

Q2 L06 - Why Is Interpretation Needed - 2020-05-09

Jean Ross: Good morning, friends. Welcome again to "Sabbath School Study Hour," coming to you here from the Amazing Facts offices in Sacramento, California. I'd like to welcome all of those who are joining us across the country and around the world. We have our regular online members that tune in every week, but joining them today is also our regular Sabbath School members that actually come to our church every week. But, of course, with the virus and the pandemic and the lockdown, they're joining us online. So we'd like to welcome all of our regular Sabbath School and church members to our Sabbath School time today.

Well, to our lesson for today, we've been studying through a series of studies dealing with the Scripture. Our lesson quarterly is entitled "How to Interpret Scripture." Today we find ourselves on lesson number six. It's entitled "Why is Interpretation Needed?" Very important study. That will be what we're going to be looking at in just a minute.

We'd also like to tell you about our free offer for today, a book entitled "The Rich Man and Lazarus," and this is actually a passage that we're going to be talking about a little bit in our study today. If you'd like to receive this, just text the--or call the number 866-788-3966 and you can ask for offer number 140, 140, by calling the number 866-788-3966. Or you can text the code "SH140" to the number 40544 and you'll be able to get a digital download of the book, "The Rich Man and Lazarus." I think you'll be richly blessed.

Well, Pastor Doug, before we get to our study, let's begin with the word of prayer. Dear Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for the opportunity that we have together to gather to study a very important subject about how we ought to interpret the Word of God, to interpret the Bible. So bless our time here in the studio, and be with those listening in their homes across the country and around the world, in Jesus' name, amen.

Doug Batchelor: Amen, well, friends, our lesson today is probably one of the most important that we can understand as Christians because I think everyone knows that we've got one Bible, one Jesus, one Holy Spirit. There's one Lord, one faith, one truth, one baptism. And 4,000 different denominations, they call themselves Christian. Why is that?

It could probably be boiled down to the word hermeneutics, and that has to do with basically the study of--hermeneutics is the skill and the art of carefully translating and interpreting the texts in the Bible. And hermeneutics is the theory or methodology of interpretation of the biblical text, and the word--you know, there was a Greek god called Hermes, and he was the messenger for the gods. And so that's where the word is derived from.

But it's really saying, how do we understand the message from God? How do we compare Scripture with Scripture? And so our lesson is based on how to interpret Scripture. We have a memory verse, and the memory verse is Hebrews 11, verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." And so this is a key to really--getting the right interpretation is by going here a little, there a little, comparing Scripture with Scripture, running to and fro through the Bible, and using some principles to come to conclusions of truth.

Jean: Now, just to add to that, Pastor Doug, before we actually get into the details of the lesson, if you have a question relating to the Bible, maybe a passage of Scripture that you've been struggling with to try and understand, you can go ahead and ask your question on Facebook if you're watching us live on Facebook. They can actually be emailing the questions to me, and we're going to try and take those questions live. So if you have a Bible question, feel free to do that.

Pastor Doug, talking about the Bible and the importance of the interpretation of the Bible, there are a couple of principles that we need to bear in mind. For example, when studying a passage of Scripture, we need to find out, is this a parable that Jesus is telling or is this a historical event? Is it a doctrinal truth that is being emphasized?

When you deal with prophetic passages of Scripture, you need to ask yourself, what does the symbol represent? What does it mean? And you got to compare other passages. Is this a historical narrative? Is this a story that we read about in the Bible? So any text can quickly lose its significance if it's taken out of context. You can manipulate or twist. Somebody once said, "You can make the Bible say anything you want it to say if you take things out of context."

Doug: Yeah, you can--yeah. And I've seen it before, we all have, where a pastor will torture a text to try to make it to say what he wants it to say. But you don't arrive at truth like that. It's the truth that sets us free. So we want to know, what did the Lord really mean and what was the intention of the writer in their texts? And so there's several things to consider.

First of all, be aware that whenever we come to the Bible--when we first look into the Bible, we're going to probably bring our own personal experience, perspective, and even some presuppositions. That's the first section here. One of the major presuppositions that was a problem for the apostles is their concept. They had been taught that when the Messiah came, that he was going to sort of come galloping into Jerusalem on a white horse and be leading an army against the Romans and overthrow the Romans and once again he would sit on the throne of David. And instead of having the territory of Israel, the whole world would be subjugated to them.

So there was just this very glorious, untrue concept they have of the first coming of the Messiah. They've gotten some of the Scriptures about the second coming, where Jesus comes as a king, mixed up with the first coming where he comes as a lamb and a sacrifice. And I'll just give you a couple of examples. Pastor Ross might read one or two.

I'll read, for example, Matthew 16, verse 21. This is right after Peter said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." But then it shows he misunderstood the mission of Jesus. "From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and be raised the third day. Then Peter took him aside," he has the audacity to chastise Jesus, "and he began to rebuke him and say, 'Far be it from you, Lord. That's not going to happen to you. That's not what--that's not what the Messiah does.' But he turned and he said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan. You're an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men.'" He had really misunderstood the first mission of the Messiah. They didn't get it right away.

Jean: And even up till after the resurrection, they didn't quite understand fully the first work that Jesus came. Even after the resurrection, Pastor Doug, they asked Jesus, said, "Is this the time you're going to restore the kingdom back to Israel?" And they didn't quite understand the establishment of a spiritual kingdom. We can read in Luke chapter 24, this is after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to the disciples and he said to them--Luke 24, verse 36 he said, "Peace be to you." But they were terrified and they were frightened and they supposed that they'd seen a spirit.

