

## **Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 2, Culture Language Genre**

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Last lecture, we looked at what is hermeneutics and what is interpretation, what are we doing when we do that, and also what are the barriers or the distances, the gaps that necessitate hermeneutics. We said that although many would prefer to just sit down and read the biblical text, that also, as I've said, reveals assumptions about hermeneutics. But is also unaware of the distance that might create misunderstanding, and hermeneutics allows us to overcome that distance.

What I want to talk about in this session is the character of, or the assumption that we hold about the Bible that we interpret. What is it that we interpret when we talk about interpreting the Old and New Testaments? What assumptions about the Bible influence the way we do hermeneutics? And so I want to look at the character of the literature that we are interpreting and how that might affect the way we approach interpreting the Old and New Testament. Theologically, a key word for describing how we understand the Bible is the word inspiration.

Basically, when we say that the Bible is inspired, that word itself can generate a variety of understandings. What they all have in common is inspiration simply means the Bible has some connection with religious literature, with God himself. There's a connection between God and the Bible.

The question is how we understand that connection. What do we mean when we say that the Bible is inspired, that it's a literature that claims to be the word of God? What do we mean by that again, and how does that affect the way we read the Old and New Testaments? What do we mean when we say the Bible's inspired? In its theological sense, in its full theological sense, the Bible owes its origin both to human

beings but to God himself. And part of the issue is to wrestle with how do we understand the Bible as a fully human document that demonstrates its full human dimension and the fact that it is produced by human beings, but yet at the same time it claims to be nothing less than the very word of God.

How do we understand this? Actually, a lot could be said about this, but I want to restrict most of my comments to the issue of how that affects the way we interpret. But I do want to look at the biblical text itself and to examine just only two factors in understanding what we mean by inspiration that must be taken into account when we consider the Old and New Testament text as inspired literature. And obviously, this is what sets, when we think in terms of hermeneutics and interpretation, this is what sets the Bible apart from other forms of human communication and other forms of communication that we would interpret.

By calling the Bible inspired, we recognize that it is religious literature that is set apart. It is in some way the very word of God and that's what we want to explore. But there's two factors that need to be taken into account when we think of the Old and New Testament as inspired literature or as the word of God.

The first one is statements about the Bible itself. The second one is the phenomenon, the phenomena that you actually find in the biblical text. What do we find going on in the text? As well as, again, the first one is what does the Bible say about itself as far as what it is? But then what are the, what phenomena do we find in the text itself when we start to examine its details? The two perhaps most significant statements, at least when you start reading treatments of inspiration, two texts that seem to always surface as kind of the classic texts when it comes to inspiration are both found in the New Testament, though there are a number of New Testament, Old Testament texts as well as well that attest to its character.

And I think particularly of a lot of the prophetic literature where it's clear that the prophets are consciously claiming to speak God's word to the people. But two passages, the first one is found in the Pauline literature, and that is 1 Timothy chapter 2. And 1 Timothy chapter 3, I'm sorry, 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16. Sorry, 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16.

Paul instructing Timothy says, all scripture is God breathed. And that word God-breathed is the one from which theologically we get the term inspiration. And there's some question that perhaps Paul created this word himself out of two Greek words that basically resemble this translation God-breathed.

But we'll look at that later on in a moment. But all scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, and righteous. And then verse 17, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So 1 Timothy chapter 3, 16, we'll look at it later. Although primarily Paul is referring to the collection of texts as the word of God that would have been available to him and his readers, primarily the Old Testament. Although I think you could make a good case that Paul might also include the gospel in that as well.

If not, obviously his own letters and other New Testament documents. Paul is primarily perhaps then referring to the Old Testament, but clearly sees it as, and if I understand this text correctly, he's including the entirety of the Old Testament, the entirety of scripture as nothing less than the product of the very breath of God, of the very speech of God. So this text is an important sort of a meta-statement about the entirety of the Old Testament.

And again, it's possible when you read before and after this text, Paul might also include the gospel that he preaches in this as well as that to which the Old Testament

testifies. But clearly Paul in this sort of meta-statement would see the entirety of scripture available to him as nothing less than that which is the product of the very breath of God, the very word of God. The other text that in the New Testament that is prominent in establishing the Bible's own view of itself, again sort of a meta-statement that encompasses the entire the entire, entirety of the scripture available to the author, is found in 2 Peter and chapter 1 and verse 20.

