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<b>Principal Contributors</b> .....	Frank M. Hasel and Michael G. Hasel
<b>Editor</b> .....	Soraya Homayouni
<b>Consulting/Contributing Editors</b> .....	Esther Doss, Margie English
<b>Publication Manager</b> .....	Lea Alexander Greve
<b>Editorial Assistant</b> .....	Sharon Thomas-Crews
<b>Art and Design</b> .....	Lars Justinen
<b>Line Drawings</b> .....	Jon Gilbertson
<b>Pacific Press® Coordinator</b> .....	Tricia Wegh
<b>E. G. White Estate Consultant</b> .....	Dwain Esmond

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## Introduction



## How to Understand the Bible

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**A**s Seventh-day Adventists, we are Protestants. That means that we believe in “sola Scriptura.” “Sola Scriptura” means only the Bible is the support for our faith and all our teachings. This is an important belief in the last days. Ellen G. White shows us why: “God will have a people on the earth who will say that the Bible and the Bible only shows everyone what they should believe. The Bible also is the reason for any changes that we make in our lives for the better.”—*The Great Controversy*, page 595, adapted.

Of course, we are not the only Protestant Christians who say that the “Bible and only the Bible” is the reason for all of our faith and beliefs. At the same time, many of these Protestant Christians have beliefs that go against Bible truth. They believe that Sunday has replaced the Sabbath. They believe that the soul does not die. They believe that lost sinners will burn in hell forever. They even believe that Jesus will come back to earth in secret. Then He will take away the saved while everyone else is left wondering what happened to them. This false belief is named the secret rapture.

What do all these false beliefs show us? They show us that it is not enough to say that you believe in the Bible. As the false teachings show us, we need to know how to understand the Bible correctly too.

So, that is why we will study the topic of “How to Understand the Bible” this quarter. We will start with the belief that the Bible is the Word of God. “It shows us His will. The Bible also shows us how we should live and behave. It is the test for all our experience. It has the final say in what we believe. It is a record of God’s acts in history. That is why we can trust the Bible.”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, 2nd edition (Nampa: Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), page 11, adapted. In short, the Bible is the foundation for all the teachings that we believe and share with everyone on earth. As the Bible itself says, “All Scripture [the Bible] is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live” (2 Timothy 3:16, ERV). “All Scripture,”

of course, is the whole Bible. That includes parts we may not like, or make us feel uncomfortable because we need to change our lives.

We will examine how the Bible teaches us that it explains itself. That is, we will try to learn from the Bible what the Bible means. We will not go to history books or science first to see what they teach us about the Bible. The Bible tells us that no part of the Bible “came from what some person wanted to say. But people were led by the Holy Spirit and spoke words from God” (2 Peter 1:21, ERV). We believe that the things that these people wrote help us to understand the Bible.

How did Paul or other New Testament writers explain the Old Testament? Their beliefs about the Bible and their explanations of Bible teachings can help us know how to explain the Bible too. How did Jesus Himself use the Bible? How did He explain it? We will not find a better example than Jesus. He can show us better than anyone how to read and understand the Bible.

At the same time, we will look at our own beliefs and ideas about language, the ways of life around us, and history. How do these things change the way that we read and understand the Bible? How should we explain the Bible’s picture stories, special messages, holy history, warnings, praise songs, visions about the future, and dreams?

We will explore all these questions and more this quarter. As we saw earlier, our believing in the Bible is not enough. False teachings show us that. We also must learn how to understand the Bible.

*Frank M. Hasel, PhD, is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Michael G. Hasel, PhD, is professor of Religion at Southern Adventist University. He also is the director of the Institute of Archaeology and the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum. (Archaeology is a science that teaches us about life in the past. Archaeologists are scientists who study bones, tools, and other things from a long time ago to learn about how humans lived in the past. An archaeological museum is a building where people can go to see these bones, tools, and other things from history.)*

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