Then it goes on. Jesus talked to them. He ate in their presence. And then verse 44 says, "Then he said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and the Psalms concerning me.' And he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures."

So here we find even the disciples after the resurrection did not fully or did not perfectly interpret Scripture. Jesus had to help them understand. Where did Jesus go? He went to the Old Testament. He went to the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. And so he went back to the Bible to provide a correct interpretation.

Doug: You know, Pastor Ross, I hadn't thought of this and it wasn't in our notes or discussion. But what happened to the disciples, they experienced a great disappointment because of a bad hermeneutic and they were still God's people. The Adventist movement had a great disappointment because they assumed in Daniel 8:14 the sanctuary being cleansed--world would be cleansed by fire. Yeah, the world is a sanctuary, even though there was no Scripture in the Bible that called the world the sanctuary. And so, you know, they learned after that that it was based on a bad hermeneutic. So you can see why it's so important to compare Scripture with Scripture.

Now today, for instance, if the average Christian reads Revelation 1, verse 10 and John says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day." What do you think people think the Lord's Day is--most people?

Jean: Immediately they say, "Well, that's the day Jesus rose from the dead. That must be Sunday, the first day of the week."

Doug: Yeah, where's the Scripture that says that? There isn't any. Matter of fact, in my Bible when I look up Revelation chapter 1, verse 7, it's got--but when it says Lord's Day, it's got a little sub note there and it takes you back to Acts 20. It says that--it talks about they gathered on the first day of the week and you're thinking, "How do they know the Lord's Day is the first day of the week? Where did they get that? What hermeneutic is that based on?" Because when you look in the Bible and you say, "All right, what does the Bible say? Let it speak for itself. No presuppositions."

You know, I kind of came to Christianity with real--I had no denominational preference. I had no--I'm sure I had some presuppositions that I built, but didn't matter to me. I wanted to know, what's the Bible say? Well, Exodus 20:10, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord." Which day is the Lord's Day? The Sabbath. Isaiah 58:13, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day--" What day is the Lord's Day? The seventh day, the Sabbath. Jesus said, "Therefore, the son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." What day is the Lord's Day? The Sabbath day. Now, show me where the Bible it says the first day is the Lord's Day. That's based on a very severe presupposition that is popular.

Jean: People have built a whole theology over misunderstanding one verse. And, you know, interpretation is important. In some cases, it is life-threatening or has an issue of life and death. I read this, Pastor Doug. It was quite interesting. We might look at this and say, "How could anybody misunderstand this?" But you read in Mark chapter 16, verse 17 Jesus says, "And these signs shall follow those who believe. In my name, they shall cast out demons, they'll speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them. They'll lay hands on the sick and they'll recover."

I was doing a little research on this. Back in 2014, there was a news headline, February the 17th, 2014, that says, "Snake-handling pastor of a small Pentecostal Church in Kentucky died after being bitten by a rattlesnake during the weekend church service." Kind of interesting. This pastor's name was Jamie Coats, was bitten by this rattlesnake because they take these snakes and they handle them during their church service. And the people told him he needs to go to the doctor because his arm started swelling up and he started to look real sickly and pale, but he said, "No. The Bible says those who believe can take up serpents." And he refused to get medical treatment. A few hours later, he actually died. All based upon a total misinterpretation of what Jesus is talking about here in Mark chapter 16.

Jesus is not telling us to go look for snakes and carry them around. We do have an example in the Bible where Paul was bitten by a serpent. He didn't go looking for it, but he was not harmed. Also, Pastor Doug, serpents in the Bible, there's a symbolic meaning for that. The devil is described as that old serpent of all called the devil and Satan. So here Jesus He says, "You'll cast out demons," meaning that you'll have the power over the forces of darkness, over the enemy.

Doug: Yeah, in Psalms, David says, "You'll tread on the lion and the serpent." And those are two symbols of the devil. Yeah, it's an Acts chapter 27. Paul is not looking to get bit. He does get bit. He takes up the serpent putting wood on a fire, and he shakes it off and no harm comes to him. But it's principally--I think there's a spiritual analogy there that--you know, Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent--" That was a sign that the serpent had been defeated, and the blood of Christ neutralizes the venom of the devil in our lives.

And so there's a much bigger meaning here when he said, "You'll take up serpents." And Jesus said, "Don't tempt the Lord. Don't go looking for serpents and picking them up." Because if you stumble, an angel might pick you up. But if you jump off the temple, well, you're looking for trouble. So you've got to compare Scripture with Scripture.

Jean: You know, we have a question that's come in, and thank you. I see they're just really coming in now. That's great. We have Billy who's asking a question relating to the Bible. He says, "When did the New Testament officially begin?"

Doug: Well, as soon as any book of the New Testament was written, it was Scripture. And so I think Gospel of Mark was written maybe 40 AD and--but as soon as he was circulating it, they understood that this was sacred writing, as with the other writings. Some proof for that might be in 2 Peter chapter 3. That's actually in our lesson later. Paul--Peter refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture. He knew that Paul had been called as an apostle of Jesus. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul had raised the dead and did many miracles, and those letters he wrote were Spirit-inspired letters. And so Peter refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture.

Jean: You know, we have another question that's come in, Pastor Doug. It actually ties into our next section in our lesson that talks about the importance of translation and interpretation. Let me just mention this.

There are two different groups of Bibles that you can find. You have the actual translations, which the translators would go to the original languages and they'd find the best English word to convey that thought or that idea in the original language.

