



2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 5 By Scripture Alone—*Sola Scriptura*

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

One of our online class members, Ron Holman, sent in this email:

***The trouble with Scripture is NOT what we don't understand,
The trouble with Scripture is what we DO understand
and DO NOT apply to our life.***

Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (NKJV)

A lamp gives us just enough light to safely take a few steps at a time. A lamp doesn't light up the whole length of the path if we stand still. If we want to have light for our journey, we must step forward into the light.

We cannot expect God to give us more light, if we do not follow the light He has given us.

The Captain can guide a giant ship with a small rudder, but only if the ship is moving.

Read first paragraph, “The Protestant claim...” The lesson correctly points out that the Bible is to be our source of theological truth, not the Bible plus equal weight and value to church tradition. This is the original meaning and purpose of the phrase *Sola Scriptura*. *Sola Scriptura* was not intended to suggest that Scripture is the only and exclusive source of truth, but to state that Scripture is to be used without man-made traditions interpreting it or negating it—that was its point.

In fact, there were five *soloes* all of them were *not* intended to mean only the one element alone, but to divorce that element from a specific other element that had come to be merged with it which undermined the truth.

- *sola fide* – by faith alone, was to teach by faith and not by faith plus works
- *sola gratia* – by grace alone, was to teach by grace not grace plus human works
- *Solus Christus or Solo Christo* – by Christ or through Christ alone and not by Christ plus church sacraments
- *Soli Deo Gloria* – glory to God alone and not glory to God plus glory to the church

We see that faith alone does not mean without grace or without Christ, and Christ alone does not mean without the Holy Spirit working in the heart.

Do you see how these *soloes* are not about the element alone, but about excluding something from inclusion that was wrongly being included?



So too *sola Scriptura* means our doctrines come from Scripture not from Scripture plus church traditions, church councils, or papal rulings. But *sola Scriptura* does not mean we are to divorce Scripture from science/nature and experience, the other threads of evidence that Scripture itself teaches God has revealed Himself through.

The idea that Scripture is to be used all by itself without nature and experience is a tradition that must be rejected.

Read second paragraph, “It was the Bible that gave...”

The historical-grammatical method is one that strives to discover the biblical author’s original intended meaning in the text. Many conservative Protestant groups focus on this method.

The historical-critical method, or higher criticism, is a method that investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand the world behind the text, looking for local cultural applications and understanding of the day, rather than the author’s written intent. (As an example from today—if we read a statement “He is a gay fellow.” The historical-grammatical method would seek to understand what the author meant—did the author mean happy or homosexual? The historical-critical method would seek to understand the typical way the word was used in society at the time it was written.)

Revealed exegesis posits that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write things beyond their own understanding and thus the Bible contains deeper meanings or truths than its human authors intended or could have foreseen.

Each of these methods have their strengths and weaknesses. While the lesson authors prefer the historical-grammatical method in which we only draw conclusions consistent with what the authors intended, I can assure you they don’t use it exclusively.

Consider these two quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church, and whether you agree, have applied this and believe the lesson authors do also:

No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than that God by His Holy Spirit especially directs His servants on earth in the great movements for the carrying forward of the work of salvation. Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act; to each is granted a measure of light, adapted to the necessities of his time, and sufficient to enable him to perform the work which God has given him to do. **But no man, however honored of Heaven, has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption, or even to a perfect appreciation of the divine purpose in the work for his own time. Men do not fully understand what God would accomplish by the work which He gives them to do; they do not comprehend, in all**



its bearings, the message which they utter in His name... Christ in His Heavenly Sanctuary 103.2

Even the prophets who were favored with the special illumination of the Spirit did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained... CIHS 104.1

Often as [Jesus] presented the Old Testament Scriptures, and showed their application to Himself and His work of atonement, [the disciples] had been awakened by His Spirit, and lifted into a heavenly atmosphere. **Of the spiritual truths spoken by the prophets they had a clearer understanding than had the original writers themselves.** DA 494.3

Do you agree with these ideas? Does history and evidence support them to be true? Consider the book of Daniel—did Daniel understand all that he wrote? Do we understand more today? Consider any field of study, science, medicine, mathematics, automotive technology—isn't it true that as truths are understood by one generation and taught to the next that the next generation expands and builds upon those truths and more truth unfolds? Wouldn't this be true in our study of the Bible?

