

Listen to this one! Why Christians Differ Doctrinally - Part VII, The Origin of Doctrinal Differences - 66 Books, 40 Authors, 3 Continents, 1400 - 1800 Years, 3 languages - Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek. WOW!

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[0 : 00] Those were real tongue twisters, and I thought seriously about inflicting that upon you, but I thought, well, it's there in the text, and those names are not Irish, are they?

My, they are, I don't know if they could have answered a roll call or not if they were here from the job he did, but it was, you did just fine, and I appreciate it.

Thank you so much. Those were real tongue twisters. You will note the emphasis is upon understanding here, and Ezra the scribe enabled the people to understand.

We could say that he was taking the word of God, communicating it to the people, so that they were able to grasp it. This must have been a really electrifying kind of situation.

Note, if you will, that this was the whole body politic of all the people who were available in that geographical area, and it consisted of ages as young as those who were just able to understand, and they stood from morning until evening, or morning until afternoon at least.

[1 : 16] It's just hard to imagine a scene like that with that many people. And they were reading from the law of Moses. And the reason this was such an electrifying situation is because these people had gone for so long without hearing the law, without knowing the law, without understanding what had been provided for them, or what their obligations were to it.

And now it is as though the whole revelation of God is being known to a generation of people for whom it had been absent all of this time.

So this was all, much of it, news to them. And they were just enthralled by it all. I'm sure that many of them were hearing a lot of, wow, and did you hear that, and isn't that something?

And this was brand new material for most of these people. We have been investigating for the past several weeks the subject, why is it that Christians differ doctrinally?

And admittedly, about the only thing I have given you thus far is background material to introduce the subject, and we have not really gotten into it. But we will broach the subject a little bit more this morning.

[2 : 33] I just want to make sure that we have a solid enough foundation before we go on. And I have been telling you things like, No one really has the competence or the ability to interpret the scriptures, including myself.

And that means that we have to look elsewhere for an interpreter. It would be easy if it worked as simply as some think that it does, And that is, well, when a pastor goes into his study and sits down at his desk and takes his Bible in hand and his notebook and begins making notes, etc.

He is supposed to do so in an attitude of prayer. And when he comes to a particularly difficult passage, he just prays. And he asks God for enlightenment as to the meaning of that passage so that he can pass it on to his people.

God reveals the meaning of it through the Holy Spirit, and then he takes that and gives it to the people. And isn't it wonderful that it works that way? Well, it doesn't work that way.

That sounds very spiritual. And I'm sure that there are some who do believe that that's the way it works. And they think that when they come up with an interpretation of the passage, God gave it to them.

[3 : 56] And all I'm telling you is, maybe he did. Maybe he didn't. That is no guarantee. And it doesn't work that way. I told you how embarrassing it is if you try to work it like that.

When I come up with a particular interpretation as a result of prayer, but the pastor down the street, he prays just as earnestly as I do. And maybe he prays longer than I do. And he comes up with a different interpretation.

Which one is right? And the utterly non-thinking person will say, oh, well, they're both right.

Baloney. They're not both right. They may both be wrong, but they're not both right.

Because God does not reveal the meaning of his word to one person and then reveal a different meaning of the same passage to another person. He is not a God of capriciousness. He is not a God who is fickle.

He is a God who is utterly, reliably dependable in every way. So, how then do we arrive at an interpretation?

[5 : 02] The only possible way, the only legitimate way, is to allow the scriptures to interpret the scriptures. And how do you do that?

You compare scripture with scripture. You allow the Bible to be its own commentary on the passages that are in the Bible.

And you must realize that this is a marvelous provision that God has made because he chose to use 40 different writers, one author, one author, but 40 different penmen, writing over a period of approximately 1500 years while situated on three different continents.

And one of those will shed light on another. And these are people who, for the most part, never met one another, never knew one another, never lived as contemporaries, but were far removed geographically and chronologically from each other.

Yet, the Spirit of God, in a wonderful way of coherence and cohesiveness, brought all of these 66 individual books contributed to by 40 different writers together over this period of time.

