



Lecture # 9 Part 1

THE CHARACTER AND CONTENT OF INSPIRATION

Is there “occasional inspiration”?

[First Kings 13:11–32](#) relates a story of an “old prophet” who lied, claiming that God had spoken to him when He had not ([v. 18](#)).

1 Kings 13:11-32 (NASB)

¹¹ Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father.

¹² Their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone.

¹³ Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it.

¹⁴ So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am."

¹⁵ Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread."

¹⁶ He said, "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place.

¹⁷ "For a command *came* to me by the word of the LORD, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.'"

¹⁸ He said to him, "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" *But* he lied to him.

¹⁹ So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.

²⁰ Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back;

²¹ and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the LORD, and have not observed the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you,

²² but have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, 'Eat no bread and drink no water'; your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'"

²³ It came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back.



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²⁴ Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body.

²⁵ And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told *it* in the city where the old prophet lived.

²⁶ Now when the prophet who brought him back from the way heard *it*, he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him."

²⁷ Then he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled *it*.

²⁸ He went and found his body thrown on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside the body; the lion had not eaten the body nor torn the donkey.

²⁹ So the prophet took up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey and brought it back, and he came to the city of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him.

³⁰ He laid his body in his own grave, and they mourned over him, *saying*, "Alas, my brother!"

³¹ After he had buried him, he spoke to his sons, saying, "When I die, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.

³² "For the thing shall surely come to pass which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria."

This raises the question of whether one can be a true prophet on one occasion and a false one at another time. That is, could there be occasional inspiration (really, revelation)? **If so, then how could one know when to trust a prophet and when not to trust him?**

There are two possible responses.

First, one can deny "occasional inspiration" and point out that 1 Kings 13 does not say the old prophet was a true prophet or that he ever gave a genuine prophecy from God. In that connection it could be noted that his prophecy was not given publicly, nor was it confirmed by any signs as a genuine prophecy by a true prophet (see 1 Kings 13:3).

1 Kings 13:3 (NASB)

³ Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.'"



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The other alternative is to argue that all prophets give revelation only on certain occasions. Whenever there is doubt about the divine origin of a message, it is confirmed by miracles. That is illustrated by God's confirmation of **Moses over Korah (Numbers 16:1–50)**, and **Elijah over the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 8:15–40)**.

True prophets are confirmed by God, and false ones are condemned by Him. Either explanation is consistent with the orthodox view of inspiration and canonization. The crucial question is not whether there were other occasions when biblical writers wrote uninspired books. All that is necessary is that the ones they wrote, which are in the Bible, be possessed of divine inspiration.²¹

Accommodation or adaptation?

Some have asserted that in the process of communicating their message, the biblical writers accommodated their teaching to some erroneous beliefs of their day. Some even believe that that kind of accommodation is a necessary part of conveying infinite truth in infinite terms.²²

Several things render those conclusions false.

First of all, they confuse accommodation to human error with adaptation to human finitude. Just because God condescends to man's level to communicate His truth to them does not mean He has to compromise His truth in doing so. Adaptation to human limitations does not necessitate accommodation to error.