

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

2020, Quarter 2, Lesson 2

The Origin and Nature of the Bible

This study guide contains additional materials to accompany the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for the second quarter of 2020, titled How to Interpret Scripture. The Deeper Daily Bible Study develops the broad theme of studying and interpreting the Bible into some areas not covered by the Sabbath School Study Guide. While the general topic of each week's set of lessons corresponds to the Study Guide topic for that week, the daily focus will vary at times from the Study Guide. We hope that you will find this approach to be a valuable added resource in your Bible study.

The "Digging Deeper" section probes into the day's topic, and illustrates the study principle or tool being discussed. Suggested answers, if included, are provided in parentheses. Sabbath School teachers will find this section especially helpful in the Sabbath School setting. The "Apply It" section gives the student an opportunity to apply the subject at hand to his/her own study of the Bible, and the "Share It" section provides an opportunity for those in group studies to discuss and share their response to the day's theme.

The Origin and Nature of the Bible

In this week's set of lessons we will be looking at the origin and nature of the Bible. Understanding the process of inspiration is important, and we will examine that. Understanding the purpose of inspiration is even more important, and we will devote the majority of our lessons to looking at some of those purposes—perceiving God's voice, His presence, His power, and His promises. As we will see, all of these are revealed in the Bible! The two statements below from the book *The Great Controversy* explain well the importance of recognizing the divine origin of the Bible:

[T]he Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. (*The Great Controversy*, v.4).

In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, R.V. (*The Great Controversy*, vii.1).

Digging Deeper

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. What does this verse reveal about the origin and source of the Bible? (It is divine and supernatural.) If we recognize the Bible as God's word to us, what practical ramifications should that have for us as we read it and study it? (Answers will vary. We should approach the Bible with reverence, respect, and awe, rather than with criticism, doubt, and suspicion.)
2. Read 2 Timothy 3:15. According to this verse, what is the purpose of the Bible? (The purpose of the Bible is to make us wise unto salvation and to plant and grow faith within us.)
3. Read John 17:17. What did Jesus say about the nature and the trustworthiness of the Bible? (Jesus said that it is the truth.) Why is this so important, especially in today's post-modern culture? (Many people today are attracted to the idea that there is no absolute truth, and that they are free to determine the "truth" that works for them best. Jesus, however, indicated that the Bible contains God's authoritative and unchangeable truth.)

4. Read Deuteronomy 32:45-47 and John 12:48-50. What do both of these passages reveal regarding our response to what we read and hear from the Bible? (The Bible is not just a book with history, poetry, prophecy, etc. It reveals how we should live our lives.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the “Digging Deeper” section above. Read each passage below and answer the question that follows:

1. Exodus 20:1,18-21. Compare Israel’s reaction to God’s voice and His words with that of most people today. What makes the difference? Even if God’s thunder and lightning are not present as we study the Bible, what can help us to maintain an attitude of reverence and respect when we open the Bible?
2. Hebrews 11:3,6. What role does faith play in our understanding of the Bible? Why is faith so essential to the plan of salvation?
3. John 7:17. What did Jesus say we need to do in order to truly understand the Bible and determine if it is true?
4. James 1:22. What does it mean to be a “doer of the word”?

Share It

- For what reasons is it so important that God has given us a written record of sacred history, prophecy, etc.?

The Process of Inspiration

Protestant Christians have traditionally held one of three views regarding the process of inspiration:

1. Proponents of **verbal inspiration** believe that God essentially chose the exact words used by the Bible authors, and used the human being as a sort of writing instrument to record verbatim the message given to them. Those who support this view often emphasize the infallibility of Scripture and see every detail of its writing as being without error or mistake. As a result, the human elements in the inspiration process are often minimized or even ignored completely.
2. Proponents of **thought inspiration** believe that God inspired the Bible authors with specific thoughts, but left them free to choose the exact words, the writing style, etc., as they wrote those thoughts down. Those who support this view sometimes suggest that while the thoughts given by God are without error, the words and language chosen by the human author can be prone to error. As a result, the divine authority inherent in Scripture can be jeopardized as it lies in the hands of the reader to decide which words of the author may be less than fully inspired.
3. Proponents of **plenary inspiration** seek to balance the divine and human factors in the process of inspiration and preserve the integrity of each. Those who support this view emphasize the importance of recognizing the Holy Spirit as the ultimate Author of all Scripture, while recognizing the distinctive background and characteristics of the human authors.

