

Introduction to an Exegesis of the Bible

When I exegete a book, I tend to get very bogged down in the details and so, I decided to develop a series of a few short lessons on various chapters of the Bible, where I attempt to simply deal with the primary points of each verse without getting too detail-oriented. Each lesson is 3–5 pages long and designed to be read at one sitting. Although it is always nice to have a Bible open when studying this, I have, in almost all cases, included the actual Scripture within the text.

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The organization and genesis of this project began when I sent an explanation of a few verses to a friend. Something along this line has been done before; J. Vernon McGee put together a series of half-hour lessons called *Thru the Bible*, which lessons are still found on the radio today (and on the internet as well). The only problem with his series is, he uses the King James Version of the Bible. So, when he quotes a verse, it is difficult to understand the verse, even though his explanation is often excellent.

At this point in time, I do not have any idea how long I will continue this particular project. I do write a very detailed, word-by-word commentary on the Bible, but it is so detailed oriented as to be more suitable for seminary students or pastors or evangelists. This project which I have begun here (at this point, I have written 13 lessons in the past week) is sort of a break for me. Examining the Bible word-by-word is a more exhausting process, and I figured that I should be able to put together a shorter, much less detailed commentary, designed more for the average person.

There may be as many as 100 English translations of the Bible. Here are some which I recommend.

Recommended Bibles

Type	Recommendations
Accuracy	You may want to have a Bible nearby, just in case you want to refer to it. For accuracy, I recommend the <u>New King James Version</u> (don't be put off by the name), the <u>New American Standard Bible</u> , or the <u>English Standard Version</u> . Herein, I have given you links to <u>www.Biblegateway.com</u> where, if you have internet access, you have these, along with dozens upon dozens of other versions within clicking distance. If you only have occasional access to the internet, then I recommend you go to <u>www.e-sword.net</u> and download their free program, and select a few translations which they offer (most of them, like the ESV, are free).
Readability	If you are more concerned with readability than with accuracy, then I highly recommend the <u>Open Bible</u> , also called the <u>New Living Translation</u> .

Recommended Bibles	
Type	Recommendations
Limited Vocabulary	If you have a vocabulary problem and have a limited command of the English language, then may I suggest the incomplete EasyEnglish Bible , also called the English learner's Bible. There is also the Bible in Basic English , found as an e-sword module (you must have e-sword already installed to use this). The New Simplified Bible can be found on the internet or as a download for E-sword 8.x 9.x . The Net Bible (also called the Next Bible) is available for free on the internet.

Whatever your strength or limitations are, there is a Bible translation—probably several in fact—which are for you.

In most cases, if a verse needs to be quoted, I will quote it within the study.

I began this series originally by exegeting the first few chapters of Genesis. That was problematic for several reasons. In most cases, teaching the Bible to an unbeliever is a waste of time; teaching the Bible to a believer out of fellowship is a waste of time. So, the first two lessons deal with those issues.

Then, although Genesis is a good starting point, it is important to first have some sort of idea as to what the Bible is in the first place. My intention was to keep everything reasonably simple. So, the end result is, there will be about 10 lessons which introduce a verse-by-verse study of the Bible.

Introduction Part I

Salvation

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then prior to any time that you study the Bible, you need to name your sins directly to God. You can mentally tell your sins to God or you can even say them out loud, if no one else is around. When you name your sins to God (if you have already believed in Jesus Christ), then God forgives you for those sins and He cleanses you from all unrighteousness. If you understood this paragraph, then you may skip this lesson and move to [Introduction Part II](#).

There are some one-shot decisions which impact your life forever. When you chose to marry someone, even if your marriage lasts only a few months before you give up on it, that marriage and that union will impact your life forever. If you choose to marry someone and you give credence to the vows which you took (*...in sickness and in health, till death do you part*), this choice has essentially defined your entire life. If you choose to move to another city or if you choose to take a job which may become a lifetime career, these one-shot decisions define, enrich, and limit your entire life.

The defining decision of your life and the next life is, whether or not you believe in Jesus Christ. Let me lay out the gospel and the plan of God for you (I will provide more Scripture later on in this series): we are fallen creatures, separated from God. We have a sin nature, which tempts us to sin (to do wrong, to act immorally); every single one of us has chosen to sin (to do wrong, to act immorally); and most of us make this decision to sin many times a day. Our ancestor Adam, chose to sin, and God imputed his sin to all of us, which means that, even from birth, we are behind the 8-ball with God. You look at a baby and think how marvelous and wonderful this baby is; God looks at a baby and sees Adam's sin.

We constantly see and experience the results of sin all around us. We cheat on our wives or husbands, we divorce, and our children not only go through great trauma, but their lives are impacted forever by the dissolution of the marriage of their parents. Many children will live in poverty for their entire lives, participate in destructive relationships, and possibly destroy the lives of their own children, all because two parents chose to divorce. This one example, this one sin, this breaking of this one vow, can impact an entire family and their descendants for several generations.

We hear about nations wherein genocide takes place, where one group of people seeks to destroy another group of people, over racial, religious or ethnic reasons. Furthermore, we cannot send in an envoy of clever debaters who will be able to reason with the two groups to achieve a cease-fire or a lasting peace (Israel and the Palestinians are examples of this). When there is unreasonable and unrelenting hatred—a mental attitude sin—there is little that we can do to alleviate the suffering or to stop the actions which are based upon this animosity. We live in a world of great pain and suffering, and much of this (not all) comes from our decision to sin.

I personally have lost a job, ultimately based upon 3 women who sat around and gossiped together. Now, this was completely within God's plan and the end result was wonderful; but, the point is, the seemingly minor sin impacted my life for years. Sin is a very destructive force on the human race, and we all sin. Every single person—no matter what his ethnic background, no matter what his upbringing, no matter what his religion—sins.

You may not want to recognize even the concept of *sin*, much less the universality of it. That's fine. However, in your life, even if you are unable to recognize it in yourself, there are people around you who do things to you that, even if you refuse to call it *wrong*, *evil* or *sin*, it still angers you considerably. Furthermore, there are limits as to what you will put up with. This is why people leave jobs, leave marriages, disown their children, disown their parents, and occasionally just want to punch someone out. God calls the thoughts, words and actions leading up to these things, *sin*; you can call it whatever you want. In any case, you have caused other people pain, and they have caused you pain as well. It is all based upon sin, whether you want to recognize that concept or not.

Because we have Adam's sin imputed to us; because we have a sin nature; and because we choose to commit personal sins, we are separated from God. We may choose, at some point in time, to start straightening out our lives, but we will always have Adam's

imputed sin, we will always possess a sin nature, and we will always commit personal sins, even though we might be able to cut back on them.

God is perfectly holy—this means that He is completely set apart from us. He is perfect righteousness. We might be able to find some person in a circle of friends that we feel morally superior to, and thus have what might be termed as *relative righteousness*. However, since God is perfect, and since we have 3 strikes against us (Adam's original sin, and indwelling sin nature, and a collection of personal sins), we will always be separated from God, and there is nothing that we can do about it.

Let me give you an illustration: someone might murder a member of your family. However, he goes to the courts and says, "You know, I was just having a bad day and I am not going to do something like this ever again." He might be sincere and truthful. Should the courts simply allow him to continue his life as a free man? Of course not! Our sense of justice, our sense of right and wrong (which we have from God) would cry out against such a result. I know a person who does not believe in right or wrong or in morality. However, if anyone ever laid a hand on any of his children, there would be hell to pay. He rightfully recognizes that there are boundaries over which no one should ever cross, and, if necessary, he would personally exact a punishment for such an offense. This is someone who does not believe in right or wrong or in evil.

My point in this is, God is perfect righteousness, and He cannot just let us off the hook for those 3 reasons which I have repeatedly stated. Even if we decided, right now, that we are going to live the very best and honest and moral lives that we can live, this would not erase our past deeds to God, no more than a criminal's promise never to do wrong again erases his criminality. So, we stand—every man, woman and child—estranged from God. And, in the grand scheme of things, there is nothing that we can do about it.

There is something which God can do about this, and, in His sovereignty, He chose to provide a solution to our estrangement. Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, was born. He is God come as a man into this world, subject to all of the frailties of man, except for 3 things: because Jesus was born of a woman by the Holy Spirit, He was not subject to Adam's imputed sin nor was He born with a sin nature. God chose, because of the difference between the sin of Adam and the sin of Eve, to genetically pass along the sin nature through the father; and to legally pass along (or, *to impute*) Adam's original sin to all of those born with a sin nature.

Jesus voluntarily gave up the use of His divine attributes as God and functioned as a man in this world, apart from having a sin nature. Throughout His life in this imperfect world, Jesus did not choose to sin, not even once. This made Him sinless in all respects and therefore qualified to take the penalty of our sins upon Him. Had Jesus sinned, then He would not be qualified to endure the cross, during which time, God the Father poured out on Jesus all the sins of the world, and judged those sins.

God, Who respects our volition, then gives us a simple, free will choice. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we are saved and will spend eternity with God. If we do not believe in Jesus,

not even taking a few seconds out of our lives to believe in Him, we are not saved, but the wrath of God is upon us.

One of the objections which I have heard in my life is, Charley Brown is a good person and, even though he never believed in Jesus Christ, he tried to lead a good life. How is it fair for him to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire? Yes, it is fair, and let me give you 3 reasons why it is fair: Charlie Brown has Adam's imputed sin, he has a sin nature, and he has sinned in his life, even though his sins might not be quite as observable to us as someone who murders and rapes. Furthermore, Charley Brown had to, in order to be saved, choose just one time to believe in Jesus Christ; to put his faith in what Christ did for him on the cross. This is the one act of positive volition which anyone can do and which is the non-meritorious action which saves us. We do not deserve salvation; we are not offering up any sort of work for salvation; we simply accept what Jesus has done on our behalf. It is a gift which is free to us.

However, what God does not do is control our own volition. God does not alter our free will. God may allow things to occur in our lives which encourage us to look toward Him (such as, severe suffering), but He does nothing to alter the free will choice of faith in Christ, which choice He offers us. We have to, for a few seconds in our life, choose to believe in Jesus Christ in order to have a relationship with God. No one else has to be aware that we make this choice; and we don't have to tell anyone. We simply believe in Him. Now, if we are unwilling, over the course of 70 years, to spend 2 or 3 seconds exercising faith in Jesus Christ in order to have a relationship with God, then we will not want to spend eternity with God. If you do not want to spend a few seconds out of your entire life exercising positive volition toward God and His plan, then you are hardly going to be interested in spending eternity with God.

After death, you will either be with God or apart from God; but you will make that choice. You cannot make that choice for anyone else and no one can make this choice for you.

Introduction Part II

Rebound

There is another thing which we, in this introductory lesson, must know: *rebound*. Rebound is not a term found in the Bible, but it describes what puts a believer back into play in the Christian life. Only a Christian can have a Christian life—the kindest, nicest, most moral person in the world cannot have a spiritual life unless he has first believed in Jesus Christ. However, after we express faith in Christ, one of the first things that we do afterward is sin. This is our nature. All believers sin. Some do horrendous, shocking things and others commit fewer and less overt sins; but all believers sin after salvation. What this does is, break temporal fellowship with God. At the moment of salvation, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit and placed into Christ and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The first ministry remains with us our entire lives, the second is lost as soon as we sin for the first time. However, the filling of the Holy Spirit is recoverable, and recovering the Holy Spirit is referred to as rebound. The Bible refers to this as walking in the light versus

walking in darkness; as yielding to Christ; as being in fellowship with God as opposed to being out of fellowship.

Why Rebound and the Filling of the Holy Spirit are Important:

1. We are able to understand doctrine and to access our full understanding of God only when filled with the Spirit.
2. We have fellowship with God in time *only* when we are temporally cleansed.
3. Our lives have no spiritual impact apart from God the Holy Spirit.

Although there are many passages which deal with this particular topic, we will only look at one of them: 1John 1:6–10:

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1John 1:6). In the Bible, each author has his own vocabulary. John speaks of fellowship (being filled with the Holy Spirit) with God as *walking in the light* and *practicing the truth*. John call the opposite of this temporal state, *walking in darkness* and *lying*.

This epistle (letter) was written to believers, as are all the other epistles (with the possible exception of *Hebrews*, which speaks to both Jewish believers and unbelievers). The first 3 verses of the book of 1John make it fairly clear that John is writing to other believers.

But if we walk in the light, as He [God the Father] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1John 1:7). The blood of Jesus continues to cleanse us from all sin while we are walking in the light, and while we enjoy fellowship with one another. John writes in terms of absolutes, and the purpose of this letter is that ***our joy might be complete*** (1John 1:4).

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1John 1:8). *Sin*, in the singular, often refers to the sin nature. If we claim that we have no sin nature, we are deceiving ourselves. There are a few goofy cults out there who present their members as sinless. However, most reasonable people recognize that Christians sin just as all people sin.

John then gives us mechanics, and one of the most sorely lacking aspect of the Christian theology today is, few churches or seminaries teach mechanics. Most churches teach the most fundamental mechanic, *believe in Jesus Christ and you are saved*; and, after that, they drop the ball. John teaches the most fundamental mechanic for the believer, and that is rebound: **If we name [acknowledge, confess] our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9).

John is teaching this doctrine so that our joy (our inner happiness) may be fulfilled or completed. John teaches us that we have to *name* or *acknowledge* our sins (that is the mechanic; i.e., that is the thing we must actually do to get back into fellowship). If we do this, the God does two things: He forgives us for the sins that we have committed, and He

also cleanses us from all unrighteousness (whatever sins that we committed but did not name to Him). These are the known and the unknown sins.

You will notice two things in the mechanics here: we are not naming these sins to an intermediary party (like a priest) nor are we running around and finding people we sinned against and telling them what we did. We name our sins to God. Secondly, there is no emotion attached to this verb *to name, to acknowledge, to confess*. Sometimes, as believers, we will feel emotional and sometimes we will not. Sometimes this emotion will be related to the confession of sin and sometimes there will be no emotion. This is a simple mechanic and one which every believer needs to know. Before you do anything related to the spiritual life, you need to do a quick, personal inventory, and you name these sins to God before you take another step. You do this before Bible study, before giving, before doing anything which you may associate with the Christian life. In fact, whenever you sin, your immediate reaction should be to *rebound*, to name that sin to God right then and there. Then you are walking in the light and you are practicing the truth; your fellowship is with other believers and with God. If you sin and do not name your sins to God, then you are walking in darkness, you lie, you do not the truth, and you have no fellowship with God or with other believers. This is what John is writing and telling other believers. This is not something which is directed toward unbelievers. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ, you can confess your sins to God, to a priest, to all of your friends, and there is no spiritual impact.

Mechanics come in a specific order, and God clearly lays these mechanics out in the Bible. The first thing an unbeliever must do is believe in Jesus Christ. The first thing that a believer must do is, after he sins, name that sin to God. And repeat when necessary.

There are some self righteous believers who are going to object to the concept of *rebound*. They will claim to live perfect or nearly perfect lives and that they do not sin. John anticipates and answers this objection: **If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us** (1John 1:10). No believer can lay claim to living a nearly sinless life. Now, you might, on a good day, go for a few hours without sin; but all believers sin, and the only temporal cure for this is to name this sin to God.

One of the things which I find humorous is, I have unbeliever friends who, when some well-known Christian commits some horrendous sin, they send me web links about the sins these people commit. The writer of these articles often reports this news gleefully, so happy to expose the great hypocrisy of Christianity. But, there is no hypocrisy. Believers sin. All believers sin. Some believers learn to refine and hide their sins from those around them, but God knows that they sin, and so does John, who tells us, **If we say that we have not sinned, we make God out to be a liar.**

Let me make something clear to you which you may not quite understand. If you have been saved and you are still alive, then you have some sort of a life in front of you. God keeps believers alive after salvation because He wants us to function in His plan. The Bible has information about how we are saved in the first place and what was involved in

order for that to happen; however, the Bible also tells us about our lives after salvation, and what is supposed to happen after we believe in Jesus Christ and what we need to do.

