

## Q2 L05 - **By Scripture Alone - Sola Scriptura** - 2020-05-02

Jean Ross: Good morning, friends, and welcome again to "Sabbath School Study Hour" coming to you from the Amazing Facts offices in Sacramento, California. I'd like to welcome those who are joining us across the country, and around the world, part of our extended Sabbath School class. And today we're looking at a very important study in our lesson series. The series is entitled How to Interpret Scripture and today in particular, we're looking at lesson number five, The Great Cry of the Reformation, By Scripture Alone or Sola Scriptura. That's going to be our study, lesson number five.

We also have a free offer we'd like to let our friends know about, it is one of our little sermon books entitled "Satan's Confusing Counterfeits." And we'll be happy to send this to anyone today who calls 866-788-3966 and all you have to do is ask for Offer Number 191, and we'll be happy to send it to you in the mail. Or you can receive a digital copy of the book by texting the code SH058 to the number 40544. And you'll be able to get a digital download of the book entitled, "Satan's Confusing Counterfeits."

Doug Batchelor: Yeah, so we're ready for our lesson, and our lesson, of course, is Sola Scriptura, The Bible Alone. This was the, what do you call it? The battle cry for the Reformation, and we have a memory verse and that's Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, Hebrews 4:12 and it says, "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 joints and marrow. And it's the discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart."

The Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, I should say, you know, brings great conviction and it can divide. You know, Jesus said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." The Word of God is a sword and it can sometimes cause division in culture and in families, but it causes, the design is that it's a scalpel to separate us from sin.

Jean: You know, Pastor Doug, talking about the Scripture, in order for us to understand the Scripture correctly, we always need to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, and maybe it would be a good time for us after our memory texts we just read, to take just a moment and have a special prayer. I know we're going to pray for those who are watching, we're also going to pray for us here in the studio that as we study this important subject, the Holy Spirit would be able to really help guide our hearts and our minds. So, let's just bow our heads for prayer.

Dear Father, once again, we are grateful that we're able to gather together around your Word to study a very important subject on how we ought to interpret the Bible. Father, we know the Bible has power to transform the hearts and the lives of those who take time to study it and so we ask for that transforming power of your Spirit to come and work in our hearts, be with those who are listening wherever they might be, and lead us into a clear understanding of this very important study today. For we ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Doug: Amen.

Jean: Now, Pastor Doug, in our Scripture reading in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, it talks about the Word of God as a sharp, two-edged sword. Do you think there's any significance to the fact that Paul specifically mentions here, not just any sword, but a two-edged sword?

Doug: Well, a two-edged sword you can cut both directions when you're working with it, and that means it can be used offensively for blocking and defensive--or offensively for attack and defensively for blocking. You can swing it to the right or to the left. And it's a symbol, the Word of God is often symbolized in a dual nature. The Ten Commandments are on two tables. The Word of God is often identified as the law of God and the testimony, the commandments and the testimony. It's identified as Moses and Elijah. In the last words in the Old Testament, "Behold--remember the law of Moses, Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet." And, of course, Moses and Elijah, a symbol for the Word of God appear to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. And so, and you probably have some other ideas.

Jean: I'm just going to add to that in Revelation chapter 11, you read about the two witnesses. And if you

look at some of the similarities of the two witnesses, it talks about how that fire can proceed out of their mouth and devour those who are opposed to them or the wicked. You have the experience of Elijah that called fire down from heaven. He talks about the plague coming upon the land for those who wish to destroy them. Well, you recall Moses was the one that brought the plagues, well, God brought the plagues, but Moses announced the plagues that came upon Egypt. So, the two witnesses, again, are a symbol for the old and--or the two witnesses, the law and the prophets in the Bible is divided into two parts. You got the Old Testament, you got the New Testament. So, the two-edged sword, it's significant because it relates to the Word of God.

Doug: In case everyone's wondering, they say, you know, part of good production is to do what they call an established shot, that means so the people that are watching kind of figure out, "Where are they?" In case you're wondering where we are, we are not in the Amazing Facts studios. When this whole pandemic struck, we were building sets downstairs. We are in the Amazing Facts building, our office building, in the worship room where we normally have our staff worship every morning, and it has been converted into a studio. We're doing a revival here. We've got a few of our crew, Mrs. Batchelor's here, and a few friends here. We're all keeping safe distance just so we could bring you this study, but we want to engage you, so let us know. You know, I've got an amazing fact, Pastor Ross, about the Word of God. According to the Guinness World Records, the US Library of Congress is the largest library in the world and contains more than 151.8--that number is changing all the time so this is outdated already, 151.8 million items. The library is housed, not in one building, it's in three separate buildings in the Washington D.C. area, and contains 838 miles of bookshelves and corridors that currently hold over 34 million books. In addition to books, this mega library houses 3.3 million recordings, 13.4 million photographs, 5.4 million maps, 6.5 million pieces of sheet music, didn't know there was that much music, and 66 point million manuscripts. To top things off, the inventory grows by approximately ten thousand new items every working day. And yet in spite of this massive volume of material, guess what book has been the best selling book consistently every year? The Bible, the Word of God. So, in this lesson where we've been talking the whole quarter about the Bible, but in this lesson in particular, we're talking about how it's really the Scriptures alone have the authority we discussed earlier.

Jean: Pastor Doug, I understand that also in Washington, D.C. in the mall area there near the Capitol, there's a new museum that's opened up. And I don't know, I've never been there. I'd like to go there, but the museum is all about the Bible. Have you had a chance to see that?