The following paragraphs written by Ellen White provide some helpful insights into the process of inspiration:

The Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece through successive generations, as God in His providences saw a fitting opportunity to impress man at sundry times and divers places. Men wrote as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. There is “first the bud, then the blossom, and next the fruit,” “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” [Mark 4:28.] This is exactly what the Bible utterances are to us (Manuscript 24, 1886, par. 4).

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers (Manuscript 24, 1886, par. 9).

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions, but on the man himself, who under the influence of the Holy Ghost is imbued with thoughts. But the words and thoughts receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the Word of God (Manuscript 24, 1886, par. 10).

Digging Deeper

1. Read 2 Peter 1:20,21. What does this passage reveal about the origin of the Bible? (Men wrote it as the Holy Spirit moved them.) What does this mean? (At some level, the process of inspiration will always remain a mystery to us, just as the process of the incarnation will always remain a mystery. However, the Bible assures us that God is the ultimate Author of Scripture as He used men to write the words. The statement below from the book *The Great Controversy* is helpful in understanding how this happened.)

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language (*The Great Controversy*, v.3).

2. Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17. How much of the Bible is inspired by God? (All of it!) What does that imply? (All of the Bible is important, and we are not at liberty to pick and choose which passages, doctrines, or teachings we like and which ones we want to ignore. The statement below from the book *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, emphasizes the importance of recognizing the divine origin of the Bible.)

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do His work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 26).

3. Read Joshua 10:13 and Luke 1:1-3. What was part of the process that Luke and the author of Joshua engaged in when writing their books? (They researched existing historical writings that shed light on the subject at hand.) Does this make their writings less inspired or less authoritative than other parts of the Bible that may have been directly inspired by God, perhaps through a dream or vision? (Of course not! As 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God...")
4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:32,33. What does this passage reveal about the unity of Scripture and God's method of progressive revelation from age to age? (Every teaching of Scripture harmonizes with the Bible as a whole. The Holy Spirit's inspiration of one man later in history does not conflict with what was revealed earlier in history.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the "Digging Deeper" section above. Read each passage below and answer the question that follows:

1. John 1:1-3. By referring to Jesus Christ as the Word, what insight does this passage reveal into the process of inspiration?
2. John 16:13,14. What was Jesus referring to when He said that the Holy Spirit would guide us into “all truth”?
3. Romans 15:4. What lessons can we learn from sacred—and secular—history that can give us comfort and education?
4. Proverbs 4:18. What does this verse suggest about the idea of “new light” that God may reveal to His people after the Bible was written? How will any “new light” relate to the previous inspired writings that God has given?

Share It

- How can we trust in the authenticity of the Bible as an inspired book even if we don’t fully understand the process of inspiration that God used to write it?
- What lessons from Old Testament stories have you learned about living your life today?

Perceiving God’s Voice

Shortly before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus was speaking to people in the temple when a voice spoke from heaven. Some of the people listening believed that an angel had spoken to Jesus, while others only heard thunder (John 12:28,29). How tragic that, even as God’s voice was speaking from heaven, most people didn’t recognize it!

Since the Bible is God’s message to us, we should expect to hear His voice as we read and listen to the words of the Bible. Imagine the excitement and joy we would experience every day in studying the Bible if we recognized God speaking to us personally. However, this is often not the case, and because we frequently fail to perceive God’s voice in the Bible, its study too often becomes dry and uninteresting. In today’s lesson we will look at some of the reasons why we often fail to discern God’s voice in His Word. More importantly, we will discover secrets to hearing His voice in our study of the Bible.

Digging Deeper

The passages below reveal some of the primary reasons why we often fail to perceive God’s voice in the Bible. Read each passage and answer the questions that follow:

1. Isaiah 59:1-2 and Psalm 19:12-13. What effect does sin have on our relationship with God, and our ability to hear His voice? (Sin always separates us from God. If there is known sin in our lives that we refuse to confess or deal with, this will prevent us from perceiving God’s voice as we study the Bible.) What two kinds of sins do we need to be cleansed of so that we can perceive God’s voice to us in the Bible? (Known or presumptuous sins, and hidden sins that we might not even be aware of.)