But then we have Bibles that we call paraphrase. They're all--they're not all bad in and of themselves, but basically what that is, is somebody might read the Bible in English and then they'll try and rephrase the passage using their own words and sometimes conveying some devotional thoughts. And I think paraphrases are useful and helpful if you're doing more of a devotional study and you want to get some different insights on how to apply that.

But when you're studying doctrine, it's always a good thing to go to the original sources. Try go to a translation that is as close to the original as possible. And the reason I even mentioned that is we have a question that came in, Pastor Doug. Cindy is asking, "Can you explain Genesis 6, verse 4?" What are these nonhumans that's been referred to there?

Doug: Yes, that's a great--that's really a great example of how you need to let the Bible interpret itself. A number of people read this passage in Genesis chapter 6 where it says, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair and took them wives." And notice where it says here, "Now it came to pass--" And I'll go to verse 1. "It came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth--"

Now keep in mind there are two groups of men when that happens. Cain took his sister wife. They went off in a separate place. They began to grow and marry and intermarry and multiply. And Adam and Eve and their new son Seth and his family, they began to grow. But one group worshiped God. They were called the sons of God.

And you say, "How do you know that, Pastor Doug?" This is where you compare Scripture with Scripture. "As many as follow him, they are the sons of God." 1 John chapter 3, "Behold what manner of love the Father's bestowed on us, that we should be called sons of God." Isaiah says, "We are the sons and daughters of God."

A lot of Scripture says believers are called the children of God. Jesus says that don't--those who don't believe you're the children of your father, the devil. And they were called the children of men. They're mortal. I think the word was enos that was being used there. And it says, "When the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful, they took wives for them of all whom they chose." As long as the distinction between the descendants of Seth, Adam and Eve stayed separate from Cain and his posterity that had turned from God, they had been faithful. But when they began to intermarry, the result was--God said, "My Spirit will not always strive with men. The thoughts of man's heart were only wicked continually." One of the main things God told His people all through the wilderness, "Do not intermarry with the Canaanites, with the unbelievers." Samson got in trouble doing that. Solomon got in trouble doing that. And here the Bible starts out. It was through those mixed marriages that the faith was lost.

Jean: And talking about translations in paraphrase, there's a fairly well-known paraphrase that actually misinterprets that verse and says the angels took wives of, you know, the daughters of men and as a result giants were born unto them. Well, that's not the translation. That's a paraphrase. You know, Pastor Doug, when we do our radio program in the beginning of the year, we encourage people to read through the Bible. We almost always get somebody that asks about, who are these angels that took human wives and as a result giants were born? Well, that's actually a misunderstanding of what the verse says. Of course Jesus said, speaking of angels, they neither marry nor give any marriage. So couldn't have been angels that took human wives and as a result giants were born. That's just really a misunderstanding of what the verse is actually saying.

Doug: Now there--it is true that when the descendants of Seth intermarried with the descendants of Cain, says their children were mighty ones. But that's what you call genetic vitality, and that's just a common fact of science. You can cross a lion and a tiger, you get a liger, but it'll be bigger than the two. And so--yeah, donkey and a donkey, the mule--I'm sorry. Donkey and a horse, you end up with a mule. A mule is going to be a lot bigger than a donkey.

Jean: We have another question, Pastor Doug, if you have your Bible there. 1 Corinthians 15:29. Cindy's just asking, "Can you please explain this verse: 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 29?"

Doug: I'm looking in my notes here because I think--yeah, I did, I put that in my notes. She's got--the Lord designed that, Cindy. Thanks for your calling. Let me read it to you. It says, "Otherwise--" Now, the whole purpose of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, talking about the resurrection. Some of the Corinthians had lost faith in the resurrection. And Paul says in verse 29, "Otherwise, what will they do, who are baptized for the dead? If the dead do not rise at all, why then are they baptized for the dead?" That is a very common misunderstanding.

First of all, you have to ask by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Don't ever build a doctrine on one Scripture. There's at least one denomination that baptizes living people in behalf of those who are dead. There's a really big theological problem with that because the Bible says once you die your destiny is forever determined. It's appointed unto men once to die. After that, the judgment. While you're alive, there is hope. To all the living, there is hope. After you die--it says that a living dog is better than a dead lion. There's no more hope for them. Their destiny is sealed.

So you can't believe you can be baptized for the dead. It's kind of like praying for the dead and burning candles for the dead. It's a very pagan teaching. How do you translate this verse? There was no punctuation in the original Greek. And so when the translators were translating, they had to punctuate the way they saw best. Some of their presuppositions ended up getting into the punctuation.

So this is the way it ought to read properly punctuated, and I think there may be some translations out

there that do this. 1 Corinthians 15:59, "Otherwise, comma, what will they do who are baptized, comma, for the dead, comma, if the dead don't rise at all, comma, why are they baptized, question mark. For the dead?" So he's basically saying, "All those who have been baptized--if you don't think there's a resurrection. Otherwise, what are they doing? If the dead don't rise at all, why get baptized? For the dead?" You're not doing it for their sake. So it's what you call a rhetorical question. And so once you understand that it's punctuated incorrectly, it starts to make sense. And another famous example of that is the thief on the cross.

Jean: You read in Luke where the thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom." Now I just want to underline that. The thief wasn't expecting to be remembered that day. He said, "Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom." Jesus responded and said, "Verily I say unto you today, you shall be with me in paradise."

Now as Pastor Doug said, there's no comma in the original language. You'll pretty much look at any Bible today and you've got the presupposition where the translators put the comma before the word today, meaning Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you," comma, "today you will be with Me in paradise." Sounds like that day Jesus was going to be with the thief in paradise.