Doug: I went to a virtual version at NRB. They let you put on these goggles and you could walk through it. So, I think I was there but I wasn't, but it is pretty amazing.

Jean: I understand, it's got some old manuscripts and old copies of the Bible, and it's just very interesting to look at that. We do have a question that's come in. Jonathan is asking a question, he says, "If we sin against others, should we confess our sins to those people? However, sometimes the sin is not publicly done against another person, so should we confess those sins to that person if they're not even aware of it?"

Doug: You know, I would encourage Jonathan to tune in tonight, we are talking about confession. Now, in our message, our revival message that follows Sabbath School, we're talking about repentance tonight, we're talking about confession. I'm answering that exact question. So, in order not to sound redundant, I won't do that right now.

Jean: Okay, so tune in tonight, Jonathan, or we'll be able to share more about that. Okay, moving into the first section of our lesson, if you're following along with us, the first area that we're going to focus in is Scripture As The Ruling Norm. You'll notice that the title on the top of the page there and Genesis chapter 1, verse 3, we have these well-known words. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light, and then you can compare that passage with John chapter 1, verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And we notice the creative power of the Word of God. Whatever God says, it always happens. Of course, Jesus in a little boat in the midst of the storm in the Sea of Galilee, when he spoke to the wind and the waves, he said, "Peace, be still," immediately, the

wind and the waves obeyed the voice of the Creator. That so impressed the disciples at that time that they began to really realize, "Wow, who is this that we have in our midst?" You know, it really pressed home the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, he's the Creator. There is power in the Word of God.

Doug: Absolutely, and there's creative power in the Word, and, of course, the Bible begins by saying, "And God said." And then the New Testament says, "And he is the Word." So, one reason the Bible needs to be the sole authority is because all knowledge comes from God. They say that, you know, some animals like ducks and swans, and there are other animals, when they're very young, the first voice they hear is the one they--it's called imprinting or bonding, they connect with it, and then they'll follow that voice. Little sheep learn that with their shepherds. And because God's voice is the first voice in the universe, it is the ultimate authority that we listen to. Yeah, I heard years ago in Nova did a program called "The Elegant Universe," and it was about string theory, and they said that research now indicates that absolutely everything in the universe, all of the particles that make up matter and force is comprised, notice, of tiny, vibrating fundamental strings. So, when it says, "In the beginning, God said," sound, the sound of God had creative power and everything came from His Word. And so, that needs to be the sole authority because it is the original Word.

Jean: Absolutely. Well, we've got a question, Pastor Doug. Eric is asking, "What is the best evidence that the Bible can be trusted?"

Doug: Now, and you may have a little different answer, but the first thing that comes to my mind is prophecy. For me growing up pretty much agnostic or atheist, I thought the Bible was a collection of fairy tales and what changed my mind is when I began to study the Bible, and see that it was a supernatural book because God was able to foretell in great detail events that had not taken place yet, which meant that it was on a whole different level. And then something that's hard to quantify is, as I read the Bible, something was happening in me. The words that I speak, Jesus said, there's spirit and they're life. I noticed there was a conviction. There was a transformation happening as I read it that was unlike anything I'd read. I'd read a lot of religious books, but the Bible was different and it's always so hard for me to explain what was happening, but I was changing as I read it.

Jean: You know, the Bible says "Come let us," actually God speaking to the Bible says, "Come let us reason together." One of the key in understanding the authority and inspiration of the Bible is to recognize that the Bible is written in order for us to understand what God's will is for our lives. It's also written to help explain why we are here, where we are headed, what brings joy and peace. And if a person approaches the Bible with a sincere desire to know God's will for him or her, the Bible takes on power and relevance. You got prophecy that foretells the future, but it also gives you practical instructions as to how you can gain victory over sin, how you can live a joyous life, how you can be a witness. So, the Bible addresses every area of a person's life. There is counsel in the Bible for children, counsel for parents, there is counsel in there for the elderly, it talks about how to deal with finance, talks about marriage, talks about education, every aspect of life is addressed in the Bible. It's a powerful book.

Doug: Amen. All right, you know, another thing when we're talking about the Scriptures alone, in the Bible both from beginning, well, at least from Deuteronomy all the way to Revelation, it talks about that this, these are the words that must not be changed because they are the ultimate authority. So, you can read, for instance, in Deuteronomy 4, verse 2, "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it that you might keep the commandments of the Lord God that I command you." Proverbs 30, "Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you, and you be found a liar." Also in Deuteronomy 12:32, "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe you shall not add or take away from it." And then there's that sobering curse in Revelation. It says Revelation 22, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in it, and if anyone takes away from it, then I will take his part from the Book of Life, and from the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book." So, the Bible, one reason we believe it is the sole authority. It says it is the words, it's the utterance that you must never add to or take from. It stands alone on its own authority.

Jean: Now, talking about the Bible, we have a question that came in from Gloria and she's asking a very practical question. She says, "I've been attending church for years, but I still don't know how to read the Bible on a daily basis. Can you suggest steps that I could use to do so?"

Doug: Thank you, good question, Gloria. And again, if you have questions, friends, send them in, we're going to do our best to engage the class here. You know, Martin Luther used to say you should read the Bible the way you pick apples. First, you go and you shake the tree, and whatever is ripe will fall, and he said, then you go and you shake the limbs, and then you shake the little branches, and then you shake the twigs, and then you look behind every leaf.