What may not be obvious to you, but is taught in the Bible: some people believe in Jesus Christ and then their lives turn to crap because they choose to live their lives as if they were unbelievers. Paul calls these believers *enemies of the cross* along with a number of other choice descriptions.

God allows us our free will for the entirety of our lives on earth. We can choose to believe in Christ or not; we can choose to rebound or not; we choose to have a spiritual life or not.

So that there is no misunderstanding, this does not mean that we can believe in Jesus and then tell God, "See You in eternity," and go back to our lives prior to salvation *without consequence*. We certainly do have that option of believing in Christ and then doing whatever we feel like doing. However, when we believe in Jesus Christ, God the Father becomes our Father, and we face divine discipline for sin as well as the consequences of sin. You can believe in Jesus Christ and then tun around and murder someone, and, although you are saved and will spend eternity with God, this does not mean that your action is without consequences. You are still subject to discipline from God and you are still subject to the laws of your country.

To sum up, there are two mechanics which we need to know up front: in order to be saved, we must believe in Jesus Christ. This action may take all of 2 or 3 seconds. This is a one-shot, irrevocable decision. There may be a lot which leads up to this (intense pressures in our lives; illness; great difficulties), but the actual choice to believe in Christ takes just a few moments, and that one-short decision decides your eternal residence.

The second mechanic is *rebound*; you name your sin or sins to God, and you are temporally forgiven and put back into fellowship with Him. This fellowship lasts as long as you do not sin. In other words, this fellowship with God may last for all of 5 seconds or it may last for a few hours. As my pastor-teacher has said many times, "Keep short accounts with God." When you sin, rebound.

When I was first saved, I soon understood the Bible to be my ultimate authority. I do not really know how I came to that conclusion or why. I also began, early on, listening to the teaching of R. B. Thieme Jr. At this time, I had bounced around from church to church, and they all seemed to have a gimmick or a variety of gimmicks. One seemed to have sort of a balance between music, prayer, teaching, and fellowship. At another, I just about had my hand shaken off by all of the friendly people. I went to several charismatic churches, where the most powerful moments (and I don't necessarily mean this in a good way) were people speaking in tongues, all at once, often at the end of the service. I must admit to being a bit freaked out. I recall one pastor who strapped on an electric guitar and, if memory serves, he was mostly talking about the old standards and how they are really

good (by *old standards*, he meant *the old gospel tunes*). About the only church which I attended which seemed to emphasize the Bible over all else was a church adjunct to a Bible school, and that primarily when the assistant pastor taught. He was somewhat of a dull speaker, but he did make an attempt to explain the Bible.

When I began to listen to R. B. Thieme Jr., I quite frankly did not really like him very much and thought that this *doctrine* thing was his gimmick. But I did continue to listen. More than anywhere else that I had been, his emphasis was on teaching the Bible, word-by-word sometimes, and verse-by-verse.

After awhile, I began to realize that, my understanding of the authority of the Bible comported quite well with the way that Thieme taught the Bible. He also accepted the Bible as the final authority.

As I began to recognize the importance of the Word of God, I tried to share this with other believers. Most of us have witnessed to a hostile unbeliever before—and most of us recognize that many unbelievers just do not want to hear it. They look at Christians as freaks, as stupid, as brainwashed, as closed-minded, as too radical. They often do not want any part of it. I found that, speaking to other believers about the importance of the teaching of the Word of God often elicited almost the same reaction. I recall meeting with several couples after church, and we all listened to a sermon by Thieme together, as part of this get-together and, the guy who was the leader, took me aside at the end and confided that, we might continue to meet, but we weren't going to listen to this Bible teaching tape series. Just as a new believer is sometimes excited about his faith, I had become quite excited about learning what was in the Bible. What was a shock to me was, how few Christians had the same interest.

The same thing is found in most churches. What might surprise the average unbeliever is just how little Bible teaching is actually found in the average church. Even in the few churches where I have found the Bible taught, often it is taught without intellectual rigor and many times incorrectly. When I retired, I attended a mid-day Bible lesson, and it was all women and it was taught by a woman, who played a video tape of a woman teaching the same thing. I must admit to being struck as to how weak the teaching was. There was an attempt there to do the right thing, but it was very poorly executed.

The last topic which we covered was rebound. Rebound simply restores fellowship with God. We do not grow when we rebound. In our lives as believers in Jesus Christ, we either grow spiritually, we retrogress or we tread water. We are commanded to **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ** (2Peter 3:18a). This phrase is in the imperative mood in the Greek; that means, this is a mandate (an order, a command) from God to us. Growth involves two things: grace and knowledge.

Grace is one overarching principle in our relationship with God. We do not deserve to be saved. Jesus Christ, in His grace, went to the cross and died for our sins. This is something that we do not deserve in any way. The worst person in the world does not deserve salvation and the best person in the world does not deserve salvation.

We do not deserve to have a spiritual life after salvation. We do not deserve to have God temporarily forgive us sins, and then to walk in fellowship with Him and with other believers. God, in His grace, allows us to do this; and God, in His grace, allows us to be a part of His plan.

Grace is very much a part of our post-salvation existence. God makes it possible for us to grow spiritually and to have some sort of a spiritual life after salvation. Let me quell your fears about this: just because you decide to start growing spiritually, this does not mean that God is going to make you do something that you absolutely hate. My original fear was, God would send me off to be a missionary somewhere. It was an irrational, goofy fear, but most believers are not sure how much they want to commit to the Christian life for fear of what God might make them do. Maybe you don't want to be that guy passing out tracts on the street corner; or worse, that crazy guy in a robe and a beard, proclaiming that the end is near. Just because you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not mean that God is going to make you do something that you absolutely hate. Spiritual growth is a normal part of the post-salvation life. It is not something that we ought to fear.

The illustration that I like to go with is the little boy learning how to tie his shoes for the first time. There may be some frustration involved here, and the child may want his mom or dad to tie his shoes for a long time afterward; however, it is clearly in the child's interest for him to learn to tie his own shoes. It is clearly in any child's interest to grow up, step-by-step. Life is frustrating and growth is frustrating, but the last thing that you want are a houseful of kids who cannot blow their own noses without parental help and guidance. The end result is, human maturity coupled with self-sufficiency.

The Christian life is the same way—God wants us to grow and God mandates for us to grow spiritually, and, even if it is frustrating at times, it is what is best for us in this post-salvation life. The end result is spiritual maturity and spiritual self-sufficiency. This is a clear mandate from God. The last thing that God wants to do is tie the spiritual shoes of a believer who has been a Christian for umpteen years.

All children require guidance, training and knowledge, and if you take a hands-off approach to raising your children, it will come back to haunt you in the worst ways. Believers also require guidance, training and knowledge; and believers who do not grow spiritually, are often great embarrassments to Jesus Christ, just as a 22 year-old kid is an embarrassment to his parents if he still acts like he is 14. .

What is the key to our growth is *knowledge*. God has given to us His Word, and we grow by knowing and understanding His Word. This does not mean that, right after salvation, we sit down and start reading the Bible. If a pastor or some sort of spiritual leader told you that, right after salvation, what you need to do is read your Bible, this man has abdicated his own responsibility. Even though the Bible is the Word of God, you cannot just pick it up and start reading and expect to get much out of it.

This does not mean that you can't get something out of it. If you read the first few chapters of the book of John, you will get a basic understand of Who Jesus Christ is and how we are saved. However, what you can take out from a simple reading of the Bible is limited. Let me go back to the analogy of raising a child—let's say you wrote down everything you know about raising a child. Would you hand that book to a 3 or a 4 year old child and say, "Okay, read this and take it from here." I don't care how good the book is, you have abdicated your responsibility as a parent to do that.

God did not just give us His Word and say, "Okay, read this and take it from here." Part of grace is, God provides for us a Bible teacher and this teacher leads us through the Bible and teaches us what we need to know. In the post-canon Church Age (a set of terms I will soon define), God gives pastor-teachers as the highest spiritual gift, and pastor-teachers help us navigate through the Word of God. They teach spiritual information, and then we, when we hear this information, decide on whether we believe it or not. If their teaching is accurate and we believe what they say, we grow spiritually. If their teaching is inaccurate or if we choose not to believe what they teach, then we don't grow at all. Spiritual growth is a process. Just as you do not hand your 6-year-old son a briefcase and tell him, it is time for him to go out in the world and fend for himself; at the same time, you don't want him to be a directionless 25-year-old living in your house, mooching off of you, without a thought in the world as to what he ought to do. As a parent, you want you child to grow step-by-step from childhood to adulthood to where this child can become self-sufficient in life. Our spiritual growth is quite similar. God does not expect us to go sit on a park bench all call out to Him, "Give us the stuff we need."

When God entrusts you with a child, how often do you teach him about growing up? How often are you teaching him the steps toward maturity? Ideally speaking, unless you believe that you can foist this off on daycare or on our school system, you teach this child daily about what is right and wrong, about how he ought to treat other children, about how he ought to treat his or other children's toys and pets; and you teach him normal skills, from toilet training to tying his shoes to catching a ball. You will also find there is a point in time when, this kid asks you everything under the sun. All of a sudden, around age 4 or 5, he hits a mental growth spurt, where he can put thoughts together, when he understands how to communicate, when he begins to appreciate just how fantastic the world is, and, at that point, he wants to know everything. At about that time, the kid is ready for school, where he will learn these things, on a daily basis, in a systematic way.

The child will make up for this somewhere between 18 and 25, at which point he thinks that he knows everything there is to know.

I was a math major in college. When I went through Trigonometry, Linear Algebra, Set Theory and Calculus I, I felt pretty cocky, and thought to myself, "This isn't all that difficult." However, near the end of my college career, after a course in Topology and advanced Probability and Statistics, and after taking a walk through the math section of the University of Houston library, I became quite humbled in my own field. Outside of those I went to school with, I knew more mathematics than any other person I knew; and what I knew barely scratched the surface of mathematical knowledge.

I've been a believer for over 35 years and I have spent a considerable amount of time studying the Bible. In the first few years, I was pretty cocky and figured I knew pretty much all I needed to know. At this point in time in my life, I recognize just how much there is in the Word of God which I do not understand and how much more there is to learn.

Our spiritual lives often mirror the learning of a child. There is this point where, if we are on positive volition toward Bible doctrine, we learn the basic vocabulary and, suddenly, we want to know everything, and we are ready for the pastor to sit us down and give us the entire scope of Bible doctrine. Just like the 4 or 5 year old kid. However, we soon find out that it takes longer than an extended session with the pastor, and we learn that spiritual growth, like human growth, is a day-by-day thing. We need physical food every day; we need Bible doctrine every day.

We will probably go through a know-it-all stage and eventually a stage where we realize just how little we know about the Word of God, even after years and years of study. But, make no mistake about it: God does not want to tie our shoes for us every few hours.

Let me mention one more thing: prayer. A baby learns to cry when it wants something: to have its diaper changed, to get his milk, or to be cuddled and comforted. Most believers learn about prayer early on, and they begin to use it like a baby learns to use crying. Whenever you want something, you pray for it. If it hurts, you pray about it or ask others to pray about it. You want God to take it away. You see something you want, and you pray about it. You see an attractive member of the opposite sex and you might pray to get to know them. Prayer is a good and effective tool, but it is like having a tool box with one tool in it—like a hammer. You can do a lot of stuff with a hammer, but it should not be your only tool. A baby can get a lot of stuff done on its behalf by crying, but, once a certain stage of growth is reached, he figures out how to go to the refrigerator and pour himself a glass of milk (or, he learns how to ask permission to get a glass of milk).

With spiritual growth, you learn how to pray properly and effectively, and you learn what to pray for. With spiritual growth, you also begin to fill up your tool box with a lot more than just a hammer. You will also learn that, to go from point A to point B, the answer is not always to pray about it—sometimes, you just have to tie your own shoes and walk from point A to point B.

Believers fall apart spiritually for two reasons: (1) they do not rebound or they rebound infrequently; and (2) they never recognize the importance of the Word of God or spiritual growth under the authority of a well-trained, educated pastor-teacher.

Therefore, it is important to see what the Bible says about itself:

The Word of God is alive and powerful; sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit [distinguishing between the soul and the spirit], and of the joints and marrow, and discerns [the Word of God fully understands and accurately judges and evaluates] the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). Not only does God know what we are thinking and is able to evaluate the thoughts and intents of our

thinking, but the Bible is able to do this as well. The Bible critically examines our thinking and our motivation. No other book examines so carefully what goes on in our souls.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (1Tim. 2:15). Although this is directed toward a pastor, the pastor is to know the Word of God so that he can teach it to his congregation.

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished to every good work (2Tim. 3:16–17). Bible doctrine in the soul is required for good works.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105). When you walk, you put one foot in front of the other; the Bible lights the path in front of you.

Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her [wisdom] (Prov. 8:1, 8, 10–11).

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to Me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children (Hosea 4:6).

Heaven and earth shall pass away but My Words shall not pass away (Mat. 24:35).

Look carefully then how you walk [this is your day-to-day life], **not as unwise but as wise** [wisdom comes from Bible doctrine in the soul], **redeeming the time, because the days are evil** [you are surrounded by human viewpoint; each day, you are bombarded by human viewpoint]. **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is** [knowing the Word of God is how you understand the will of God] (Eph. 5:15–17).

In order to begin to grow, and in order to begin a study of the Word of God, you need 3 things: (1) you need to be saved by having believed in Jesus Christ; (2) you need to be familiar with the rebound technique, which means that, whenever you sin, that you name this sin to God; and (3) you need to recognize the importance of the Bible as the Word of God, as your guidebook through this life you are about to embark.

With regard to this 3rd point, you need to be under the daily teaching of a pastor teacher. God did not design you to go out there on your own. God gives all believers a pastor-teacher who has spent years studying the Word of God, who understands that this is divine truth, and who does his best to convey this truth to his congregants. **Remember your leaders** [pastor-teachers], **those who spoke to you the Word of God** [this is the teaching of the Bible]. **Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Yield to those leading you** [pastor-teachers], **and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you** (Heb. 13:7, 17).

Now these [Berean] Jews...received the word [of God] with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, along with many Greek women of high standing as well as men (Acts 17:11–12).

On my website, I have provided [a list](#) of what are probably good and accurate pastor-teachers. If you are not in the proper geographical area of any of these teachers, many of them provide lessons which can be ordered or downloaded from the internet. I look for 4 things in the ministry of a pastor-teacher: (1) Is money an issue? Do they beg for money? Is money tied to receiving spiritual growth? Do they agree to send you books or MP3 files, but, they suggest a love offering? God provides for every good ministry, and no one should ever hit you up for money. It is legitimate for a church to take up an offering, and at the church I attend, this is done once a week only. I would personally be leery if a church is taking up an offering every time they open the doors and hold a Bible class. (2) Do they teach salvation by faith alone in Christ alone? Nothing is more fundamental than this. (3) Are you encouraged to rebound before beginning a Bible study? Does your minister just start in, or does he remind you to get back into fellowship? And (4) does your pastor-teacher teach verse-by-verse? He may not do this every time, but there will be occasions when a pastor starts a book at verse 1 and takes the study all the way to verse last (and such a study should take months, if not years, to complete). If you pastor does not appear to ever do this, I suggest finding a different church.

God gives us just so many days of life, and we need to redeem (purchase) this time (Eph. 5:16 Col. 4:5). For our physical daily sustenance, we sleep daily and we eat daily. Our spiritual life—our daily walk with God—is the most important dimension of our lives. Therefore, it is reasonable to take in the Word of God on a daily basis. For those of you who see church as a once a week function, I realize that this may seem incredibly radical to you. However, we ought to live every day alike, which means, every day should involve some spiritual growth, which means learning Bible doctrine from a qualified pastor-teacher.

And they, continuing **daily** with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house...And the Lord added to the church **daily** such as were being saved. (Acts 2:46a, 47b). And **daily** in the temple, and in every house [local church], they ceased not to teach and proclaim Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42). And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number **daily** (Acts 16:5). And if there was no local church, Paul would go out in the market place and into the synagogues and *daily* discuss and dispute with those there: Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market **daily** with them that met with him (Acts 17:16–17).