But if you'll put the comma behind the word today, Jesus was simply telling the thief that day--while He was on the cross, He was promising the thief He would remember him when He came in His kingdom. "I'm telling you today, you will be with Me in paradise." So where you put the punctuation is rather significant. You gave me an example just before the program of somebody that put the comma in the wrong place.

Doug: I think it was Czar Nicholas. Someone had offended him, and he wrote a note and he wanted to send them to Siberia. And the families pleaded, "Don't send them to Siberia." And he wrote back on a note, "Pardon not possible. To go to Siberia." Well, his wife was more merciful. She got his note. And before it went off to the officer, she put the comma after the word pardon. It said, "Pardon, not possible to go to Siberia." So he was freed.

But, you know, it's not just the punctuation. Look at the other verses. Did Jesus go to paradise that day? John chapter 20 or 21, he says to Mary, "Do not cling to me for I've not yet ascended to my Father." And the thief--you know, days end and begin at sundown. We don't even know if he died by sundown, which would have been when that day ended. And so there's no way he could have been with Jesus in paradise that day. That was not the emphasis of that phrase.

Jean: Of course you can't build a whole doctrine on one verse. You got to look at what the rest of the Bible says when it says, "The dead know not anything." Jesus speaks of death as being as asleep. So you got to put all of the verses together to reach a correct understanding, especially on doctrinal issues. You can't build it on just simply one verse. Pastor Doug, that brings us to our next section there on Tuesday. It's entitled "The Bible and Culture." And of course, the Bible wasn't written in western mindset or western culture. So it is helpful to have somewhat of a knowledge of some of the cultures at the time of the writing of the Bible.

Now, for somebody that reads the Bible, they will actually learn some of these cultures just by simply reading the Bible. If you read the Old Testament, you get a feel for the culture. A little bit different today. But we do have some examples of where cultures is rather important. There's an interesting verse that you find in Genesis chapter 24, verse 2 where Abraham asks his servant Eliezer to put his hand under his thigh, and he's making a promise he's going to go get a wife for his son Isaac. Now I've heard people read that verse and say, "What in the world, put his hand under his thigh. What does that mean?"

Doug: Yeah, today if you shake hands like that, you might get slugged. That's not how they make contracts. But in the Bible, it meant that someone was resting on--they're going to rest and trust on your promise. And when Jesus comes, on his thigh he's got the words written: King of kings, Lord of lords. Yeah, so that was a custom back then that just meant, "I'm resting on your promise. We're making an oath. We're making a covenant." And they used to do it with salt. There was different ways that they

would ratify an oath or a covenant, with a meal. And that was just one of the customs.

Jean: And the reason they used the thigh is because it's the biggest muscle in the body. It's the biggest bone in the body. So represents strength, a promise. "Absolute, I'm going to stick with it." They didn't sign a piece of paper the way we would do it today in western culture. But having a little bit of an understanding of the--of what was taking place at that time kind of helps you. You have another story in Luke chapter 7, verse 44 where a woman comes into a feast at Simon's house and she begins to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears, and Jesus--of course, she's a sinner. And Simon says, "If Jesus would have--if he was a prophet, he would know what kind of woman this is." Then Jesus turns to Simon and says, "I came into your house. You didn't give me any water to wash my feet." Now for us today, we might think

Doug: And he said, "You didn't kiss me also." We don't typically do that.

Jean: That's right. And we might think, "Well, that's kind of strange if you go to somebody's house and they want to wash your feet." But if you were walking in sandals back on dirt roads in those days and you arrived at somebody's house, it was an act of hospitality to wash the feet of your visitor. Simon neglected that in the case of Jesus.

Doug: Today when you go to someone's house, before dinner you might say, "Where's the restroom so I can wash my hands?" Back then, they shared the roads with the donkeys and all the other animals and it was unthinkable that you'll go to someone's house to eat with your feet smelling like you just came from the barn. And so Jesus said, "Here, she's humbling herself washing my feet with her tears and drying them with her hair." And like--as I said, Jesus said, "You didn't give me any kiss." Well, it was common back then when men--you know, the prodigal son comes home, they kissed him. Jacob and Esau, they kissed each other. Joseph--Jacob and then later Joseph, they kiss each other. And the Bible says, "Greet the brethren with the holy kiss." Now, don't do that during the pandemic. But they were a little--I've gone to Russia and Argentina. And in France, I got kissed a lot. So it was a culture back then. You have to know the culture.

Jean: I remember we had a visitor once come to our church, and we had somebody that was doing the greeting that morning and this person must have come from a French culture or something. And he was so excited to come visit our church that he grabbed a hold of one of the deacons and gave them, you know, the kiss on one side and kiss on the other. Kind of surprised the deacon somewhat. And afterwards, he walked up to me, says, "That guy just kissed me on my shoulder." I mean, that's not really something we do in our culture. But, you know, that's a sign of greeting and just a warm greeting there in some of the parts. So culture is important.

We have a question that somebody sent in. It has to do with Elijah, Enoch, and Moses. And the question is, did they or were they taken to heaven by God or did they die? And I think the root of the question is in the Old Testament. We read about Moses dying. We know Elijah was taken to heaven. But how do we know they're in heaven? Elijah, Enoch, and Moses.

Doug: Well, you can look in Mark chapter 9. Matter of fact, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have the Mount of Transfiguration vision where Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Jesus, and it's really them. It's not a vision because three humans see it at the same time. It's not like, you know, three people ever have the same dream.