If we use strictly the historical-grammatical method, then we cannot gain more from Scripture than the original authors intended when they wrote it. It would severely limit our understanding and the agency of the Holy Spirit to both inspire His prophets and to enlighten and unfold truth throughout the ages.

So, I think all the methods have their value, when used correctly, but can be misused to restrict the truth or introduce error.

But, the biggest problem with any of these methods is that they don't address the assumptions and presuppositions the student has when they come to the Scripture. In my view, it doesn't matter which of these methods one uses if one believes, prior to studying Scripture, that God's law functions like human law. If one accepts that lie then one reads into Scripture imperialism, force, coercion, legal-penal theologies that are not part of God's kingdom and thus corrupt the truth about God.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "From the beginning..." I want to affirm that for SDAs the official position and the method used to form church doctrine is the Bible and the Bible alone.

The SDA church believes that the Bible teaches the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to people and one of those gifts is the gift of prophecy and that EGW was gifted with the gift of prophecy—in which she had special revelation, visions, dreams and was visited by and spoke with angels.

This is a similar claim to Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church, who also claims to have had special revelation and been visited and spoke to angels, particularly the angel Moroni.



What is the difference between EGW's experience and approach to Scripture and Josephs Smith's and does their attitudes toward Scripture and how their writings are used give insight into whether one was more likely inspired by God than the other?

EGW herself subordinated her writings to Scripture. She called her writings the lesser light whose primary purpose was to lead people back to Scripture—the greater light. Her writings were not to be used for the formation of doctrines—the doctrines were to come from Bible study. In the founding of the SDA church the leading brethren would study a subject, often for years, and only after faithful study, pulling from Scripture the Bible basis for a conclusion, would EGW, sometimes, get an vision, dream or some other inspiration which would confirm the conclusions already formed from the Bible.

Ron Duffield, in his book, *The Return of the Latter Rain Volume I A Historical Review of Seventh-day Adventist History from 1844-1891* does a great job of providing the historical quotes, references and writings from the pioneers of the SDA church that document this process—and how the church leadership rejected the message of Jones and Waggoner, which EGW endorsed and supported, and instead chose the penal legal view to promote.

But, perhaps the most important point for SDAs is: EGW herself in regard to her writings wrote the following about her writings:

“If the Testimonies speak not according to the word of God, reject them.” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies Volume 5, page 691)

The Testimonies refer to EGW's writings and she herself and the SDA church make the Bible the standard, and if there is ever a contradiction between EGW and the Bible, then her position was that we should reject her writings on that topic.

This is in sharp contrast to Joseph Smith who took the position that his work was to correct and improve the Bible. That if any contradiction arose between the Bible and his writings the Bible was to be corrected by what was revealed to him.

This is why I value the writings of EGW but do not value the writings of Joseph Smith—because EGW never sought to correct Scripture, but elevated the Bible as the standard and subordinated herself and her writings to it, whereas Joseph Smith claims to supersede Scripture.

Now, I was quite heartened to note that the lesson authors wrote: “the *sola Scripture* principle was intended to safeguard the authority of Scripture from dependence upon the church and its interpretation...”

This is a great point—that a group of theologians working at a Bible research institute do not have the authority to interpret Scripture for the rest of us. The Bible remains its own authority. Sadly, for many in Christianity, and some in the SDA church it often doesn't work this way.



For many Christians when Bible questions arise they often seek a theologian, pastor, commentary, or research counsel to tell them the answer and these research institutes end up becoming authorities over the Bible all the while claiming they only believe in the authority of the Bible.

We should respect our church leaders, those who have dedicated their lives to the study of Scripture. We should thoughtfully, prayerfully, and honestly consider, examine, and study ideas that they may present. But we should not surrender our individuality, our minds, our thinking to them and simply believe because a person with an academic degree or in church office says so. We should only believe because we have examined the evidence for ourselves and understand and agree it is actually true.

And remember, we can disagree and still respect and love those with whom we disagree. It is okay. We can still view people who hold to different theological views with love and respect and being part of God's family. I wish we had more of that in the church. I would enjoy the opportunity to have regular discussions with someone who saw it differently as long as we both have love and respect for each other in our hearts and we both acknowledge our human limitations and are open to have our ideas changed with evidence.

I remember Graham Maxwell used to say that he had friends with whom he disagreed on various topics and they would say how they couldn't wait to get to heaven to ask Jesus who was right—but then said he had to be prepared for Jesus to say: "Well, the truth is, you are both wrong." If we don't have a heart that is willing to give up a position we hold when truth is presented then we are no longer walking by the light, the lamp of truth is no longer leading us.

