



2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 2 The Origin and Nature of the Bible

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Consider some passages from Remedy Psalms to promote God's love

Read first paragraph, "The way we see and understand..." The lesson brings up a good point, our preconceived ideas, assumed premises, mindsets, beliefs we hold before we go to the Bible will impact what we are able to learn from the Bible. The lesson emphasizes the godless mindset and how if one believes there is no God that belief impacts the ability to understand Biblical truths. No doubt about it, but what are other preconceived ideas that people can have that also negatively impact a person's ability to gain truth from the Bible?

- That the Messiah will come and use might and power to overthrow the enemies of Israel and rule on an earthly throne—did this idea corrupt how the Pharisees read the Bible 2000 years ago?
 - What about today—do any religious groups believe this same idea about the second coming of Christ?
- The Bible is to be taken as it reads without reasoning things through
 - Psychotic patients have been known to gouge out eyes because of Jesus's words if you eye offends you then pluck it out
- The Bible is to be taken alone, divorced from science and nature
- God's law functions like human law and God is the source of inflicted pain and death to punish unrepentant sinners.

The lesson points out the value of faith—and contrasts it with skepticism. To be sure if a person is denying God, has concluded that the Bible is a book of myths and fairytales and goes to read it with such a skeptical mind, they are very unlikely to find any truth. But are these the only two options when approaching the Bible?

Can a person:

- Have faith in the wrong god? Remember Jesus said they would prophecy in His name but He never knew them?
 - What happens when people do believe in God, study the Bible regularly, but hold the wrong view of God?
 - Crucified Jesus
 - Salem witch trials
 - Seek to pass laws to make others comply with their religious views



- Not have faith, but also not have skepticism, could they have an honest desire to discover the truth of the Bible, but haven't yet come to a knowledge of God? Consider the Ethiopian Phillip met on the road

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible is not like..." No doubt about it, the Bible is truthful and trustworthy, but does this mean that every text in the Bible is a true statement or should be taken as it reads?

When Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus was Satan speaking truth to Jesus? No, Satan was using Scripture to create a falsehood. Does this happen today, where Scripture is used to create falsehoods?

- How about when a disaster strikes and people say it is God doing it?
 - What about the current Corona pandemic—some people are saying this is God doing it? Are viruses part of God's creation?
 - One person posted on our Facebook page that God is the One who brought the Corona Virus quoting Isaiah 45:7
"I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things. "

Several points to be understood when reading this text:

In Scripture God is often credited with doing that which He permits to occur. God did not stop King Saul from committing suicide, yet Scripture states God put Saul to death:

Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day. 1Sam 31:4-6.

Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse. 1Chronicles 10:13,14.

So, this passage can be understood as God being credited for the evil He permits to occur during this conflict with Satan.

The Hebrew word *ra'* can refer to moral evil occurring within the character of a being or external trouble that occurs outside a being. In this case the text is referring to the latter. God does, at times, use His power to bring disasters upon nations and individuals for the fulfillment



of His overall healing plan of love. God brought the 10 plagues upon Egypt, but for what purpose? To expose the impotence of their pagan gods and turn their hearts toward Him. Sadly, many didn't respond. Yet we can say that God brought calamity upon them as a therapeutic intervention. Those who don't understand reality will see a god who punishes. Those who do understand reality will see a God of love who intervenes to heal and save. God's actions are always actions of love because God never changes and is true to Himself—He doesn't act based on our misunderstanding, but on what is right.

Finally, the passage was written in reference to King Cyrus who was a pagan ruler called by God to release Israel after 70 years of captivity. Pagan gods are esteemed in relation to their power. The more powerful the god, the greater he is believed to be and the more esteemed by the worshipper. Therefore, God is speaking a language designed to reach the mind of a pagan ruler, reminding Cyrus that the God of heaven has all power.

When compared with the rest of Scripture, we know that this text does not mean evil, sin, darkness, suffering, pain, or death originate, arise from, or are found within the heart of God.

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 1John 1:5

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; James 1:13

God is love 1John 4:16

- How about God's wrath being God using power to punish sin? This is a common misuse of Scripture in which people project their human, worldly understanding of wrath upon Scripture and misconstrue the meaning. What is the true meaning? God always acts in love and uses power to expose evil and give opportunity for salvation—but in the end God sets free those who refuse Him to reap what sin brings, which is death. Thus, God's wrath is exactly what the Bible teaches—letting go. Romans 1:18, 24,26,28.

Read second paragraph, "Direct verbal communication..." Can you think of some people to whom God spoke to directly?