[6 : 30] And they all hum in harmony, just like a smooth running sewing machine. God put it together that way.

It is absolutely incredible. And if you have spent any amount of time in researching scripture and comparing Genesis with Revelation and the Psalms with the Proverbs and with Ezekiel and Daniel, you see how they all interconnect in a way that is absolutely undeniable.

It is impossible that humanity could have just engineered something like this. It has the divine imprimatur upon it and it is undeniable.

I do not know who originated the quote, but it's one of my favorites. The Bible is a book such as man could not write if he would and would not write if he could.

It is a divine book. It is beyond deserving the interpretation of mere men to tell you what it means.

[7 : 49] There is that which God says in his word that is utterly reliable. You count on it. You bank your eternity on it.

But then there is that which man says God says in his word. That you take with a grain of salt. It may be true.

It may not be true. Does that apply to yours truly? Most definitely. I do not claim any kind of special authority or insight or wisdom when it comes to sharing the scriptures with you.

I am as fallible as anybody maybe more so than most. And I am painfully aware of that. So, I do the best I can not with the completeness that I would like but I do the best I can to let scripture interpret scripture.

along with your bulletin this morning you have an insert that I hope you will keep in your possession forever and I want to go through it with you. We will be spending a little bit of time on it not this morning but we are just going to quote it together and I want you to read it with me if you will.

[9 : 06] It is this little vanilla paper inside that has Miles Coverdale's rules on it. And you know this is hard to imagine when I first read this I thought well that can't be right but it is right and I looked it up and verified it and it is true.

Do you realize that only a short 500 years ago less than 500 years ago and 500 years is not a very long period of time in human history less than 500 years ago we did not have a complete printed English Bible didn't exist.

Original manuscripts of course from which the Bible and translations were taken go back a couple of thousand years but we don't have any of the original manuscripts all we have are copies of copies of copies but not to worry there is a built in protection against copyists errors and that is

another subject in and of itself but in the year 1535 a man by the name of Miles Coverdale gave us the first complete printed English Bible and along with it and by the way understandably it was called the Coverdale Bible and along with it he gave these simple rules for interpreting the Bible and I am here to tell you my friends that if there were some way that we could insist upon every pastor all over the world of every church and every denomination of implementing these simple rules times when studying and preaching the Bible about 90% of the different doctrines that divide us now would go right out the window that would be the end of it

I'd like you to read this with me will you it is written as it was originally given in the old English and you will see that even in some of the letters that are here in your copy let's read it together please it shall greatly help ye to understand scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written but of whom and to whom with what words at what time where to what intent with what circumstances considering what goeth before and what followeth after that's it simple as it is that's it a huge percentage of the difficulties in interpreting and understanding the Bible are resolved if we allow this to be implemented because it will require self interpretation of the

Bible and you'll note that context is king considering what goeth before and what followeth after and you've got the immediate context which means the words right before the words you're trying to understand and the words that come after right after the words you're trying to understand that's the immediate context the remote context may be found several pages away several books away the remote context of a passage that you're trying to understand in the New Testament may be revealed in the Old Testament that's just the nature of the book so we go through the Bible comparing scripture with scripture and allowing it to be its own best commentary when we talk about why Christians differ doctrinally we have explained some of the dynamics that lead to belief and adoption of doctrine and doctrine doctrinal expression always begins with the recognition of an authority very often it is a cleric who is in a position of respect and influence may be a seminary professor maybe a priest maybe a pastor maybe maybe a

[13 : 49] Martin Luther maybe a John Chrysostom maybe one of the original apostles but their authority was recognized by a certain group of people and they looked to them for direction and insight and wisdom and understanding etc.

