

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2020: *How to Interpret Scripture*
Lesson 5 “By Scripture Alone—*Sola Scriptura*”

Read for this week’s study

1 Corinthians 4:1–6; Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 1:13; Mark 12:10, 26; Luke 24:27, 44, 45; Isaiah 8:20.

Memory Text

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Scripture as the Ruling Norm
- III. The Unity of Scripture
- IV. The Clarity of Scripture
- V. Scripture Interprets Scripture
- VI. Sola Scriptura and Ellen G. White
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What do we mean when we say “by Scripture alone”? What fundamental principle of biblical interpretation is implied in this phrase? What was the context in which the Protestant Reformation declared this Bible alone principle? Is that context still valid today? In other words, is tradition always bad? Under what circumstances is it helpful? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What did the church in the Middle Ages mean by “tradition”? Why did they feel that tradition was equal with Scripture in authority? What drove the Reformers to be so negative toward church tradition? Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-6. What does it mean not to go “beyond what is written”? Why is that so crucial for our faith? Read Acts 17:10-11. How would we do that today? How do you test your beliefs by Scripture in practice? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Titus 1:9 and 2 Timothy 1:13. Why is the unity of the Bible so important for our belief? What does it mean in practice to take the unity of the Bible seriously? What

do we do when we come across texts in the Bible that appear to contradict each other? How do we work to resolve them? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read Matthew 21:42, 12:3-5, and 19:4. What was Jesus' attitude toward the Scriptures in these texts? Is everything in the Bible clear? How can you know if a text that you are studying is clear or not? What are some safeguards to keep us from reading our own opinions into the Bible? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Luke 24:27, 44-45. How does Jesus refer back to Scripture to explain who He is? What does this teach us about how we can and should use Scripture? According to Romans 15:4 "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us." Does that mean every story, every genealogy, even the defective ideas of Job's friends? Or did Paul mean only selected proof texts? If the former, how do busy people in today's world manage to learn from the whole Bible? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Isaiah 8:20. What do you think he meant by "the law and the testimony"? Do we relate to prophets differently after they are dead? How do we relate to prophets whose writings didn't make it into the biblical canon? How should Seventh-day Adventists weigh the authority of Ellen White against the authority of Scripture? How do you understand her comment that her inspiration is the same in quality as the biblical prophets yet she is a "lesser light"? (Thursday's lesson)
7. What erroneous beliefs do people hold today because they have looked at only a few selected texts rather than all that the Bible says about a topic? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

However, when people are expressing their feelings, one had better hear them through, because a person might express extreme depression for a little while and then say, "However, I've thought this through." For example, look at 77:10. How's this for a key text: "It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

Is that one of your key texts? No, the key text we use is that God never changes. Now, how is it that the verse, "God changes not" has more authority than this one, "It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed"? Well, put with that, say, the second Psalm, verse 11, for another key text. Psalm 2:11: "Serve the LORD with fear, with trembling kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled."

Is that a key text? Now, you may have a version that reads a little differently, though. But I'm just illustrating, if you are just using the *Revised Standard*, that's the way these two verses read. There are many more statements like this in the Psalms, aren't there? Why do we pick the verses that we like? And we don't use the ones that don't seem to fit in. See, the verse we like is that God is slow to wrath. When you are going through the Bible, how do you know which

text to pick out as a key text? How do you know to pick the one, “He is slow to wrath” and skip the one, “His wrath is quickly kindled”? And you know, some of our friends feel that we Adventists have done this, that we’ve gone through the Bible, here a little, there a little, we’ve picked out our collection of ‘littles’ to support our convictions about God and the plan of salvation. What about all the others? Well, that’s one reason for going through the sixty-six, let’s not skip any. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Psalms, recorded January, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/27MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

The great purpose of the Bible is to reveal the truth about our heavenly Father that we may be won back to him in love and trust. This truth, this everlasting good news, is to be found in every one of the sixty-six books. But to discover this truth we must learn more than just what happened to Samson and Delilah, to David and Bathsheba, to Gideon and his fleece. The all-important question is: what do these stories tell us about God?

If one does not ask this question, much of the content of scripture may seem unrelated to the plan of salvation, even perplexing, sometimes even contradictory. But when one learns to view the Bible as a whole, there emerges a consistent picture of an all-wise and gracious God who seems willing to go to any length to keep in touch with his people, to stoop and reach them where they are, to speak a language they can understand. And the further one reads on book by book, the more one is moved with love and admiration for a God who would be willing to run such risk, to pay such a price, in order to keep open the lines of communication between himself and his wayward children. God will save all who trust him. But he has not asked us to trust him as a stranger. The Bible—all of it—is a record of God’s revelation and demonstration of infinite trustworthiness. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6, “Evaluating the Evidence” recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:

<http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>

Lou: This question has come up, Graham, and I noticed too, that as I looked over the Bible reference sheet you used, I think six or seven different translations are included. How do you decide what translations to use? Are you just picking out the one that says it the way that you want it?

Graham: That's a very fair question. When I am finished choosing these, I have versions all over the table and the floor, because I have more than a hundred and fifty different English translations.

Lou: Do you check them all?