- Adam and Eve (Gen 2:16, 3:9-13)
- Cain (Gen 4:6)
- Noah (Gen 6:13-21, 7:1-4, 8:15-17)
- Noah and his sons (Gen 9:1-17)
- Job and his friends (Job 38:1-42:6)
- Abraham (Gen 17:9 and many others)
- Isaac (Gen 26:24)
- Jacob (Gen 35:1, 9-12, in a dream 28:13-15... likely 32:26-29)
- Moses (Exodus 6:13, 34:33 and many others)



- Aaron (Exodus 6:13 and others)
- Miriam (Num 12:4)
- Joshua (Jos 6:2-5)
- Samuel (1Sa 3:4-14, 15:10, 16:7)
- David (1Sa 23:2, 23:4, 30:8; 2Sa 2:1, 5:19, 5:23-24)
- Nathan (2Sa 7:4-16, 2Sa 12:1 by implication)
- Solomon (1Ki 6:11-13, 3:5-15 in a dream)
- Jehu (1Ki 16:1-4)
- Elijah (1Ki 19:9-18)
- Isaiah (2Ki 20:4; Isa 6:8-12, 8:1-11)
- Ahaz (Isa 7:10-25)
- Manasseh and his people (2Ch 33:10)
- Jonah (Jon 1:1-2, 3:1-2, 4:4, 4:9-11)
- Ezekiel (Eze 1:3)
- Hosea (Hos 1:2-5)
- Haggai (Hag 2:10-23)
- Zechariah (Zec 1:1-17)
- People at Jesus's baptism (Mat 3:17)
- Apostles if we count Jesus in human form
- Paul (Act 9:3-6, 18:9)

And which ones wrote Scripture?

- Moses (Exodus 6:13, 34:33 and many others)
- Joshua (Jos 6:2-5)
- Samuel (1Sa 3:4-14, 15:10, 16:7)
- David (1Sa 23:2, 23:4, 30:8; 2Sa 2:1, 5:19, 5:23-24)
- Solomon (1Ki 6:11-13, 3:5-15 in a dream)
- Isaiah (2Ki 20:4; Isa 6:8-12, 8:1-11)
- Jonah (Jon 1:1-2, 3:1-2, 4:4, 4:9-11)
- Ezekiel (Eze 1:3)
- Hosea (Hos 1:2-5)
- Haggai (Hag 2:10-23)
- Zechariah (Zec 1:1-17)
- Matthew, Mark, John, James, Peter, Jude
- Paul (Act 9:3-6, 18:9)

Why doesn't God speak directly to us today? What would you do if tonight a being suddenly appears in your bedroom and begins to talk to you?

The lesson suggests that God is the ultimate author of the Bible, read the last paragraph from **MONDAY's** lesson, which is a quote from the book *The Great Controversy*:



The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. p. v3

What does this mean? God is the author of Scripture in that He directed it, oversaw it, inspired it, but does that mean God wrote the Bible? Is the Bible a dictation from God and the Bible penmen wrote down what God told them to write down? Are the words of the Bible inspired or were the men inspired and they wrote the words they thought best to convey the concepts, thus it is the truths that are inspired?

Consider this quote from the same author as the one above, do you agree or disagree?

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. 1SM 21.1

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 and thoughts 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.—Manuscript 24, 1886 (written in Europe in 1886). 1SM 21.2

So God is the author, in that He inspired the men with truths to be communicated, but God is not the writer. The Bible does not represent God's words, but God's truth, His methods, laws, character, but also exposes Satan, the nature and character of sin, and the plan of salvation.

Why is this important to understand? Because many people get stuck in concrete or magical thinking and believe it is essential to get the right words, or the words used have power. Almost like an incantation, have to get the words right. Such as, don't use Jesus, must use Joshua, but not Joshua, must say Yoshua. Or it isn't God its Jehovah—oh no it's not it's Yahweh, and on the arguments over words go and divert the mind away from truth.

The third paragraph points out that the Scripture is practical—what does this mean? What is required of the Scriptures for them to be practical? That they communicate reality, i.e. operate upon design law and in harmony with how life works. Notice how the New Testament church only put three directives upon the new Gentile believers and they were all practical applications of design law:

- Food polluted by idols:
 - An idol cannot change the nutritional quality of the food. Therefore, eating foods offered to idols does not pollute the body. Paul makes this clear in Romans 14.