It's sometimes a good idea to get an overview of the Bible so you get the context and the history of who the people were and what's the backdrop of history, where's it happening, what the culture was like, that gives you a lot of understanding. But you may not be able to, for me, I couldn't even read the Bible so to read the whole thing through was difficult. So, I had someone finally--I read Genesis and Exodus just to kind of get the history of creation and Abraham because everything springs from the first 11 chapters of Genesis, really. And then I jumped to the New Testament, and that gave me enough background so when I was reading about Jesus, so much of what Jesus says he's quoting from Genesis, then I was able to pick up more.

And then I began to go through the kings to get the history of Israel, and Samuel, and the Chronicles, and along with the prophecy, and for me, I mixed it up. Now, Amazing Facts has a great, we got a great tool if people want to study the Bible, it's free and it's online. It's just been updated, our Bible school.

Jean: All you have to do is just go to the Amazing Facts website, and you can see a link there and you can enroll for free. It's online, the Amazing Facts Bible school, and we just recently revamped it and updated it. And I was talking with our Bible school director, and she was saying how that we've just seen a tremendous increase in enrollment in our Bible School. Maybe part of the reason is people are at home and they have a little more time to do reading and studying.

Doug: It's been revamped, and then we had a pandemic. We've got a 50% increase in the enrollment. Something else I know Shamika will appreciate our mentioning is that we've also taken the Bible school, and you can listen to the lessons being read. I think the first 14 are done, or is it all of them? I forget.

Jean: The first 14.

Doug: Fourteen lessons. So, if you're walking around and you want to do the Bible lesson, you can listen to it as it's being done. Also, just go to our website, BibleUniversity.com. Then you'll see the lessons in other languages as well.

Jean: The next part of the lesson, Pastor Doug, is talking about the unity of the Scripture. And one of the powerful evidences for the inspiration of the Bible is the fact that the Bible is written over 1,500 years with 30, at least 36 different authors, and yet they're in perfect harmony. And even today, you get a group of theologians together and ask them to discuss some particular passage of Scripture, you don't always get harmony at the end. But here you have these different Bible writers over such a long period of time writing in different languages and yet the Bible is in perfect harmony. It explains itself and so, that's an evidence of the trustworthiness of the Bible is the unity that we find in the Bible.

Doug: Amen, I heard one pastor said the whole Bible is the story of one problem, sin, with one solution, Jesus. And it always was amazing to me that the first three chapters of the Bible talk about how man lost the tree of life, and he was evicted from the garden. The last three chapters of the Bible talk about how man is brought back into the garden and restored to the tree of life. And so, the whole Bible is about how to get back to the garden. And if you look in Genesis, it begins with God asking the question, where are you? Because of sin, man ran from God, God didn't run from us. The New Testament begins by the wise men saying, "Where is he?" And so, we've been separated from God. The Bible tells us about the great atonement at-one-ment, how we can get back together with God.

Jean: And that's an important principle. I think it's important when we're reading the Bible. It's not just a

book of facts. It's not just a historical document, it is a life-changing document, and so in our study, the Bible we're always asking the question, "What is the spiritual application? What is God trying to teach me through the study of His Word?" Now, in the New Testament in 2 Timothy chapter 3, we have a rather important verse. This the Apostle Paul and he's writing to Timothy, who was a pastor of one of the churches and he said, verse 16, "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God." The word there "inspiration" is sometimes translated as God breathed, or inspired by God and then it lists four things that you can use the Bible for. It is profitable for doctrine.

Pastor Doug, probably doctrine represents teaching. Reproof, maybe there are areas in our life that we need reproof, the Bible can reveal that. For correction, tells us how to get back on the right path. And instruction, we are educated through the Bible. And then it says, "for righteousness that the man of God might be complete, thoroughly equipped for all good works." So, the Bible, the study of the Bible, can bring about a completeness where we are reflecting the character of God. It's through the power of the Word.

Doug: Amen, I heard about, this popped into my mind. I heard about two criminals that were just thought, "Well, maybe we'll get caught one of these days." And they said that, "if you get caught and get thrown in jail and you can only have one book, what book would you want?" And one of the guys said, "I'd want the Bible." He said, "Fred, why would you want the Bible? You're not religious." He said, "Well, you can keep reading it, reading it and it never really comes to an end. It gets deeper and deeper every time." Jean: Well, Pastor Doug, how many people have studied. I know you spent a lot of time studying, I study the Word. You never run out of new things. It's amazing that way.

Doug: It's a three-dimensional book. It just keeps going deeper and deeper.

Jean: When you're reading a historical book, you can only read it so many times, and you really have a good picture of what it's saying. But the more you study the Word of God, the more you compare Scripture with Scripture, the more things you discover that you've never seen before. It's really exciting. It's like mining for gold, you find a thread of gold and you just keep following that. And you discover more and more.

Doug: You read Robinson Crusoe and because it's written by Daniel Defoe, pretty soon you know what Defoe is thinking, and that's all it is. But when you read the Bible, you're reading something written by God and so you're going, every time you read it, it just gets deeper and deeper, and there's so many different angles, and so many connections. And yeah, it's a spiritual book. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. And someone asked a minute ago, we may have more questions, about reading the Bible. Always pray when you read the Bible and ask the author, God the Spirit, it's God breathed, ask the one who authored it to help you understand it.