These first 3 lessons comprised the most fundamental mechanics of the spiritual life: first, believing in Jesus Christ, then naming your sins (silently) when you are out of fellowship; and, thirdly, growth via the teaching of the Word of God. In the next lesson, I will introduce the Bible as well as cover some fundamental themes found throughout the Bible.

People have a variety of reasons for adhering to this or that religion, going to this or that church, or being adverse to either. I know some Muslims, Catholics and Buddhists, and the primary reason for their faith is, they were brought up this way. From the earliest age, they were taught that their religion was correct and moral, and they often adhere to their beliefs simply because of their upbringing. Many of these adherents do not even know some of the fundamentals of their own faith. Let me give you two examples: many Catholics do not know the concept *infused grace*, even though one might arguably assert that this notion is what fundamentally separates Catholics from Protestants. Second example: ask a Muslim what is his religion's view of Jesus Christ. Many do not know that Islam officially recognizes Jesus as one of the great prophets from God (along with many Jewish *saints*). However, these same people, who know precious little about their faith, will cling to it and even argue its accuracy and exclusivity.

Some people are moved to a position of faith based upon peer pressure and/or brainwashing. Faith does not have to be directed only toward God; faith can be directed toward government, education and/or science. People in college often have this inordinate trust in science, they shed their religious upbringing, and they often cling to liberal politics because that is the predominant view. Some truly believe that conservatives are selfish, rich racists. They may believe that they have come to these positions by intelligent discourse and logical reasoning, but, most of the time, it is because they have irreligious, liberal professors and because they are surrounded by students with those views. When most everyone tells you that these sorts of beliefs are reasonable and logical, and they are the fundamental thinking of an intellectual, then people buy into this.

Some people attend a particular church for a variety of reasons: it has a daycare center or teen classes, or young married classes; it is nearby.

In any case, I want to move away from this approach to God and to religion. Let's say that, you have absolutely no religious training or an intensive religious background, or you are somewhere in the middle—what exactly should you expect from God, from God's Word, or from religion in general? What would make sense? Irrespective of your background, let's just for a moment, recognize there may be a God; Holy Writ may exist; and there may be some sort of a true religion—what are some logical things which would have to be true about these things?

Concerning God:

God should make sense. God should conform to some semblance of logic. Someone should be able to explain basic things about God to me which make sense, and I should be able to explain these things to someone else and they should make sense—no matter what my background is, no matter what my nationality is, no matter what my religion is. If God does not make sense, how exactly would I reach Him, understand Him, fellowship with

Him? How could someone convey information to me as an unbeliever so that I would want to know more about God?

There are things which I expect God to be: I would expect Him to be right; for Him to be all-knowing and all-powerful; I would hope that He would be a God of love; I would expect Him to, at some point in time, enact justice. I've known of too many people in my lifetime who have gotten away with this or that, and I think that there should be some sort of retribution for what they have done.

Some people say, "God would have to appear to me; if He appeared to me, then I would probably believe in Him." And if you were to press such a person, asking, "And how would you know that this is God?" Somehow, they would answer, "Oh, I'd know." And I have heard this before—from people who have no interest in God, who claim that, if God appeared to them, then they would just know it is God. Such thinking could not be more illogical (and more typical of man). On the contrary, we will eventually study people to whom God appeared and they did not know that He was God.

Concerning God's Word:

There must be some way to know something about God.

I would like to have my instructions/information/doctrine from God in writing.

This writing should make sense. This writing, if ancient, should stand the test of time. It would make sense that the writing is ancient, as we are aware of at least 5000–6000 years of human history. It would not make sense for me to have the Word of God in writing today, but someone 3000 years ago would not.

This written document should make sense. I should be able to read it and make sense out of it.

If God is all-knowing, and there is a document from Him, then this document should stand the test of time in every possible way. It should not be anti-science, it should contain information only available from God, it should be authoritative, it should make sense, it should make logical sense. This document should be self-authenticating. That is, it should stand by itself, and be the Word of God.

If there is such a document known as the Word of God, it should be available to virtually everyone in their language.

The Word of God should speak to me as fundamentally as it spoke to man 100 years ago or 2000 years ago. It should speak to me, whether I am raised in the United States or in the deepest regions of Africa or under a repressive political regime, such as Iran or North Korea.

The Word of God should tell me that it is the Word of God. Not only should it speak with authority, but it should just flat out tell me, “This is the Word of God.” It should not be nebulous with regards to what it is.

If there is such a document as the Word of God, it should not be the product of one or two men. I have, throughout my life, seen some very charismatic and persuasive men, in a variety of areas. I don’t think a document should stand simply because some very charismatic, persuasive guy wrote it (or claimed to have some sort of access to it). In fact, I doubt that I could trust a document written by one person. I would be suspicious of a document which claimed to be the Word of God, but benefitted the author in some way. I would be suspicious of a document claiming to be the Word of God, if it was produced in some dubious manner—like some guy found a magic pen and sat down and wrote it (which magic pen has since disappeared).

I want the Word of God to be transparent. What I mean is, I want to be able to independently check this or that detail out about it. If someone tells me that this ancient word means such and such, I want some way of checking that. If someone tells me this or that about the text, then I want to be able to check this. I do not want to have to depend upon someone else to tell me everything I need to know about God’s Word. When I am taught something, then I want to be able to verify this for myself.

If the Word of God is ancient and if God is all-knowing, then God must know some things will happen before they actually occur. It seems that God should be capable of this. Therefore, it would make sense for God to tell us about things before they happen. Furthermore, there must be some way to independently verify that these things are predicted and then come to pass *after* the predictions are written down. These predictions have to be more than just a check list that someone, later on, can simply pick up, do them, and then claim that the predictions have been fulfilled.

Concerning this life:

I have felt a lot of pain in my life, both emotional and physical. I have seen others and their lives, and they seem to have better lives than I have. I need to know why do people feel pain. I need to know why things don’t work out like I want them to. When someone seems to get away with doing something wrong, I want to know why, and I would like to see the books balanced on that person—particularly people who have done me harm, intentionally and cruelly.

I want my life to make some sort of sense. I don’t want to believe that I just happened on this earth. I don’t want to believe that my thoughts are nothing more than chemicals sloshing around in my head, and neurons firing off electrical currents. My brain and my thinking have to be more than just chemical reactions and electrical impulses.

I know that there must be some sort of right and wrong, morality and immorality. I may not be able to define it myself, but I know it exists. I need to understand what it is, why it

exists; and I want to know why so many people have such wildly differing ideas about what is right and wrong.

There has to be some sort of evil in this world—there are just so many terrible things which happen that, they could not make sense unless somehow, somewhere, in this world, there were evil forces or evil people. The idea that one man could effectively order the death of 6 million Jews; or that two political leaders could simply murder 3 million Vietnamese and Cambodians in the space of a few years; or that a tyrant could destroy the lives of more than 10 million people only for the expressed purpose of an economic system—a mere philosophy; or that men would do whatever they could, include killing themselves or their own children, in order to kill other innocents—these things make little sense to me apart from there being some sort of evil force in this world, or evil men, or both. The idea that a young mother would intentionally smother her own child, the idea that a man is capable of raping a child who has not even reached puberty, the idea that someone could not just come up with the idea of dragging someone to death behind their pickup, but would actually do such a heinous thing—these acts seem to demand that evil of some sort exists. I need to know if there is such thing as God, how could He possibly allow these things to go on.

There seems to be this thing called love, and it seems to be overpowering, and desperately wonderful as well as unbelievably heart-breaking. I want it to make sense to me.

There has never been a year in man's history, insofar as I know, when there has not been a war going on; why is this? I have heard it said that, right now, at this moment, there are 50 wars going on in the world. Can we end war? Why not? Why does it seem to be such an integral function of man?

There has never been a time in man's history where there have not been hungry people. There has not been a time in man's history when there has not been some sort of natural disaster which seems to kill or ruin peoples' lives. This needs to make sense to me.

I have been watching politics as of late, and I have never seen our country more divided. Even those who claim to be in favor of uniting us as a people, do just the opposite. I have watched newsmen intentionally distort the news. I know so many people whose beliefs are so diametrically opposed; why is that? How can we, as man, differ so dramatically in our thinking from one another. How can we take points of view which are so different, and yet each of us be so assured that we are correct and our rivals are not? This needs to make sense to me.

More about God:

How can I be assured that God really knows what my life is like? How can I be certain that He knows the pain and the frustration which I have felt? Does He have any idea as to what unrequited love really is? Does He know what pain really is? Can God appreciate my emotional stress and my physical pain? Can God appreciate how difficult it is to live this

life? Maybe God would treat me better if He had to spend a day walking in my shoes, living my life.

Understanding who God is; understanding who Jesus Christ is; knowing the Bible and all about the Bible—these things should, at some point, answer all of the questions which I have raised, and fulfill the expectations which I have.

What things do we know? What things can we agree upon?

We live in an extremely complex world. The more that we know about something, the more that there is to know about it. We used to view the single cell as being simple and fundamental; we have since found out that, a single cell is not only extremely complex, having some functions which we do not fully understand, but it carries with it an extremely complex set of information within it called DNA, which appear to be blueprints, for want of a better word, for a more complex structure beyond the individual cell.

We used to view the parts of an atom—neutron, proton and electron—as being the most fundamental building blocks of matter, and now it appears that they may be made up of something themselves. Furthermore, although we understand a great deal about the bonding of various groups of molecules and we have reasons why this or that group will adhere to one another or not, we do not fully understand that bonding within an atom. We do not understand why a set of atoms can be alive and the same set of atoms can also be dead.

We have observed brainwashing in our lives, and we know that various political systems do it. It is clear that there was some sort of mass hypnosis or mass brainwashing with Hitler; and it is clear that Communism attempts to do the same thing (but with less success, as they have to kill or imprison those who do not go along with their doctrines). We see the same thing in our own country, how various politicians who belong to the same party all of a sudden start saying the same slogans. I don't mean to get political, but most of you have heard, *John McCain is George Bush's 3rd term*; with regards to our energy crisis and its high cost, *we cannot drill our way out of this*. A political party knows it has succeeded when you ask a random person on the street, and they spout one of these slogans. In 4 years, there will be another set of slogans. If you are reading this, and do not recognize these slogans, then you might be removed from this writing by many years.

We live in an era of great technological advancement. What has been developed by science today is beyond human comprehension. You may know all there is to know about computers, about televisions, about cars, about cell phones; but none of us could build any one of these things from scratch. Not 1 person in a million could assemble one of these things if all its component parts sat in front of them.

We live in an era of great medical advancement. However, it appears that, every time we get this or that disease or ailment under control, another set of diseases take its place. And, as of late, we are showing progress against certain diseases (diabetes, AIDS, cancer), but we have no cures for any of these ailments.

With all of these things which often are designed to make our lives easier or more enjoyable, for some reason, they don't quite do the trick. For instance, I like owning a car and a refrigerator and have trouble imagining a life without either of these conveniences. However, I don't know that I am actually happier with these items than I would be if they did not exist. Man has lived 1000's of years without these conveniences, and I don't know that we could say that man today is happier and more adjusted than man from 200 years ago, when these things did not exist.

Teens in America have things today which I could not have imagined in my youth. They have greater conveniences and many more ways to spend time. Yet, teen suicide is about the 10th greatest killer of teens; more teens die each year of suicide than by homicide. One would think that as our lives have more and more conveniences and more and more things to entertain us, that life would simply be better for the person who is inside of us. 50 years ago, teen suicide was a lot more rare.

What I am saying is, on one level, life seems to be getting better; and, on another, it isn't. I am not ready to sell my car or get rid of my television; but my actual contentment and happiness is not directly correlated to these things. One would think that, as we advance in science and medicine, as there are more and more things that I can buy, and as I become more able to indulge in these things, that man in general should become more and more happy—but that does not seem to be the case. In fact, I would argue the case that families of the 1950's were happier statistically than families of this era. There was more family unity and a greater family bond, and this is reflected in our television shows of that era. Children and families of today seem to be more unhappy, more disjointed, and certainly less unified. In the 1950's, a young teen getting pregnant, an unhappy teen killing himself or fellow students, was almost unheard of. A teen taking drugs was extremely rare. Even alcohol abuse, although it occurred at that time, was nothing like it is today.

My point is, science—even psychology—cannot seem to speak to some things. Science, medicine, technology, and psychology have made great strides, but these things have not made us happier or more well-adjusted.

I taught teenagers for nearly 30 years, and there were some fairly simple observations which I made over these years. Those who were disciplined seemed to be happier than those who leaned toward self-indulgence. Those who were religious—and I am speaking of any religion—were generally happier than those who were not. Those who seemed to have moral imperatives in their lives seemed to be happier than those who did not limit themselves or their behavior.

My recollection of grammar school included singing Christmas hymns. At the time, even though I memorized many of the lyrics, I did not know what they meant, but these were great songs and thoroughly enjoyable. Today, our schools have undergone some bizarre transformation, where some grammar schools will not sing these songs; other schools will carefully regulate such singing, as to require for other religious hymns to be sung as well. People have actually gone to court over these hymns and are quite angry about them. How can these hymns be that powerful to require some people to want to ban them?

You may say, "Well, this is religion, and we should not have any religion in the schools." However, most schools teach mythology, and the characters of mythology were considered gods at one time. There is no nation-wide movement to remove the reading of mythology from English classes. However, if this were the reading of the Bible, a significant number of people would be up in arms over it. What is so powerful about the Bible that we need to guard our young people from it?

In any case, there is something more to life than science, psychology, philosophy, medicine and technology. There seems to be something which is more fundamental and more important than these things. At the same time, there seems to be an attack on such things (Christmas hymns, the Christmas holidays in general) that, 50 years ago, would have been seen as absurd.

There is something there which speaks more fundamentally to the soul of man than does science or politics or technology. Jesus said that we are more than the food that we eat; we are more than the clothes that we wear. What I hope to present, in this Bible course, is:

Some Basic Propositions

1. There is more to life than just the externals. Having enough food on the table, having a place to live, having clothes to wear, and having an assortment of things to entertain us is not enough. There has to be more to life.
2. When we have all of these external things, but nothing else, there is a fundamental part of our lives which is missing.
3. The God of the Bible is real, He is logical, He is dependable, He is perfect righteousness, He is perfect justice; He is omnipotent and omnipresent. It is possible to know Him, even though we do not see Him with our eyes.
4. Jesus is God in the flesh. He is not just a great moral teacher or a man who suffered great indignities; He is God come in the flesh, living as we do and suffering as we have suffered (in fact, suffering far greater than we could imagine). Furthermore, this is not some coat of divinity which we, hundreds of years later, have put upon this man; He claimed, in no uncertain terms, to not just be from God, but to be God.
5. As has been pointed out many times by many other teachers, you cannot simply call Jesus a good man or a good teacher without acknowledging that He is also God, because what man would claim to be God, except a charlatan, an insane person or God Himself, come in the flesh? A good man or a good teacher would not lie about such a thing.
6. Everything that we view in this world has order, design, and purpose. Whether we examine a molecule, a mouse or a mountain, there is order, design and purpose; as well as an adherence to a specific set of laws.

Some Basic Propositions

7. Our lives make sense. Our lives have meaning. We are not just a random collection of molecules meandering about aimlessly, without purpose, direction or boundaries. We are actually put here on earth for a reason.
8. The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is everything that we would expect it to be. Even among other religious literature and sacred books, the Bible is unique. It is as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago.
9. We should expect anything related to the Bible to be attacked, including a high school course on the Bible or Christmas hymns.
10. We will find that spiritual information cuts across cultural lines and time. What Jesus said 2000 years ago is pertinent to our lives today. What Moses wrote 3500 years ago is pertinent to our lives today. What the writers of Genesis said 4000–5000 years ago is actually more meaningful today than it was when written, as we now have science to verify much of what we find in the book of Genesis.
11. These things in our lives which we view as evil or wrong or in a negative sense—war, man’s inhumanity to man, sickness, natural disasters—do make sense. They are not just random events in a random universe, without meaning. The good things in our lives also make sense.
12. All of these things require time to learn. A short 5 or 6 lesson Bible study or even a year in a seminary, is not enough time to put it all together. Life takes a long time, and God designed our spiritual lives to occupy that entire time. We do not run out of things to know. We do not reach a point in our lives when, everything is completely clear and completely explained, and we know all of our next moves. However, God did design our lives to be fulfilling and meaningful and happy. Even in the midst of a world filled with suffering, pain and heartache, God designed us to be content, even when these things touch us directly.
13. You will eventually find that, learning about God, God’s plan and God’s Word, is not an imposition on your life, but time well spent, which will give your life meaning, guidance, purpose and definition. No longer will your life seem random or purposeless.