Graham: I check many of them—until I find what I want? That's right, but what do I want? In all fairness, I do go back to the original. I have taught biblical languages for years, the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Aramaic, and so I check with the original. What I want is a version that will be as neutral as possible. Like last week, "God sent his Son." Some versions add "as a sacrifice for sin," or "to atone for sin." That's very interpretive. The Greek just says "He sent his Son concerning sin." So I put two versions in, "He sent his Son to deal with sin." That's beautifully neutral. Now I can decide how he dealt with it. Or "He sent his Son to do away with sin." So if I can't find one that is neutral, then I will put in several to show the possible meanings. And on that evening when we discuss the Bible, we'll go into that in more detail.

Lou: All right. What if I only have one? You say you have a hundred and fifty. I have maybe twenty or thirty. I don't think my wife is going to let me buy the rest to catch up with you.

Graham: Unless you have one of the extraordinary ones I'll bring next time, like the *New Testament Revised by the Spirits*, or the *New Testament Translated From Numerology*, or from *Metaphysics*, if you have one of the mainline versions, they are all very trustworthy, if you read the Bible as a whole. If you make everything depend on one verse, even the comma might be in the wrong place. So put many passages together. The safety, always, is in reading the Bible as a whole. Then almost every version is dependable. {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>*

Further Study with Ellen White

If men will walk in the path that God has marked out for them, they will have a counselor whose wisdom is far above any human wisdom. {2BC 993.1}

Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distress, He is making arrangements for our deliverance. . . . God knows them better than they know themselves, and He understands how to lead them. . . . {OHC 316.4}

The truths of the Bible, treasured in the heart and mind and obeyed in the life, convince and convert the soul, transform the character, and comfort and uplift the heart. . . . {TMK 199.2}

When we are faithful in making God known, our impulses will be under divine supervision, and we shall make steady growth, spiritually and intellectually. {UL 81.4}

When you search the Scriptures with an earnest desire to learn the truth, God will breathe His Spirit into your heart and impress your mind with the light of His word. The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed. {4T 499.1}

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes. {7BC 945.7}

Many narratives of the Inspired Word are given to teach us that the human family is the object of the special care of God and heavenly beings. Man is not left to become the sport of Satan's temptations. All heaven is actively engaged in the work of communicating light to the inhabitants of the world, that they may not be left in the darkness of midnight without spiritual guidance. An Eye that never slumbers or sleeps is guarding the camp of Israel. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels are ministering to the needs of the children of men. Voices inspired by God are crying, This is the way, walk ye in it. {ML 88.2}

We thank God that the Bible is prepared for the poor man as well as for the learned man. It is fitted for all ages and all classes (MS 16, 1888). {7BC 945.3}

The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration. {COL 132.4}

The truths of God's word are not mere sentiments, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding is removed. {CT 452.2}

The words, "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezekiel 36:26), mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our view of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the word of God. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher plane of intelligence. {CT 452.3}

All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path. {COL 35.3}

The same Spirit that in His stead was sent to be the instructor of His first co-workers, Christ has commissioned to be the instructor of His co-workers today. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20), is His promise. {Ed 96.1}

It is the Spirit that causes to shine into darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; that makes men’s hearts burn within them with an awakened realization of the truths of eternity; that presents before the mind the great standard of righteousness, and convinces of sin; that inspires faith in Him who alone can save from sin; that works to transform character by withdrawing the affections of men from those things which are temporal and perishable, and fixing them upon the eternal inheritance. The Spirit recreates, refines, and sanctifies human beings, fitting them to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. {GW 286.3}

The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.” {DA 302.1}

Those who are under the influence of the Spirit of God will not be fanatical, but calm and steadfast, free from extravagance in thought, word, or deed. Amid the confusion of delusive doctrines, the Spirit of God will be a guide and a shield to those who have not resisted the evidences of truth, silencing every other voice but that which comes from Him who is the truth. {AG 219.6}

Jesus declares that the Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. The Holy Spirit understands man’s every necessity. He will bestow upon the earnest seeker that for which he hungers and thirsts. The blessings that God has to bestow are unlimited. We cannot comprehend their height and depth and breadth. All heaven is at the command of those who, realizing their lack of wisdom, come directly to the source of wisdom. To such ones God gives liberally and upbraids not. . . . {HP 294.4}

We need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in order to discern the truths in God’s word. The lovely things of the natural world are not seen until the sun, dispelling the darkness, floods

them with its light. So the treasures in the word of God are not appreciated until they are revealed by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. {COL 113.1}

The Holy Spirit, sent from heaven by the benevolence of infinite love, takes the things of God and reveals them to every soul that has an implicit faith in Christ. By His power the vital truths upon which the salvation of the soul depends are impressed upon the mind, and the way of life is made so plain that none need err therein. As we study the Scriptures, we should pray for the light of God's Holy Spirit to shine upon the word, that we may see and appreciate its treasures. {COL 113.2}

In the truths of His word, God has given to men a revelation of Himself; and to all who accept them they are a shield against the deceptions of Satan. {GC 465.1}

The Lord's angels are appointed to keep strict watch over those who put their faith in the Lord, and these angels are to be our special help in every time of need. Every day we are to come to the Lord with full assurance of faith, and to look to Him for wisdom. . . . Those who are guided by the Word of the Lord will discern with certainty between falsehood and truth, between sin and righteousness (MS 43, 1907). {7BC 907.1}

There is one safeguard against Satan's deceptions and snares, that is the truth as it is in Jesus. The truth planted in the heart, nourished by watchfulness and prayer, nourished by the grace of Christ, will give us discernment. . . . {TMK 301.4}