Jean: Okay, well, we have quit a few questions coming. We're going to try and take a few of them. Dwight is asking about the two witnesses. We mentioned that in the intro. He has a question about the three-and-a-half years, what is that talking about? Three-and-a-half days, I should say. What is he talking about where the two witnesses are killed and they're lying in the streets of the city for three-and-a-half days?

Doug: Well, we believe in what you would call a historic interpretation of prophecy. And when you look at the span of history, there was a time in history, if the witnesses are the Word of God, you can say the New and the Old Testament are the law and the prophets. There was a time in history when during the French Revolution, the people had become so exasperated with the church and they lost so much trust in the church, that not only was blood running in the streets because they were overthrowing the government and the king, Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette, and it was rather brutal.

Karen and I stood at the spot where he was executed a year-and-a-half ago, I guess now or a year ago. And but that was also a time when they revolted against religion, and they were burning Bibles in the streets. And they were mocking the Bible. They said, "We don't need the Bible," even tried to enforce a seven day week. And so, over a period of three-and-a-half years, and you can help me see if I remember.

It ended in 1798 so was it 1793—

Jean: Would have started three-and-a-half years before.

Doug: Before that, yeah, an three-and-a-half years, and it ended in 1798. At the end of that time, the country was economically in such a disastrous shape. They made some reforms, they reinstated the seven day week, they allowed the Bible again. So, they had been rejoicing over the Bible, and they exalted this goddess of reason. And so, for three-and-a-half years, it looked like the Word of God was in the streets and dead. At the end, it was ascending up to heaven.

Jean: That's amazing. In the early 1800s, we find a tremendous revival of interest in the Bible. The Bible is translated into multiple languages. Missionaries go in the early 1800s to the uttermost parts of the earth. You know, Voltaire, the great philosopher who was an atheist or rejected Christianity or the Bible, he made a statement. He said, "Within 100 years, the Bible will be dead." What's amazing is that eventually a Bible Society bought his house and the very printing press that Voltaire was using to produce his anti-Christian literature was eventually used to print the Bible. And, of course, the Bible went on long after Voltaire and, of course, today, it's still a powerful book, transforming people's lives.

Doug: And almost nobody reads Voltaire. So, he said the Bible would be an extinct book, but it didn't happen. Let's read a little more lesson, then we'll do another question if you have one. In Titus 1:9 it says, "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." And so, for Paul when he said as you're picking leaders in the church, they must be faithful to the Word. The Word must be the authority that is used by church leaders in teaching. Now, Pastor Ross, does that mean that believers should never read anything but the Bible?

Jean: Well, I think it's important to, first of all, understand what the Bible says, that needs to be our anchor. There's nothing wrong in reading what some other theologians or what a pastor might say. Other people reflect their experience and they share about that in the Bible. But when it comes to receiving doctrine or absolute truth, everything has to be tested by the Bible. It is the acid test, you might say, of what is truth. So, nothing wrong in reading some of the other writings, and they are some great, you know, you and I use different commentaries. If you want to get a further explanation of a particular passage, there's some great commentaries by the early reformers, but even they will say, you know, the Bible is the absolute authority. So, you can look at different things, but always go back to the Word.

Doug: Now, one of the great classics of history is "Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan, and it's an allegory. Of course, it's an allegory of the Christian life and it's filled with Scripture but even in his allegory he says the Bible is the book, it's the scroll that he takes with him through his journey that gets him into the Promised Land, so to speak. So, everything, when we say Sola Scriptura, we're not saying believers are only allowed to read the Bible. I think that's important because there are some churches that say you can only read the Bible. There's some churches that say, "You can only read stuff that comes from our publishing house," and they want their members to put blinders on. But the most important thing is to be reading the Word of God, and it's the final truth for all that we believe.

Jean: You know, somebody is asking a question and Natasha, good question, she says, "How can one know when the Spirit is speaking to him or her?"

Doug: That's a difficult question to answer because the Spirit is kind of it's a nebulous thing that is a little bit subjective. And first of all, the Holy Spirit is never going to say something contrary to the Word. Sometimes you'll feel the Holy Spirit can be easily confused with your conscience. Sometimes you think, "Well, my conscience is telling me," well, that may be the Spirit of God speaking to your mind saying you should do or should not do something. And it's these impressions. And so, I think that the more you walk with the Lord, the more you'll recognize the voice of God's Spirit speaking to you.

When you're Spirit filled, you know, you've ever seen you get two drops on a windshield, and they're just moving around as individual drops and when they touch each other, they coalesce. And when you've got

the Holy Spirit in you, you will quickly coalesce and recognize when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. There's a connection that happens.

Jean: And we also need to recognize that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through our conscience. That doesn't mean every impression that we have from our conscience is always the Holy Spirit speaking. But in a very real way, the Holy Spirit will often convict us through our conscience and if that conviction is in harmony with the principles of the Word of God, it's humbling to think that God is taking the time to actually speak to us to convict us and guide us. So, Paul speaks about having a clear conscience. So, we want to have a clear conscience, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the conscience, and submit it to the Bible.

Doug: Amen. You know, when we're talking about the unity of the Bible, before we go on to the next section, one more thought. I saw somebody wrote, "The Bible is as though it was a magnificent symphony that was clearly orchestrated by a single master conductor." They say the key in, you know, a happy marriage is the closer that the husband and the wife come to God, the closer they will come to each other.