But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan’s counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God’s promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures. {DA 126.1}

2. Mark 4:11,12. What did Jesus say about many of the people that heard His parables? Why were they unable to recognize the truths that He was sharing? (An unwillingness to be changed or converted can leave us unable to perceive or understand God’s voice.)

3. Mark 10:38-40. What was Martha's mistake that left her unable to listen to Christ's words? (Misplaced priorities—even with good things such as doing God's work—can leave us so busy and preoccupied that we fail to sit at Jesus's feet and listen to His words.)
4. John 9:39-41. What tragic mistake did many of the Pharisees in Christ's day make that left them unable to perceive the truth? (They believed that they already knew all they needed to, and had the religious experience they needed.)

Apply It

The Bible contains valuable advice for us regarding how we can better perceive God's voice, both in our study of the Bible and in our lives in general. Read the passages below and summarize the advice given in each one:

1. John 10:1-5,16.
2. John 12:47.
3. John 12:49,50.
4. Psalm 46:10.

Share It

- Have you had an experience where you knew that God was speaking to you? What impact did that experience have on you?
- What keys for hearing and recognizing God's voice—whether connected to Bible study or not—have you learned in your life?
- What dangers might we open ourselves up to if we are “listening for God's voice” and yet, at the same time, not looking in the Bible for His message to us?

Perceiving God's Presence

One of the most important keys to effective and life-changing Bible study is to search for God's presence in our study. We have already seen the close parallels between Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the Bible, the written word of God. As we read and study this word, it is our privilege to invite and recognize—in its pages, and in our life—the presence of the resurrected Word of God through the Holy Spirit. This is far different from the subjective, experientially based mystical practices overrunning Christianity today. Instead, it is a connection with our living Savior through time spent with Him in His words to us. Asking for and recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit during our Bible study is essential:

We must establish an unyielding enmity between our souls and our foe; but we must open our hearts to the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.... We want to become so sensitive to holy influences, that the lightest whisper of Jesus will move our souls, till He is in us, and we in Him, living by the faith of the Son of God (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 355).

In this lesson we will look at some of the Bible's keys for recognizing God's presence as we study the Bible.

Digging Deeper

1. Read John 14:16-17 and 16:7. Through what Agency has God chosen to reveal His presence with us? (The Holy Spirit. When we talk about perceiving God's presence, we are really talking about perceiving the Holy Spirit's presence.)
2. Read John 16:7. What name did Jesus give the Holy Spirit in this verse? (The Comforter.) Why would He be such a comfort to the disciples? (Jesus had just explained that He was about to leave them, and the Holy Spirit would enable the lonely disciples to experience Christ's presence.) How can we realize this promise through our Bible study? (When we feel God's comfort, peace, and love through the words of Scripture, this is evidence that the Holy Spirit is present.)

3. Read John 16:8-11. What does the Holy Spirit convict us of? (Sin and righteousness and judgment. When we are reading and studying the Bible and become convicted of our sin, of the need for Christ's righteousness, and of the urgency of obtaining this experience because we live in the Day of Judgment, then this is evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence. Keeping these three foci of Bible study in mind will allow us to be sensitive to God's presence as we spend time in His Word.)
4. Read Acts 1:8. What did Jesus say would result for the disciples when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit? (They would receive power and would be witnesses of Christ.) How might Christ's promise apply to us today as we seek to perceive His presence in Bible study? (Answers will vary. There are many ways in which Bible study can convict us of God's power, and any time that Bible study leads us to feel a burden for others' salvation, or to share the gospel and the Three Angels' Messages, this is evidence that the Holy Spirit is present.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the "Digging Deeper" section above. Read each passage below and answer the question that follows:

1. Matthew 18:20 and Acts 1:14. In what ways is the promise of the Holy Spirit intended for each individual believer? In what ways is this promise intended for the church corporately?
2. Matthew 11:28-30. For what reasons does God's rest reveal His presence?
3. Leviticus 16:29-30 and 1 John 4:17. What do these verses say regarding how we should be living in the Day of Judgment? Why is the assurance of Christ's presence with us so important in the time of judgment?
4. Matthew 28:19,20. Why did Christ conclude the "great commission" with the promise of His presence? Is there any other way that this mission could be accomplished?