- The issue they were addressing is the design law of worship—by beholding we become changed, this also known as modeling. What we believe has power over us: truth heals and sets free, lies damage and enslave. Don't allow your minds to become contaminated by giving any credence to idols. Thus, don't eat food polluted by the *idea* that it is a bounty given you by a false god or the false god has any power of you.
- Sexual immorality:
 - God designed relationships to operate on love and trust. When sexual intimacy occurs between husband and wife, as God designed, healthy bonding occurs. The brain actually rewires, and reward circuits are heightened for one's spouse. This is design law—how our biology is actually built to work. Deviating from this design is damaging to the mind, body, and relationships.
 - It is a violation of design law, altering brain circuitry, inflaming selfish and fear circuits, thus obstructing healing of mind and character.
- Meat from strangled animals or blood:
 - It also violates design law—the laws of health.
 - Humans were not designed to eat meat, and the blood carries waste products, stress hormones, and various inflammatory factors. Eating raw meat and drinking blood increases disease risk, and when the body is unhealthy the mind is compromised.

The lesson points out that we need the help of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives what God has revealed in His Word. Question: Are we to apply everything to our lives that God has revealed in His Word, or are some things only applicable to certain people at certain times in history?

- Should all of us follow the example of Abraham and take our first-born child to a mountain to sacrifice expecting God to intervene? No, this was a specific directive to a specific person at a specific time for a specific reason
- Should all of us observe the feasts days of the Old Testament? No, these were again specific directives, for specific people, at a specific time, for a specific purpose. Does that mean we would do wrong if we did observe them? Not necessarily—it would depend on the reason. If one chose to observe them in order to gain insight into the experiences of those who lived in OT times, to learn any lessons possible that these acted out metaphors were designed to teach, this could be beneficial. But if one were to observe the feast days out of a sense of legal obligation, without understanding they are only object lessons and have no direct benefit, then such activities could actually close down thinking and shut the mind to the Spirit of truth.
- What about foods that we eat? Should we eat only those things contained on a list in Scripture?

Read last paragraph, “Scripture also says,..” God is infinite and we are finite, and we cannot comprehend infinity thus we do need God to reveal whatever He desires to us. Further, our minds are infected with fear, selfishness and lies and thus we are unable, in our own ability, to comprehend the truth of God's universe and kingdom without God revealing it to us.



Further, what happens to us when we sin? Sin causes fear, guilt, shame—and what is the natural response to that? To deny and distort, to blame, to externalize, to justify. In other words, the natural response is to try to make those feelings go away, to justify ourselves, to find fault with the rules, the system, with others, to avoid taking responsibility for our own condition or wrong choices—thus we further darken our minds and don't want to accept the truth.

Jesus said,

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.” John 3:19-21 NIV84)

Here is a historical quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

For this time light is shining from the throne of God upon His people, and He sends His messengers to give that light to the world. All the light given in different ages to the children of men,—in promises, in prophecies, in threatenings, in testimony, and in example,—all has been handed down to this generation by Him in whom are hid “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” But from this source new light is constantly received by the Christian, showing yet more clearly the way to heaven. To those who will not see the light, who refuse to walk in the path it reveals, the light becomes darkness; but on the path of him who is willing to see, anxious to hear, and earnest in search for the truth as it is in Jesus, it shines with increasing brightness. The Lord accepts those who are not only willing to hear, but who are ready also to obey. He has said, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” BEcho January 4, 1897, par. 4

What might this mean? Could it be the light of the 3 angels—to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, and sea? The truth of God's laws as design law and rejecting the lies of imperialism? What happens in the minds of those who accepted the light on the Sabbath but reject the light on design law?

I have seen this happen with people I know, who have refused to give up the imposed law view of God's law and slowly they lost appreciation for truths they once cherished and over time began to embrace more arbitrary ideas.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, “All of Scripture is divinely inspired...” We went over this last week, but are all Scriptures divinely inspired?

- Koran
- Book of Mormon
- Apocrypha



What about all parts of the 66 books of the Bible?

What about when Paul wrote:

To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 1Cor 7:12

Can prophets, those inspired by God to write the Scriptures sometimes be wrong—wrong on details and wrong on things involving the church?

I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 1Cor 1:14-16 NIV84

What does this mean? Does it give us insight into how inspiration works? Inspiration is not about the Holy Spirit making sure every detail of reality is remembered correctly, but giving inspiration into truths that the human writer then records with their own words, experiences, and memories.

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. Galatians 2:11-13 NIV84

What does this tell us about how inspiration works?

Read bottom pink section, "Today there are biblical..." I would agree with the authors that we should not doubt the divine inspiration or reliability of Scripture. So, I believe in Creation, the Exodus, the Flood, the Resurrection. But, what about the last sentence, are we to pass judgment on the Word of God?

I guess it depends—

- Are we to make a judgment of whether we can trust Scripture or not?
- Are we to judge whether to take something literal or metaphorical?
- Are we to judge what applies to our lives and what was specifically for people of another time and not applicable to us today?
- Are we to judge how the various truths apply to our lives?
- Are we to judge whether we can trust God?
 - Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged." NET
 - Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come...Rev 14:7
 - Has God been lied about? Has God asked us to investigate the truth He has revealed and make a judgment?