Even though God used such incredibly different people when He was inspiring the Scriptures, I mean, you think about the, you have shepherds. You've got farmers, you have, you know, Elisha and Amos were farmers. You've got tax collectors, you've got scribes, like Ezra. Technical, I think Judas was a scribe too, but we won't go there. You've got Pharisees like Paul. You've got kings. You got nomads like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I mean, just such diversity. You get people who are educated in the courts of Egypt like Moses, such diversity, and yet they all knew the same God so they maintained that harmony. Yeah, it is really incredible. Probably we ought to talk next about the clarity of the Scripture before we run out of time, and take more questions.

Jean: Yes, the next section may be a good time for us to get into that. He's talking about the clarity of Scripture and understanding the Bible. I like the illustration that's brought out about the Bible can be thought of as a telescope, one of probably the most well-known and famous telescopes is the Hubble telescope. And I've read some statistics about the Hubble telescope. And one of the statistics I read about it is so accurate and can dial in so precisely that if the Hubble telescope was on the earth and you were able to actually zoom in, you could see an object less than the size of maybe a peanut, we'll say, or a pea, a bean. You'll be able to see that object over a mile away if it was on the earth. So, the ability of the Hubble telescope to zoom into a tiny object is rather remarkable.

So, you can spend a whole lot of time studying about the telescope, how it was made, what it does, but you don't really benefit from the telescope until you look through the telescope and you begin to see what it reveals of the universe. So it is Bible, the Bible is a remarkable book and you can spend a lot of time studying the languages, and the different wording that's used in the Bible, and some of the symbolisms. But you really benefit from the Bible when you look through the Bible and you see the God behind the Scripture, the God that the Bible is revealing and eternity and the life to come. That's why the Bible has so much power.

Doug: Absolutely. You know, when we talk about the clarity of Scripture, some people think, "Well, I read the Bible, when I first read it, I didn't understand it." And I struggled to understand some things, but if you keep reading, the Bible explains itself. And an example of it would be Jesus shared a lot of things in parables. For instance, you get the parable of the soils. He talks about four different kinds of soils, and the sower goes forth to sow, and the disciples are going, "What does this mean?" Well, He sits down with them, and this is Matthew 13:16. He said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Therefore hear," that means understand, "the parable of the sower."

And then Jesus goes on to explain all the different symbols that were in there. When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom, he doesn't understand it, he's like that bird that comes and snatches away what

was sown in the heart. He that receives a seed by the wayside, and he who receives a seed in stony places, he hears the Word and immediately he receives it with joy, but it's stony ground. He's got no root in himself. So, then he goes through and explains it. The parable of the wheat and the tares. He's a leader, gets by Himself, He explains it to them.

When you read in Revelation and like Revelation 17, John sees this woman and it's the seven heads, and the seven mountains, and the water, and he's going, "What does this mean?" Well, later in the chapter, what happens? Angel comes says, "Let me tell you what you saw and what it means." So, those are some easy examples that explain, if you want to understand the Bible clearly, then keep reading and the different parts of the Bible explain things that you may have read earlier.

Jean: You know, we have a question that Ozzy's asking. He says, "Why are there so many contradictions in the Bible?" And in particular, one could cite maybe some of the accounts that we find in the gospels, they're not always the same, the wording is not exactly the same. How do we explain these, what seems to be contradictions?

Doug: Well, I'm glad you qualify that because I used to say we have these contradictions in the Bible, and the more I studied, I realized that there are what you would call apparent contradictions. For example, above the head of Jesus, I mentioned last night in our message on the thief on the cross, there was a sign and Pilate had the sign and it said, "This is the king of the Jews." Well, when you go to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, every one of the gospels has the wording on the sign a little different. One will say he said he was the king of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth is the King of the Jews, and they're all different.

Someone says, "So you can't really trust the Bible. They can't even get the wording on the sign correctly." They forget that the words on the sign, it says it was in three languages. So, they had it in Hebrew, they had it in Greek, they had it in Latin. And so, it just depends on which wording, and the disciples probably all spoke a little bit of elementary Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. It just depend on what version they were translating there. It was up there three times. So, that's not a contradiction.

There are times in the Bible where it'll say, there was, there were two blind men on the road by Jericho. And one time it says there was a blind man named Bartimaeus, and they said, "Well, was it two blind men or one blind man? That's a contradiction." Not really, it means that maybe one was more outspoken, and he spoke up. And so, one recorded this blind man, the one who spoke, there were actually two there but only one spoke named Bartimaeus. And so that, for me, actually affirms the Bible. That tells you that the Bible writers did not make these things up.

It's like, it's pretty common when a lot of people witness an event, depending on the perspective of where they were standing, they will relate the event based on what their perspective was of how they heard it and saw it. And so, you know, I think that and if you take what they call apparent contradictions, you're talking about one-tenth of 1% of the Bible, 99.9 tenths of the Bible, you're going to see incredible unity.

Jean: You know, another point to add to that which seemed to help me when I'm reading the different gospel accounts, when you're reading what Jesus says, he might give a parable a certain way in one of the gospels, but then it's different in another gospel. What we need to recognize is that Jesus traveled to a number of towns and villages and, of course, his disciples with him. And Jesus probably told some of the same parables to new audiences, of course, the disciples heard that. Pastor Doug, you often, myself as well, will preach the same sermon in different situations, rarely do we use the exact same words, even though we're telling the same story or making the same point.

So, I think some of the disciples might have been impressed by a particular way Jesus said something, and they remembered that way at one place, but maybe Jesus said it a little differently when he's in a different town or village and they recorded it that way. So, these slight variations in what Jesus said doesn't mean the Bible is contradicting itself, rather that Jesus told the same thing in different locations.