and some of them had it to give and some of them didn't and some some didn't have great content but they had a wonderful suave pleasing personality they could deliver it in an interesting way they didn't say much didn't say anything you'd want to take home with you but they were pleasant and nice to listen to well that doesn't do the body much good and some have great authority and have great content but the manner in which they presented it was kind of ho-hum and boring and so something was lost there we talked about this last week when Paul the apostle described his own kind of ministry saying that his speech and his utterances were weak and not particularly able to be listened to easily he had great content but his bodily presence was contemptible he was nothing to look at and nothing especially interesting to listen to and he said that about himself and he said that's what others say about him and I suspect that he would agree with him but he had content and that made it really really important people of influence and personality and persuasiveness get an idea and their persuasiveness and their influence allows them to export it they start talking about it to other people and they have people come on board and sign on and the next thing you know they have a following they are following this man and his teachings this has gone on throughout human history it goes all the way back at least to Nimrod in the book of Genesis who was described as a mighty hunter before the

Lord he was a recruiter of men he was an ungodly man he was an in your face man in so far as God was concerned he was a shake your fist at God man we're going to do our own thing and he rallied a certain number of people around him and they made a great impact a great influence so you see this thing works for good or ill it doesn't make any difference if you are a Mother Teresa a Billy Graham an Adolf Hitler a Joseph Stalin or a Pol Pot it all works the same way the dynamics are the same it's just one may be for evil and one may be for good but it always begins with an influential person getting an idea nothing so powerful as what an idea whose time has come Adolf Hitler proved that in Germany and Karl Marx proved it and different ones have proved it for good or ill Abraham Lincoln proved it too so did

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson the goals were different the objectives were different the dynamics are the same it all works the same it begins with an idea somebody had the original idea of throwing all of those boxes of tea into the Boston Harbor in the 1700s and they said

something about it to someone else and they said you know that sounds like a good idea we ought to do let's get some guys and next thing you know I don't know how many of them dressed up like Indians and went on board that ship and threw the tea over but there was a bunch of them and it started with somebody's idea and it convinced others to follow it is the same way with religious dogma information doctrine somebody gets an idea and they have power and personality and persuasiveness and they are convincing and they put it over and they gain a following now not everybody's following them they don't all get on board the

Methodists think the Lutherans are all wet the Presbyterians don't cotton to the Baptists so they do not have a commonality but they have certain people that buy into that it has always been that way that's the way the dynamic works that's part of the human situation and the whole thing boils down to whether it is for good or ill but it all works the same way you need to understand that this is the dynamic behind why people believe anything about anything it starts with an idea and it isn't limited to religious things it works that way with inventions it works that way in science it works that way in art somebody can develop a whole new genre of art and it's called impressionism or it's called modern art you know the kind of art where you look at it and you say well I'm trying to figure out what this is what does this say and someone says well it would help if you turned it right side up it's upside down so you turn it right side up and lo and behold you still don't have a clue what it looks like or what it's supposed to be maybe it's not maybe I need to turn it this way and no matter how you some people think that's the most exquisite art that there ever was they've started a whole new thing and they have a following not everybody's following but that's the way the dynamic works and it works exactly the same way when you're talking about interpreting and promoting religious truth among people more often than not we are exposed to certain ideas when we are young and we grow up with them we become enamored with them we have a sentimental emotional attachment to them not just intellectual but sentimental and emotional and all of these things come into play and it creates it creates a huge variety of beliefs and ideas etc so doctrine always begins with somebody coming up with an idea and others recognizing that individual as an authority and they get in line and they begin following and when it comes to doctrinal issues in most cases it's the

[20 : 37] Bible some however add to the authority of the Bible other authorities and for Mormons they add to the Bible the book of Mormon and they say the Bible is fine and you need the Bible and the Bible is God's word but so is the book of Mormon and you need the book of Mormon in order to have a complete revelation of what God has given there are those who feel the same thing is true but not of the book of Mormon it is true with science and health with key to the scriptures written by Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy and all faithful Christian scientists who practice that know that in order to really understand the Bible you need science and health with key to the scriptures written by Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy and others feel the same way except for Jehovah's

Witnesses you need the new world translation of the scriptures and the writings of Charles Taze Russell to add to and supplement the Bible because you don't have all of God's revelation with just the Bible you need these other writings along with it and they are on a par or a plane of authority with the Bible so you take that too and others would add the writings of William Miller and Ellen G. White for the Seventh-day Adventist the Roman Catholic Church adds the papal bulls and the pronouncements of the Pope when he speaks ex cathedra from the chair of Peter that gives it the authority the ring of scripture itself along with church tradition etc.