This is why I promote the principle of developing a heart that loves truth and wants to grow in truth at the earliest possible moment—because God's truth is infinite and we will never stop growing in it as long as we live in harmony with God's plan.

The lesson quotes 1 Corinthians 4:6, "Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another." (NIV84)

Read second paragraph, "Not to go beyond..." Not to go beyond Scripture—what does this mean? Is this different from contradicting Scripture? I think we can all agree that we should not incorporate ideas that contradict Scripture, but going beyond Scripture—what does that mean? Does it mean adding to our beliefs and practices things that are not in Scripture—is that okay as long as it doesn't contradict the Bible?

I am not convinced this means that we are restricted from adding to our experiences, practices, beliefs, and ideas things that are not in Scripture as long as they don't contradict Scripture. For instance:

- Does Scripture teach that we should form denominations and have property and buildings built for church worship which are owned by the corporate church?
- Does the Scripture teach we are to build corporate healthcare systems owned by the corporate church?



- Does Scripture teach we are to use printing presses or electronic media in transcribing and printing the Bible and distributing it to others?
- Do we find the structured church service with its opening prayer, opening song, passing an offering plate through the pews, special music, sermon, closing prayer, in which church members are led through the service from the front in the Bible?
- Do we find the practice of soliciting donations from unbelievers to support the gospel in the Bible—some have called this Ingathering?
- Do we find veganism in a post-flood world taught in the Bible?
- Do we find total abstinence from alcohol for all human beings taught in the Bible?
- Does the Scripture teach whether we should or should not use digital devices on Sabbath or in the worship service?

My point is that as long as it doesn't contradict the Bible we may continue to grow and advance in living out the Bible principles in ways the Bible never described.

This is the difference between levels 1-4 moral development and levels 5-7. The first levels are rules oriented, obey or be punished, the higher levels are love and principles oriented, do what is right because it is so and there is no rules to love and thus the specifics can change as long as the principles are practiced. But rules often interfere with the practice of the principles.

We see this same division of maturity in our country right now in dealing with Corona Virus. The point of all the interventions is to stop the spread and prevent illness and death. With this in mind, some guidelines have been put in place:

- No gatherings of more than 10 people
- Wash hands regularly
- Don't touch your face
- Wear mask—especially if at risk
- Quarantine if sick or exposed to someone who has the virus
- Don't shake hands, hug or touch

But some have approached this by making the guidelines into rules—it is no longer about avoiding contact and spreading disease, but enforcing rules. So a father who was in a park with his daughter throwing a ball, with no one around for hundreds of yards, gets handcuffed and taken away.

Those who understand the principle of avoiding contact, yet still wanted to have an Easter Service, promoted a drive-in service in which people would come into the church parking lot, everyone stay in their own cars with the windows rolled up and the service was broadcast where they could hear it. However, government officials, following rules, sent police to give citations to those who were in their cars. This means, the police, going from car to car and giving citations to enforce the rules became vectors that broke the 6-foot distancing and potentially spread the virus to those in their cars.



The point is that the problem with rules versus design laws and principles is a society wide problem and the church is to grow up into maturity, which means we must move past the penal legal view into the worship of our Creator God and embrace and live in harmony with His design laws for life.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, “The Bible itself claims...” The Bible itself does not state that all Scripture is inspired of God, but that all Scripture **which is inspired of God** is useful. This is a truth, not a claim.

There are many Scriptures that are not inspired by God:

- Apocrypha
- Pseudo-apocrypha
- Book of Mormon
- Koran

This statement by the lesson authors is a good example of why we are not to submit our thinking to other humans—because they make mistakes. This is a clear mistake and if they make a mistake on something this basic, simple, and straightforward, how can we have confidence in their views on more complex ideas? So we don’t surrender our thinking to the lesson authors, but respect them for their hard work, motives and consider what they have to say but...

We take the position that Paul wrote in Romans 14, that every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind. I am not here to tell any of you what to think. You have your own mind, identity, individuality, capacity to reason and think, and we at Come and Reason Ministries are not here to indoctrinate you or tell you what to think, but to stimulate you to think, to present evidences for you to examine for yourself and come to your own conclusions. This is the law of exertion—the only way to get stronger is to exercise—if you don’t use it you lose it. So, we want you to think, reason, wrestle with ideas and understand for yourselves the truth and why it is the truth.