And I'll back up and read verse 19 as well. And starting at verse 19, we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to the light shining at a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Verse 20, above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

For prophecy, verse 21, prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. And we'll return to this text very briefly later on. Again, there may be some limitations of this text in that the author is primarily referring to prophetic texts, but clearly to prophetic texts at least, he sees them as a product of God's spirit moving the persons along to speak God's very word to his people.

So these two statements establish the fact, again sort of meta-statements that transcend scripture, establish the fact that Paul and Peter, these two authors, look at the Old Testament and see it as nothing less than the product of the very speech of God, as the result of divine activity of God's spirit working in the lives of human beings to produce this. So it's from these two texts primarily that we get the understanding of inspiration, that the biblical texts are to be seen as the product of God's speech, as the product of divine activity of God working and moving individuals to speak what is nothing less than the word of God. Yet, not only do we need to look at statements of the biblical text itself, and what it says about itself, but the

phenomena of the Bible, what do we actually find in the biblical text? And again, I'll give a kind of a painfully brief survey of some of the details, or what we find in the text, that have to be taken into account when we understand what do we mean when we say the Bible's inspired, and how does that affect the way we read and interpret the biblical text.

The first thing we find, again I'm just going to list a handful of things and give some very brief examples. The first thing we often find in the biblical text is God speaking directly to human beings, to human authors. The best example of this is the prophetic literature, and you find that repeated formula throughout the prophetic text, the word of the Lord came to Isaiah the prophet, or the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, or the word of the Lord came to whoever, and then often thus saith the Lord, a prophetic speech formula.

The prophets seem to be, at the very least, whatever else they are doing, the prophets seem to be aware that what they are speaking is nothing less than the result of God directly speaking to them or through them. So often in some theological textbooks you find prophets described as the mouthpiece of God, or something like that. But a text such as the prophetic text where the prophets are aware of the word of the Lord coming to them, and thus says the Lord, they're aware of proclaiming a message that is a result of God directly speaking to them.

Or you think in the Old Testament of the Decalogue that God himself writes and gives to his people. Or a book like Daniel or Revelation, where two apocalyptic works where God, especially Revelation, where in the first, the very first verse of Revelation chapter one, the very kind of the prologue to his book, John labels his book the revelation of Jesus Christ. And I'm convinced Jesus Christ is the source of the revelation, the one who is giving the revelation.

But notice he says the revelation of Jesus Christ, it is the revelation that comes from Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to his prophets. So ultimately John claims, again whatever else he's doing in Revelation, that ultimately it John claims it is nothing less than a result of the revelatory activity of Christ and ultimately God himself to John. So God in a number of texts in the Old New Testament, especially prophetic type text, we find the authors recording a message that God speaks directly to the human author.

Another interesting sort of text is you have a few places where human words, words apparently spoken and written by human beings unaware that they're doing anything else but writing their own words, are by later authors often attributed to God. Just to give you one example, in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24, I'm a little uncomfortable using Old Testament examples because I have an Old Testament scholar videoing all this and so I, if his head starts shaking, no I know I'm on the wrong track. Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24, a passage that later gets picked up a few times in the New Testament as well.

But in chapter 2 and verse 24, for this reason, at the end of Genesis 1 and 2 being two accounts of the creation from different perspectives, at the end of the account in chapter 2 the author ends by saying, for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh. Interestingly, a number of commentaries think that this is what is often called an interpretive aside. That is, it's kind of the author's own comment.

In modern day, we might put it in parentheses or in a footnote or something. It's kind of an aside or a comment that as the author's narrating something, it's, oh by the way, let me make this comment to help you understand. So this is probably the author's own interpretive comment, his own narrative aside on the biblical text.

It's his own words, his own evaluation of what he's written so far. But it's interesting, when Jesus himself picks this text up in Matthew chapter 19, in one of his debates with the Pharisees, the Pharisees come to him and say, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason? And in verse 4 and 5, Jesus responds by quoting this text. But notice how he introduces it.

Jesus says, haven't you heard, he replied, that at the beginning the creator, a reference to God himself, made them male and female and said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. Apparently, Jesus thought that God himself was responsible. The creator was responsible for saying these words.

And there are a few other examples of this. But this is a very, I think, straightforward example of human words and their original context of Genesis 2 now being attributed to the creator, to God himself. So there are places where God speaks directly to his human authors and they appear to record what he says.