So are we to pass judgment on the Bible?

TUESDAY

The lesson asks why God instructed that His revelation be written down?

What are the benefits to a written record?

- Accuracy through the generations
- Increased distribution
- Reference resource to return to as human memory can change
- Resistant to introduction of false narratives—but has the written Word prevented false narratives from arising? Why not?
 - because people don't study Scripture or
 - don't harmonize Scripture with science and experience or
 - have false premises about Scripture that are not in Scripture such as:
 - immortality of the soul
 - God's law works like human law

WEDNESDAY

Read John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” NIV84

The lesson makes an interesting comparison between Jesus the living Word and the written Word:

- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit yet born of a woman; Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit yet written by men
- Jesus became a man and lived at a specific time in a specific place, yet that did not nullify His divinity; the Scripture was written at specific times and places yet that does not deny its divine origins.
- Jesus is not limited to the time and place He lived on earth and Scripture is not limited to the time and place in which it was written.
- Jesus came down to the level of humanity in order to reveal God to us; the Scripture was written in the language of humanity in order to reveal God to us.

As we ingest the truths of the written Word we are taking into our minds and hearts the truth about God Himself, which become building blocks of ideas, concepts, beliefs that dispel lies and purify the heart—thus we eat the flesh of the Son of God and have our temples cleansed by His life (blood).



THURSDAY

The lesson points out the importance of faith in understanding the Bible.

What is faith based upon? Do we have faith before we hear the Scripture or is our faith established upon the Scripture? Which comes first our faith or our hearing of the truths of truth—perhaps from Scripture perhaps from one of God’s representatives?

Paul writes in Romans:

For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved. The scripture says, “Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.” This includes everyone, because there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles; God is the same Lord of all and richly blesses all who call to him. As the scripture says, “Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.” **But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, “How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!”** Romans 10:10-15 GNT

So upon what is our faith based? Is it not on the word of God, the truth as Jesus revealed and as recorded in Scripture?

So our faith is based upon the evidence God has given us, which is established in history and recorded in Scripture of God’s trustworthiness!

Read first paragraph, “All true learning...” what is true learning? Would this be learning that becomes more than an idea, but a way of living, something that is part of the character? Actual believing it to be true?

Is there a difference between learning about something and believing it? I learned about godless origins theories but I never believed them.

Can people learn about God and never know Him? Is that true learning?

Knowledge and understand grow out of a loving and trusting relationship—this is true—but how does one come to love and trust their parents? Isn’t it by experience, by the evidence of the parents’ love and trustworthiness wrought out over time? Or do they come to love and trust their parents because they read about them in a book?

What about us? Do we need to have more knowledge of God than only reading about Him in a book? Where does that knowledge come from? From nature and life experiences—without integrating Scripture knowledge with the knowledge of God revealed in nature and in our real-life experiences then the Bible knowledge is often theoretical but not experiential.



I love this quote:

Experience is said to be the best teacher. Genuine experience is indeed superior to mere theoretical knowledge, but many have an erroneous idea as to what constitutes experience. **Real experience is gained by a variety of careful experiments, made with the mind free from prejudice, uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits.** The results are marked with careful solicitude, and **an anxious desire to learn, to improve, and to reform** on every point that is not in harmony with **physical and moral laws.** Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene 109.1

That which many term experience is not experience at all; it has resulted from mere habit, or from a course of indulgence, thoughtlessly and often ignorantly followed. **There has not been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principles involved in the action. Experience which is opposed to natural law,—which is in conflict with the unchangeable principles of nature,—is not to be relied upon. Superstition arising from a diseased imagination is often arrayed in opposition to reason and to scientific principles.** To many a person, the idea that others may gainsay what he has learned by experience, seems folly, and even cruelty itself. **But there are more errors received and held through false ideas of experience than from any other cause.** There are many invalids today who will ever remain such because they cannot be convinced that their experience is not to be relied upon. CTBH 109.2

This false idea of experience is manifested today in the phrase, “That’s my truth.” This phrase creates a lie that allows a person to hold to something that is actually contrary to design law, contrary to how life actually works. For instance a person who says, “cigarettes help me function better, that is my truth” and they deny the evidence of all the damage it is causing.

In the second paragraph, the lesson states, “In a similar way, we do not understand the Bible correctly when we approach it with an attitude of skepticism or methodological doubt, but in a spirit of love and faith.”

How about if we approach it as an expert in the law and theological expert? Did the Pharisees in Christ day approach it this way? Did they understand the Bible correctly? Could this be a problem for theology professors today?

The bottom pink sections asks, “Why is this faith not blind? That is, what are the good reasons that we have for this faith...?”

Upon what do we base our faith?



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>