So, while I do not believe the authors know all the answers, for none but God knows all the answers, I find value in hearing how others understand things, getting their insights and then examining them for myself in light of God’s Word. So I would not want to do away with the study guides or other resources for they are good tools to stimulate study and thinking.

Yes, we can assume a fundamental unity in Scripture—why then do we not have this unity in Christianity? Because if the imposed law lie that has infected how we read Scripture.

In the second paragraph the lesson states, “Without the unity of the Bible the church would have no means to distinguish truth from error and to repudiate heresy.”



Consider that for a second—believing the Bible to be inspired by the Holy Spirit such that it communicates consistent, non-contradictory truths is an important concept to understand so that we can utilize Scripture to help clarify other Scripture and find harmony.

However, this does not mean that we can only differentiate truth and error from Scripture—in fact to truly differentiate error from truth, Scripture must not only be compared with Scripture, but with nature/science—God’s design laws, and real-life experiences.

If we fail to do this, then using only Scripture we introduce all kinds of false ideas and this is why there are so many denominations and divisions in Christianity.

I have just made a claim, that Scripture is not the only means to differentiate truth and error—is there evidence to support this claim?

Jesus, when dealing with theologians, would sometimes use Scripture to expose their hypocrisy, but was that the only method Jesus used to reveal truth and expose error?

What about these parables:

- the landowner
- the Good Samaritan
- speck versus log in the eye
- new cloth old garments
- the sower
- wheat and tares
- mustard seed
- leaven
- hidden treasure
- pearl of great price
- lost coin
- lost son
- lost sheep
- fishing
- what goes in the mouth/food doesn’t defile the character
- laborers in the vineyard
- marriage feast
- ten virgins
- faithful and wicked servant
- one, five, and ten talents
- the rich man and Lazarus
- the Publican and tax collector

Did Jesus teach truth and expose error and heresy? Did He do it by *only* quoting Scripture?



The idea that *sola Scriptura* means truth can only be promoted by and error only exposed by quoting Scripture **is the false tradition and we must reject it**. When we understand God’s character, God as Creator, His laws as design laws, how life really works, the nature and character of sin, we can expose error and promote truth in many ways, all throughout life and life’s experiences—**but truth from science and life experiences will never contradict the truth from Scripture**.

This is important, because those who use the Scripture to create false theologies will be foremost to condemn the integrative evidence-based approach. They take a position of moral supremacy, claiming that they are true to the Bible, honor the Bible, respect the Bible, make the Bible supreme and that by using nature and experience we devalue and dilute the Bible and thus they claim that their positions are more Biblically sound than ours. They do this because their positions are refuted by reality, by God’s design laws and how life really works. Thus they deny the truth while claiming to promote the truth and we end up with over 40,000 different Christian groups arguing their views of the Bible.

Do we have other Bible examples of people exposing error and promoting truth by means other than quoting Scripture?

- How did Nathan expose to David his error with Bathsheba? With a story about a poor man and his lamb.
- How did Micaiah expose the truth to Ahab and Hezekiah that they should not go to war with Ramoth Gilead? By telling a story about lying spirits in heaven. (1Kings 22)

So, even in the Bible we have many examples of errors being exposed by means other than quoting the Bible.

In the last paragraph, the lesson points out a **very good point**—that the entire Bible must be taken together. All of the various parts of Scripture must harmonize with the other parts of Scripture. When we allow parts of Scripture to be deleted from our understanding then we open the door to misunderstanding.

The lesson asks what are we to do when one verse in the Bible seems to contradict other verses in the Bible?

Let’s consider the story in 1Kings 22. The setting is Ahab meeting with Jehoshaphat trying to get Jehoshaphat to join him in attacking Ramoth Gilead. The prophet Micaiah is called and this is what the prophet told them:

Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’

“One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’

²² “ ‘By what means?’ the LORD asked.

“ ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said.



“ ‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’
²³ “So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

Yet, James tell us:

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.. (1:13 NIV84)

Does God lie or deceive? Do we accept the 1Kings 22 passage as inspired by God? Do we take this literally, just as it reads? Or, do we understand this passage through the lens of what the rest of the Bible tells us about God, and through the lens of design law.