Let me review what we have covered:

A Summary of the Introductory Material

1. Being a Christian means that you have believed in Jesus Christ. You have trusted what He did on the cross on your behalf. Becoming a Christian does *not* require you to go to church, to be good, to be moral, to be baptized, to reform your wicked ways, to renounce worldly possessions, etc. It is faith alone in Christ alone. If you have mixed with your faith in Christ, getting baptized, going to a particular church, adhering to the doctrines of a particular church, leading a good

and moral life, then you are not saved. Salvation comes only from faith alone in Christ alone. Believing in Jesus Christ gives you an eternal relationship with God, and this is a relationship which you cannot lose, give away, or sin your way out of. God is not our Father by birth; God is only our Father by faith in Jesus Christ.

2. As a believer, we have a two-status condition in life; and these two statuses are mutually exclusive: we can be filled with the Holy Spirit or we can quench the Spirit; we can be in fellowship or out of fellowship; we can walk in the light or we can walk in darkness. The key to this is naming your sins or acknowledging your sins before God. This is not to a priest, not to the person you sinned against, and not aloud in front of a church, but quietly or silently. **God is faithful** (He does this every time) **and just** (this is something He can do without compromising His perfect righteousness) **to forgive us our sins** (whatever sins we have named) **and to forgive us of all unrighteousness** (any unknown sins which we have committed) (1John 1:9b). Where I go to church, naming your sins to God when you are out of fellowship is called *rebound*. At any point in your life when you sin, you need to name that sin to God. This is known as *keeping short accounts*.
3. The most important thing you can do as a believer is Jesus Christ is to know the Word of God; to know Bible doctrine. Going to church once a week for a 25 minute sermon is not enough. You need a church or a source where you can get doctrine daily.
4. These 3 things are the fundamentals of Christianity and Christian growth.

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So that you understand where I am going with this, I would like to exegete a few books of the Bible, but there will be some introductory material which is required first. Those first few lessons deal with the essentials of Christianity, as well as what one ought to expect from God, Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Before I begin exegeting the Bible, I need to introduce the Bible.

There are been tens of thousands of books written about the Bible. Figuring out what to say and what not to say in a basic, introductory lesson is quite difficult.

Do you know what book topped the best seller list last month? The Bible. Do you know which book sold more copies than any other book the month before that? The Bible. How about the month before that? Surprisingly enough, the Bible. The Bible is the all-time best seller, month after month after month, since the advent of printing. Prior to that, it was the most produced book in the world, even though it had to be copied by hand, laboriously.

In the ancient world, the first book to be translated into another language was the Bible. The ancient book translated into more ancient languages than any other is the Bible. The book today which is translated into more languages than any other is the Bible. No other book, religious or otherwise, comes close.

There have been a lot of authors as of late who have recently put out some anti-religion, anti-God and anti-Bible books, and these books sell a lot of copies. There is [God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything](#) by Christopher Hitchens. There is also [God: The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist](#) by Victor J. Stenger. And [Atheist Universe: The Thinking Person's Answer to Christian Fundamentalism](#) by David Mills. And [Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam](#) by Michel Onfray. [The God Delusion](#) by Richard Dawkins. These are not new. Books which attack Christians, Christianity, God, the Bible and faith are as almost old as literature. Over the years, and for hundreds of years, there have been books put out disparaging the Bible

and Christianity in general. One of the books I own that is now about 40 or 50 years old, and it promised, through logical discussion, to put an end to the Bible. I don't recall the name of the book or the author (it is somewhere in one of my bookcases), but one thing that I do recall about that book is, it did not put an end to the Bible.

Books written against the Bible go back at least to 1st century A.D. Apion, and many others, questioned the books of the Old Testament; they questioned their historicity, they questioned their accuracy, as well as their divine authority (that is, they contended that only men wrote these books and that the words in the Bible were not from God). These men claimed that Israel was not as old a nation as claimed; and that Israel did not have the ancient and unique origins, as found in the first several books of the Bible. These men claimed that there were all of these contradictions in Jewish writings and in the Old Testament Bible (which, at this time, existed as a unit, much as we see the Bible today). Flavius Josephus (37–100 A.D.), the great ancient historian, answered these claims in a book called *Against Apion*, which is available free for our reading even today: <http://bible.christiansunite.com/jos/apiindex.shtml> Josephus was not answering just Apion, but a whole host of critics, just as authors today write books to defend Christianity, the Bible, and the true person of Christ ([*God and the New Atheism: A Critical Response to Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens*](#) by John F. Haught; [*The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions*](#) by David Berlinski; [*What's So Great About Christianity*](#) by Dinesh D'Souza, to name a few).

The historical backdrop to the writing of Flavius Josephus (whose works we have and whose works can be easily found with a dogpile or google search) is important. Rome, at this time, was hostile toward Christians and Jews. Jews were hostile toward Christians. So, to write books and essays against Jewish traditions, against the books of the Old Testament and against the new Christians was a very popular thing to do. In 70 A.D., the Romans slaughtered the Jews in Jerusalem in a gruesome massacre. Romans continually persecuted Christians, martyring many of the early Apostles and evangelists. In the first century A.D., Romans did not like the Jews or the Christians, or their written works, so at the time of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, early Rome was a perfect environment for anti-Jewish and anti-Christian literature.

My point in all of this is, the very concept of a Bible, the very idea that God would see that man recorded His Word, is not a very easy pill to swallow, and men have been arguing about this since at least the 1st century A.D. To read Josephus, it is apparent that such arguments have been going on long before this. What is even more fascinating, is, most of these are the same arguments as we read today in modern literature.

If we were to collect all of the books written against the Bible, all the books written in support of the Bible, and all of the additional literature written about the Bible, there would be a greater number of books in this collection than you would find at your local library. At my own house, I have a library, and the primary category of books which I own are related to the Bible. I literally do not have enough room for them in my house (I have bookcases in nearly every room), and I own far less than 1% of the books which are available to me.

What is actually in the Bible? Let me begin with the most basic theme which is found throughout the Bible: God created man and man chose to sin against God. This means that, man chose to do wrong, man chose to do that which God told him not to do, man broke God's law, man disobeyed God. For this reason, man is under judgment from God. God is perfectly holy, just and good; man is fallen and in rebellion against God. As a result of our sin, man feels pain and eventually dies. The world in the hands of man becomes a place of injustice, anger, frustration, pain, suffering, and great inhumanity.

The Bible reveals that God is always here with us, in one form or another, ready to comfort us and ready to guide us, but this is a choice that we must make. God is a gentleman and does not force Himself upon anyone. However, we are not born with a relationship with God—at least not a friendly one. The fundamental problem is, God is perfect, He is righteous and just, and we are not. We are under judgment by God for 3 things: Adam, the first man created by God, sinned against God, and God imputed this sin to each and every one of us the moment we are born. We have an old sin nature which seems to affect every aspect of our lives; this is that which is an integral part of our being, and tempts us to continue to rebel against God and to continue to sin against Him. Thirdly, we all sin; every person on this earth sins against God, including the greatest religious leaders in man's history. Every man born from the seed of man, sins—without exception. So we stand before God with these 3 strikes against us.

The Bible also tells us that God is love, and that God sends His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. That is, He takes upon Himself the penalty and the judgment which we deserve, and this gives us the potential for a relationship with God. This is what Jesus suffered on the cross. Now, the actual crucifixion itself, and the physical misery associated with being crucified, was not the punishment which Jesus endured that saved us from our sins; while Jesus was on the cross, God poured out upon Him the penalty and punishment for every sin that every single person has ever committed and ever will commit, and this provides for us a potential relationship with God. Even those who witnessed this event did not see God pouring out the penalty for our sins on Jesus, as God covered this area with a thick darkness (Matt. 27:45).

The Bible also tells us, in case we did not know, that we are created with free will. Adam, the first man, could only do one thing to sin against God: he could eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This was the only thing which God told him not to do. Sin began when Adam exercised his volition toward this tree and against God. Today, we live in a world entrenched in sin; you have observed that every person you know sins (he or she does that which is wrong) and you know that you yourself sin as well. There is a second *tree* which God presents us: the cross (occasionally called a *tree* in the New Testament); and this tree—the cross of Jesus Christ—also invokes us to make a choice, to exercise our volition: if we believe in Jesus Christ—if we put our trust or our faith in Him—because of what He did for us on the cross, we are eternally saved. At the moment that we believe in Him, we begin our relationship with God. Adam could exercise his negative volition in only one way, by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; today, we can exercise positive volition in only one way, which is exercising faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the tree.

These basic themes—God’s perfect righteousness and justice, man’s fallen nature, and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ—are the fundamental concerns of the Bible, from cover to cover. This is the message of the Bible. There are a lot of details, history, genealogies, psalms, prophecies and doctrines contained in the Bible, but man’s fallen nature, God’s perfection, and salvation through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are the essential elements of the Bible. From the very beginning of the Bible, to the very end, these are its essential themes.

We see the Bible as one book (and, in one sense, it is), but it is a collection of dozens of books, poems, compositions and letters written over a period of at least 1600 years by dozens of authors. These authors were both rich and poor; they were political leaders, as well as shepherds; they were religious men as well as non-religious (i.e., they had varying degrees of formal religious training and were not always recognized as religious men); and they were well-known figures as well as obscure men. Men from every station of life wrote down the words which we read in the Bible.

The writing of the Bible took place while leading a host of Jews through the desert, while sitting on the throne of Israel, while tending sheep out in a lonely field, while imprisoned, while on a missionary journey, and while in between great wars against child-sacrificing heathen. Men wrote these words during times when they were elated and during times when they were distressed, depressed or stressed. Their writing styles may be complex, with thoughts and themes which continue for 20 or 40 verses; while others wrote in parallel thoughts; some wrote in prose and others wrote poetry; they wrote exactly the words which God spoke, and they wrote history as they observed it or according to the testimony of those who were there. The words of Scripture vary from being melodic, to matter-of-fact, to sarcastic, to a careful set of reasoned arguments, to historical narrative. We have the complex vocabularies and sentence structure of Moses, Luke and Paul and the absolutely simple structure and vocabulary of John.

Even the most severe critics of the Bible agree that the Bible was written in different places by many different men over a very long period of time and that the Bible is filled with a variety of writing styles and formats. The most severe critics would at least grant that the Bible was written over many hundreds of years by many different men, and most will acknowledge at least 1100 years passed between the writing of the first and last words of the Bible.

Even today, if you took the writings of dozens of men from a variety of countries, even over the short span of several hundred years, and put these writings together, you would end up with an anthology. There would be no beginning; there would be no focal point; there would be no shadow images pointing to things which would occur in the future. You would just have an anthology of writings, without a beginning or an end; without a focal point; and with a disjointed and contradictory philosophy at best. We would expect such a religious book to be filled with contrary themes and ideas (have you ever sat down at your family Thanksgiving dinner and began a discussion on religion?).

However, the Bible is quite different from an anthology. It has a beginning, an end; and it has a focal point. We find the same basic themes repeated again and again: that man is a sinner, separated from God; that God is perfect righteousness and justice; that man needs a Savior or a Mediator to stand between him and God; and that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ), Who is God come in the flesh, to mediate between God and man, to save man. Whether the author is Moses, David or Isaiah, who all wrote hundreds of years before Christ, or Paul, John or Peter, who wrote a few decades after the crucifixion, they all write about the same Jesus; they all write about the same fundamental themes.

Let's approach this from a different view: I challenge you to choose from the writings from the past Millennium and put together a set of writings by at least 20 different authors, a cohesive book, with a clear beginning, an unmistakable end; with a continuous narrative; and with a set of specific, religious themes which, when taken together, present the grand relationship between God and man. Your choice. You choose the authors, you put the books in whatever order. If you had to do that, the best you could come up with is a religious anthology, with some common themes. You might be able to come closer to this end, if you had full editing privileges, so that you could just edit out anything that you did not like. However, even with editing privileges, you will be able to put together a book with some common themes, and little else. Interestingly enough, as we will come to find out in a later study, the history of the preservation of the Bible precludes such wholesale editing.

Let me give you a more specific example: let's say you decided to put together the writings of those who believe in evolution. They all believe in one basic thing: macro-evolution (one specie of animal can evolve into another—a fish can become a reptile which can become a bird). However, that is where the agreement ends. When arguing against evolutionists, creationists and Intelligent Design believers often use their words against them. For almost any agreed upon principle of evolution, works of noted evolutionists can be cited which disagree. You would be surprised as to the amount of disagreement between evolutionists when it comes to human fossil remains—to what period of time do we assign this set of bones and to what human or pre-human family these bones belong are disagreements which are generally kept off the grid. But, my point is, you could not even take the writings of evolutionists, who have only been writing for a couple hundred years, and put together a cohesive book, with a beginning, an end and with a specific set of themes (beyond the general belief in macro-evolution).

Yet, the Bible is written by dozens of men with a great variety of backgrounds; and they wrote over a period of time which clearly exceeds 1000 years. Yet the Bible has a clear beginning, a clear end, a series of histories, and a plethora of common themes, which themes we will cover in more depth in the next lesson.

For the next two lessons, there was no logical place to divide them up, so I am sending out two lessons for the next two weeks.

What is listed below are specific themes found throughout the Bible, from cover to cover. The Scripture quoted in each instance is not an exhaustive list by any means, but a representative one, where my intent was to take representative passages from a wide range of authors and time frames. This is so that you can see that, even though the Bible was written by dozens of men over a period of 1000's of years, they seem to have all been of the same mind.

The Basic Themes of the Bible

Man is sinful; man is fallen; man is separated from God. People in the Bible are presented warts and all. They are real people. Even the greatest believers in the Bible are shown to fail.

Because man is separate from God and because man has sinned, man is sentenced to death.

Our good works, good intentions, and morality do not save us. The Bible is not a book which tells us how to behave in order to impress God. The universality of sin and God's penalty upon all of us is death in the Lake of Fire.

God is holy; this means that He is perfect justice and perfect righteousness.

Jesus Christ is holy; He is perfectly righteous and He is perfect justice.

God will send a Messiah/Mediator/Savior to man. The Savior sent by God is Jesus, His Son.

Jesus died on the cross and took upon Himself the penalty for our sins.

We are saved by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

These are not the only themes in the Bible, but these are the most fundamental.

Now, let's look at some of these fundamental themes and see how they are found throughout the Bible, from beginning to end.

I have mentioned several themes; let me give examples of what these authors have said concerning these basic themes. We will begin with *all men are sinful*.

I follow a certain convention when it comes to quoting Scripture: I use blue when quoting an Old Testament passage; red for a New Testament passage; and magenta when an Old Testament passage is quoted elsewhere in Scripture.

