

Introduction to Bible Study

- Last Week!
 - What is theology?
 - Faith Seeking Understanding
 - What is the Bible?
 - A library of books that describe the truth about God and our relationship with God.
 - The importance of tradition
 - Scripture is a product of tradition



Reading John 14:15 - 17

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- Last Week!
 - Personal Reading vs. Interpretation
 - No one can listen to God for us.
 - The doctrinal truth of Scripture is not for us to decide.
 - Old Testament
 - Written after a long oral history.
 - There are many types of books.
 - Jewish canon defined after the destruction of the Temple.



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- **Last Week!**
 - New Testament
 - Most books written after a short oral history
 - Gospels written from 70 – 100 AD
 - Paul's letters written from 50 – 60 AD
 - Others written from 70 – 100 AD
 - Revelation written in code to hide meaning from Roman authorities.



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- Questions about last week's material?
 - What's a good Bible study resource?
 - Did the oral tradition of creation come from Abraham?
 - Most important: Scripture is about God and our relationship. Remember this and you'll do great!
 - Prayer uses common language in a unique way.
- Comments on the reflection idea?
 - the second creation story.



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- This Week:
 - Faith and Science
 - Inspiration Theories
 - Inerrancy in the Scriptures
 - That's great Tom. Who cares?



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- Are Faith & Science Incompatible?
 - Here's what the Catholic Church teaches:

“Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself –

nor can truth ever contradict truth.”

(CCC 159)



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Are Faith & Science Incompatible?

- The answer is no!



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Are Faith & Science Incompatible?

- This has huge implications for our faith...
- If faith and your life experiences don't jive:
 - Pray
 - Study
 - Try to be open to a new truth ...
 - Start with the assumption that you do not understand – not that science, Scripture, or church teaching is wrong!



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Are Faith & Science Incompatible?

- This has huge implications for our faith...
 - This does not mean that you can use reason to explain everything that happens on your faith journey, it just means that “truth cannot contradict truth.”
 - The great thing about being Catholic is that there is a 2000 year Tradition of saints, church teaching, and Scripture to help you find the truth.



We can't explain everything in our lives with reason. For example, prove to me that you love your wife or children. Prove to me that they love you! Explain to me why Mother Theresa could walk into a stadium filled with 100,000 people and everyone became quiet. Explain to me why when she said the words “God loves you” people burst into tears? There are many truths that we can know but cannot explain with reason.

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So how did God inspire the Bible?

- When we say that the Bible is inspired by God, what does that exactly mean?
- Let's look at some possible explanations given throughout the centuries...

Source: "The Shape of Catholic Theology", Aidan Nichols



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Possession Inspiration Theory

- Philo of Alexandria (Jewish Philosopher, 50 AD)
 - The writer is possessed by God, losing ordinary consciousness and letting his personality be taken over by the divine power.



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Possession Inspiration Theory

- This explanation has problems...
 - Why so many different styles of books?
 - Why do the authors of Luke and Sirach talk about research and difficulties in writing?
 - Why did God make so many historical and scientific mistakes?



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Dictation Inspiration Theory

- St. Thomas Aquinas (Doctor of the Church ~ 1270 AD)
 - God gives each writer (via supernatural means) the words which best suit the writer's individuality.
 - The writer acts under the intention of the Holy Spirit, not his or her own intention. Again, all the words are chosen by God. In other words, the writer is the chalk, fully capable of writing, while the Holy Spirit moves the chalk in such a way to write "inspired" words.



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Dictation Inspiration Theory

- This approach addressed the issue of “why so many literary styles”
- But we still have problems ...
 - Why did God make so many historical and scientific mistakes?
 - Still have the research problem (Luke and Sirach) .



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Negative Assistance Inspiration Theory

- Johann Jahn (~ 1790 AD)
 - Theory that God only intervenes when the author is about to mess up.



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Negative Assistance Inspiration Theory

- This approach doesn't leave much room for divine inspiration. God only keeps the human author from making grievous errors.



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Inspiration Theories

- Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1896 AD)
 - Inspiration is an illumination of the mind of the biblical author, enabling the author to judge the natural materials in a way that conforms to God's will.
- *Huh? What the heck is he talking about?*



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Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1896 AD)

- This theory says that biblical writers only knew the science and history that was available to them through “normal” means. What was special about these people is that they were able to judge the situations that they wrote about in a way that was consistent with God’s will.
- We know this because Scripture, in all its forms has fed the people of God for thousands of years!



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Inspiration Theories

- This is the illumination theory ...
 - Problems?
 - None, as far as it goes. Complications arise when literary analysis and historical discoveries indicate that the biblical books have multiple writers.