We should ask questions like: Does God actually lie? No, then this must mean something else—and what does it mean? That God is sending a message to Ahab, a man who worships Baal. What happens in the minds of people who worship false gods? (To answer this we must understand design law—the imposed law view merely states that they are in legal trouble for breaking a commandment. But when we understand design law, we understand worshipping changes us—so what happens in the minds of people who worship false gods?) Do they grow in God’s wisdom or do their minds become darkened? So, will Ahab, a worshipper of Baal be responsive to clear heavenly light, will he understand heavenly truth, or would the wisdom of heaven be foolishness to a worshipper of Baal? What would a Baal worshipper believe to be true about the gods? That the true gods are the most powerful gods. Ahab would worship a dictator god, a being who imposes his will and make things happen.

Does our God of love want Ahab to die or Ahab to repent and be saved? So what type of message would God send Ahab—a message to lead him to his death, or a message to lead him toward salvation? If Ahab follows the message what does Ahab do? He refuses to go to war. **So, this story reveals that God, in grace, steps down and assumes the role of causing the lies** in order to inform Ahab that the other prophets had lied to him and going to war will result in his death. This was not about how things truly happen in heaven, but a message of mercy communicated in the only way the listener could comprehend that he had been lied to, all in order to save the sinner.

Now, we have harmony, God is shining light into Ahab’s mind, but Ahab doesn’t like it.

This is how we harmonize Scripture—but we can only do so if we understand the basic truths about God’s character of love and His design laws.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, “The biblical testimony...” I want to affirm this—absolutely—that the Bible can be understood by anyone who has a heart’s desire to understand truth and opens their hearts and minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit.



Does this mean all Scripture is easily understood, or the basics, the key elements are clearly revealed?

I like these two historic quotes from EGW, do you agree?

The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and a perfect adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart, that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while it enables the humblest and uncultured to discern the way of salvation. **And yet these simply stated truths lay hold upon subjects so elevated, so far-reaching, so infinitely beyond the power of human comprehension, that we can accept them only because God has declared them.** Thus the plan of redemption is laid open to us, so that every soul may see the steps he is to take in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be saved in God's appointed way; **yet beneath these truths, so easily understood, lie mysteries that are the hiding of His glory**—mysteries that overpower the mind in its research, yet inspire the sincere seeker for truth with reverence and faith. **The more he searches the Bible, the deeper is his conviction that it is the Word of the living God, and human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation.** A Call to Stand Apart 46.5

The mysteries of the Bible, so far from being an argument against it, are among the strongest evidences of its divine inspiration. If it contained no account of God but that which we could comprehend; if His greatness and majesty could be grasped by finite minds, then the Bible would not, as now, bear the unmistakable evidences of divinity. The greatness of its themes should inspire faith in it as the word of God. Ed 170.2

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “The beauty of letting...” The immediate context of what was occurring is very important to correctly understand Scripture, but most importantly is the context of the Great Controversy that began in heaven and spread to this earth.

Read third paragraph, “The Bible is...” I love this quotation and it is exactly right, the grand central theme of Scripture needs to be understood. If we don't understand that central theme then we can take the Bible stories and stand them up as stand-alone stories and that often make little sense. But when we understand the grand central theme then we see how all the parts fit.

And what is that central theme?

- The truth about God—His character, methods and principles of love, truth and freedom. God's design laws—how God built reality to operate.
- The controversy over God's character and design laws when Satan lied and framed God's laws are imposed rules thus alleged God to be a dictator and source of inflicted pain, suffering and death.
- How the creation of this world was not only the crowning act of God's creation, creating beings with Godlike abilities to pro-create and have dominion to rule—but this world was also created as a revelation, a living center of God's perfection to shine throughout all God's



universe. Such a revelation would expose Satan's allegations as false, so Satan targeted Adam and Eve to corrupt them and displace God's design and methods of love and instill Satan's methods of fear and selfishness.

- God reveals Himself more fully in Jesus who is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus commits Himself to cure humanity, to remedy the sin problem and save this planet and all who trust Him
- The Old Testament is then the battle between the forces of God working to bring the Messiah and the forces of Satan working to obstruct the coming of the Messiah.

When we understand this the Bible stories fall into place and make so much sense.

Read the last paragraph, "When we compare Scripture with Scripture..." No doubt there is great value in being able to understand the original languages. However, with the various lexicons available today, knowing the original languages is not the most important knowledge to have to translate accurately for several reasons.

