

Understanding GOD'S WORD

An Apostolic Approach
to Interpreting the Bible

DAVID K. BERNARD



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Understanding God's Word

by David K. Bernard

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C H A P T E R

1



God's Inspired Word

“The word of God is living and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is the living Word of God, and as such it has power to transform our lives and impart new spiritual life. It is able to make us “wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” and it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:15-17).

For the Bible to make this impact upon us, we must believe and obey its message. To do so, we must first understand its message. The need for understanding thus leads us to a discussion of hermeneutics, or the science and art of interpretation.

Before discussing the interpretation of the Bible, which is the subject of this book, we need to understand the nature of the Bible itself. What we think about the Bible will greatly affect how we interpret the Bible. In this chapter, we will discuss the Bible's unique identity as the inspired, authoritative, and infallible Word of God. (For a more thorough investigation of this subject with

documentation, see *God's Infallible Word* by David K. Bernard.)

The Bible Is God's Word

If we believe in God, we should also believe in the Word of God. Since God was interested enough to create us, and since He created us as rational beings, surely He is interested enough to communicate with us and thereby fulfill His purpose for creation. All intelligent beings seek to communicate, and the supreme Intelligence is no exception.

Since God is the Father of the human race, surely He wishes to have a relationship with His children. Since He loves us enough to impart life to us and sustain us, surely He desires to communicate His love to us and help us. From our belief in an intelligent, loving Creator, we should expect to find the Word of God among us. We would expect God to record His message in writing, the historic medium best suited for precision, preservation, and propagation.

How can we know what is God's Word? We would expect God's Word to identify itself clearly and convincingly, to tell the truth about the human condition, to contain content worthy of its Author, and to address our deepest spiritual needs. When we examine the world's religious literature, it is evident that the Bible is the unique written Word of God to humanity. The Bible bids us to investigate and prove the truth for ourselves. "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). It also admonishes us to be prepared to explain the basis of our faith to others (I Peter 3:15).

The Bible asserts its unique status as the Word of God, and it speaks with self-vindicating authority. The prophets and apostles who wrote the Bible testified that the Spirit of God moved upon them as they wrote. Jesus Christ endorsed the Old Testament as Scripture, and He commissioned the writers of the New Testament to proclaim His message. Thus, if we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, we will accept the authority of the Bible.

We can establish that the Bible is God's Word by carefully examining its claims, character, historical and scientific verification, and impact upon human society. The fulfilled prophecies of the Scriptures are an amazing testimony to its supernatural origin. Finally, we can demonstrate the truth of the Bible by applying it to our lives, receiving its promises, and experiencing its dynamic power personally.

The cumulative effect of these points is to establish overwhelmingly, beyond reasonable doubt, that the Bible is God's Word. God has challenged us to prove His Word; when we do we will find it to be true in every way. The Bible then becomes the standard of truth by which we measure all things.

The Inspiration of the Bible

In the final analysis, the author of the Bible is God Himself. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16). In this verse, "inspiration of God" is translated from the Greek word *theopneustos*, which literally means "God-breathed." The picture is one of God breathing out words from His mouth (Matthew 4:4), creating Scripture similar to the way He created the universe