So all of those things are added to the Bible with an effort to provide a full revelation our position however can be summed up in the Latin terms sola scriptura which means Latin alone or Latin for scriptures alone and sola sola gratia which means by grace alone and sola fide which means by faith alone we lock ourselves in to the scriptures as the completed and only revelation that God has given all extra biblical writings may be interesting they may contain some truth but they are not the inspired word of

God and are not to be put on a plane with scripture and given scriptural authority the Bible and the Bible alone is God's completed revelation to us it is sola scriptura the Bible alone once you begin adding the words of mere men you confound and confuse the issue and you give authority where authority is not due and the end result in my estimation is absolutely disastrous and yet that is precisely the way that many go there is a huge difference between what the scriptures call or what we would call what interpreters call exegesis and this is a word that simply means to read out and the idea is to take a passage of scripture and read out from that passage what is there that's called exegesis and this word ex compound word ex which means out of same word from which we get

the word exodus and exit it means to read out that which is in there and if we are not careful we will engage in eisegesis guess what that means yeah it means to read into that which is not there god never put it there but we read into it something that was never intended to be there and then we call that the interpretation of scripture it isn't the interpretation of scripture it is our interpretation and it may be right and it may be wrong but it is suspect so we cannot succumb to that there is a temptation to do that because

[25 : 50] I think there is a temptation on the part of anyone who comes to the scriptures to understand the scriptures to explain the scriptures I think there is a natural ingrained temptation to find in the scriptures what you want to find it is very easy to make the scriptures say what you want them to say you know why don't you because that confirms what you already believe that means you are right it also means that everybody else is wrong but you can handle everybody else being wrong as long as you know you're right and there is a certain amount of emotional comfort that comes from that that is something that has to be guarded against intellectual integrity is essential when we come to the scriptures it's essential whether we're coming to the scriptures or not but especially when we come to the scriptures we have got to be aware that we are biased we are prejudiced we have them built in and we must make sure that we do not succumb to simply finding those passages and those things in scripture that shows us how right we are nobody wants to be wrong as opposed to being right but we need to be right for the right reasons we need to be right because instead of coming to the scriptures and bringing our position to them and finding passages that will support us and confirm us in our position we need to come to scriptures as much as lies within us as a blank page and allow the scriptures to determine what our position is to be rather than bring our position to the scriptures and look for support now that is a very simple formula but it isn't always easy to follow and yet it is absolutely critical that we approach it that way we must allow the scriptures to tell us what

God is saying rather than allow men to tell us what God is saying there is a huge difference between what God says and what man says God says doesn't make any difference what man it is who is saying it I have little doubt that a man by the name of Adamantius Origen prayed about the meaning of Matthew 19 12 would you look at that please Matthew chapter 19 and verse 12 and I'm going to show you how dangerous it can be to approach the scriptures in this manner Origen O-R-I-G-E-N his first name was Adamantius and he is generally considered the father of allegorical interpretation he obviously was a brilliant brilliant individual and you know for the most part only brilliant people can gain a following

I mean it's very difficult for a dunce to gain an audience it really is brilliant people can have a lot to offer and brilliant people can also be very very dangerous Karl Marx was brilliant Charles Darwin was brilliant Adolf Hitler was brilliant sometimes the brilliance of man can backfire on humanity brilliance is a wonderful thing but it is unreliable and undependable in and of itself don't we all know people who are of the professorial academia intelligent six figure salary individuals and some of our leading professors just so book smart it's coming out their ears and everybody who knows them knows they don't have enough sense to come in out of the rain people like that there are people like that you all know that so brilliance in and of itself is simply not adequate but it will help you to gain a following and by the way brilliance is compartmentalized people may be brilliant in one particular area and dumb as a box of rocks in another area because brilliance is not across the board in anybody it's like I said it's compartmentalized and that too is a protective device