But--then you also--it tells us Moses was resurrected in Jude verse 9. Michael came, did not dispute with the devil about the body of Moses. Michael is the resurrection and the life. And he didn't come for the body to relocate the body, he's come to resurrect Moses. Even a Jewish tradition--that's not the Bible, but it's called the vision or the assumption of Moses. They always said Moses was raised 3 days later so he could see the people go into the Promised Land. And then you have where Enoch--it says Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him. That's both in Hebrews 11 and it's in Genesis. So you have Scripture that they were exceptions. Typically people die, they sleep until the resurrection when Jesus comes, but God has a few exceptions and He identifies them.

Jean: Pastor Doug, we've got a question that you going to like. Here it is. Octavia is asking, "The Bible says that Jesus was in the earth for as long as Jonah was in the belly of the whale. How do you get three days and three nights from Friday?"

Doug: Pastor Ross said I'm going to like it because one of my favorite books is Jonah. I wrote a little book on Jonah, and you'll find this answer in more detail in that book. It's downloaded for free. It's a common misunderstanding. The only one time in Matthew chapter 12 does Jesus say, "As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." Well, if Jesus died Friday afternoon, he spent Friday night in the tomb, Saturday night in the tomb, and he rose Sunday morning, that's parts of three days but only two nights no matter how you cut it.

But the common misunderstanding is, they think that, heart of the earth, as Jonah was in the belly of the whale, the son of man will be in the heart of the earth," everyone automatically thinks that must be the tomb. Wouldn't you be in the heart of the earth if you're in a tomb? Where else in the Bible does it say that the heart of the earth is a tomb? Let the Bible explain itself. When we say the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," that doesn't mean in the tomb. So the word heart there is kardia in the original.

It always helps--our lesson later talks about look at the original words. And the word for earth there is talking about the tear of the world. Jesus really became a captive of the world when God withdrew his protection from him. The devil is called the prince of this world. Thursday night in the garden of Gethsemane is when he began to suffer for our sins. Right after the Lord's Supper, that covenant was sealed. He prayed, "Father, if there's any other way--" There was no other way. He perspired blood. He shed blood. He began suffering for our sins when the mob arrested him. The penalty for sin is suffering and death.

He began to suffer. Thursday night, he was in the heart of the earth. The devil was punishing him. They were beating him Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night. The heart of the earth really begins Thursday night. Christ came to the disciples at that point. In the garden he said, "Now is the hour."

And so you can start your stopwatch right then; Thursday night, Friday night. Three days, three nights, he was in the clutches of the devil, paying for the penalty of sin. In the heart of the earth, it's not talking just about the tomb.

Jean: All right. Good answer, Pastor Doug. Moving on with our lesson then--was anything else you wanted to add Bible and culture or should we move on to our next section? I'm not sure if we covered everything we needed to.

Doug: Let me see. You know, I think that it's important--when we're talking about Bible and culture, sometimes we bring our ideas and we need to be taught more thoroughly by those who are grounded. I was just looking, for example, of Paul. When he goes into Athens, he's surrounded by idols and he is brought off into the theater there and he's smart enough to say, "I understand the culture of the Greeks." Paul was born in Tarsus. And he said, "If I'm going to reach these idolaters, I've got to speak to them on their own terms." And so he said, "I was noticing on your promenade you've got a lot of idols dedicated--you got one idol with--you got one pillar with nothing on it. It says, 'To the unknown god.' Let me tell you about that God."

So that was a brilliant move on Paul's part to say, "I'm going to use their culture to try to reach them." So understanding culture when you're teaching the Bible helps you reach people.

Jean: And I think that's especially true when you do mission work. We have a series of missionaries that work with Amazing Facts in different places around the world, and one of the things that they--we encourage them to do is to look at the culture that they're working with and try and tailor-make the gospel material that we're going to share with them, try and make it applicable to them.

I remember a story about a missionary that was preaching the gospel to some Eskimos and--of course,

they have no idea about what sheep and goats and lambs are. And he was trying to illustrate the point of what the lamb of God that took away the sins of the world. To them, a lamb didn't mean anything. They were surrounded by polar bears and seals. And the missionary trying to illustrate the idea of a meek and lowly animal, the lamb in that case became the seal to try and help them understand the significance of an innocent animal dying for the sins of somebody else. So sometimes you got to try and tailor- make--at least use language that people can understand.

Doug: Yep, absolutely. And then it talks about that you've got some people that are--they're dedicated, they're committed, they're God's children, but they need deeper Bible studies. So because a person maybe doesn't understand all the Scripture doesn't mean God isn't working with them or in them. You know, Jesus said to James and John, "Don't forbid them. If he's not against us, he's with us." And when Priscilla and Aquila ran into Apollos, he was mighty in the Scriptures, preaching the baptism of John, but he didn't know about the outpouring of the Spirit and understand Jesus' ministry. And by the way, that's Acts 18:24. They sat him down. They went through the Scriptures, using the Scriptures and hermeneutics. They proved from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah by comparing Scripture with Scripture, and he became one of the most powerful New Testament preachers because he did have his hermeneutics repaired, you might say.

Jean: Well, then that brings us to our next section on Wednesday. If you're following with your lesson, the title is "Our Sinfulness and Fallen Nature," and how true this is. There are too many times when Christians will try and justify their behavior because of the unwillingness to make a change or repent, and then they look for passages in the Bible to try and justify their disobedience. And, Pastor Doug, one of the areas that come to mind with this is--I've had an opportunity to do a number of evangelistic meetings and Bible studies with people, and one of the truths that is so clear in the Bible is the truth of the seventh-day Sabbath. That is the day that God set aside and that's the day that God blessed, and I've even gotten into discussions with pastors who don't keep the Sabbath. And I asked them, "What's the reason why you don't keep one of the Ten Commandments?" "Well, the Ten Commandments are nailed to the cross. We don't have to keep the Ten Commandments."