There are other places, a few places where the human author says something and then later on that's attributed to God himself, such as Jesus does in Matthew chapter 19. There are also examples of human beings speaking to God, where it doesn't appear that God is addressing them at all, but it's solely human beings addressing God. The Psalms in the Old Testament, the Psalms are full of examples.

Psalms 103, praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Psalms such as this, and you could turn to just about anyone, are expressions of praise or lamentation or other sorts of expressions of the psalmist to God.

Not a record of God speaking to the psalmist, but a record of the psalmist pouring out his heart to God. So this is a human being speaking to God. How is that the inspired word of God? Other biblical texts seem to reflect very human processes of compilation or production or writing.

That is, I'm thinking especially of having in mind references, explicit references, in the biblical text of the human author relying on previous writings, even secular writings, and making that clear. For example, I could point to a number of examples, but in 2 Kings, and this happens in several places, but 2 Kings chapter 12 and verse 19. 2 Kings 12, 19, and at the end of recording the exploits of one of Israel's kings, in verse 19, the author of Kings says, as for the other events of the reign of Joash, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the king of Judah? Which I'm not sure what that is, but apparently the author of Kings has been relying on another source, which would have been common during the day, and researching and utilizing another document that he calls the annals of the kings in order to provide information for his own written work.

You find something similar going on in the New Testament in the gospel of Luke, the third gospel, where in, again, in a sort of prologue type statement at the very beginning, Luke actually tells us something about the means by which he produced the gospel of Luke. He tells us a little bit about the workings of his gospel, and how it was that he produced it, and it came about. Chapter 1, in verses 1 through 4, many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.

Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you most excellent theophilus, who may have been kind of the patron that funded the work and the



research for Luke to produce this, so that you may know the certainty of the things that you have been taught. Now, notice what's going on in this text. A couple things.

First of all, Luke uses quite a bit of language that was common in other narratives or biographical works that Luke's resembles, such as writing an orderly account. A lot of this language resembles other works. It's not unique to Luke.

Second, Luke seems to be aware of other accounts of the life of Christ. Notice his language, since others have undertaken to write up an account. So Luke seems to be aware and seems to be utilizing the work of others, whether that's one of the other gospels, such as Matthew or Mark, is possible, but Luke doesn't tell us what other resources he had available, but he's clearly aware of other accounts of the life of Christ, and perhaps he's intending to supplement them or maybe correct some of them.

The other thing Luke tells us that he's aware of eyewitnesses and others who testify to these accounts, and he's relying on them as well. So putting this all together, Luke seems to reveal a very human process of interpretation. In fact, so human is it that I wonder if one of the motives for that, we'll talk about this a little bit later on in another session, but there are a couple of manuscripts of Luke that in these verses where Luke says, it seemed good to me, there's a couple manuscripts that supply end to the Holy Spirit, which is also a phrase found elsewhere in Luke, so maybe they're drawing it from that, but it's almost as if some scribes thought that this was too human, and they wanted to add the divine sanction that, you know, certainly Luke did not write this on his own, it seemed good to me, but it must have divine sanction behind it as well.

But if those two manuscripts are incorrect in adding that, we're left with Luke undergoing a very human process of production. He's relying on other sources, he's

aware of eyewitnesses, he's aware of other accounts of Jesus' life, and now it seems good to him to write his own account for Theophilus, perhaps at Theophilus's request. So it doesn't appear that Luke all of a sudden one day began to glow and felt compelled by the Spirit to sit down and start writing this, as it seemed to be the result of a very human process, much like the author of 2 Kings, using sources to compile his own account of the life of the king.

So how is this inspired scripture? How does this fit with an understanding of the Old New Testament as inspired? Another type of evidence that we find in the Old New Testament, especially this evidence, this example comes from the New Testament, is it's interesting that Paul seems to distinguish at times his own words from the words of God, or the words of Christ. And some have even drawn on this to call into question whether Paul thinks that what he writes is more his own opinion, as opposed to what has been revealed to him through Christ. 1 Corinthians chapter 7, where in chapter 7 Paul is addressing instructions to, because of certain situation going on in Corinth, and chapter 7 would be another wonderful example of the distance that exists between the modern reader and our history and culture and background, and the ancient text and its culture and background and history.