I think the almighty has given us but this origin was a brilliant man and when he read Matthew chapter 19 and verse 12 which reads the words of Christ for there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb and there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven he who is able to accept this let him accept it what is a eunuch a eunuch was a man a male who had been neutered castrated castrate horses and they castrate cattle ordinarily we do not castrate men a castrated man is unable to perform sexually they were preferred as the guards of the harem that was the royal way of making sure there was no hanky panky and that the guards were not going to mess with any of the ladies in his harem he used only eunuchs they were unable to perform so Adamantius origin read Matthew 19 12 and concluded that if he really wanted to provide a supreme example of devotion to the almighty and sacrifice for the kingdom of heaven he should castrate himself so he did why would he do that read the verse he took that quite literally as meaning that was something that he was supposed to do and that for those who are really serious about the

kingdom of heaven they will do this his interpretation of the verse led him to castrate himself he was a young man I suppose about 25 years of age

[33 : 28] I've often wondered if afterwards he regretted that but I guess we have no way of knowing I don't know what kind of medical facilities were available to him but it is this kind of interpreting of the scriptures that caused him to be known as the father of allegorical interpretation and I just want to leave you with this because it's all we'll have time for this morning an allegorical interpretation means that you look at a text and you interpret the text you derive the meaning of the text not from what it appears to say on the surface in a plain literal way but you insist that beyond the plain literal truth of the text there is a hidden underlying interpretation that is the real truth of the text question is are you able to get below the surface meaning and arrive at the deeper more spiritual meaning of the text text that's called an allegory and there are legitimate allegories in the Bible we will look at some of them we are told for instance that in Galatians chapter 4 where the apostle Paul is talking about the law and grace he's talking about Hagar and Sarah and he says that Sarah is mount well Sarah is the free woman all right Hagar is the slave woman and Hagar corresponds to Sinai which is of the law and there he goes on and identifies this as an allegory what does that mean and how does that differ from the literal meaning and when we come to the Bible why do we insist on taking a literal approach and I want to emphasize I use that word approach because it would be a gross misstatement to say that we believe everything in the Bible should be interpreted literally that is what evangelicals are very often accused of and fundamentalists are always accused they take everything in the Bible literally well that is so stupid I don't know anybody who takes everything literally but we do have to approach everything in the Bible from a literal standpoint and there are keys that will inform us that we are to take it literally or not to take it literally and those keys are important and we'll examine those as time goes on too I don't want to turn this into a classroom on hermeneutics I do want it to be practical and I do want you to be able to get a handle on where these differences in doctrine originated and how they came to be why do the why do the Lutherans as a whole why do they embrace the Reformation theology idea idea of Israel is pass and finished and the church is the new Israel that has replaced Israel of old where do they get those ideas how do they arrive at that this is really important because this is one of the issues that keeps Christians from really getting together we are kept apart by these doctrinal differences we do however have one joyous thing in common and that is even though there are differences of interpretation and differences of eschatology and differences about the kingdom and about Israel and about the church there is that one blessed thing that we do have in common that is our fellowship is in his son death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the one uniting factor and that is the one that really makes us one in Christ that is the one that allows us to wear the label

Christian despite the fact that there are a lot of doctrinal differences there is that one thing that we have to be in agreement in order to be called Christian and that is for I delivered unto you that which first of all I received how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and the third day he was raised again according to the scriptures believing that is what makes us Christian dividing us with other doctrines that is painful to the body and it is confusing to the world who is looking on saying these people all claim to be Christians why can't they get along why do they have so many differences and why are they breaking off and starting another and breaking off of there and starting another and what's going on there anyway they don't understand and they deserve better and we ought to take the steps to make that better available would you pray with me we are grateful father for opportunity to be together and to share these things and we realize that there's so much to be said here that none of us even understand myself included but we intelligently communicate the claims of Christ and explain to people why these differences exist and how they came about and thank you for that wonderful commonality that unites us together in him so that regardless of how we baptize or don't baptize regardless of what we believe about the kingdom or the future or amillennial or premillennial we have the finished work of

[39 : 51] Christ that knits us together and we are so grateful for that thank you for making that truth so clear that none of our denominations or non denominations could miss it we bless you for it in Christ's wonderful name amen you are dismissed