



Lecture # 9 Part 3

THE CHARACTER AND CONTENT OF INSPIRATION

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.

A mother may answer a four-year-old child's question about where babies come from by saying, "**Babies come from their mothers' tummies.**" **That is not false, but it is truth adapted to the child's level.** A few years later, when the child asks how the baby got there, it would also be true to say, "**Daddy placed a seed there and it grew.**" Neither is this the whole story, but at least it is not the stork story, which is false.

God uses **anthropomorphisms** when speaking to **man** (*anthropos*), but He does not use myths ([2 Peter 1:16](#)).

Anthropomorphisms:

- a)** attribution of human characteristics to nonhumans: the attribution of a human form, human characteristics, or human behavior to nonhuman things, e.g. deities in mythology and animals in children's stories

2 Peter 1:16 (NASB)

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

In short, God adapts His truth to limited human understanding, but He never accommodates Himself to human error.

The biblical view of inspiration "**does not assert that prophets and apostles were infallible, nor that in their own learning they were exempt from limitations imposed by their cultures. What it asserts, rather, is that the writers did not teach the doubtful views of the cultures in which they lived.**"²³ In fact, there is abundant evidence in the New Testament that Jesus never accommodated Himself to the false beliefs of His day.



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Some of the following examples will serve to illustrate.

1. Jesus rebuked those who believed “**tradition**” rather than the Word of God ([Matthew 15:1-3](#)).
2. Jesus set His words over against the false beliefs of Jewish teachers six times by using emphatic words: “**you have heard ... but I say to you**” ([Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43](#)).
3. Jesus rebuked the famous teacher of the Jews, Nicodemus, saying, “**Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?**” ([John 3:10](#)).
4. Jesus bluntly declared to the Sadducees, “**You are mistaken ...**” ([Matthew 22:29](#)).
5. Jesus’ severe words of [Matthew 23](#) are scarcely accommodating: “**Woe to you, blind guides ...**” ([v. 16](#)); “**you fools ...**” ([v. 17](#)); “**you serpents, you brood of vipers ...**” ([v. 33](#)).
6. When Jesus took a whip and chased the animals of the money changers from the Temple, He was not accommodating to their false beliefs and practices ([John 2:15-16](#)).

[John 2:15-16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁵ And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;
¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

In short, Jesus never accommodated truth to error. Instead, **He rebuked error with the truth.** He said, “**You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**” ([John 8:32](#)). Even Jesus’ enemies acknowledged His straightforwardness saying, “**Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one**” ([Matthew 22:16](#)).

[Matthew 22:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any."

Limitation or misunderstanding?



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An important question arises from the issue of Jesus never accommodating to human error, and it is related to His divine-human nature. The Bible speaks of Christ's "increasing in wisdom" ([Luke 2:52](#)), not knowing what was on the fig tree ([Matthew 21:19](#)), and not knowing the time of His second coming ([Matthew 24:36](#)).

[Luke 2:52 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

[Matthew 21:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹ Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.

[Matthew 24:36 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

If Jesus were limited in His understanding as a man, was it not possible that He made some mistakes in His teaching?

This question is built on a confusion of limitation and misunderstanding. It is one thing to have a limited understanding and quite another to have a wrong understanding. All human understanding is limited. It is limited because man himself is a finite creature. But it does not follow from that that every human understanding is in error.

Further, even if Jesus were limited in what He knew as a man, it does not follow that He was wrong in what He did know. A limited knowledge of truth is not the same as error. In fact, whatever Jesus did know He affirmed with absolute authority, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" ([Matthew 28:18](#)).

[Matthew 28:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Some twenty-five times He introduced His teachings with the formula, "Verily, verily" or "truly, truly" (cf. [John 3:3](#), [5](#), [11](#)).

[John 3:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

[John 3:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

[John 3:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.

Jesus placed His words on the very level with God's words ([Matthew 7:26–29](#)).



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Matthew 7:26-29 (NASB)

²⁶ "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

²⁷ "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

²⁸ When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;

²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

He declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away" ([Matthew 24:35 NASB](#))

Finally, Jesus said He only taught what the Father gave Him to teach: "I speak these things as the Father taught Me" ([John 8:28](#)).

John 8:28 (NASB)

²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, **but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.**

He also asserted, "I can do nothing on My own initiative ... because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" ([John 5:30](#)).

John 5:30 (NASB)

³⁰ "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

In His great prayer toward the end of His earthly ministry Jesus said, "The words which You gave Me I have given to them" ([John 17:8](#)).

John 17:8 (NASB)

⁸ for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

Again He said, "I have given them Your word" ([John 17:14](#)).

John 17:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

What Jesus said is what He received from the Father. Hence, to say Christ was misinformed is to charge God the Father with misunderstanding and error. So although Jesus may have been limited in His human understanding regarding issues about which He did not speak, there was no limitation of His authority on the matters He did address.



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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Bible claims to be the verbal, infallible, and inerrant Word of God. Because divine authority extends to every part of Scripture, this is verbal plenary inspiration. Although the general claims of the New Testament explicitly refer to only the Old Testament, they may be applied to the New Testament as well, because it too is “**Scripture**” and “**prophetic.**”

The divine nature of Scripture does not rule out the fact that it is also a human book, manifesting the variety of literary styles, figures of speech, and individual personalities of its authors. However, like Christ, the Bible is **theanthropic**, (having both the divine and human elements united in one expression).

As a result, **God adapted His truth to finite understanding, but He did not accommodate it to human misunderstanding.** Therefore, on the authority of Christ, the Scriptures are completely inerrant.