Well, then just follow up and say, "Is it all right for Christians to steal, to commit adultery, to lie, to worship idols?" They'll say, "No, no, no, no." But yet they're saying the Ten Commandments are no longer binding, and the reason they have to say that is because they don't want to observe the fourth commandment that says the importance of the Sabbath.

So we have to reinterpret Scripture to justify something that we are unwilling to do, and that's really what the problem with the Pharisees. The scribes and the Pharisees in the days of Jesus, they refused to acknowledge that they were in error in the interpretation of the Bible. And in order to justify their own ways, they ended up rejecting and even persecuting Jesus.

Doug: And Jesus said over and over that it is lethal to put aside the commandments of God in order to observe a tradition. He said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for commandments the doctrines of men." And you can't put popular tradition ahead of a thus saith the Lord.

Jean: In John chapter 9, verse 39 we read these words: "And Jesus said, 'For judgment I've come into the world that those who do not see may see, and those who see may be made blind.' Then some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words and they said to him, 'Are we blind also?' And Jesus said to them, 'If you are blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.'" So again, we have this misinterpretation of the religious leaders. They totally rejected the teachings of Jesus because it didn't fit into their mindset or their philosophical idea or theology.

Doug: Yeah, and today, you know, one of the most common mistakes I see is the idea that God's law has been done away with and because the Bible does teach grace. But what is that grace? Is it grace--is grace a license that God gives us where you're allowed to sin with no consequences or is grace power that God gives us that not only forgives our sin, but empowers us to live a different kind of life? And so the same grace it can cover our sin, that grace can empower us to be new creatures. And people sometimes fail to

emphasize that because of our sinful and fallen natures.

Jean: We've got a question that's coming from Nicole, and she says, "I've always been surprised--" She says--let me read it. "Can you please explain 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 2? Being confused about this verse for quite a while." So let me read it here, Pastor Doug. 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 2, Paul is writing and says, "I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago whether in the body I do not know or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows such a one was caught up to the third heaven." She's confused about what is Paul talking about.

Doug: Well, a lot of Bible scholars think Paul is talking about a vision he had, and it was so real that he's saying, "I knew a man." And he's not going to say, "It's me." Because he said he was actually tempted to be proud about the abundance of visions that he had. And he said, "This man who was caught up to the third heaven--" Now in the Bible when it says third heaven, there's three words the Hebrews use for heaven. The first heaven, they called the air around our planet. We call the atmosphere; when God says in Genesis he made the heavens and the earth. Then you get the second heaven, which is where the sun, moon, and stars hang and the heavenly bodies that we see from our planet. Third heaven was the dwelling place of God, paradise. Paul says, "I was caught up to paradise." And it's like when John in Revelation chapter 4 he says, "I was caught up in the spirit." It was so real he said, "I don't know if I was in the body because it felt 100% real. It could have been in my mind and it just felt real. I don't know. But I heard and saw things it's not even lawful to utter." And I think he said such a one because he didn't want everyone to probe him for, "What did you hear? What did you see?" So is that your understanding of Paul?

Jean: Yeah, absolutely, yeah, talking about a vision. A good question, moving on then with that topic—

Doug: Does that mean there's seven heavens?

Jean: No, there's three. You explained that, right? The atmosphere, the stars—

Doug: People always say, "I was in seventh heaven." But there's no seventh heavens.

Jean: There's no seventh heaven. The next section that we have is "Why Is It Important to Interpret Scripture?" And we need to take care when interpreting Scripture. Nehemiah chapter 8, verse 8, this is when all the children of Israel gather together. It says, "So they read distinctly from the book and the law of God and they gave the sense and help them to understand the reading." So is there a place for good preaching and teaching to help explain the Scriptures? Absolutely.

You know, you mentioned--I forget. Maybe last week, Pastor Doug, you mentioned that, or maybe last night, whenever somebody comes up with a teaching or an idea that is somewhat unique to them and when you share that idea with other Christians, they might look at you and say, "Yeah, that's not correct." Sometimes we have people who have particular ideas, but because of pride of opinion and they don't want acknowledge that they are wrong, they will stubbornly cling to error and eventually they begin to propagate that and share that.

I know a person who was a good Christian, solid Christian, but he came up with an idea about when Jesus is going to come. And even though he said, you know, "The Bible doesn't say we know the day or the hour." But he kind of reached the conclusion and stubbornly held on to that, and today he's pretty much given up his faith in the Word of God because things didn't turn out the way he had thought they would. So recognizing that we can make mistakes in interpretation of Scripture and allowing others to kind of give their input is important.

Doug: Yeah, an example would be--you've got that parable in Luke chapter 16, starts at verse 19, about the rich man and Lazarus and people read this parable, and it must be properly interpreted and understood. And people sometimes have to be taught. Don't build a doctrine on one parable. The idea that punishment begins immediately after death before the resurrection and before the judgment is--it doesn't go along with any other Scripture. But people read this one parable and they think it's literal.

And you've got, of course, this rich man who's clothed in purple and he feast sumptuously every day, and

at his gate lays a poor beggar named Lazarus who desires the crumb--crumbs that fall from his table and only the dogs comfort him by licking his sores. They both die. The rich man, he goes to Hades, hell, and he's in torment. The poor man, he goes to Abraham's bosom.

