

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2020: *How to Interpret Scripture*
Lesson 2 “The Origin and Nature of the Bible”

Read for this week’s study

2 Peter 1:19–21; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Deuteronomy 18:18; Exodus 17:14; John 1:14; Hebrews 11:3, 6.

Memory Text

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Divine Revelation of the Bible
- III. The Process of Inspiration
- IV. The Written Word of God
- V. The Parallel Between Christ and Scripture
- VI. Understanding the Bible in Faith
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. How we read the Bible is significantly shaped and influenced by our understanding of the process of revelation and inspiration. It is wise, therefore, to allow the Bible itself to determine the basic parameters of how it should be treated. Does it matter if we approach the Bible in faith or with a certain amount of doubt or skepticism? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read 2 Peter 1:19-21. How does Peter express his conviction about the origin of the biblical prophetic message? What element of Scripture makes it totally unique as a source of truth? What are some of the negative outcomes that might occur if we distrust or question the divine origin of the Bible? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Timothy 3:16 and Deuteronomy 18:18. What do these texts say about the inspiration of Scripture? While not all parts of Scripture are easy to read and some parts may not be specifically applicable to us today, why should the entire

Bible be attended to, not just the parts that make the most sense to us? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read Exodus 34:27. Why would the Lord have Moses write down these words as opposed to having Moses only recite them to the people? What advantages does the written word provide that oral instruction does not? What are some disadvantages to written communication? What do the following texts teach about written revelation (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; Joshua 24:26; Jeremiah 30:2; Revelation 1:11, 19; 21:5; 22:18-19)? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read John 1:14; 2:22; 8:31-32 and 17:17. How would you compare Jesus and the Bible as "the Word of God"? In what ways are Jesus and the Bible similar and in what ways are they different? If Jesus is the Word, why is the Bible foundational to our faith? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Hebrews 11:3, 6. Why is faith essential in understanding God and His Word? Why is it impossible to please God without faith? What exactly IS faith? What does it mean to approach the Bible with an attitude of faith? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Why does God reveal Himself and His will to us? Why do we need revelation? (Friday's lesson)
8. How does God reveal Himself? Has God revealed Himself to you personally? Under what circumstances did that happen? (Friday's lesson)
9. Can God also reveal Himself through the lives of believers? When people observe you, what kind of God do they see in your behavior? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Faith, as I understand it, is a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known. The better we know him, the better this relationship may be.

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in him, based on the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe whatever he says, to accept whatever he offers, and to do whatever he wishes — without reservation—for the rest of eternity.

Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 43. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-05>

How you define faith and trust enters into this. To me, **faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known; and we get to know him through the gospel. The good news is about God, that he is infinitely worthy of our trust. It implies an attitude toward God of love, and trust, and deepest admiration.** It means having enough confidence in God, based upon the more than adequate evidence, all summed up in the good news, to be willing to believe what God says—as soon as we’re sure *he* said it! And to accept what God offers, as soon as we’re sure *he’s* offering it, and to do whatever God wishes, without reservation, as soon as we’re sure *he’s* asking us, and not somebody else. Anybody who has such a trusting relationship with God, of love, trust, and admiration, willing to listen, is perfectly safe to save. He could die just beginning that relationship, like the thief on the cross. He would arise loving, trusting, and admiring that kind one in the middle. He will be willing to listen, and accept all kinds of instruction and correction. He is therefore safe to save.

But you can’t regard God in that attitude without a new heart and a right spirit. So you are a new creature, which he’s going to mention in a moment. And that’s what David eventually wanted—truth and honesty in the inner man. Mention honesty, and you remember Micah, Amos, Hosea, they all talked about this. All God asks of us is that we stand humbly in his presence with an honest willingness to listen, and let him do for us whatever needs to be done.

I would add that even though with the passing of time I’m finding more and more that everything God has asked us to do makes such good sense and I agree with him; I would have to say that being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I’m willing to obey this trustworthy God when he instructs me to do something beyond my present understanding. Wouldn’t that be safe? Because he’s proved always to make such good sense in every other respect. And I think that’s what Abraham said to him. “God, you’ve always made such good sense. But your command to sacrifice the son of the promise makes no sense to me. But I know it will. So God, I’m on my way.” I believe faith says to God, “God, I hear you, and I’ve checked that carefully. It is you. And I am on my way. But as I go, in all reverence, may I ask why?”

And that’s how we come to know God. And for three days and three nights Abraham thought that through; and in the end he said, “God, I’m even beginning to think of ways in which you could work this out. I’m not telling you how, but I know you will; because you’ll not contradict yourself in the promise you gave me about my son. Maybe you’ll resurrect my son. Just as you gave him miraculously, you could easily resurrect him. Or maybe you’ll provide a substitute.”

And that’s what God chose to do. And Abraham is cited in Hebrews 11 as one who trusted God, but thought it through. **Faith is not blind. You can jump off a cliff if you take leaps in the dark, and call that faith. It is not safe. History is strewn with the wreckage of people who leap in the dark and call it faith. Light makes faith possible, and without it we ought to wait.** {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded April,

1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Lou: Let's move along to another question that has come in. "You've talked about faith meaning trust rather than just 'knowing' something. Aren't there some things that we could legitimately say we only know by faith, such as that statement in Hebrews 11, 'by faith we know that the world was made,' and so forth?"

Graham: I would want to reply, "By faith in what? What do you mean you just know something by faith? Do you have a feeling of conviction inside perhaps?"