Man is Fallen—Man is Sinful—Man is Separated from God

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Unknown/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth (Gen. 6:11–12). This passage technically refers to a corruption of mankind, not just through sin, but by another means. However, the illustration is apt, as many things in the Old Testament illustrate essential truths found elsewhere in the Bible.
Job/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	Therefore, I despise myself, and I have repented on dust and ashes (Job 42:6).
David/ circa 1000 B.C.	The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. God looked down from Heaven on the sons of mankind, to see if there was any discerning, who was seeking God: Every one has turned aside, together they are corrupted, not one is doing good, not even one! (Psalm 53:1–3). I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Psalm 51:5).
Solomon/ circa 950 B.C.	For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin (Eccles. 7:20).
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	All we like sheep have gone astray; we have each one turned to his own way; and Jehovah made meet in Him the iniquity of all of us (Isa. 53:6).
Paul/ 56–58 A.D.	For we have charged both Jews and Greeks before, all with being under sin; according as it has been written, "There is not a righteous one, not even one!" "There is not one understanding; there is not one seeking God." All turned away, they became worthless together, not one is doing goodness, not so much as one!" (Rom. 3:9b–12; Paul is quoting Psalm 13:1–3). All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Therefore, since we have sinned, we stand guilty before God and are sentenced to death:

All Men are Condemned to Death

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Unknown/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Eating you may eat of every tree in the garden; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you may not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, in dying you will die (Gen. 2:16–17).
Ezekiel/ 593–570 B.C.	The soul that sins, it will die (Ezek. 18:4b).
Paul/ 56–58 A.D.	God's wrath is revealed from Heaven on all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 1:18 6:23).
John/ 95–96 A.D.	And I saw a Great White Throne, and the One sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled; and a place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, the small and the great, standing before God. And books were opened. And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead in it. And death and hell gave up the dead in them. And they were each judged according to their works. And death and hell were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found having been written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11–15). This is the final end for those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

Not only do we stand guilty before God, but there is nothing that we can do about it by way of works, morality or good deeds.

Our Morality, Good Deeds and Works will not Save Us

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Unknown/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	And in the end of days, it happened, Cain brought to Jehovah an offering of the fruit of the ground. However, Jehovah did not have respect to Cain and to his offering. And Cain glowed with anger, and his face fell (Gen. 4:3, 5).

Our Morality, Good Deeds and Works will not Save Us

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Job/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous? (Job. 15:14).
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	But we are all as the unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as a menstruation cloth. And we all fade as a leaf, and like the wind our iniquities take us away (Isa. 64:6).
Jesus/ 30–33 A.D.	Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:28–29).
Paul/ 61–63 A.D.	For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast (Eph. 2:8–9).
John/ 95–96 A.D.	Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15). Man is condemned to the Lake of Fire based upon his works.

This theme in itself is revolutionary. How many times have you heard the lie, *if you are good, you will go to heaven and if you are bad, you will go to hell?* Every religion developed by man offers up some system of works by which you placate or ingratiate God. The Bible is just the opposite. The Bible teaches that there is no set of good works which will gain God's favor.

The character of God:

God is Holy: God is Perfect Righteousness and Absolute Justice

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Asaph/ circa 1000 B.C.	And the heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge (Psalm 50:6).
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	For as the heavens are high from the earth, so My ways are high from your ways, and My thoughts from your thoughts (Isa. 55:9).
Ezra/ circa 450 B.C.	O Jehovah, God of Israel, You are righteous (Ezra 9:15).
Jesus/ 25–30 A.D.	But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matt. 6:33).
John/ 95–96 A.D.	Lord God Almighty, Your judgments are true and righteous (Rev. 16:7b).

The Messiah to come:

God will Raise up a Messiah/Savior/Mediator to Man

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Job/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall rise on the earth at the last (Job 9:25).
Moses/ circa 1400 B.C.	Jehovah your God shall raise up to you a prophet from among you, of your brothers, one like me; you shall listen to Him (Deut. 18:15).
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	For a Child is born; to us a Son is given; and the government is on His shoulders; and His name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).
Malachi/ 450–425 B.C.	Listen, I will send My messenger, and He will clear the way before Me. And Jehovah, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Angel of the Covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He comes, says Jehovah of Hosts (Mal. 3:1).
Matthew/ 45–60 A.D.	And as he thought upon these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take to you Mary as your wife. For that in her is fathered of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a son, and you will call His name Jesus: for He will save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:20–21).

Jesus is this Messiah:

Jesus is the Savior/Mediator of Mankind, the Messiah Promised

Author/Time Period	Scripture
David/ circa 1000 B.C.	Sing to Y ^e howah, and praise [or, <i>celebrate</i>] His name; every day, announce [the good news] of His deliverance [or, <i>proclaim His Jesus</i>] (Psalm 96:2). I have exegeted this verse, word by word, in the Hebrew, and it says, "Proclaim His Jesus" in the Hebrew.
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	For a Child is born; to us a Son is given; and the government is on His shoulders; and His name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).
Luke/ 64–70 A.D. Jesus/ 25–30 A.D.	And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went in to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And unrolling the book, He found the place where it was written [and He read these words], "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me; because of this He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and new sight to the blind, to set at liberty those having been crushed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And rolling up the book, returning it to the attendant, He sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:16–21).
Paul/ 56–58 A.D.	Christ [Messiah] is God over all, and is blessed forever (Rom. 9:5b).
Unknown/ circa 60 A.D.	Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 3:1–3).
Paul/ 63–67 A.D.	There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1Tim. 2:5).

I should point out that *Christ* means *Messiah*; and every time you say the name *Jesus Christ*, you are affirming that Jesus is the Messiah.

The character of Jesus:

Jesus, the Messiah, is Holy; He is Righteousness and Just	
Author/Time Period	Scripture
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	For a Child is born; to us a Son is given; and the government is on His shoulders; and His name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).
Jeremiah/ 626–580 B.C.	This is His name by which He shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6b).
Pontius Pilate/ 28–33 A.D.	So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, I find no fault in this man (Luke 23:4).
John/ circa 90 A.D.	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us. And we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and of truth (John 1:1, 14).
Peter/ 55–64 A.D.	Jesus committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth (1Peter 2:22).

The basis of our salvation is Christ's death on the cross; by His death, we are saved. His death for our sins was revealed in many ways in the Old Testament.

Jesus Died on the Cross for our Sins	
Author/Time Period	Scripture
Unknown Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	God clothes Adam and the woman in animal skins, which indicates that an animal was sacrificed in order to cover them. In the Old Testament, since Jesus had not yet come, their sins are said to be covered rather than forgiven. Gen. 3:21.
Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son whom he loves (Isaac). It is possible that Abraham even took his son to mountain of Golgotha to offer him up (Golgotha is where our Lord was sacrificed, and it would have been a 3 day journey for Abraham). The moment before Abraham is to cut the throat of his son, God provides a substitutionary sacrifice. This all represents God giving His Son on our behalf, to bear our sins as a substitute for us. Gen. 22.

Jesus Died on the Cross for our Sins

Author/Time Period	Scripture
David/ circa 1000 B.C.	Psalm 22 provides us more details about the crucifixion of our Lord than do any of the gospels. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me, from the words of My groaning? But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see Me mock Me; they make mouths at Me; they wag their heads; "He trusts in the LORD; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, for He delights in Him!" Many bulls encompass Me; strong bulls of Bashan surround Me; they open wide their mouths at Me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to my jaws; You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass Me; a company of evildoers encircles Me; they have pierced My hands and feet--I can count all My bones--they stare and gloat over Me; they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots (Psalm 22:1, 6–8, 12–18).
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD; "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. My Servant, will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities (Isa. 1:18 53:4–6, 11b).
Zechariah/ 520–518 B.C.	"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him Whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn." (Zech. 12:10).

Jesus Died on the Cross for our Sins

Author/Time Period	Scripture
<p>Matthew/ 45–60 A.D.</p> <p>Jesus/ 25–30 A.D.</p>	<p>Jesus made it clear to Peter that the crucifixion was absolutely necessary. From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." (Matt. 16:21–23).</p>
<p>Peter/ 55–64 A.D.</p>	<p>He personally bore our sins in His [own] body on the tree [as on an altar and offered Himself on it], that we might die (cease to exist) to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed (1Peter 2:24; paraphrasing Isa. 53:5).</p>
<p>Paul/ 65–70 A.D.</p>	<p>We are waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works (Titus 2:13–14).</p>

The most important aspect of our salvation is confirmed by Jesus being brought back from the dead, to live evermore to make intercession on our behalf. This tells us that God the Father accepted the work of Jesus, His Son, as efficacious in the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus Rises from the Dead and Sits at the Right Hand of the Father

Author/Time Period	Scripture
<p>Job/ Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)</p>	<p>For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God (Job 19:25–26). The fact that we will be resurrected is a doctrine of the Old Testament. As we find out in the New Testament, our Lord's resurrection is the basis for our resurrection.</p>

Jesus Rises from the Dead and Sits at the Right Hand of the Father

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Unknown (David?)/ circa 1050 B.C.	When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, and then she asked Saul, "Why did you deceive me? You are Saul!" But the king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" "I see a spirit form coming up out of the earth," the woman answered (1Sam. 28:12–13). Samuel was raised from the dead temporarily, not for the benefit of Saul, but to draw further parallels between Samuel and Jesus to come.
David/ circa 1000 B.C.	You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your Holy One see corruption (Psalm 16:10). The LORD declared to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool." (Psalm 110:1).
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust! For you will be covered with the morning dew, and the earth will bring forth the departed spirits (Isa. 26:19).
Jesus/ 30–33 A.D.	Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (He was speaking about the temple of His body) (John 2:19, 21).
John Mark/ writing in 60–70 A.D. of what he heard from Peter	When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so they could go and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?" Looking up, they observed that the stone--which was very large--had been rolled away. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; they were amazed and alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he told them. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has been resurrected! He is not here! See the place where they put Him" (Mark 16:1–6).

Jesus Rises from the Dead and Sits at the Right Hand of the Father

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Paul/ 55–56 A.D.	Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain (1Cor. 15:1–6, 12–14).
Unknown/ circa 60 A.D.	The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but He [Jesus] holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:23–25).
John/ 90–96 A.D.	When I saw Him [Jesus Christ], I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1:17–18).

How are we saved?

God Will Forgive Us; Salvation is by Faith in Christ Jesus

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Unknown Unknown (before 1440 B.C.)	And Abraham believed the LORD, and He [God] counted it to him [credited this faith to his account] as righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

God Will Forgive Us; Salvation is by Faith in Christ Jesus

Author/Time Period	Scripture
Isaiah/ 740–680 B.C.	"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD; "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." My Servant, will justify for many, and He will bear their iniquities (Isa. 1:18 53:11b).
Ezekiel/ 593–570 B.C.	Then I will sprinkle clean waters on you, and you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all your defilement and from all your idols. And I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give to you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them (Ezek. 36:25–27). Although this passage specifically refers to Israel, this is applicable to mankind in general.
Jesus/ 30–33 A.D.	"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (John 3:16, 18, 36).
Paul/ 56–58 A.D.	For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." (Rom. 4:3–8; Paul quotes from Gen. 15:6 and Psalm 32:1–2).
Paul/ 65–70 A.D.	[God's love and grace come to us] not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).
John/ circa 90 A.D.	Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).

This is the most important theme of the Bible; the ones which come before essentially set us up for this.

The Bible has many themes, but these I believe to be the most central. These themes stretch all the way back to Genesis and the book of Job, which are probably the first two books written. Conservatives place the writing of these books to be around 1400 B.C., taken from the oral traditions. Skeptics who are antagonistic to Christianity place them a few hundred years later. I believe that they were written prior to 2000 B.C. (at least the majority of Genesis). In any case, we have a series of themes not found anywhere in any other set of religious books. We have a surprising continuity of themes, which is not found outside of the Word of God. As I suggested before, if you could handpick the religious writings of men over the past 1000 years, you would end up with an anthology, not a complete and cohesive work, with thematic elements found throughout, but not found outside of Christianity. It is important to recognize that, most of the essential themes of Scripture are not found anywhere else but in the Bible (and literature which discusses the Bible).

I hope that these two lessons allowed you to appreciate the unity and the continuity of Biblical theology. This, in itself, suggests divine involvement.

Introductory Lesson 4: The Bible

The Old Testament

The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. We may think of these as the Old and New Covenants or the Old and New Contracts (between God and man). These portions of Scripture cannot stand alone—much of what is foretold in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. The Old Testament alone tells of a Messiah to come, the New Testament is about the Messiah. The Old Testament tells about the continual animal sacrifices which are offered for sin—animals without spot and without blemish. In the New Testament, we have the Lamb without spot or blemish—Jesus Christ—being sacrificed on our behalf. The Old Testament merely covers over sins; in the New Testament, sins are forgiven. In the Old Testament, a great Kingdom is promised to the Jews; in the New Testament, Jesus offers this Kingdom to the Jews.

The Old Testament was written by dozens of authors over a period of at least a 1000 years (and, in my opinion, over a period of 2000–3000 years). Most believe the text of the Old Testament to be written somewhere between the years of 1440 and 400 B.C. I think that portions of the Bible (Genesis and Job) go back much further than this, to as far back as 3000 B.C. or before.

Most believe that Moses wrote at least 4 of the first 5 books of the Bible; that Job wrote Job, the Isaiah wrote Isaiah, etc. We have men from incredibly different backgrounds all contributing to the Old Testament. Some of these authors were:

.....
The authors of the Bible were very different from one another.
.....

Some of the Authors of the Bible

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Moses	Moses was a crown prince of Egypt, even though he is born a Jew. He leaves Egypt after killing a man and becomes a nomad for 40 years. He then returns to Egypt to lead his people (the Jews) to the Land of Promise (the land of Canaan, which Jews would become the nation Israel).
Joshua	Joshua was a general of the first army of Israel, who leads the Jews into the land of Canaan to conquer it.
Samuel	Samuel was a priest from outside of the family of Levi (which is unique), and a prophet (one who speaks the Word of God) who helps Israel choose her first king.
David	David was a shepherd boy who becomes the king over all Israel, who is said to be a man after God's own heart. David was a shepherd boy, an accomplished musician, a warrior and a king.
Solomon	Solomon was the third king of Israel who was a genius in many fields, from architecture to the art of chasing of women. Solomon led a very flawed existence for much of his life, and also wrote several books of the Old Testament (some of these, like Proverbs, were based upon his being taught Bible doctrine by his father, David).
Job	Job was one of the richest people in the world in his time, who lost everything, including his health, at the hands of Satan.
Esther	Esther was a Jewish woman who, when exiled with the rest of the Jews, became the queen of the Persian empire.
Hosea	Hosea was a man completely and fully in love with his wife, which wife continued throughout much of their younger lives, to be unfaithful to him (as the nation of Jews were unfaithful to their God).
Amos	Amos was a shepherd and keeper of a fig orchard.
Micah	Micah was probably a peasant farmer.

These are only some of the authors of the Old Testament, and they are different as night and day; their writing styles are different, the topics which they cover are different, but everyone of them, in some way or another, speaks of the basic themes of Scripture: fallen man, a righteous God, and Jesus, the Mediator between God and man.

If you examine any religion or cult with a specific set of holy writings, there is usually one person who writes the inspired word; and who is also the original leader: Mohammed and Islam; Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy and Christian Science; Joseph Smith and Mormonism.

There are 2 things in this area which differentiate the Old Testament from all other religious writings. For most if not all religions or cults, there is one principle charismatic founder who both founds, promotes and writes the doctrines of their religion. Mohammed founds Islam; Buddha founds Buddhism; Mormonism, a slight exception to this rule, has essentially 2 founders. Secondly, a religion or cult appears to come fully developed on the scene within one generation. The religion may or may not continue to grow after the death of its charismatic leader, but it is generally a full-blown movement before its founder has died. This is not the case of the Old Testament. Dozens of authors wrote these books over at least a period of a 1000 years, and yet there is this marvelous cohesiveness from the beginning to the end. The movement of Old Testament believers in Jehovah (Y^ehowah) Elohim seems to come and go throughout the Old Testament; sometimes, the people show great faith and sometimes they are great failures. However, there does not appear to be a beginning for Old Testament faith in Jehovah Elohim, unless you go all the way back to the first man and woman. There are charismatic leaders in the Old Testament (principally Moses, David, Isaiah and Jeremiah), but they neither found Jehovah worship nor is Jehovah worship completely dependent on any of these men.

Each time a new charismatic leader in the Bible comes on the scene, he does not give the worship of Jehovah Elohim his own personal spin. The God and the doctrines of the Old Testament remain quite constant, whether taught by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, or Jeremiah. However, their personalities are quite different, and the authority of their leadership positions is quite different. Yet, they all spoke the Word of God.