- The further back in antiquity the less anyone knows of the original languages. In many places in the OT the various lexicons say, "Hebrew unknown" which means the translators make their best guess.

The older the language the less clearly it is understood. Here is an example of English from the 14th Century. Luke 8:1-2 from Wycliffe's original Bible and then the modern English translation of it:

And it was don aftirward, and Jhesu made iorney by citees and castelis, preching and euangelysinge þe rewme of God, 2 and twelue wiþ him; and summe wymmen þat weren heeled of wickide spiritis and syknessis, Marie, þat is clepid Mawdeleyn, of whom seuene deuelis wenten

And it came to pass afterward, that Jesus went throughout every city and village (castle), preaching and showing the kingdom of 2 God, and the twelve were with him; and certain women, which had been healed of wicked spirits and sicknesses, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

- The most important thing to know is God's character of love, His design laws and the Great Controversy—if one holds the human imposed law lie then when they translate they will incorporate legal distortions into the translation.

Let's examine some differences in various translations:

Romans 3:21-26 from the NIV, GNT, Remedy:

NIV: But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the



glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

GNT: But now God's way of putting people right with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. 22 God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: 23 everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. 24 But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. 25–26 God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.

Remedy: But now God has revealed a healthy state of being — a character that is right and perfect in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

Psalms 32:3,4:

The Good News Bible: When I did not confess my sins, I was worn out from crying all day long. Day and night you punished me, Lord; my strength was completely drained, as moisture is dried up by the summer heat.

English Standard Version: For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.



King James Version: When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, Through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

The Remedy: When I held onto my guilt and shame, refusing to talk to God, I stressed myself and my body decayed because every day I screamed “no” denying the truth. But day and night your healing hand pressed firmly upon me; my resistance evaporated, like water in the summer heat.

Do you see how the various translations differ because there is no agreement on the various Greek and Hebrew words or the best English translation for those words. Do you see how the law lens impacts the translations?

THURSDAY

The lesson is about EGW and Scripture. Some have really struggled with this—they question: is she a prophet, is she more than a prophet, is she just a Christian with a good heart etc. Many people have argued over such questions, but these are all false arguments.

Those who want to insist she had the gift of prophecy often do so because they approach Bible truth from a child’s view, they want someone else in charge to tell them the answer, so they want EGW to have the prophetic gift so they can find quotes she wrote and use them as the final word. This shifts the responsibility away from them to become fully persuaded in their own mind, from exercising by practice their own ability to reason and think and weigh out the issues and come to their own conclusions. It is so much easier just to believe the person in authority—“the teacher said so” approach. Many people do this, whether with the Bible, the pastor, priest, pope or EGW. But it really misses the entire point.

The question of inspiration, to me, is cleared up very easily with some basic questions.

- Are spiritual things spiritually discerned?
- Which means that sinful human beings can only understand God’s truths by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit
- So, to the degree any human being speaks the truth about God it is only possible for them to do so by the enlightenment and working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds. Whether it is Billy Graham, Martin Luther, or EGW. And all such writings must be compared to and tested by the Scripture, just as EGW said should be done with her writings. **So to me the question of her gifting isn’t relevant, the relevant question is whether what she wrote harmonizes with the Bible.**
- Thus, her writings have value to the degree they speak the truth and harmonize with Scripture NOT BECAUSE SHE WROTE THEM.

A second point that has caused some confusion regarding EGW came up a



few decades ago, when scholars discovered that within her writings are text that was copied from other sources. This led to the allegation of plagiarism. This caused a lot of confusion and some to lose confidence in what she wrote—but it really is quite simple.

Imagine you had a family member who was dying with a terminal illness. Your doctor didn't know what to do and hospice has been called in. You go online and find a medical journal in which a cure for your loved one's condition is described. In desperation, having nothing to lose, you give them the recommended remedy—and sure enough it works. They are cured and restored to health. Not only that, but over the next several decades millions of people with the same terminal condition who take the remedy described in the journal also are cured—in fact it has cured everyone who has taken it.

But then, scholars discover that the author of that journal article plagiarized it, copied it from another person. What would you do? Would you decide that the remedy was wrong? Or would you say, so what, it works.

The point is this, the only relevant question is **whether it is true or not.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Journal of the Watcher Video is available for FREE streaming at comeandreason.com

SOUTH AFRICA NEWS: *The Journal of the Watcher* and *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World* will be available in SA after the lockdown is over, at least another two weeks.

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.

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.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

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