Lou: What about the Hebrews passage here?

Graham: Where Hebrews says "we know by faith," what would the writer mean? Faith in something, to be sure.

Lou: Don't keep me waiting...

Graham: How do we know anything about where the world came from? We have to read it in the scripture, don't we? So we read the record. So, by faith in the scriptures we believe that God created the world as recorded. That leaves another question. Can the Bible be trusted? So when we say we know these things by faith and they are things described in scripture, we are not saying, "I know this because I have a warm feeling down in my heart." That could be from indigestion! So when you say, "I know something by faith," I would want to know what the faith is in; and in this case in Hebrews 11 it is faith in the Bible. We have a whole evening on this. Can the Bible really be trusted? In the most critical company can you say, "I have found the Bible to be utterly reliable from cover to cover." I believe you can, and so we have one evening on "The Record of the Evidence." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God #5 "The Record of the Evidence" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/5MMCAG>

Conversations About God #6 "Evaluating the Evidence" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The truth if received is capable of constant expansion and new developments. It will increase in brightness as we behold it, and grow in height and depth as we aspire to grasp it. Thus it will elevate us to the standard of perfection, and give us faith and trust in God as our strength for the work before us (MS 153, 1898). {5BC 1147.3}

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. {7BC 945.9}

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the Word of God (MS 24, 1886). {7BC 945.10}

The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. {7BC 946.1}

God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired Word to finite man. This Word, arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven. {1SM 16.3}

The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us. It is seldom that two persons will view and express truth in the very same way. Each dwells on particular points which his constitution and education have fitted him to appreciate. The sunlight falling upon the different objects gives those objects a different hue. {1SM 22.1}

Christ declares that our heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than earthly parents are to give gifts to their children. {RC 304.3}

The Lord did not lock the reservoir of heaven after pouring His Spirit upon the early disciples. We also may receive of the fullness of His blessing. Heaven is full of the treasures of His grace, and those who come to God in faith may claim all that He has promised. {AG 193.4}

To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the day of

Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 20. {ChS 250.1}

God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. . . . There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. . . . Christ declared that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. {ML 37.4}

When Christ ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. The Holy Spirit, as His representative, and the heavenly angels, as ministering spirits, are sent forth to aid those who against great odds are fighting the good fight of faith. Ever remember that Jesus is your helper. No one understands as well as He your peculiarities of character. He is watching over you, and if you are willing to be guided by Him, He will throw around you influences for good that will enable you to accomplish all His will for you. {MYP 17.1}

Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through cooperation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {ML 49.4}

The Holy Spirit loves to address the youth, and to discover to them the treasures and beauties of God's word. The promises spoken by the great Teacher will captivate the senses and animate the soul with spiritual power that is divine. There will grow in the fruitful mind a familiarity with divine things that will be as a barricade against temptation. {COL 132.3}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

Provision is made by God Himself for every soul that turns to the Lord, to receive His immediate cooperation. The Holy Spirit becomes His efficiency. {ML 47.4}

Equal with the Father, honored and adored by the angels, in our behalf Christ humbled Himself, and came to this earth to live a life of lowliness and poverty—to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Yet the stamp of divinity was upon His humanity. He came as a divine Teacher, to uplift human beings, to increase their physical, mental, and spiritual efficiency. {5BC 1129.6}

As His representatives among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took humanity that He might reach humanity. A divine-human Saviour was needed to bring salvation to the world. And to men and women has been committed the sacred trust of making known “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Ephesians 3:8. {AA 134.2}

But although Christ’s divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. The human did not take the place of the divine, nor the divine of the human. This is the mystery of godliness. The two expressions “human” and “divine” were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality. Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty. Surrounded with sorrow, suffering, and moral pollution, despised and rejected by the people to whom had been intrusted the oracles of heaven, Jesus could yet speak of Himself as the Son of man in heaven. He was ready to take once more His divine glory when His work on earth was done. {5BC 1129.3}

Man’s need for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were aroused in behalf of human beings, fallen and bound to Satan’s chariot car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the councils of heaven came to this earth as man’s instructor. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world, and to meet the necessities of human nature He took humanity upon Himself. To the astonishment of the heavenly host the eternal Word came to this world as a helpless babe. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts and mysteriously allied Himself with fallen human beings. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” John 1:14. {CT 259.2}

In Christ’s parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world. That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ’s teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar. {COL 17.1}

This work of Christ was to confirm the beings of other worlds in their innocence and loyalty, as well as to save the lost and perishing of this world. He opened a way for the disobedient to return to their allegiance to God, while by the same act He placed a safeguard around those who were already pure, that they might not become polluted. {MYP 253.3}

While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise and honor and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as

well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan has brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by His mediatorial work. {MYP 254.1}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God’s thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, “I have declared unto them Thy name, “—”merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, “—”that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which “angels desire to look,” and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which “seeketh not her own” has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. {DA 19.2}

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

God gives sufficient evidence to every soul. He does not promise to remove every doubt, but he gives a reason for faith. And sufficient evidence was given to the Jews. {RH, January 24, 1899 par. 7}

to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence. {RH, September 16, 1873 par. 10}

Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the

consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action.—Letter 12, 1890. {2SM 56.1}

He maintained his disguise till he had interpreted the Scriptures, and had led them to an intelligent faith in his life, his character, his mission to earth, and his death and resurrection. He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not because it was supported by his personal testimony, but because the typical law, and the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeing with the facts of his life and death, presented unquestionable evidence of that truth. {3SP 214.2}