Christian cults, on the other hand, generally begin within one generation, and are founded by a very charismatic leader who sets down all of their peculiar doctrines all at once. The end result is a form of Christianity—a cult, in fact—where a particular spin is put upon Christian doctrine, which spin involves two things: (1) an indulgence of the proclivities of the founder, who is often very charismatic; and (2) a set of works by which to gain God's favor.

The people of Israel often strayed from the worship of Jehovah Elohim; however, they never splintered into a variety of denominations—those who followed the precepts of Moses versus those who follow the teachings of Isaiah. When the people of Israel strayed from the worship of Jehovah, it would be to the worship of some set of gods from a nearby nation. God would discipline them and bring them back to Himself (as we find over and over again in the book of the Judges).

If dozens of authors over a period of 1000 or more years were enjoined to put down their religious thoughts, the end result would be a religious anthology. Even if these authors were specifically required to cover a fixed set of topics within their writings, the result would still be a religious anthology with tremendous disagreements between authors. And, if these authors were allowed to read what others had already written, their most natural inclination would be to say, "Well, Charlie Brown says this, but I don't find his opinion to be credible. Here's what I think..." The end result would be a potpourri of religious ideas and themes and differing, if not contentious, opinions. We would not expect there to be a

consistent witness or a consistent set of viewpoints offered on the most disagreed upon subject in the world, religion.

There is one more thing which we would find—some writers would not be authoritative. When I completely exegete a passage, I sometimes give several opinions as to the meaning of the passage; and when I compare certain texts which are different, there are times when I do not feel qualified to make a call on which text is accurate. There is one constant among these writers of the Old Testament (and of the New): they are absolutely authoritative about the Word of God which they speak to the people. Please understand my point here: I am not saying that, because a person speaks with authority, that they are good or bad teachers, or that is when differentiates a man of God from someone else. I am saying that, the writers of Scripture all spoke with authority, and yet they are unified in what they have to say. Again, if you gathered up the writings of a few dozen men over the period of a thousand years, some would be authoritative and some would not.

Much of what these men consistently taught is seen as counter-intuitive to most religious and secular thought. That God would forgive His people again and again and again—there is a point at which even some contemporary Christians think people cross the line to a place where they cannot be forgiven by God. There are murderers in the Old Testament who receive forgiveness from God; there are men who have spectacular failures in their lives (David and Solomon); yet most of us recall that David is a man after God's own heart and we recall Solomon's great wisdom.

The idea that man ought to bring a perfect lamb with him to the Tabernacle and allow the priest to slit the lamb's throat is an odd religious practice (it was more common during ancient times, but it came to a halt about the time that Jesus died for our sins on the cross).

That man has a sin nature and that it is his nature to sin against God is an odd doctrine. Many Christian churches today [incorrectly] teach that believers can reach some unspecified state of godliness and that those who don't, can lose their salvation. Many secular teachers see man as the ultimate power on this earth, able to do anything; powerful enough to even change the weather of planet earth and to raise or lower the oceans.

The most counter-intuitive proposition found in the Bible is that Abraham could merely believe Jehovah and this was credited to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). Islam, as one example, requires their followers to pray 5 times a day; Mormonism has a missionary requirement of its followers; Buddhism has requirements of those who follow Buddha—and yet, Abraham does nothing more than believe God, and that counts as righteousness to God.

The Old Testament, book after book, offers up Jehovah Elohim as a perfect God—righteous and just; and man is seen consistently as fallen and continually sinning against God; and that salvation comes by faith in Jehovah Elohim. The Old Testament also contains the promise of the Messiah to come, to be called *God with us*. The book of Daniel even provides a timeline specifically telling us when Messiah would come.

In the previous two lessons, I covered the most fundamental teachings of the Bible, and how these doctrines remain consistent from the very beginning to the very end of the Bible. What is begun in the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New.

I should point out that there are disagreements on the authorship of the various books of the Old Testament. I personally believe that the book of Genesis was the work of many men, and that the text was passed along either orally or in written form (or both). Moses may have edited this book, but I don't believe that he is the actual author of Genesis (and nowhere in the Bible is he said to be the author of Genesis). There is one opinion, held by many scholars, that a group of people wrote the books of Moses, and then these different writings were integrated and edited together by someone many years later. Personally, I believe this to be a very faulty theory, but I will not go into that in this study.

However, what all scholars agree is, the Old Testament was written over a lengthy period of time by a variety of authors, and that it was clearly completed hundreds of years before the New Testament. You may have heard of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These are very ancient manuscripts only recently discovered this past century which date back to approximately 100 years before Christ. These manuscripts confirm the accuracy of the text of the Old Testament which we have today. In fact, there are fewer differences between those ancient manuscripts and others which we have from 1000 years later than there are between older and newer Shakespeare manuscripts, which were produced *after* the printing press was invented.

Another reason that we know that the Old Testament was written well in advance of the New is, this was translated from Hebrew to Greek somewhere between the years 300 and 100 B.C. This is called the Septuagint, and it was the Bible used by the Apostles and the early church.

There are those who think that someone or some organization (like the Catholic Church) somehow changed great portions of the Bible in order to reflect their particular theology. This is impossible. We have several divergent groups which preserved the text of the Old Testament. There were the Masorite Jews, who were careful in making copies of the Old Testament—their life's work—and knew even the number of letters in each book of the Bible. There were at least two different cities where these Masoretes lived and did their work. There were the early Christians, originally persecuted by the Jews and the Romans, who preserved the Old and New Testaments, primarily using the Greek text of the Old Testament (which translation was made about 200 B.C.). The Catholic Church preserved the Latin text, and, in the studies which I have done, Jerome's translation of the Old Testament into Latin, is an extremely accurate ancient translation of the Old Testament. There were several other groups who preserved copies of the Old Testament. There were ancient libraries which had the Old Testament books (like the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were in the library of a religious group). Some of these groups were antagonistic toward one another; but mostly, there was little interaction between these various groups. It would have been just as difficult in the past to make wholesale changes to the text of the Old Testament as it would to make such changes today. Too many people have Bibles, so

changing the text to reflect this or that theological viewpoint is impossible today and would have been impossible in ancient times as well for essentially the same reasons.

My point is, with reference to the Old Testament, there was no large organization which oversaw and preserved the canon of the Old Testament. There were as many as 10 completely separate organizations who oversaw and preserved the canon of the Old Testament; as well as hundreds of libraries possessing all or portions of the Old Testament text (the Dead Sea Scrolls being one of these libraries). Therefore, there is no way that some group at some point in time had a set of religious ideas which they imposed on the Bible by changing the text of the Old Testament.

And, so there is no confusion, we have a number of Hebrew manuscripts (Hebrew is the original language of the Old Testament, along with Aramaic in a couple of books). Today, in the age of the internet, anyone who wants to view the ancient Hebrew text of the Old Testament may do so. Other ancient translations of the Old Testament are also available online, as well as in book form (one can find the Greek or the Latin text of the Old Testament online quite easily, as well as translations of this text).

I personally study whole books of the Old Testament word-by-word, and compare the Masoretic text with the most ancient translations. Now, there are differences, but these differences tend to be quite trivial (for instance, the Latin adds an *and* where there was none previously). In the entire book of Samuel, whose text is known to be the least accurate in the Old Testament, I have found not even a handful of differences between the ancient manuscripts which have any real affect on the actual meaning of a verse. The most striking that I have come across is, King Saul calls for the *Ark of God* to be brought to him, but some ancient translations read the *Ephod of God* instead. *That* is a real difference. The words are quite similar in the Hebrew text, which explains how they were possibly confounded. Furthermore, we are able to reasonably deduce that the correct text is the *Ephod of God*, as that would have been more apropos to the narrative. That example is the most dramatic textual difference in all of 1Samuel, even though King Saul never actually used the Ephod of God in the passage. There are many other textual differences, to be sure, but none of these differences have any affect on any major or minor doctrine.

My point in all of this is, we know with great certainty what 96–99% of the Old Testament text is. We quite frankly have far more difficulty translating certain words and phrases and fully apprehending their meaning than we do with the actual accuracy of the text itself.

The Old Testament which we have today is based upon dozens of manuscripts coming from different continents, and spread out over at least a 1400 year time period (that is a conservative estimate; I personally believe that the writing of the Old Testament actually occurred over a 3000 year time period). As I have mentioned, there are some textual problems, but far fewer than we find in Shakespear's writings. We do not find any evidence of, for instance, of this or that group appropriating the Old Testament and making wholesale changes to it. The Old Testament preserved by the Catholic church differs little from that preserved by the Jewish Masorettes, which varies little from the Greek text found

in dozens of ancient libraries. What is amazing is how closely these various texts, written even in different languages, agree.

I have mentioned these central themes of Scripture, of God offering up His Son to pay for our sins. Although we associate this with the New Testament, we find shadow images of our Lord's sacrifice back in Gen. 22 Psalm 22 and Isa. 53, 3 chapters written in completely different eras, all of which point to Jesus dying for our sins.

We divide the English Bible up into 3 sections:

The 3 Sections of the Old Testament

the historical section begins with Genesis and runs through Nehemiah. These books are roughly put into the order in which they were written, which also puts them roughly into a chronological order. Chronicles (which we break up into 1 and 2Chronicles) runs parallel to Samuel and Kings (which we divide into 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 and 2Kings). Samuel and Kings appear to have been written during the era in which these events took place; Chronicles seems to have been assembled hundreds of years after the fact. Esther, the first of the wisdom section, chronologically, would precede Ezra and Nehemiah, the last books of the historical section.

The 2nd section in the Old Testament is the literature books. Job appears to be written almost as early as Genesis, and is unique in the Scripture for two reasons: we get a very good look at our adversary Satan; and Job and his friends discuss God and what our relationship to God actually is. Much of the book of Job is a theological discussion. The rest of the literature section (Esther, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon) are primarily written by David and Solomon around 1050–950 B.C. and they provide us with a unique look into the souls of believers of that era.

The 3rd section of our English Bibles is the prophets, and they seem to have just been put in a random order, primarily based upon length. Each prophet lived during a specific time period and was recognized by the people of Israel as a prophet. Prophets of God gave messages which applied to the near future of those to whom they spoke, as well as to the far future, speaking about the Messiah to come and Israel during the final portion of the Age of Israel, called the Tribulation. Many prophecies do double duty—they not only apply to the people and the times during which they were proclaimed and then written, but also to a future era beyond the time of those who heard these prophecies. Some of these prophets are easily tied to specific historical events (like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel) and some seem to be rather generic (Joel, Obadiah, and Habakkuk). What I mean by generic is, these prophets could have come along almost any time during Israel's history. However, some of their prophecies were Messianic and quite fantastic.

The Hebrew Bible has the same books, but in a different order and in different sections.

Speaking of the Messiah—and most books of the Old Testament speak of the Messiah in one way or another—the book of Daniel even gives us a timetable where tells us to the day when Jesus would walk into Jerusalem to the Passover when He offers up Himself as the Lamb of God, to pay for our sins.

The Hebrew Bible has the same books, but a different categorization and a much different order (I've had it explained to me on many occasions and it still seems weird to me). However, book by book, the text is consistent.

If you examined with me a chapter out of Samuel, where I examine this book word by word, and cover the differences between the major ancient texts (Hebrew, Latin, Greek and Syriac), what would strike you first is how trivial these differences are. Most of the differences are so trivial as to make the average reader ask, "Why mention this at all? It does not change the meaning of the verse."

We may conclude that the text of the Old Testament was accurately maintained throughout history; that the authors of the Old Testament were a very diverse group of men; and that they still appeared to speak with one voice.

Introductory Lesson 5: The Bible

The New Testament

400 years after the final few words of the Old Testament were penned, Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, is born. This time period is quite important. Even the most critical of historians (those who actually know something about history) must admit that the Old Testament Scriptures preceded the New Testament Scriptures by at least a few hundred years, even if they deny everything else about the Old Testament. The reason this is important is, all of the prophecies about the Messiah are clearly written before Jesus came. That anyone could fulfill these prophecies is quite fantastic.

Again, we know this for these reasons: (1) There existed libraries of these books before the time of Christ, e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls. (2) The Hebrew text was translated into Greek before the time of Christ. (3) Ancient historians testify as to the accuracy and time frame of the Old Testament (e.g., Josephus).

The New Testament was written by 8 or 9 authors over a period of about 50–60 years. One of the fascinating and unique aspects of Scripture is, (1) Jesus had a very short public ministry (about 3½ years); (2) He spoke His words in a very small geographical area; and (3) Jesus did not write any of the books in the Bible. The Bible is all about Jesus—from cover to cover; Jesus is quoted extensively in the Bible; and the Bible is called the mind of Christ; but Jesus Himself did not write any of the Bible. He chose to have man testify as to Who He was. This is very different from all other religions. Religious figures who found a religion or a cult have a ministry which lasts for several decades (a minimum of 2 or 3 decades) because these figures must establish themselves as an important religious figure, and then they need to get their message out there. This takes a long time. Furthermore, other religious figures need to take their message geographically as far as

possible, so most of these religious figures covered many square miles; they have to spread their message out as far as they possibly can—but not Jesus. Jesus confined Himself not only to a relatively short period of time in history, but also to a very limited geographical area. Furthermore, all other religious leaders are flawed. Joseph Smith had many wives; Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy changed husbands rather frequently; Buddha left his wife and family in order to walk around and get philosophical; Mohammed personally murdered hundreds of people. Jesus is presented as flawless, as the unblemished Lamb of God.

The New Testament is divided up into the gospels, the book of Acts, the epistles (letters to the churches) and the book of Revelation. *Gospel* means *good news* and the first 4 books of the New Testament are the *Good News [about Jesus]*. These are 4 different men who all bear witness to Jesus Christ. Before I knew very much, I wondered, *why 4 gospels? Why do we need 4 people to tell us about the life of Jesus?* We need this because, historical events in history are made known to us by eyewitnesses to these events. The more eyewitnesses to a particular event who record what they see, the more likely it is that this event took place as they say it did. You would be amazed at the threadbare evidence which we have for every historical event prior to, let's say, 1600 A.D. Often we have either an eyewitness, or someone who spoke to an eyewitness; and the writing which we often possess is hundreds of years removed from the event itself, as a copy of a copy of a copy of the original writing, which may not have been by someone who actually observed the event itself.

The 4 men who wrote the 4 gospels certainly understood just how incredible these few years had been—God chose to come to this earth as a man and walk among us. No event in history could be more important; and therefore, they were all moved to write about it. What is interesting is, no one wrote books to dispute the gospels. No one came along and said, “No, it did not happen this way.” Many people were quite hostile to Christianity and to Jesus Christ, but no one wrote during this era disputing the facts of the gospels, during an era where writing and libraries were becoming more and more common; and during an era where anti-Christian literature would have been well-received.

There were those who had philosophic differences who wrote around this era and soon thereafter—the humanity of Jesus was questioned for hundreds of years—large groups of gnostics and others accepted that Jesus was God, but they had trouble believing that He was truly man. Some even had difficulties believing that Jesus was real flesh and blood. Some taught that He was an apparition (but a real apparition) or an immaterial figure, because no man could do what He did. However, the historicity of the gospels and His Deity were not questioned for several hundred years (if memory serves, His Deity was not questioned until after 1700 A.D.).

Two of the gospels were written by eyewitnesses—by Apostles who were there and actually saw what happened. Matthew, a Jewish tax collector and John, a Jewish fisherman both observed Jesus from the beginning of His ministry and wrote about what they saw within a few decades of their observations. We have copies of their writings which date within about 100 years of their writing their accounts. That is quite unusual

insofar as historical evidence goes—having two accounts by two eyewitnesses with copies of their accounts in our possession today, written less than 200 years of their writing their account.

Interestingly enough, these two accounts could not be more different. Even though Matthew was generally despised by his fellow Jews, because he collected taxes for the Roman government, he was extremely knowledgeable about the Scriptures, and, next to Paul and the writer of Hebrews, showed a more thorough understanding of the Old Testament than any other New Testament writer. So, more often than not, when Matthew observed something that our Lord did which fulfilled historical prophecy, he made written note of that.