Now, where else in the Bible do you literally find Abraham's bosom? Does it say anywhere in the Bible that the dead are all looking forward to going to Abraham's bosom? This is a parable Jesus tells, warning the Jewish religious leaders. They think because they're children of Abraham they're going to be saved, and they're neglecting to reach the Gentiles around them that are dying for the crumbs of truth that fall from the table of the Jewish people. They had the truth and they're desiring the crumbs of truth, and they said, "We're the chosen people. It's too bad for you, folks."

And so the whole purpose of Jesus' parable is not to say someone dies and goes right to heaven or hell. He's using an incredible paradox. Lazarus, this poor Gentile--he's a symbol of a Gentile, who's outside of the rich man's house, outside of the fellowship of Israel. He ends up going to Abraham's bosom. That's the place of reward for the Jews. While the rich man represents the Jewish nation. It's got the truth, the religious leaders. He dies, he goes to the pagan place of torment, Hades.

And so Jesus is using just a great contrast here, a paradox to try and teach this parable. And people in heaven and hell aren't going to be able to talk to each other. And he says, "I'll send Lazarus with a drop of water." A drop of water is not going to cool anybody's tongue. So the message is usually in what you call the punch line. The moral of the story is usually--if it's told well, it's in the last phrase. The rich man says, "Well, if he can't go back, if you'd send Lazarus back from the dead, then they'll believe." Now, Jesus literally raises a person by the name of Lazarus and the religious leaders--not all, but many of them, they want to kill Lazarus. And Abraham says in the parable, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded the one from--should rise from the dead."

Jesus is saying that as you go through Moses and the prophets, you will know that I am the Messiah. That is the greatest evidence. The hermeneutics is the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. So this parable is really a parable about, you must believe Moses and the prophets. It's not a parable that you die and go right to heaven and hell. Compare Scripture with Scripture.

Jean: Pastor Doug, we got--just a couple questions has come in and they're really good ones. So we might want to try and give a quick answer in the time that we have. This question is, "Can you help me understand what happened to Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11?"

Doug: Yes, it says Jephthah makes a vow that if God gives him victory over the--I think it's the people of Amman, that whatever comes out of his gates when he comes home, he'll make a burnt offering, a sacrifice and--he uses his word burnt offering because that's typically how they would sacrifice. I used to have goats and I'd come home, they'd all run out to meet you. So he expected the family cow, the goat, the oxen, the sheep to come out and meet him when he came to the ranch. He comes back victorious. His daughter comes out first singing. He'd been watching carefully, "What will come out my gates? I made a vow." His daughter came out. He says, "My daughter, you've brought me very low. I've opened my mouth to the Lord. I cannot go back." She says, "Do unto me as you promised." So it says he then did to her as he had promised. Now, that doesn't mean he sacrificed her because the Jews knew you're never supposed to sacrifice a person. The firstborn of every Jewish man was to be a sacrifice to the Lord, but they never offered the person. They are offered an animal. And what happened in the case like this; as Hannah offered her son to the temple to serve the Lord, as the Bible says Hannah was dedicated in the New Testament to serving God in the temple. The daughter of Jephthah would never marry. She was to be serving in the temple for the rest of her life. That's why once a year the daughters in Israel would mourn with the daughter of Jephthah, her virginity; just like Hannah came up to the temple every year, brought a coat for little Samuel. So no, he did not burn his daughter. God does not want human sacrifice. But he had no offspring because she never married. Long answer. Sorry.

Jean: Yeah, that's good. In the last few minutes that we have, Pastor Doug, do you want to just talk about the importance of correct understanding or interpretation of the Bible leading to unity in the church and

a lack of correct understanding leading to disunity in the church?

Doug: Yes, you know, Jesus says several times in his Word that it's important that we abide in him and that we become one in truth. Jesus says there in John 17--three times he says, "I want you to be one." Look, for instance, in John--let me see. John 17:17, "Sanctify them by your truth. Your Word is truth. As You sent me into the world, I've sent them into the world, and for their sake I sanctify myself they might be sanctified in the truth." Notice truth, truth, truth. And then he goes on and he says, "That they might be one." Verse 21, "As You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they may be one in us, that the world might believe that You sent me. The glory that You have given me, I've given them that they might be one as we are one."

Three times truth, four times one. God is saying we should be one, but don't ever seek to be united apart from the truth in the Bible. That is critical because in the last days the beast power is going to say--they'll quote John 17, but they'll misquote it. They'll say unity, unity, unity, but they'll be willing to sacrifice doctrinal truth to achieve unity and that ends up becoming a lie when you do that. So we must be united in truth, in the Word of God through proper hermeneutics.

Jean: Again, we want to thank you for all of the many questions that are coming in. Some really good questions. We're going to take some more of these questions in our next program. It's going to be starting in about 10 minutes. We want to remind you about the free offer today. It is a book entitled "The Rich Man and Lazarus." We'll be happy to send this to anyone who calls and ask. The number is 866-788-3966, and you can ask for offer number 140. We'll be happy to mail it to you. Or you can receive a digital download of the book by texting the code "SH140" to the number 40544.

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.

Justin: Growing up as a kid, my mother was on drugs and alcohol. Lots of fighting in the home. My mom would be abused mentally, verbally, physically. Went from California to Oregon. Spent some time in Oregon and it was just the same cycle of drugs, alcohol, violence. My mom's boyfriend would go to jail at times. She would wait until he would, you know, get out of jail and it was back to square one.

The drugs and alcohol escalated to a lot harder drugs: crystal meth, cocaine, and lots and lots of alcohol. So I started using the alcohol to--as a medication. It was like a--to the misery and the fear that I had. I wanted to drown all that misery. Times I would just grab, you know, a bottle of beer and go out into the desert and just drink until sometimes I just pass out in the desert somewhere and wake up the next morning and, you know--and I just couldn't find rest.