But Paul's addressing a situation related to different issues revolving around marriage and divorce and sexuality and abstinence and widowhood, etc. And in the middle of that, he says something interesting as he addresses the situation of some who are perhaps questioning about whether they should get divorced or not, and I won't go into details as to what may have prompted some of the Corinthians to think this. But in verses 10 through 12, Paul says, to the married I give this command.

But he says, not I, but the Lord. And then here's the command, a wife must not separate from her husband, but if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be

reconciled to her husband, and a husband must not divorce his wife. Now verse 12, to the rest I say this, but Paul qualifies it by saying, I say this, not the Lord.

And here's what he says, if any brother has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer, and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. So what's going on in this text? Is Paul really distinguishing his own words, which are his own opinion, when he says, I say this, not the Lord, from something that was revealed to him through Jesus, so that he'll say, the Lord says this, not I? Is Paul distinguishing his own opinion that can be taken more lightly from the very word of Christ that he now communicates to his readers? I think there's probably a better explanation for this text.

Instead, I think that Paul is not distinguishing levels of authority, that somehow if Christ says it, if Christ revealed this, you should obey it. But this is my own opinion, so you can take it with a grain of salt, or you can decide what you want to do with it. Instead, I think he's distinguishing simply whether his words can find support in something Jesus taught or not.

So when in verse 10, when Paul says, to the Mary, I give this command, not I, but the Lord, I think he's drawing on a specific saying of Jesus from the gospels. You go back to Matthew, the Matthew text, in the Sermon on the Mount, in chapter 19, or Mark, the Gospel of Mark, where they record the sayings of Jesus regarding divorce. I think that's what Paul's referring to in this text.

We read part of that when we read Matthew 19, part of Jesus' instructions regarding divorce. And so I think Paul, when he says, I give you this command, not I, but the Lord, he's not saying that this is something Jesus revealed to me, therefore it's on a

higher level of authority. He's simply saying, I can appeal to a direct command of Jesus from the gospels, or from the traditions of Jesus' teaching.

But then in verse 12, when he says, to the rest, I say this, I, but not the Lord, he's not saying that this is merely my own opinion. He's simply saying, I don't necessarily have a saying of Jesus to back this up. Yet it's interesting, at the very end of chapter 7, he can say, and I think too, that I have the Spirit of God.

So the entirety of chapter 7, Paul seems to be aware that what he's saying is authoritative and is to be obeyed. In fact, later on, later on in chapter 14, Paul will say, basically say, that anyone should realize that what I say is nothing less than the command of the Lord. So Paul does not seem to be distinguishing levels of authority, that what he says is somehow his opinion to be taken with less seriousness.

And therefore, what Jesus says is what has been revealed to him, and they should listen to that. But instead, I think in chapter 7, Paul's simply distinguishing whether he can appeal to a saying of Jesus from Jesus' earthly teaching or not. Yet, even when he can't, Paul's still convinced that he has God's Spirit.

And he speaks a message that is authoritative, and he expects his readers to obey. A second, not a second, but another detail that one finds, another phenomenon that one finds in the biblical text. Again, I appeal to the New Testament for this one, though you could find similar probably examples in the Old Testament.

But it's interesting that when you read the Gospels, especially Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the so-called synoptic Gospels, because there appears to be some literary relationship between them. The wording, the order of events, we'll look at this later under source criticism in a different session. But the synoptic Gospels seem to be

recording the same, at times, the exact same wording, the exact same statements of Jesus.

Yet, it's interesting that they don't always appear to be interested in recording the exact words of Jesus. So, for example, how do you handle this? In Matthew chapter 5 and verse 3, one of Jesus' so-called beatitudes in his Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 5 verse 3, Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit. But Luke chapter 6 verse 20, in Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, you have, blessed are you who are poor.

Now, my point, my intention at this point is not to adjudicate between these two or solve the issue, but merely to point out that their wording is very different. Matthew has poor in spirit, and Matthew has it in the third person, blessed are the poor in spirit. Luke just has blessed are the poor, and he has it in the second person, blessed are you who are poor.

