.
         2. “His sovereignty over these is exercised by moral suasion through moral government.” (Hailey, Homer, *Prayer and Providence*, 116)
         3. **Consideration regarding the transmission and protection of God’s word.**
   3. As an expression of God’s will, creation has purpose:
      1. **Psalm 19:1** – declare His glory.
      2. **Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 12:13** – to bring/declare God’s glory by bearing His image, and abiding by His will.
         1. **Romans 3:23** – fell short of His glory.
         2. Eternal purpose of redemption – **Ephesians 3:8-12**
            1. Revealed through writing – **Ephesians 3:3-4**
            2. Ages to come – **Ephesians 2:7**
            3. **Conclusion – Perpetuation of the written word under the provident care of God, even using mankind – a part of His creation.**
8. The Correlation of Divine Revelation and Divine Providence
   1. **2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:30-31; 2 Peter 3:16 –** God’s decision to fully reveal Himself, His will, and His plan of redemption through the written word involves some “conclusions from which necessary antecedent inferences and deductions must be drawn:” (Wallace Jr., Foy E., *A Review of the New Versions*, 32)
      1. “First, that God, the Creator, would communicate by revelation with man his creature”
      2. “second, that the record of the stages in the development of this revelation be made”
      3. “third, that this record of revelation was made by its original inspired recipients, consisting of a collection of ‘the holy scriptures’”
      4. “fourth, that the means and the methods for the record of revelation were providentially provided.” (ibid.)
   2. This correlation of the divine revelation with the divine provision and preservation of it is evident throughout scripture:
      1. **Psalm 119:89** – God’s word is settled and cannot be altered.
      2. **Isaiah 55:10-11** – As God’s word is sent forth it cannot be overtaken by an opposing force of any kind – it will accomplish.
      3. **Matthew 24:35** – God’s word will stand through time and eternity.
      4. **1 Corinthians 10:11** – the writings God provides for instruction will stand the test of time. (Speaking of OT canon of scripture preserved through the ages for the availability of ALL in the last dispensation – including us.)
      5. **1 Peter 1:24-25** – not only the OT word of God, but the gospel (NT) is eternal, and will by no means fade away.
      6. **1 Corinthians 13:9-10** – the “perfect” or entire/complete revelation of God would come according to God’s will.
      7. **Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3** – such revelation was once for all delivered.
   3. The only question that remains is whether God could do what He said He would do, and whether He did – **Numbers 23:19; Psalm 77:8; Hebrews 6:13-18**
9. Revelation and Confirmation
10. The Biblical, and therefore most important, standard of determining the authenticity of a message lies with a **twofold supply of God (these are not what man provides but observes)** – Revelation and confirmation.
    1. This is what precedes the provident care of the message and helps to identify to a degree how it is that God used men by moral suasion to perpetuate His word, both OT and NT, throughout time.
    2. Throughout all revelation there has been the corresponding confirmation.
    3. Before understanding and appreciating the providence of God in the transmission, integrity, and canonicity of scripture we must understand its very birth.
       1. It is this process revealed in the Bible that led to the weighty estimation of these writings.
       2. They were venerated, and their esteem was that of divine authority for a reason.
    4. Divine revelation is confirmed through divine signification – miracles.
11. Old Testament and Jesus
    1. Moses appealed to the scenes of Egypt and Sinai as confirmation of what had been revealed – **Deuteronomy 4:32-36**
       1. Formula followed w/ 10 commandments – **Exodus 20:1-2**
    2. The divine test for the prophet – **Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33; Jeremiah 28:9** – when He says something will come to pass and it does you know God speaks through Him.
    3. “For Christians, however, it suffices that the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament was accepted as divinely authoritative by our Lord and his apostles.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
    4. “We may, however, follow our Lord, who placed the *imprimatur* of His infallible authority upon the books of the Old Testament.” (E.J. Young, “The Canon of the Old Testament,” in Revelation and the Bible, 168) (Archer, Gleason L., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 85)
       1. **Imprimatur** – from Latin, ‘let it be printed’, from the verb imprimere
       2. “a person's acceptance or guarantee that something is of a good standard” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
       3. “an official license by the Roman Catholic Church to print an ecclesiastical or religious book” (ibid.)
          1. Above quote suggesting that no church made scripture legitimate, but Jesus certainly placed His stamp of authenticity on it.
          2. Even then, its authenticity as being an inspired and authoritative message of God preceded Jesus’ coming in the flesh.
    5. Jesus’ view of the OT:
       1. **John 10:35** – cannot be broken.
       2. **Luke 24:44** – must be fulfilled.
       3. **Matthew 22:29** – ignorance generates error.
       4. As He inspired Paul to write – **2 Timothy 3:16** – is given by inspiration of God.
    6. Jesus’ references to OT:
       1. **Matthew 19:4** – Creation, Adam and Eve.