John, on the other hand, had a very limited vocabulary in the Greek in which he wrote. He also was more of a people person than Matthew was, and if you want to know anything about the other Apostles, the book of John is where you go for this information. Matthew put together an account of the events in our Lord's ministry in roughly a chronological way, with emphasis upon our Lord fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies. John was much more topical, and certain things which our Lord said struck him, and John made note of these things. John recalled those things which Jesus taught about the Church Age; Matthew wrote about Jesus' teachings on the Tribulation.

John also seemed to have an agenda of sorts. One of the cults of his day were the gnostics, and what we find in the book of John and in his first epistle are words and thoughts which appear to be directed toward gnostic thinking. Where there *appeared* to be some agreement between what gnostics taught and the truth, John would bring this out; and then he would suddenly indicate where they were wrong in their thinking. If you are unfamiliar with gnostic philosophy, you would not notice this. However, time and time again, it is clear that John is speaking to or thinking about gnosticism.

John Mark (who wrote the Gospel of Mark) was closely associated with Peter and he wrote down what Peter told him about the ministry of Jesus. Given this close association, John Mark may have come into contact with other Apostles for their input as well. Mark's gospel is more of a utilitarian gospel and an action gospel. What Christ does is often covered as much as what He says. This approach comports well with the personality of Peter, who tended to be active and impulsive. There are some remarkable similarities between Matthew's and Mark's gospel, and it unclear whether one depended upon the other one for some of their information. Although Mark undoubtedly knew Matthew, it is not clear whether Mark interviewed Matthew; but Mark wrote what we may understand as Peter's gospel. Given that Peter was more a man of action than a man of words, it makes sense that a close associate would write his gospel.

Luke is the only Gentile to write a book of the Bible—he writes the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Let me caveat that with, Ruth may have written the book of Ruth, and, although she became a Jew, she was originally a Moabite. Esther, who may have written the book of Esther, was a Jew, but was thoroughly entrenched in a Gentile culture.

Luke is a very methodical historian. He had access to those who observed our Lord and those who were around in the early years of the church, and he made every effort to put together a chronological gospel of our Lord, pulling together whatever material that he could find, and filling in information with, presumably, interviews with eyewitnesses. Luke probably used the books of Matthew and Mark to write his gospel, but not the book of John, as John wrote his gospel last, several decades later. Therefore, we have a lot of similarity and overlap in the first 3 gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The book of John covers the same material, follows the same person as Jesus, but it is a whole different book. The Greek of the book of John is the most simple of all the books of the Bible; and yet, his thoughts are the most profound.

Luke also wrote the book of Acts, which is a chronological history of the early church. The very length of his gospel and the book of Acts make Luke the author to write the greatest portion of New Testament Scripture.

The Apostles went from city to city to spread the good news of Jesus and of salvation by faith in Him. Paul is the most well-known for this, and, about a third of the way through the book of Acts, Paul takes center stage. Paul was not originally a disciple of Jesus. In fact, Paul persecuted Christians. Jesus came to Paul when he was out pursuing more believers, and struck Paul down (Jesus appeared to Paul long after the resurrection). Paul knew Who Jesus was, and became a believer. Like most people of the Bible, then there was a time of preparation (a few years) for Paul before he went out and proclaimed Jesus.

At this point, when Paul comes to the forefront, we are told less and less about the remaining 11 Apostles. We know the churches which Paul founded, and we may reasonably assume that the other Apostles were engaged in the same activity. They soon recognized Paul's sincerity and the accuracy of his teaching, and Paul was taken in as a brother.

What Paul would do is, he would go to a city (generally a Gentile city where there were some Jews) and he would proclaim Christ. He would set up a local church and try to get them set up with a pastor as well. Then, within a few months, he would go off to another city. He was essentially an evangelist, but an evangelist who had a profound understanding of Scripture and the era in which he lived. When the church experienced problems, became confused about doctrines, or broke into factions, Paul would write them letters in order to straighten them out. Several other Apostles and church leaders wrote letters as well, to churches or to groups in general (e.g., the Hebrews). Our Church Age doctrine comes primarily from the epistles (these letters written to local churches or to groups of believers).

The final book in the Bible is the Revelation, which is a vision that John has while exiled to Patmos Island. This vision is broken down into two parts: messages from the Living Christ to the churches and visions of the times to come (the Tribulation and Millennium).

The preservation of the New Testament is, in part, related to the Old Testament preservation; but has some very specific history. The Church Age begins with a number of local churches being established throughout the ancient world, and these new believers in Christ face a number of problems, including persecution by the Roman authorities and infiltration by those who were antagonistic to the church and its doctrine. What these churches did was, informally, insofar as we can tell, recognized which writings were important, and they would copy and disseminate these writings to other churches. At first, this was probably a fairly disorganized process. However, the books and letters with authority were eventually recognized by various councils. In any case, the end result for us today is, we have a whopping 26,000 hand-copied complete and partial manuscripts which we have found to date. Some of these manuscripts date back to the 2nd century. We also have a litany of early church fathers who correspond with one another or who wrote their own books and sermons, and in these writings, they quote the New Testament Scriptures as authoritative. My understanding is, if all of our 26,000 manuscripts suddenly disappeared, we could reconstruct about 98–99% of the New Testament simply from the writings of the early church fathers.

	WHEN WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NO. OF COPIES
CAESER	100-44B.C.	900A.D.	1,000YRS	10
LIVY	59B.C.-A.D.17			20
PLATO	427-347B.C.	900A.D.	1,200YRS	7
TACITUS	100A.D.	1,100A.D.	1,000YRS	20
PLINY THE YOUNGER	61-113A.D.	850A.D.	750YRS	7
THUCYDIDES	460-400B.C.	900A.D.	1,300YRS	8
SUETONIUS	75-160A.D.	950A.D.	800YRS	8
HERODOTUS	480-425B.C.	900A.D.	1,300YRS	8
SOPHOCLES	496-406B.C.	1,000A.D.	1,400YRS	100
LUCRETIUS	DIED 55B.C.*		1,100YRS	2
CATULLUS	54B.C.	1,550A.D.	1,600YRS	3
EURIPIDES	480-406B.C.	1,100A.D.	1,500YRS	9
ARISTOTLE	384-322B.C.	1,100A.D.	1,400YRS	5
ARISTOPHANES	385BC	900A.D.	1,200YRS	10

<http://www.carewinnipeg.com/ManuscriptEvidencefortheNT.html> originally from Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

This plethora of ancient manuscripts so close to the date of the original writings is unheard of with regards to ancient world literature. Ancient literature from the same era as the Bible is based upon a handful of manuscripts (1–20 for most of them) removed from the original writing by, on average, 1000 years or more. Our sense of ancient history is based primarily upon these ancient writings.¹ If we were to dismiss the Old and New Testaments as not having enough eyewitnesses or not having enough manuscripts to recommend them as accurate, then we would have to dismiss all ancient history as completely and totally unknown. All that we know about history prior to, say, 1600 A.D. is based upon manuscripts and historical records which are far less reliable than either the Old or New Testament documents.

If you are a new believer, or if you are unfamiliar with the term *apologetics*, then I highly recommend one of the [Josh McDowell books](#) e.g., *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* or any one of his books produced later, but based in part on that first book (*A Ready Defense*, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*). Josh, in his books, explains just how reasonable and how credible Christianity is. Although what we believe is based upon faith, it is based upon a mountain of evidence as well. For instance, I believe that there is a

¹ <http://www.windmillministries.org/frames/CH11A.htm> has another excellent chart.

country called England, even though I have never been there. I take its existence on faith and I take the history of the United States and Britain on faith as well. I have never observed the historical events between 1500–1900, but those which I learned about early America and about England I believe. I find that the evidence to believe in England and the history of our two countries to be overwhelming. I don't need to hop on a plane with a plane ticket for London in order to prove to myself that England exists. McDowell's books present overwhelming evidence for the Christian faith and the resurrected Christ.

My point is, we all have faith and we all believe and disbelieve in a number of things. It is estimated by some that between 70–95% of what we know is based upon faith. There are some things for which there is overwhelming supporting evidence (the existence of England, for instance) and there are other things that we strongly believe in which has very limited evidence. The background of the New Testament gives us great reason to believe that, this is the fulfillment of the Old Testament; and that the Jesus of the New Testament is the Messiah of the Old. Everything that we know about the history and background of the Old and New Testaments has overwhelming extra-Biblical evidence; everything that we know directly from the Bible is a testimony which cannot be reasonably disputed. That we have so many eyewitnesses to the Person of Jesus Christ and that we have historical documents written so soon after the events and with copies so close to the actual events, that, doubting the historicity of these documents would require us to scrap all recorded history prior to 1600 A.D.—no other set of historical events has as much written eyewitness evidence.

Introductory Lessons 6–7: The Bible

Dispensations, an Overview

Every Christian believer believes in dispensations, even if they say that they don't and even if they do not know what dispensations are. The fact that no one of the Christian faith hauls his pet lamb to a centralized single church-type building (and in the Old Testament, there was only one) and then watches this lamb be sacrificed indicates that we do not do things today as they were done 2200 years ago. No modern church follows all of the teachings of the Old Testament, even the few goofy cults which attempt to *rediscover* some ancient faith in the Bible by following some of the Old Testament rituals and precepts (like keeping the Sabbath). No matter what they decide to follow from the Old Testament, they will ignore about 99% of the proscribed forms of worship for Israel.

Properly speaking, *dispensation* refers to the administration of a household. In the ancient world, when someone was wealthy, they had a large household of farmers, cooks, maids, servants and slaves (slaves often functioned in those other vocations), and this household needed to be administered. You cannot have all of these servants meandering about aimlessly without direction. There needs to be a system of authority; there needs to be rules and regulations. Thayer defines the Greek word which is translated dispensation as follows: *the management of a household or of household affairs; specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property; the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship; administration, dispensation.*

The household being managed is God’s people and God’s Word; and there have been various people in charge of managing this household (the people and nation of Israel in the previous dispensation; the church—those who have believed in Jesus Christ—in this dispensation).

We find this word in the follow passages (among others): 1Cor. 9:17, Eph. 1:10 3:2, Col. 1:25. Closely related to the concept of dispensations is the Mosaic Law and the word *mystery* (Rom. 16:25 1Cor. 2:7 Eph. 1:9 3:3–4 3:9 5:32 6:19 Col. 1:26–27). Let me briefly touch on these 3 concepts:

In the Old Testament, after Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Many believers today confuse what the Law is to them, and, as a result, there are Sabbath keepers and there are those who believe that their spirituality is tied to their obedience to the Law of Moses. .

The Mosaic Law in the Church Age	
Scripture	Commentary
And everyone believing in this One [Jesus Christ] is justified from all things which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses (Acts 13:39).	We are not justified before God by keeping the Law of Moses; we are justified by believing in Jesus Christ.
[After arriving in Jerusalem], some of those rose up from the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Law of Moses. And the apostles and the elders were assembled to see about this matter. And much disputation having occurred, rising up Peter said to them, “Men, brothers, you recognize that from ancient days, God chose among us that through my mouth the nations should hear the Word of the gospel, and to believe. God made distinction in nothing between both us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], having purified their hearts by faith. Now, then, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we had strength to bear? But through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we believe to be saved, according to which manner they also believed.” (Acts 15:5–7, 9–11). .	<p>One of the false doctrines which the Apostles had to correct was the idea that, once a person believed in Jesus Christ that he ought to keep the Mosaic Law as his spiritual duty. In this example, those of the sect of the Pharisees were teaching that new Gentile believers ought to be circumcised.</p> <p>Peter taught here that, subjecting the Gentiles to the Law of Moses was putting a yoke on them which their fathers had been unable to bear (i.e., no one, apart from Jesus Christ, could keep the Law).</p> <p>There are some things in the ceremonial Law which are still to be followed: the Jews were not to be involved in heathen worship (sacrifices to idols) or in fornication (which, at that time, occurred in the heathen temples). Acts 15:29.</p>

The Mosaic Law in the Church Age

Scripture	Commentary
<p>By the works of Law no flesh will be justified before Him, for through Law is full knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20).</p>	<p>The Mosaic Law does not justify us (see also Gal. 2:16). The Mosaic Law makes it clear that we sin.</p>
<p>But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from Law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ toward all and upon all those believing; for there is no difference [between Jews and Gentiles] (Rom. 3:20–21),</p>	<p>We are made righteous apart from the Law, by believing in Jesus Christ. This means that we are not saved by keeping the Law of Moses.</p>
<p>There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set me free from the law of sin and of death. For the Law being powerless, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous demand of the Law might be fulfilled in us, those not walking according to flesh, but according to Spirit (Rom. 8:1–4).</p>	<p>We have a different means of spirituality than attempting to keep the Law. Our spirituality is achieved by naming our sins to God after we have sinned (which is here called, <i>the law of Spirit of life</i>; see 1John 1:9).</p> <p>Our faith in Jesus Christ fulfills the righteous demands of the Law. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, and, in being in Him, we also fulfill the Law. Therefore, Christ is the end of the Law for all who believe (Rom. 10:4).</p>
<p>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us; for it has been written, "Cursed is everyone having been hung on a tree;" (Gal. 3:13 Deut. 21:23).</p>	<p>The Law puts us under a curse; Jesus Christ redeems us from the curse of the Law.</p>

The Mosaic Law in the Church Age

Scripture	Commentary
<p>Brothers, I speak according to man, a covenant having been ratified, even among mankind, no one sets aside or adds to it. But the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed (it does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ). [Gen. 3:15; 21:12 22:18 Rom. 9:6 Heb. 11:18] And I say this, A covenant having been ratified before to Christ by God, the Law coming into being four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul the promise, so as to abolish it. For if the inheritance is of Law, it is no more of promise; but God has given it to Abraham through promise (Gal. 3:15–18).</p>	<p>Even Abraham, the first Jew, was not subject to the Law nor was the Abrahamic Covenant related to keeping the Law, since the Law did not come into being until 430 years after God made promises to Abraham. Paul is making the point that, if Abraham, the first Jew, was not subject to the Law, why are we trying to make ourselves subject to the Law?</p>

The Mosaic Law had a place—it was the legal, ceremonial and civil law for the nation Israel; and 9 of the 10 commandments define sin and condemn all mankind.

The next thing which we need to understand is the *mystery* of God.

The Doctrine of the Mystery of God

1. Mystery is the Greek word *mustêrion* (μυστήριον) [pronounced *moos-TAY-ree-on*], and it means 1) *hidden thing, secret, mystery*; 1a) *generally mysteries, religious secrets, confided only to the initiated and not to ordinary mortals*; 1b) *a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding*; 1c) *a hidden purpose or counsel*; 1c1) *secret will*; 1c1a) *of men*; 1c1b) *of God: the secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly*. Strong's #3466.
2. It is technically used for the doctrines of the Church Age which were not revealed during the Age of Israel.
3. In Rom. 11, Paul speaks of the natural branches of the olive tree being the Jews, and how they have been pruned and new branches grafted in (the Gentiles). He speaks of this as a mystery that we ought to know and understand in Rom. 11:25.
4. This mystery was not known in previous times, but has been made known in prophetic writings during out time (Rom. 16:25–26 Col. 1:26).
5. Part of Paul's ministry was to reveal this mystery to believers (Eph. 3:1–12).

This mystery, which was a part of Paul's ministry, is relation to dispensationalism.

Before I cover the various dispensations, let me show how this word is used in the New Testament.

Dispensations

First of all, the Greek word translated *dispensation* is *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία) [pronounced *oy-kohn-no-MEE-ah*] and it means 1) *the management of a household or of household affairs; 1a) specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property; 1b) the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship; 1c) administration, dispensation.* Strong's #3622.