Furthermore, if Jesus, although I think Jesus was probably trilingual, probably spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, if Jesus, as many think, spoke this in Aramaic, the fact that these are recorded in Greek clearly suggests that we don't have the exact, precise words of Jesus. Did one of them get it wrong? Did Matthew have it wrong by saying the poor in spirit? Or did Luke get it wrong by leaving out spirit? Or, more likely, should we understand the Gospel writers as not so concerned to preserve the precise, exact words of Jesus, but instead to produce accurate summations or accurate accounts and summaries of what it was Jesus said? Yes, at times they may record close to precisely what Jesus said, but at other times, is it possible that Matthew and Luke both accurately are getting at exactly what it was Jesus was communicating, without necessarily recording the precise words? I think we have to come to a conclusion like that, or else we have to conclude that one of them was

wrong. If Matthew and Luke are trying to preserve the exact words of Jesus, one or both of them got it wrong.

But, if, as was common in, we said again, one of the distances that we experience is a literary distance. In the first century, it was very common for persons to summarize, to give an accurate and adequate summary of what was said, as long as it accurately portrayed what someone communicated, it was fine. It didn't appear that they were as interested as we were in quotations, where you'd put quotations around and preserve the exact, precise reading.

Instead, they were often more interested in providing an accurate summary, so that Matthew and Luke both got it right. They both captured the meaning of and exactly what it was Jesus was trying to communicate. Or, another interesting example is the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5 through 7, the longest version of it.

If you took time to sit down and read it in a good English translation, I would guess it would take, oh, 10 or 15 minutes maybe to read it, give or take a few minutes. I seriously doubt that Jesus taught for 10 to 15 minutes. More likely, it went on for a day, perhaps.

Longer, maybe a little bit less, but probably at least the greater part of the day. So, even the cherished Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5 through 7 is, at times, it may capture some of the exact wording, but more likely, again, is an accurate summary and an accurate portrayal of what it was that Jesus said. So, that had Jesus read the account itself that Matthew wrote, he would have said, yes, that captures exactly what I was communicating.

So, how is that the Word of God? The fact that we have writers in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, recording the words of Jesus that never exactly

portray the precise wording, but they feel free to summarize, and sometimes they do it differently. Matthew seems to emphasize being poor in spirit, where Luke emphasizes physical poverty, and there's, I think, a way to harmonize that. But how do we understand that as the inspired Word of God? The last phenomenon that we find, and there's a number of others we could refer to, but the last phenomenon we find in the Old New Testament is, the Bible seems to be arranged salvation historically.

That is, the Bible seems to be arranged so that the New Testament brings to fulfillment, even at times, eclipsing the previous revelation in the Old Testament, so that Christians today can reflect on the question, why don't we offer sacrifices? When that was commanded to God's people in the Old Testament, that's a biblical precept, a biblical command, yet most of us don't offer sacrifices today. Most of us don't keep the Sabbath, as far as keeping all the regulations on the Sabbath day that God's people Israel kept. How is it that that's the Word of God? The fact that certain parts of the revelation in the Old Testament are no longer applicable, and sometimes Jesus and New Testament writers even overturn them, such as the sacrificial system and some of the regulations related to the Old Testament sacrifices.

How do we understand that as the Word of God? So, taking all this information into consideration, the different phenomenon that we find in the Old New Testament, sometimes God speaks directly to the authors, sometimes the authors speak to God, such as the psalmist when they praise, and expressions of praise, and lamentation, and worship. Sometimes human authors speak, and a later author will attribute that to God. Sometimes we see revealed very human processes of composition and production.

Sometimes we find authors not interested in producing and preserving the exact words, but summaries, and sometimes the summaries even differ. How is that the

Word of God? And then relating that to the Bible's own meta-statements, that the Bible is inspired, or that the Bible's the product of God's Spirit, moving human authors to produce what, at least in 2 Timothy, is nothing less than the very words breathed out from God, the very breath of God. Historically, there have been at least four ways this has been understood.

I'll just summarize them briefly, and then communicate what I think might encapsulate, or might account for this evidence. First of all, is historically, four views of inspiration that have wrestled with this. And again, these all could have sub-views, in different ways of looking at them.

This is not exhaustive. There might be some other views that could be added, but I'll paint with very broad brush strokes. One view has often been labeled the fundamentalist view, and that is that God actually dictated the words of Scripture.

So not just the prophets, but the prophets, in a sense, some have called this the prophetic model. The prophets, in a sense, provide the model for understanding the Genesis to Revelation. It's the result of God actually dictating and speaking directly the words to the biblical author, so that the author basically becomes a passive secretary, simply recording and inscribing, thus says the Lord.

So the prophetic, thus says the Lord, is extended to the entire Bible. So that God has sometimes in the past been understood as actually dictating the words of Scripture to the human author. Another view, in exact contrast to that, is known as the liberal view.