Doug: Absolutely, I always feel sorry for Mrs. Batchelor and you because we've traveled a lot and done a

lot of meetings, you probably heard me preach the same sermon so many times. But it's always a little different because of what the circumstances are. I look out in the audience and you see people, you say, they may need to hear this or that, and so it's modified. I'm sure Jesus went from town to town, he looked in people's hearts, and he shared things differently. And Luke is unique because Luke interviewed people other than the apostles that heard the teachings of Jesus. And so, he's got a couple o stories like, you know, Zacchaeus, and the prodigal son, and things you won't find in any other gospel.

Jean: Now, of course, if somebody's looking at the Bible and they're critical of the Bible, there is an aspect of truth that the Bible brings to light in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14, and we believe Paul wrote this. He says, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." So, it's important that if we want to find truth in the Bible, we need to come with the right attitude. We need to come with a willing heart. Jesus said, "If you're willing to do the doctrine, then you'll know whether or not it is of God." So, there needs to be a willingness to do what God is asking.

Doug: Absolutely, you know, in the Old Testament, there's this several references to the stone which the builders rejected. It's in Psalms and then Jesus says in Matthew 21:42, "Have you never read?" You know how many times Jesus says, "Have you read, have you read, have you read?" Jesus is always saying you need to read. "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

By the way, Jesus is making a very good quote there of Psalms, the same way David wrote it. Then Peter later explains in 1 Peter 2, verse 4, "Coming to Him, Jesus, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious." He says, "Oh, Jesus is the stone, the foundation stone that was rejected."

And so, these passages you read in the Old Testament, you sometimes need to read the Bible for a while and then you'll say, "Ah, A, B, C, now it makes sense." So, I just looked at three Scriptures, one in the Old Testament, one where Jesus references, and then where Peter references that Jesus is the fulfillment of it, and then it all becomes clear. So, when it talks about the clarity of the Scriptures, sometimes it takes a little time to bring that all together.

Jean: Somebody is asking a question, Christine is asking, "Can you help me understand why the seven plagues will fall on people after probation closes?" She says, "It's hard to understand, knowing that God hates to see suffering, why the plagues would come after people can't change their hearts?" They pass, you know, probation is closed.

Doug: I know you have a special love for Revelation.

Jean: Well, I'm glad you asked. I saw that question, I thought oh, wait, that's a good one. You know, one of the things about after probation closes and people can change sides, Revelation chapter 14 talks about the harvest of the earth being full. And when it comes to the second coming of Christ, there are two groups of people on the earth that are fully ripe. On the one hand you have the righteous, on the other hand you have the wicked.

After probation closes and the seven last plagues come upon the earth, it'll reveal the true heart or the true nature of the wicked, as well as the righteous. When the plagues come, what do the righteous do? They pray more fervently, they trust more sincerely in God. What do the wicked do? Well, it says that they end up cursing God. So, the purpose of the plague is to really reveal who's on God's side, and who's opposed to God. And it also shows us that even though these plagues are coming, people have so hardened their hearts, that they end up cursing God instead of turning with repentance. It reveals the true nature of every person.

Doug: Yeah, they blaspheme God. They're not softened by it, a it's showing before the final judgment, God has no choice but to cast them into the lake of fire because there's no redemptive qualities left.

Jean: We see a similarity between the plagues that came up on Egypt, how that it hardened Pharaoh's

heart instead of him coming to the point of repentance. He kept hardening his heart. The plagues do the same thing at the end of time.

Doug: So yeah, when that final plague comes to even the household of Pharaoh, you know, God, He saves the worst for last to show He had no alternative. You know, there's a section, and we've kind of touched on this, Scripture interprets Scripture. And I can read John 1:45. It tells us that Philip finds Nathaniel after hearing about Jesus, he said, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

And so, even the apostles, they recognize the Scripture was the authority to determine who is the Messiah. They say, "What does the Scripture say? Is this the one?" He would be measured by the Scriptures. Jesus used that and Luke 24, and this is verse 27, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

You know, Pastor Ross, I want to jump to the last section. It's so important. Now, we're Seventh-day Adventist Christians, this is our Sabbath School study, we keep the Sabbath. There's a myth out there that Seventh-day Adventists, they don't go by the Bible, they go by the writings of Ellen White and that is categorically not true. It's not true because in our doctrinal statement, it says something otherwise. Let me read to you what it says in the baptismal vows. We go over the baptismal vows with people all the time when we do evangelism. Point number five, "I believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and that it constitutes the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian." The Bible, we believe *Sola Scriptura*.

Do we believe that God can speak through people other than Scripture? Well, I hope so because I hope he's talking through us when we preach and when we teach. If it's not the Lord, well, then that's just our own mumblings, you may as well change channels. So, we believe that God spoke through Ellen White and she was inspired, but even Ellen White said the Scriptures are the final statement.

Let me just read this here, and this is from the book "Great Controversy," page 595. This is something Ellen White wrote about what the final authority is. She didn't say, "My writings," she said it's the Bible. "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority, not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord.'"

So, you're going to meet people in almost any church that are going to teach and do goofy things. And you got to be careful not to judge a church by one person that says, "I'm a member," and then they say outrageous things. I've always thought it's amazing whenever a tornado goes through a town, it seems like the reporter will find the strangest people in the world to interview. And the people in the community are going, "Why did they ask Bubba?" You know, and so if you want to know what a church believes, Seventh Day Adventists believe the Bible. *Sola Scriptura* is the foundation for our doctrines. That's why I joined the church because it's based on the Scripture.