       2. **Matthew 23:35** – Abel killed by Cain; Zechariah’s death (**2 Chronicles 24:20-21**)
       3. **Luke 17:27** – Flood during Noah’s time.
       4. **Luke 20:37** – God speaking to Moses through the burning bush.
       5. **Matthew 12:40** – Jonah swallowed by a fish.
       6. **Matthew 12:42** – Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon (**1 Kings 10:1-13**)
       7. **Matthew 24:15** – Daniel’s prophecies. (Last part of Daniel – most disputed.)
    7. “Jesus is not only the key to the divine nature of the Old Testament, He is also the key to the extent of the Old Testament. The ‘extent’ of the Old Testament refers to the question of which books belong in it.” (Geisler, Norman L., *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, 15)
       1. **Luke 24:44** – law, prophets, psalms = entire OT as we know it.
       2. “The Jewish Old Testament at the time of Christ consisted of the same thirty-nine books as the English Old Testament which Jesus accepted.” (ibid.)
       3. Concerning the Apocrypha (11 books written between 200 B.C. and the time of Christ):
          1. Jews who were appointed by God to keep the OT never included them (**cf. Romans 3:2**).
          2. Jesus never quoted from them.
       4. Jesus quoted from 24 of 39 Old Testament books.
       5. The New Testament quotes from every Old Testament book except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
          1. These books were contained within the Old Testament at the time of Jesus.
12. New Testament and Jesus
    1. "he [Jesus] who accredited the Old Testament retrospectively accredited the New Testament prospectively.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
    2. The Hebrew writer reveals the process of revelation and confirmation – **Hebrews 2:1-4** – the evidence is conclusive to the degree of warning concerning Divine judgment of the neglect of such a word.
       1. **(vv. 1-2)** – sets the contrast between the OT and NT, the NT being greater – and the OT confirmation as the inspired word of God is solid.
       2. **(v. 3a)** – great salvation – the gospel.
       3. **(v. 3b)** – first spoken by Jesus.
       4. **(v. 3c)** – confirmed by His disciples/apostles (**cf. Acts 1:21-22**)
       5. **(v. 4)** – confirmed by God’s witness of miracles.
          1. **Signs** – emphasis on what the event indicates to those who witness it.
          2. **Wonders** – emphasis on the effect the event has on those who witness it.
          3. **Miracles** – emphasis on the event itself, namely, its nature, and therefore its origin – supernatural/God.
          4. **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** – emphasis on the signs, wonders, and miracles performed through men by the Holy Spirit for the revelation and confirmation of the word.
    3. Jesus’ prospective accreditation of the New Testament:
       1. Apostles and prophets lined up with the Cornerstone Jesus – **Ephesians 2:20; 3:3-5**
       2. Apostles and prophets continuing what Jesus began to do and teach – **Acts 1:1** – Christ with them – **Matthew 28:20**
       3. **John 14:16-18** – Jesus promised another Divine Helper to take His place – Holy Spirit of truth.
       4. **John 14:25-26** – the Helper, HS would teach ALL things, and bring to remembrance.
       5. **John 15:26-27** – with the apostles, the Holy Spirit would bear witness of Jesus.
       6. **John 16:12-15** – the Helper, HS would guide into ALL truth, speaking the things of Jesus.
    4. The revelation and confirmation of the New Testament of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit:
       1. **Luke 24:46-49** – to preach the gospel – repentance and remission of sins – with Helper that was promised.
       2. **Mark 16:15-18** – to preach the gospel, and signs would follow, confirming the message as from God.
       3. **Matthew 28:18-20** – going with the authority of Jesus to preach the gospel, Christ is with them. (**cf. Matthew 16:19** – given keys, authority)
       4. The miraculous events through these men confirmed that their words were the words of God – **2 Corinthians 12:12**
       5. Such would also confirm their written words as being Holy Scripture – **1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Peter 3:16**
       6. These written words were to be circulated and read as divine revelation – **Colossians 4:16**
    5. **First century Christians had indisputable miraculous evidence that the writings of these men were the Holy Scripture of God.**
       1. Therefore, they would have copied and distributed so they all would have God’s word.
       2. This led, by the guidance of God’s providence, to the preserved New Testament we have today.
13. The Development of the Canon
14. What is the canon?
15. Early Evidence Within the New Testament
16. Evidence Prior to Church Councils
17. What did the church councils do?
18. The Transmission of the New Testament
19. Consequences of Materials
20. Autographs
21. Copies
22. Copies of Copies
23. Integrity – A Comparison (I.e. to other ancient writings and the documentary evidence.)
24. Translations
25. Has the Bible Been Corrupted?
26. The Lie We are Told
27. Causes of Textual Variants
28. Deciphering the Original Reading
29. Considering Textual Variants