And that is the Bible is not to be equated with the word of God. The first view, the fundamentalist, would find a very strict equation of God's word with the biblical text



itself. The liberal view would say the biblical text itself is not to be identified with the word of God, but merely and largely the record of human religious experience.

Its inspiration is to be understood in line with other inspired types of literature. So it's really not any more important than, or at least no more authoritative, than any other religious text or any other text. Another, a third view, that in a sense is meant to respond to the second one, was a view often associated with the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, and that is known as neo-orthodoxy.

And Barth said that the Bible, the written word of God, is not to be equated with the word of God, but it can become the word of God. To kind of just put this in simple terms, it can become God's word when God chooses to continue to reveal himself to his people through this record of revelation. So the Bible is a witness to, often you'll find Barth or others discussing Barth, describing the Bible as a witness to revelation.

The Bible is a witness to God revealing, but it can continue to become God's word. It can continue to when God chooses to reveal himself through this record of revelation to us. It stems from Barth's understanding God was wholly other, and no human language or document could hope to reveal and capture God's revelation.

So the Bible is basically an errant and infallible human document, but it can become God's word when God chooses to continue to reveal himself through this witness to his revelation. A fourth view is known as, often for lack of a better term, I've labeled it, and others have labeled it an evangelical view. And that is the Bible, much like number one, the Bible is to be equated with the word of God, unlike number two and three.

But unlike number one, the fundamentalist view, is the evangelical view realizes that the Bible is the very word of God, but it's communicated through human authors and

through very human and diverse methods and means. So God was at work throughout the entire process. So for example, Luke chapter one, where Luke is utilizing other sources and doing his research based on eyewitnesses and aware of other accounts of Jesus' life, perhaps see shortcomings in some of them, and now decides to write his own account.

God is at work throughout the entire process, so that the result is something that is nothing less than the very words of human beings, but at the same time, nothing less than the very word of God. So the divine production of scripture, the divine involvement, the fact that the scripture is to be identified as God's word, does not diminish the human aspect. Some have compared this to the incarnation, the fact that Jesus is at the same time fully God, yet fully human, is that this can be seen as the incarnate speech of God.

That it is at the same time, fully the word of God, yet somehow the words of human beings. And so we can read the scriptural text and see the different emphases that we see between Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount and Luke's, or Old Testament narrative, and the Psalms, Psalms crying out in expressions of praise to God. We can see very human processes of communication and writing.

We can distinguish Paul's Greek from the Greek of James or Mark. So an evangelical view affirms that the Bible is in some way God's word, without in some way diminishing the full human element as well. Let me return to just briefly to look at the two biblical texts that we raised at the very beginning, the Timothy 3.16 and the 2 Peter 2.20. The Timothy 3.16, 2 Timothy 3.16 passage, it's important with both of these texts to understand not only the contribution they make to our understanding of inspiration, but also the limitation.

Then we'll wrap, we'll summarize what do we mean perhaps in the next session. What do we mean by inspiration? How does this affect interpretation and hermeneutics? With the 2 Timothy 3.16 passage, all scripture is God-breathed or inspired by God. First of all, we've already mentioned that although this text by extension, perhaps by deduction and extension, couldn't apply to the entirety of the Old New Testament, Paul is rather clear, or at least this context, he's rather clear that the scripture that he's primarily referring to, although it may contain the gospel as well, and the teachings of Jesus, is Paul's primarily referring to the Old Testament, the scripture that would have come down to him.

The other thing is that to emphasize about this text and its contribution to our understanding of the Bible and inspiration is that it focuses and emphasizes on the product and not the process. It, although it says that the entirety of scripture, primarily the Old Testament, is God-breathed. It's the very breath of God, the very word of God.

It doesn't tell us how it does so or how that works. One attempt to answer that question was the number, the first view, the fundamentalist view that God dictates it. But there's too much evidence of the contrary that suggests that there's very few places where, outside of the prophets, where the biblical writers are aware of speaking God's word or God speaking his word through them.

But in what sense are they still inspired? So that first, 2 Timothy 3.16 emphasizes the product, that the end product, the scriptures themselves, the text themselves, are the very, some way, the very word of God. Have their genesis in the very speaking of God. Have their origin in the very speech or the very breath of God.