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Inspiration Theories Conclusion

- The truth of Tradition
 - Pope Leo (1893 AD) – *Providentissimus Deus*
 - First papal encyclical on the Bible.
 - *Divine inspiration must mean divine influence on the minds and wills of biblical writers, or the words are just so many vibrations in the air.*
- The truth of scholarly fact
 - *The biblical writers remained people of their own time and place.*



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Inspiration Theories Conclusion

- Interesting Parallel
 - The Bible was written by humans and authored by the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus was fully human and fully divine (two natures, one being).



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Dreaded class project time!

- Find the answers to these questions in the Gospel assigned to your group:
 1. Who carried Jesus' cross?
 2. Which disciples were with Jesus when he died?
 3. What were Jesus' last words?

Location hints: Matthew Chapter 27; Mark Chapter 15; Luke Chapter 23; John Chapter 19.



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Who carried Jesus' cross?

Mt:

A man from Cyrene named Simon.

Mk:

Simon of Cyrene.

Lk:

Simon of Cyrene.

Jn:

Jesus



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Who carried Jesus' cross?

Mt, Mk, Lk: Simon. Jn: Jesus

Which Disciples were with Jesus when he died?

Mt: none

Mk: none

Lk: none

Jn: the disciple whom he loved.



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Who carried Jesus' cross?

Mt, Mk, Lk: Simon. Jn: Jesus

Which Disciples were with Jesus when he died?

Mt, Mk, Lk: none Jn: the disciple whom he loved.

What were Jesus' last words?

Mt: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Mk: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Lk: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Jn: "It is finished."



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Inerrancy in the Scriptures

- Tries to answer the question: “Just how far does inspiration extend?”
 - The best answer we have is that two issues have to be taken into account in order to find the inerrant truth in biblical books ...



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Inerrancy in the Scriptures

1. The meaning intended by the sacred author.

- The literal sense of the book, defined as the meaning intended by the sacred author, has to be established. Pope Pius XII wrote in *Divino Afflante* (1943):

“the literal sense of a passage is not always as obvious in the speeches and writings of the ancient authors of the East as it is in the works and writers of our own time.”



Give example of the literary forms in a newspaper.

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Inerrancy in the Scriptures

2. The relevance to salvation.

- The intention of the Biblical author must be judged in terms of its relevance to human salvation. In Dei Verbum (~1964) the Second Vatican Council wrote:

“The books of Scripture teach firmly, faithfully and without error, that which God willed to be put down in the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation.”



Pulling it all Together

The meaning of a Bible passage should be determined by 3 things...

1. The meaning that the author was conveying.

- This means that in order to understand a Bible passage, we must understand the writer's contemporary circumstances, writing style and purpose. Otherwise it is likely that we will misunderstand the text.

– *Read the intro to a book in the Bible to get a handle on this information!*



Pulling it all Together

The meaning of a Bible passage should be determined by 3 things...

2. The implication of the author's meaning to our salvation.
 - The Bible is "about" our God and our relationship with God. It is not about history, even though it has history in it.



Pulling it all Together

The meaning of a Bible passage should be determined by 3 things...

3. The consistency of the meaning with what we have been taught by our Church!



Pulling it all Together

Ok Tom, so why should I care about this?

1. The underlying assumption of Biblical Fundamentalism is that God dictated the Bible.
2. If you read the Bible as a “thinking” person, it is hard to believe some of the historical and scientific claims.



Pulling it all Together

Ok Tom, so why should I care about this?

3. If God made mistakes with history and science, how can we be sure that other parts of the Bible are true. This leads to one of two reactions:
 1. The Bible is silly, so church is silly, so why go.
 2. Because I am a person of faith, I have to “check my brain in at the door” before entering church.
4. Both of these reactions promote idolatry, and make it harder to be in a loving relationship with the true God.



Pulling it all Together

Ok Tom, so why should I care about this?

5. The primary reason to go to church, study theology, and pray is to develop a loving relationship to God.

This effects every aspect of our lives...



Pulling it all Together

So ...

1. Love God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself.
2. It's good to think about God and struggle with our belief. (Truth cannot contradict truth)
3. The Bible *is* the Word of God. (Inspired by God)
4. We can trust the Bible, when read within the Tradition of the Church, to lead us closer to God. (The inerrant word of God)
5. Get to know your God – read your Bible!



Reflection Idea

One of the central ideas we have discussed is that the intent of Scripture is to teach us about God and our relationship with God.

Read Isaiah chapter 61 straight through to get an overall sense of the text. Then, read it again more slowly and pay attention to words or ideas that attract your attention (positive or negative) and relate to God and our relationship with God. Have an honest and humble attitude. Reflect on these ideas, ask God about them, and journal insights.