Jean: You know, during the time of the reformation, that part of the title of the lesson is *Sola Scriptura*, during the time of the reformation, the reformers believed that the Bible needed to be the final authority for finding truth. The church said, "Yes, you can, you can look at the Bible, but you also need to look at church councils and tradition." And so, they would say, you know, tradition stands on par with the Bible. Then they went a little further and said, the church explains the Bible. The reformers said, "No, the Bible needs to explain doctrine and teaching. The Bible is the final authority." And that's true today.

Now, maybe there's some Protestants who feel like, "Yeah, we understand that tradition needs to be under the Bible as far as authority goes." But there is another danger that we see today, especially in Protestant churches, and that is where we put a personal experience or a feeling, or as so-called moving of the Holy Spirit, above the authority of the Bible.

I've been doing Bible studies with people and we make a very clear point from Scripture where it's talking about the commandments, and one of the commandments needs to be kept. And they say, "Well, I see that's what the Bible says, but I feel as though I don't have to keep God's law." Maybe they have some manifestation of what they believe is the Holy Spirit and they say, "Well, the Spirit tells me that, that part of the Bible is not binding any longer." So, we have our own experience, trying to take the place of the Bible. It's a dangerous thing.

Doug: Yeah, absolutely, and yeah, I run into folks the very same thing is, you know, when the Bible talks about the Spirit and the letter. You get the Spirit of the law and the letter of the law. And I'll show someone what the Bible says and they'll say, "Yeah, I realize that's in the Bible, but this is the letter but I need the Spirit to help me understand the letter, and the Spirit is telling me that we no longer need to pay attention to the letter here."

That's not what Paul's talking about when he talks about the Spirit and the letter. He's not saying that your feelings are to somehow overrule or trump what happens--well, you can't use that word "trump" like you used to anymore. can you? But your feelings are not supposed to overrule or preempt what the Word of God says. The Word of God, as a matter of fact, what is the Holy Spirit do? Jesus said, "I will send you the Spirit, he will bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said." So, when you really do have the Holy Spirit, it's never going to go beyond what the Word of God actually teaches us.

Jean: You know, Pastor Doug, I think we have time to take one more question so here it is, "How can you tell the difference between a parable and a non parable in the Bible?"

Doug: That's a good question. Well, you know, some things are history, God is just telling a story. A person might be looking, for example, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. They're thinking, "Well, how do we know it's a parable?" Well, if there are symbols in the story that you really can't take literally, then, you know, it would be a parable. Like in that parable that you find in Luke chapter 16. That man, well, first of all, everybody that dies does not go to Abraham's bosom. The people in heaven and hell will not be able to communicate through eternity, I mean, heaven forbid. One drop of water would not really cool a person's tongue if they were in hell. So, when Jesus is talking about the sower goes and he sows seed, bird grabs some of the seed and he got four different kinds of soil. You look at the context, you can see this as an illustration, it's a parable. And so yeah, I think that you just see when it's not, can't be literal, that must be parable.

Jean: You've got to look at the context of that. Well friends, we want to remind you about our free offer that we have for you today. It is a book entitled, "Satan's Confusing Counterfeits," and we'll be happy to send this to anyone who calls and asks. The number is 866-788-3966 and ask for Offer Number 191. Or you can text the code SH058 to the number 40544, and we'll be able to send you a digital download of the book, "Satan's Confusing Counterfeits."

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen and be sure to select that digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want, and most important, to share it with others.

Announcer: Amazing Facts, Changed Lives.

Female: I was born into a family of criminals. When I got older and I started breaking the rules, no one ever taught me about "Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not lie, Thou shalt not commit adultery," anything like that. When I became a runaway at 14, I was just a wild and lost child. I had somebody tell me, "Hey, you want to earn some money cleaning this guy's kitchen?"

So, I went to this house on a different side of town than I was used to. Someone kept giving me alcoholic drinks, and being 115 pounds and 14 years old, it really didn't take much time before I was so inebriated

that I had no control over what was going on around me. He took me to another location, another town and I was put in isolation. I would come out to be abused between three and eight times a day. I was degraded, I was humiliated, and I had no value as a human being. And I learned very quickly that what I felt and what I thought, and how this made me feel, did not matter to him at all. If I even thought about not doing what he wanted me to do, I would have a gun to my head and knife to my throat.

There was one time in particular where he had been tormenting me psychologically. And one day he said, "Oh, you'll never kill yourself. You'll never do it." And almost defiantly I was like, "Yes, I will." And he handed me a big ol' hand full of pills, and I took them.

While I was overdosing and I had been overdosing all night, I cried out to a God that I didn't even believe in and at that very moment in the most powerful way, God shone his light on me. And He gave me peace of mind like I never had. And He let me know right then and there while I was on that bathroom floor that He was real, and He was love. And that I did not know how at that time, but He was going to help me.

A little less than a year later, I became pregnant at 15. I loved my son with my whole heart. He also became something that my abuser could use against me in order to pump more fear and coercion. I had finally got away from my abuser, and I had finally built up a support system to help me stay on the move and stay on the run. And I was at my grandmother's house and on my son's third birthday, he took my son. And when I called the police and said, "My son's just been kidnapped," they said, "He's the father, we can't do anything about it." After my son was gone, I lost my mind. I started doing drugs and within a month and a half, I robbed a convenience store.