Yet it says nothing of how God does this. How was it that Luke, reading other accounts of the life of Christ, perhaps aware of some shortcomings, doing his own

research, wanting to produce, desiring himself in response to a man named Theophilus, wanting to write his own gospel. How is it that that is the very breath and the very word of God? 2 Timothy 3.16 doesn't focus on the process, but assures us that the product is nothing less than, while still being the words of human beings, is nothing less than the very word of God.

The last thing I want to say about this text is that inspiration is not theoretical, but is pragmatic and practical. Verse 17 reminds us that the inspired text is not something that we put on a shelf for safekeeping and say, look, there's the inspired word of God. But it does no good if it does not reach into our beings and transform us and evoke obedience.

If the Bible is really the inspired word of God, then we cannot help but respond in a way consistent with that. If it's the very word of God, then it stands in authority over us, and we must respond in obedience. The last text then, 2 Peter 2.20 and 2.21, when the author said that prophets did not write on their own accord and according to their own interpretation, but were individuals moved by God's spirit.

Again, I think we need to realize the limitations in that Peter does not seem to be, at least here, explicitly addressing all text. I think he makes it clear, and if you read the context and understand what's going on in 2 Peter, is Paul is primarily defending the Old Testament prophets, and even perhaps the apostles as well, when he says that what they prophesied, when they prophesied, it was not a result of their own human desire and human ingenuity and their own interpretation, but prophecy came as a result of human beings moved by God's spirit to speak the very word of God.

Although we don't want to exclude other New Testament books, certainly 2 Peter 2.20, as we have it, mainly addresses prophetic literature and doesn't say anything about how narrative or poetry or other types of literature or other texts were produced, but certainly does provide a helpful model for understanding how God's

spirit could work through human beings to produce something that was nothing less than the product of the human author, but still, in some way, at the same time, was nothing less than the very word of God and something that owed itself to the very breath of God.

How does this affect biblical interpretation? First of all, because the Bible is a human document, then the various methods of criticism that we're going to talk about, we'll define what we mean by criticism later on. The very methods of interpretation, the different criticisms that we'll discuss, and how we analyze human understanding are all valid and necessary because we are dealing with documents that are thoroughly human. They're produced by human beings in a specific historical context, in response to human problems, etc.

So because of that, because of the human dimension, that validates using the different methods and the different criticisms that we will be talking about. But second, because these documents are divine, because the Bible is nothing less than the word of God, it has a claim on our lives. It demands to be obeyed.

We must submit to it and obey it. In other words, historical methods can only take us so far in understanding the biblical text, as necessary as they are. But the biblical text is also a spiritual document, and behind it lies the God who has inspired it, and who communicates to his people, and who desires to be our God, and desires us to be his people.

So as a spiritual book, as a divine book, it has a claim on our lives, and it must evoke a response of obedience. The third thing is, the text itself is, and must be, the locus of our interpretive activity. Not the traditions or sources behind it, but as helpful as that may be, and we'll talk about the necessity, as we've already seen, the historical and cultural distance that often separates us from the biblical text.

But ultimately, it's the text itself that is the locus of our interpretive activity, not the reconstruction of our, the reconstructed historical background, or a so-called hypothetical reconstructed source. But ultimately, it's the finished text, the product that is the locus, or the center of our interpretive activity, as the product of the very speech of God, as the very inspired text. The other assumption that I just want to mention very briefly, is that I will assume that the canonical Old and New Testament that we now confess, that especially evangelical scholars confess, the 39 books of the Old Testament, and 27 of the New Testament, are the inspired word of God, or are the canonical scriptures, based on the testimony of Jesus, and other ancient Jewish authorities, based on the evidence of the early church from the fourth and fifth century AD, as they were wrestling with, and working out which documents they would accept as authoritative scripture, and recognize as the very word of God.

Based on that evidence, again, the center of the locus and object of our interpretive activity, then, will be the canonical Old and New Testament. So with that, we've considered the origin of scripture, and how that influences the way we interpret, and how that influences the way we approach interpretation. The next step that we'll take is a preliminary one, and that is, how can we be confident that we have the inspired text of scripture, or something close to it, perhaps? This is the process known as text criticism, and I want to talk about that a little bit in our next session.

But now that we've discussed the origin production of the Bible as the inspired word of God, how do we know that what we hold in our hands is, in fact, the inspired word of God? That deals with issues of textual criticism, and also translation, that we'll talk about in the next two sessions.