My stepdad had gotten me a motorcycle. And so I started riding motorcycles. I'd drink a lot of beer, get on the motorcycle, ride into the desert, do donuts, and just throw out--you know, just ride on private property. People would chase me off, and I was just causing--stirring up dust and rocks and just causing chaos. And the adrenaline rush that I had was so exciting and the feeling of it was so intense that I loved it and I forgot about all my problems, you know, at the moment and I thought that material things would make me feel so good, you know. And so I started working, started making money, had a responsibility.

But as time went by, I had more money. So I would, you know, use my money that I made to buy drugs and alcohol. Got pulled over drinking and driving, ended up going to jail for a couple of days. I lost my job because I missed work for a few days. Lost my girlfriend. Lost all the money that I had. So once again, I was empty. No money, no drugs, no alcohol, and that was a turning point in my life.

At this time, I was living with my grandfather. And as I was flipping through the channels on the satellite

system, I found Amazing Facts. Pastor Doug Batchelor was telling his--sharing his testimony about how he was living in a cave, and he was--he struggled the same struggles of alcohol and drugs. And I continued to read the book, "The Richest Caveman," and it really impacted my life and really related to the things he was struggling with and all the events that took place in his life.

And when I started reading the Bible, Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I recognized that I had no strength. I was weak and I was wretched, and I needed help. So I just asked the Lord, I said, "Just help me, Lord." And the Holy Spirit convicted me and I decided to be baptized and to give my life to Jesus Christ.

A few years after the Lord took the temptation of drinking and doing drugs, He gave me a beautiful wife. I met her at church. Now I have a beautiful baby boy, 2-year-old baby boy. Just exciting to see, you know, what God is doing in my life and in my family. I met with some friends from my local church that I was attending and they had told me about Amazing Facts Center of Evangelism training seminar. The AFCOE to-go program really inspired me and motivated me to tell young people about, you know, the same struggles that I was struggling with, to help these kids give their life to Jesus Christ. And there's nothing else that you could ask for. I'm Justin and God used you to change my life.

Announcer: Amazing Facts changed lives.

Male: I had a lot of pressure as a pastor's kid to perform. They're not allowed to make the same mistakes as everyone else. Not only are people looking at you, but they're judging your father according to what they see in you. After a while, you get tired of carrying that load as a child.

By the time it got time for me to leave home, I was pretty much finished with all that. I just--I wasn't good enough and I didn't belong in there. So when I left home, I went to the world. I had a dead run. You know, I partied and went to work and, you know, was living my life as the way I wanted to, and I just wanted to be left alone.

One day I was driving my motorcycle with some buddies of mine. All of a sudden, I had oil running everywhere; all up and down my arm and across my legs and rippling down the tank in the wind. And I loaded it up on a trailer and sent it to the shop to have it fixed. So I went to pick it up and the mechanic came out. He said--you know, he said, "We got your front end rebuilt." He said, "That wasn't the bad part." He said, "The bad part was the only thing holding the front tire on was the weight of the motorcycle."

So all I would have had to have done was accelerate quickly and the front tire would have come off. And it got my attention. It got me to thinking, you know, you hear a lot of people talking about, you know, the relationship that they have with Jesus and all that and I didn't even know what that was supposed to look like. It began to work on my mind. I think God was beginning to speak to me. I believe that you can say I might be a poster child for the shepherd's lost sheep story because I wasn't looking for God. I didn't really care, but He cared about me and He came and got me.

Announcer: Together, we have spread the gospel much farther than ever before. Thank you for your support.

Doug: I'm here in the beautiful island nation of Fiji that's filled with exotic animals, beautiful vegetation, and spectacular scenery. The people here are some of the nicest in the world, but it hasn't always been that way. This was once known as the cannibal isles. The Fijian warriors were some of the fiercest in the South Pacific and greatly feared. You can understand why. This is one of the weapons that they used for breaking the neck of their adversaries. And long before they were killing and eating missionaries, they were fighting with and killing and eating each other.

In fact, as you go to the different tourist locations on the island, they'll sell you remakes of some of the forks they used for eating human brains. In fact, there was one cannibal chief, Ratu Udre Udre, during the 1800s that is in the Guinness Book of World Records for having killed and eaten the most victims. He bragged that every time he killed someone, he set a stone aside. By the end of his life, he had a pretty

big pile of stones. It's estimated he ate somewhere in the neighborhood of 900 people, oh my.

You know, the Fijians were not the only ones that had a monopoly on cannibalism. In fact, the Bible says that we are all capable of being cannibals. Galatians 5:15 says, "If we bite and devour one another, we may end up consuming one another." That's talking about destroying people's reputation by mean gossip. One famous missionary named Paton, when he was preparing to go to the cannibal isles, his friends and family begged him not to go. They said, "You'll be eaten." He said, "It doesn't matter to me if I die and I'm eaten by worms or if God wills that I'm eaten by cannibals, as long as I'm doing the will of God." Well, he went to the cannibal isles and brought many to Christ, and died peacefully in his old age.

Some of the ancient cannibal cultures believe that when you killed and when you devoured your enemy, you would somehow take within you their spiritual strengths or powers, but that's really absurd. But there is a kind of cannibalism endorsed in Scripture, that's right. Jesus said in John chapter 6, verse 53, "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you." And you don't need these tools to do it. What you need is to read His Word and learn about His life. Accept by faith His sacrifice in your place and you can have a new heart and be a new creature. You can even do it right now.