So, I was sentenced to 70 months, five years, ten months in prison. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I started attending the church services in prison seven days a week. It blew my mind. I was hooked. And then we went through, it was millennium of prophecy and net 99 that just solidified my faith in such a powerful way. And I knew God, that God was leading me. Even the guards there commented on how much I had changed. And since I started doing the studies on Amazing Facts, I was so excited about what I was learning that I was coming back from there and trying to convert my hardened criminal friends with the Storacles of Prophecy. Every question I ever had, eve worry, everything that I ever wondered about, the Bible answered everything and it was so clear and so easy to understand.

It's been 11 years since I've been out of prison. I am married to an amazing, wonderful man, my first non-abusive relationship in my whole entire life. Before we got married, we watched the Millennium of Prophecy series together, and it was just such a blessing to be able to see him learn and see him grow. And I feel like my life now is just a gift, that every single thing that happened to me bad in the past is nothing compared to the joy, and the happiness, and the stability that I have now. My name is Christine Vanorder and my life has been changed by Jesus Christ and "Amazing Facts."

Doug: We're here on the beautiful coast of the island of Puerto Rico and if you were to travel east about 2,000 miles, of course, you'd be out in the middle of the ocean but you'd also be in the middle of a mystical sea called the Sargasso Sea. It gets its name because of this common brown seaweed that can be found floating in vast mass. The area of the Sargasso Sea is about 700 miles wide and 2,000 miles long.

Now, the seaweed itself is fascinating stuff. It was first observed and called Gulf weed by Christopher Columbus. He gets the name Sargon from the Portuguese. Some people use it as herbal remedies, but out in the middle of the Sargasso Sea, the water is some of the bluest in the world. It's there you can see 200 feet deep in places. It also has a great biodiversity and ecosystem that surrounds the Sargasso Sea. For years, scientists wondered where the American and the Atlantic eels were breeding. They knew the adult eels swam down the rivers out into the Atlantic, but they never could find the place where they reproduce. Finally, they discovered it was out in the middle of the Sargasso Sea.

So, it's a fascinating place, but if you are an ancient sailor, you did not want to get stuck there. Being

caught in the doldrums was extremely difficult for the ancient sailors. Of course, their boats were driven by wind and sail, and they'd be caught in the vast mass of the seaweed that would wrap around their rudder, barnacles would begin to grow. It's an area that is notorious for light and baffling winds. And so, they'd make no progress. They'd get stuck, the men would become extremely dispirited, sometimes violence and even insanity would break out as people were trapped in the doldrums.

Well, friends, perhaps sometimes you felt that you were trapped in the doldrums. You've gone through episodes of depression. You feel like you're going in circles, life seems stifling. You know, the Bible offers good news. There is a way out. The Bible talks about a famous character that was trapped in a cycle of depression. He was low as you could be. A matter of fact, he even had seaweed wrapped around his head. His name was Jonah, but God gave him a way of escape.

In Jonah chapter 2, verse 3 through 7 we read, "For You cast me into the depths, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple. The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought my life up from the pit, O Lord, my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple.'"

You know, friends, the way that Jonah got out of his discouraging circumstances, he turned to God and he prayed. And if God can hear Jonah's prayer, just think about it, he was as far away from God as anybody could be. He was in the belly of a sea monster in the bottom of the ocean in the dark, yet he turned to God and God heard his prayer. You know, these ancient sailors, when they were trapped on the deck of a ship for weeks, stuck in the doldrums, discouraged, sometimes they would have a prayer meeting and pray that God would send a breeze that would set them free and get their boats moving. They turned to God in prayer, and often miracles would happen, and the wind would flutter in the sails and bring them out of their seaweed prison.

Friends, maybe you have been stuck in the doldrums. Maybe you've been caught in a cycle of depression. If God can do it for Jonah, if he can do it for the ancient sailors, he can do it for you. Turn to the Lord in prayer, trust his Spirit to blow through your soul and to set you free.

Doug: Hi friends, you know the modern flags that we see flying from the top of Capitol buildings or out in front of patriotic homes really stem back from the times of battles being fought between warring nations. These beautifully designed and intricately colored banners were flown high above the battlefield so the warring forces were able to identify amid the chaos, and the smoke, and the fog of war, where their forces were rallied and where they were fighting the battle. And if you could capture your enemy's flag, it was considered the highest honor. I wonder if that's where we got the game, capture the flag. With the changes in war, now these flags also represent a little more of a demarcation and identification of different nationalities.

Today, the flags that represent the different nations of the world are very colorful and diverse, and all of the colors and the shapes have a specific meaning. They're easy to distinguish and recognize from one another. Or perhaps one of the most interesting flags in the world is the flag of the Philippines. This is unique because it is flown differently in times of peace than it is in times of war. During times of peace, the Filipino flag that's composed of red, white, blue, and yellow, is flown with the blue side up. But in times of war, they flip it around, and the red side is up because there they're willing to make sacrifices of their blood to defend the freedom of the country.

In the same way that an embassy that is situated in a foreign country flies their flag while still surrounded by another nation, Christians are supposed to have the flag of God's love flying in this fallen world. You can read in the book Song of Solomon chapter 2, verse 4, "His banner over me is love." Love is the flag that identifies Christians as a unique kingdom, even here in the world. So friend, the big question is, how are you flying your flag?