Share It

- Why do you think God so often chooses to reveal His presence in the quiet moments of life, rather than in the midst of commotion and activity? Or is it just that we are more open to the Holy Spirit's presence when we pause in life?
- How have you experienced God's presence in a special way on His day of rest, the seventh-day Sabbath?

Perceiving God's Power

One of the first things the Bible reveals about God is His infinite and divine power. Genesis 1 records how God created this world simply by speaking things into existence. Like me, perhaps you have at times wished you could have witnessed this incredible power of God during creation week! We can't do that, of course, but we can experience God's power in our lives today as we read and study His word. As the apostle Paul stated, the gospel reveals "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; ...for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16,17). The same power of divinity revealed at creation is also revealed today in every changed life, and in every temptation overcome. Let's dive deeper into the Bible's amazing statements about God's power, and what that means for us today!

Digging Deeper

1. Read Genesis 1:3,6,9,14,15,24. What do these opening verses in the Bible reveal about the power of God's Word? (God's Word contains divine creative power. Whereas our words can only describe what already exists, God's words bring things into existence.) What should this realization do for us

as we open the Bible to read and study it? (We should approach this Book with reverence, awe, and faith that the things we read are, or can become, reality in our lives. Compare Hebrews 11:1,3.)

2. Read Isaiah 46:9,10. What is another evidence in the Bible of God's power? (Fulfilled prophecy reveals God's wisdom and power to predict future events.)
3. Read Matthew 28:18 and Philippians 2:5-11. Why was Jesus given "all power...in heaven and in earth"? (Jesus was given all power because of His life of self-surrender, His death, and His resurrection.) How important is it for us to remember that our Savior is not still on the cross or in the tomb, but He is alive today and working for us in heaven? (It's extremely important! It makes the difference between a theoretical knowledge of the Bible and a living faith that transforms lives.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the "Digging Deeper" section above. Read the verses below and summarize what each one says about God's power:

1. Verses that reveal God's power over sin and temptation:
 - o 1 Corinthians 10:13.
 - o Jude 24.
 - o 1 Thessalonians 5:23.
2. Verses that reveal God's prophetic power:
 - o Isaiah 53.
 - o Daniel 2:36-45.
 - o Daniel 7:25; Revelation 11:2; 12:6,14; 13:5.
3. Verses that reveal Christ's power as our High Priest in heaven:
 - o John 14:13.
 - o Hebrews 8:10.
 - o Hebrews 9:13,14.

Share It

- In what ways have you experienced God's power over sin and temptation in your life?
- What fulfilled Bible prophecies reveal God's power to you the most clearly? Why?
- What comfort does it give you to know that Jesus continues to serve as our High Priest in heaven?

Participating in God's Promises

The Bible is full of promises that address every situation and emotion in which we might find ourselves. God's power is locked up in these promises, and is offered freely to all who claim them in faith. However, experiencing the full potential of God's promises to us can be a challenge, and it is something that we often fail to completely experience. One reason for this is explained in the passage below from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

The nobleman wanted to *see* the fulfillment of his prayer before he should believe; but he had to accept the word of Jesus that his request was heard and the blessing granted. This lesson we also have to learn. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us "exceeding abundantly," "according to the riches of His glory," and "the working of His mighty power." Ephesians 3:20, 16; 1:19. (*The Desire of Ages*, 200).

In this lesson we will look more closely at the Bible's secrets for claiming and experiencing the power of God's many promises.

Digging Deeper

1. Read 2 Peter 1:4. What purpose does God intend for the Bible's promises to have in our lives? (They are to help us be partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.)
2. Read 2 Corinthians 7:1. What do God's promises give us power to experience in our lives? (They can cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and make us holy.) What does the cleansing of our "flesh" and "spirit" refer to? (The "flesh" points to our outward words and actions, while the "spirit" points to the hidden thoughts and motives of the mind and heart. God wants all of us cleansed from sin and controlled by His Spirit.)
3. Read Isaiah 55:10,11. What do these verses compare God's promises to? (They compare God's promises to the rain and snow that give life to the plants and make them bear fruit.) In order to grow and live, what must a plant do with the water that flows past its roots? (In order to benefit from the water at its roots, a plant must absorb that water, draw it up through all parts of its organism, and incorporate it into its cells.) What lesson can be drawn about how the Bible's promises become reality in our lives? (We must do the same. We must "absorb" God's promises by memorizing them, draw them into every aspect and experience of our lives, and incorporate them into even the smallest problems and trials that come our way. By doing these we become "doers of the word" and learn to trust in God.)
4. Read Joshua 3:14-17. At what point did God fulfill His promise to open a way through the Jordan River? (When the priest's feet touched the water's edge.) Why didn't God stop the river before they stepped into it? (This would not have built their faith. God's promises are intended primarily to build our faith, not just to provide a mechanism for God to showcase His power and wisdom.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the "Digging Deeper" section above. Read each passage below and answer the question that follows:

1. 1 Peter 1:16 and Hebrews 1:9. What do these verses reveal about God's divine nature, and about His goal for you in the plan of salvation?
2. Ephesians 5:25-27. What do these verses imply about the relationship that God's people at the end of time will have with His promises?
3. Psalm 1. What does this Psalm, and verse 3 in particular, promise for those who grow in faith in God's promises? What does verse 5 reveal about the importance of this experience for those who will "stand in the judgment"?
4. Romans 8:1-4 and 1 John 4:17. What is promised in these verses? In what sense do these promises (like so many promises in the Bible) require some measure of participation on our part, just as the priest's feet had to touch the Jordan River before it parted?

Select five promises you have never memorized and commit them to memory. When you confront a temptation or problem in life, pray these promises back to God and thank Him for making them a reality in your life. After you have prayed, act in faith based on the promise.

Share It

- What is the easiest part of believing in God's promises?
- What is the most difficult part of believing in God's promises?

- What testimony can you share about how the Bible’s promises have helped you or someone you know overcome sin and experience life lived in God’s power?

Praising God

Praising God is one of the most important activities a Christian can engage in, yet it is far too often something that we fail to do. There are many blessings and benefits that come from an attitude of praise, and they exceed just the emotional and mental health that comes from a positive outlook. As the following statement from the book *That I May Know Him* reveals, praising God has a direct impact on our character:

Mercy and truth have met together in Christ, and righteousness and peace have embraced each other. It is when you are looking to His throne, offering up your penitence and praise and thanksgiving to God, that you perfect Christian character, and represent Christ to the world. You abide in Christ and Christ abides in you (*That I May Know Him*, 117).

The ability to praise God, especially when life hits a rough patch, is a skill and a habit that Christians are obliged to learn. It comes with practice, and, like so many things in life, it becomes easier the more we do it. Praise is important for individuals as well as families (and churches) to practice, for it can even chase away the forces of darkness that seek to separate us from Christ:

If you sit in heavenly places with Christ, you cannot refrain from praising God. Begin to educate your tongues to praise Him and train your hearts to make melody to God; and when the evil one begins to settle his gloom about you, sing praise to God. When things go crossways at your homes, strike up a song about the matchless charms of the Son of God, and I tell you, when you touch this strain, Satan will leave you. You can drive out the enemy with his gloom; ... and you can see, oh, so much clearer, the love and compassion of your heavenly Father (*In Heavenly Places*, 95).

In this lesson we will investigate a few of the many reasons that we should praise God.

Digging Deeper

The Bible reveals many reasons for which we should praise God. Read the following passages and summarize the reason(s) given in each:

- Psalm 148:4,5. (We praise God because He is the Creator.)
- Revelation 5:11,12. (We praise God for the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.)
- Revelation 11:17. (We praise God for His great power and for the fact that He reigns as King.)
- 1 Peter 2:9. (This verse actually contains four reasons to praise God: He has chosen His people, made them a royal priesthood, made them a holy nation, and identified them as belonging to Him.)
- 2 Chronicles 7:6. (We praise God because His mercy endures forever.)

Apply It

In the “Digging Deeper” section above, we discovered at least five reasons that the Bible instructs us to praise God—because He is Creator, because He is Savior, because He is King, because He has called His people to be a holy nation, and because His mercy endures forever. Read the passages below and search for one or more of these reasons (or other reasons!) to praise God in each:

- Job 1:6-12.
- Job 41:7-17.
- Isaiah 53.
- Luke 12:22-34.
- Acts 5:1-11.
- Ephesians 4:11-16.

- Revelation 18.

Share It

- What have you already praised God for today?
- What *should* you have praised God for today that you have not yet praised Him for?
- What blessings have you experienced in your life that have come from an attitude of praising God?