Scripture	Commentary
<p>He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for the dispensation of the fullness of the times to head up all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens, and the things on earth, in Him, in whom we also have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of the One working all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:8–11).</p>	<p>God gave the Apostles wisdom and understanding of the <i>mystery</i>, which was according to His purpose and design, of the <i>dispensation of the fullness of the times</i>. This dispensation is the church (believers in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile) run the household of God here on earth.</p>
<p>Because of this, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the [Gentile] nations, if, indeed, you heard of the dispensation of the grace of God given to me for you, that by revelation He made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief, by the reading of which you are able to realize my understanding in the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, as now it was revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, for the [Gentile] nations to be joint-heirs, and a joint-body and joint-sharers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of His power (Eph. 3:1–7).</p>	<p>Through revelation, God made known the mystery (hidden doctrines of a particular group) to Paul, which he makes known to those who believe in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Paul here mentions the dispensation of the grace of God, which refers to the Church Age.</p> <p>The <i>joint-heirs</i> and <i>joint-sharers</i> refers to the Jews, to whom God first revealed Himself, and to the Gentiles, to whom God was now revealing Himself.</p>

Scripture	Commentary
<p>And you [Gentiles] having been alienated and hostile in your mind by evil works, but now He reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and without blemish and irreproachable before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and settled and not being moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard proclaimed in all the creation under Heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister, who now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up in my flesh the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His body, which is the assembly, of which I became a minister, according to the dispensation of God given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God, the mystery having been hidden from the ages and from the generations, but now was revealed to His saints; to whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the [Gentile] nations, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ Jesus, for which also I labor, struggling according to the working of Him who works in me in power (Col. 1:21–29).</p>	<p>At one time, Gentiles, in general, were reticent to trust in the God of the Jews (however, many did believe in Jehovah Elohim). Paul, again, presents himself as a minister of this dispensation of God (the Church Age), which was a mystery to previous ages (which means, there is no Old Testament prophecy concerning the Church Age specifically).</p> <p>One of the characteristics of the Church Age is the filling of the Holy Spirit, which Paul speaks of in most of these passages, referring to the Holy Spirit working in him in power.</p>

This is not, in any way, a complete examination of the concept of dispensations. Essentially, this introduces you to the concept of dispensations, so that, as we go through the Bible verse by verse, you have an idea as to where you are.

Our modern understanding of a dispensation is, this refers to an era during which there are specific authorities in place along with rules and protocols, which authorities and protocols are different from past dispensations. My intent here is to present this teaching to you without going into depth about its Scriptural evidence.² In this basic series of lessons, my focus is upon the basic issues and the basic understanding of the Bible.

² There is an excellent free book which Scripturally justifies dispensations called *Dispensations*, which is available from R. B. Thieme Jr. Ministries (<http://www.rbthieme.org/publicat.htm>).

The Various Dispensations			
Age/ Dispensation	Characteristics	Scripture	Sub- categories
Age of the Gentiles	No sin, no morality, no human good. Adam and the woman designed to live forever	Gen. 1–2	Innocence
	Adam and the woman banned from the garden; children are born; man works to eat, there is sickness, death, and one language.	Gen. 3–7	Pre- Deluvian
	After the flood, there are many languages and nations. Each family appears to be responsible for its spiritual life.	Gen. 8–11	Post- Deluvian
Age of Israel	Abraham becomes the first Jew. God primarily speaks to Abraham and his descendants and God primarily works through them.	Gen. 12–49	Patriarchal
	God takes the nation Israel out of Egypt and establishes it in the Land of Promise. He establishes laws, ceremonies, feast days, and animal sacrifices to be followed by the citizens of nation Israel. There is a specialized priesthood. There is a unification of <i>church</i> and state (the nation Israel was tied directly to God). This is a time of prophecy and fulfilled prophecy.	Ex. 1–Malachi 4	Nation Israel
	Specific believers had impact during the Age of Israel; those with great impact may be called <i>spiritual Atlas's</i> .		
	Spirituality for the average believer may be reasonably called the faith rest life. A person learned the promises of God and depended upon God to fulfill these promises.		

The Various Dispensations			
Age/ Dispensation	Characteristics	Scripture	Sub- categories
	The Age of Israel is temporarily interrupted and the Church Age is inserted. Although the ceremonial aspect of the Mosaic Law does not appear to be in effect, the exact spiritual assets and function requires some discussion.	Matt. 24–25 Rev. 4–19	Tribulation
Age of the Hypostatic Union	<p>This period of time is often considered a part of the Age of Israel. Jesus, the Son of God, walks on this earth and presents Himself and His kingdom to Israel. Although the Mosaic Law is in effect along with the ceremonies pertaining to the Law (which laws our Lord obeys); Jesus, in His humanity, functions on the basis of the filling of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the Word of God, which things will become our primary spiritual assets in the Church Age.</p> <p>Jesus introduces the concept of the separation of church and state (“Render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar’s and render to God that which is God’s”), which was a radical concept for that time, both to Jews and to Gentiles.</p> <p>This is a time of prophecy and fulfilled prophecies.</p>	Matthew–John	Hypostatic Union

The Various Dispensations

Age/ Dispensation	Characteristics	Scripture	Sub- categories
<p>Church Age</p>	<p>After our Lord is resurrected, He sends the Holy Spirit to us as our mentor and as our power. We no longer observe the laws, ordinances and ceremonies as found in the Mosaic Law; but are subject to a higher law, the law of the Spirit and death. When we sin, we name this sin directly to God. God forgives us our sins and fills us with the Holy Spirit. During this time period, there are temporary spiritual gifts to take up the slack for having no complete canon of Scripture: knowledge, tongues, interpretation of tongues and healings are examples of these gifts.</p> <p>Jesus prophesied as to particular doctrines which would be an integral part of the Church Age in the Upper Room Discourse.</p>	<p>Acts</p>	<p>Pre-Canon</p>

The Various Dispensations

Age/ Dispensation	Characteristics	Scripture	Sub- categories
	<p>Once God has seen to it that His fully revealed revelation is available to believers in the Church Age, the temporary gifts disappear. Man learns to walk in the Spirit and to live and grow according to the full Word of God.</p> <p>In both the pre and post-canon periods, we have the concept of separation of church and state. Individual nations may enjoy what is called <i>client-nation</i> status, but this can change from time to time. It depends upon how many believers are in a nation and what exactly they are doing with respect to the plan of God.</p> <p>There are no prophecies to be fulfilled during the Church Age itself, apart from the rapture. We do not know what leads up to the rapture. Nor is this an age where we have prophets and prophecy. We live during a time of historical trends. We learn and discern these historical trends from knowing the Word of God and by observing current events.</p> <p>Every individual believer in the Church Age potentially has impact. Every individual is included in the plan of God. We have a unique spiritual life in this dispensation, which characteristics are not found in other dispensations. Jesus Christ, in His humanity, <i>test-drove</i> the power system which we all possess, which includes the filling of the Holy Spirit, along with a number of other operating spiritual assets.</p>	<p>Epistles, Rev. 1–3</p>	<p>Post-Canon</p>

The Various Dispensations			
Age/ Dispensation	Characteristics	Scripture	Sub- categories
(Age of Israel continued)	<p>Chronologically, the Tribulation follows the Church Age; however, since God works primarily through the Jews in the Tribulation, this is actually the final 7 years of the Age of Israel. Jews, at this time, will be scattered all over the earth, and they will function as evangelists. There will be a nation Israel at this time as well as a Temple. Logically, believers of this portion of the Age of Israel will probably have the same spiritual assets that we do.</p> <p>There is a great deal of fulfilled prophecy in the Tribulation.</p>	<p>Matt. 24–25 Rev. 4–19</p>	Tribulation
Millennium	<p>Jesus will rule from Jerusalem over the entire earth while Satan and his fallen angels are incarcerated. Although this will be a state of perfect environment and the knowledge of God will fill the earth, some men will still sin against God. I hypothesize that, when a person sins, he will probably gain a sin nature; but the perfect environment will not be changed.</p>	<p>Isa. 9:6–7 Jer. 23:5–6 Ezek. 36–48 Daniel 7:13–14 Luke 1:32b–33 Rev. 20</p>	Millennium
The Eternal State	<p>God will place Satan, his fallen angels and fallen man into the Lake of Fire. God will create a new heavens and a new earth where we will dwell forever.</p>	<p>Rev. 21–22</p>	Eternal State
<p>These various ages are not confined only to the portions of Scripture which I have indicated. For instance, the Upper Room Discourse of John 14–17 covers, for the most part, Church Age doctrine.</p>			

Dispensations are important to understand, so that you don't, for instance, start reading portions of the Mosaic Law one day, and suddenly decide that you need to start observing the Sabbath or attending the Feast of Booths or that you need to start raising lambs to take to church to slaughter. The doctrine for our lives comes primarily from the epistles; however, all Scripture is important for us to know and to learn from. Since the flood until this time period, man is essentially the same; so the characteristic, actions, and consequences which we read about in the Old Testament are pertinent to us. Dispensational teaching helps us to recognize what is pertinent to our daily lives (say, the

life of David) as opposed to what is informative, but not something we should follow (the Levitical sacrifices).

Now, some things are constant in all dispensations. God is One Who exists in 3 persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The essence of God remains the same throughout all dispensations (God is perfect, just, righteous, love, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our Savior and the revealed member of the Trinity. We are saved by believing in Him by whatever name He is known by (either Jehovah Elohim in the Old Testament or Jesus Christ in the New). Our salvation is always based upon faith in Him; Old Testament saints were not saved by trying really, really hard to keep the Law. The owner of a household might fire all of his staff and hire a new staff, thus initiating a new group who run his household; however, it is still the same house and the same owner. So, there are differences from dispensation to dispensation (and even within the same dispensation), but there are points of continuity as well.

Introductory Lesson 8: The Bible

Canonicity³

One area which confuses people of all opinions is canonicity. Who decided which books should be in the Bible and which books should not? Maybe God did speak through this or that author, but how do we decide who? Let me preface by saying, this topic could be a book in itself. What I hope to do here is just provide some basic information.

The most proper understanding of canonicity is this: God spoke through specific men, and their writings are canonical; and man simply recognizes what is God's Word. Men simply recognized the authority of these writings, that they were from God.

Although the Jews did not use the word canon, they understood, from the earliest of times, that some of the writings which they had were from God. The original sacred text (probably the Pentateuch) was placed into the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31:24–26) before the Jews crossed over the Jordan River into the Land of Promise. When the Temple was built by Solomon, about 500 years later, those books which were seen as sacred were kept in the Temple (2Kings 22:8). When the northern kingdom and later the southern kingdom were conquered and forced out of the land (in 721 and 586 B.C. respectively), the Jews could not carry and preserve everything that they had written, so certain books were understood to be from God, and they specifically preserved these books.

Apion, an ancient author whose writings have been lost, apparently questioned the idea that there was a set of specific books which formed the Old Testament, and Josephus answered him, writing, *From Artaxerxes until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased. But what faith we have placed in our own writings is*

³ Much of this comes from Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 136–207. This is an outstanding resource on the Bible.

evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything in them (from *Contra Apion* 1:8). The succession of prophets, from Moses to Malachi, seemed to be universally recognized among the Jews and to those who adhered to what was seen as the Jewish religion.

Somewhere between 300 and 100 B.C., it was determined that the Jewish Scriptures should be translated into Greek, so there had to be an agreement as to which books these were. This translation is known as the Septuagint (*the Seventy*, abbreviated the *LXX*). A number of other ancient translations were made—into Latin, Arabic, Syriac, etc.—and these translations always translated the same Old Testament books, the books which comprise the Old Testament canon today. Some contained the apocrypha, which will be discussed briefly at the end. Some did not.

Let me make two obvious statements: the Catholic Church was not around when the Old Testament was translated into some of these languages, so the Catholic Church had no say in the matter of early Old Testament canonicity. Secondly, translations of the Old Testament were made by different sets of people; those who translated it into Greek are not the same as those who translated it into Aramaic. So we know what was recognized as authoritative by which books are translated.

Jesus, the Son of God, also verified the canonicity of the Old Testament writings throughout the gospels. Jesus said, 400 years after the completion of the Old Testament canon, “Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will beat in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.” (Matt. 23:34–35). The blood of Abel is in Gen. 4; the blood of Zechariah is in the final book (2Chronicles) of the Hebrew Bible (2Chron. 24:20–22). With these words, Jesus takes in the entire Hebrew canon (which excludes the Apocrypha). The Hebrew Old Testament was broken down into 3 sections (The Law, The Prophets and the Writings), which 3 sections Jesus speaks of in Luke 24:27, 44: *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He [Jesus, after having been resurrected] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself...saying to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."*

The New Testament canon has a different history. The Apostles and those closely associated with the Apostles, wrote the gospels and Acts (the history of Jesus Christ and the history of the early church) and, after founding churches throughout the ancient world, Paul and other Apostles would send letters to these churches to help to straighten out various difficulties which were happening in these churches (these letters are called *Epistles*). At the very end, John wrote the book of *Revelation*, which is Jesus speaking to the churches (Rev. 1–3) and then John has a vision (a *revelation*) of the end times (Rev. 4–22). Although many of these writings were accepted early on as authoritative,

believers realized that they needed to formally recognize the canonical books (those books which were *God-breathed*).

Various tests and standards were determined in order to recognize both Old and New Testament canonicity. Having a recognized Old Testament canon helped to codify tests for canonicity in general.

The Principles of Canonicity

1. Is the book authoritative?
 - a. Are there phrases such as, *the Lord said* or *God spoke* in the book? Again and again, for instance, in the prophetic books, we find similar phrasing as the prophets spoke.
 - b. Were these books recognized as authoritative? Prophets may have been persecuted and even killed, but were their writings recognized as having come from God?
 - c. Paul claimed the authority of God in his writings, for instance, in Gal. 1:1, when he writes: **Paul, an Apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who raised him from the dead.**
 - d. There were forged and false epistles even during the time of Paul. Paul indicated that what they received in writing should be in accordance with doctrines which they had previously received from him (see 1Thess. 2:2, for instance). At the same time, this historically called into question the epistle of 2Peter, because the writing style of Peter in this epistle was different from his writing style in 1Peter.
2. Is the book prophetic?
 - a. The test of an Old Testament prophet was, did they make accurate predictions of what would happen during that prophet's life? A prophet who uttered prophecies which were inaccurate, was to be executed. These prophets also spoke of the distant future, and if what they said during their lifetimes panned out, their writings and words were accepted as from God.
 - b. As hundreds of years have passed, the prophecies recognized as applying to the Messiah clearly apply to Jesus Christ, giving further credence to the accuracy of Old Testament prophecy.
3. Does the book comport well with the faith already delivered?
 - a. Each book of the Bible needs to conform to the doctrines already delivered and it needs to be in alignment with recognized texts from God. When Paul taught the Bereans, they hauled out the Old Testament Scriptures to make certain what he told them was true (Acts 17:11).
4. Is the author known and is his authority accepted among believers?
 - a. Moses, who wrote the Pentateuch, was the leader of the Jews in the desert, and therefore, very well known. His writings have been accepted as the Word of God since their inception.
 - b. Certain prophets, like Isaiah or Jeremiah, told of events to come, and they were always accurate, even though the people of Israel did not always like

The Principles of Canonicity

- what they had to say. Their collected writings (which were, essentially, their oral teachings) were accepted almost immediately.
- c. The writings of the original 11 disciples, Paul, and those closely associated with these 12 were accepted as canonical
5. How did believers (and unbelievers) respond to these writings?
- a. Believers responded favorably to the teaching of Isaiah, for the most part; and with hardened hearts to the teaching of Jeremiah. However, their books were accepted by believers from the beginning.
 - b. We have a story of how the book of the Law had not been available to one particular king, and when Hilkiah the priest discovered the book, and gave it to the secretary of the king, who read it to the king, King Josiah reacted emotionally to hearing God's words being spoken (2Kings 22:8–11).
 - c. The early church fathers of the first 2 or 3 centuries (before the inception of the Catholic church) clearly recognized some writings as authoritative and quoted these writings in order to support their teaching and doctrines. Almost the entire New Testament can be salvaged from the writings of the early church fathers.
 - d. People respond to the Bible even today. Although I had gone to church and had known some religious people, I knew very little about the Bible at age 21, when I was at a low point in my life, and I picked up and began to read the book of John. Like most unbelievers, what caught my attention was, "Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (John 3:16, 18, 36).
6. How was the book received? Who recognized the books as canonical?

What about when dispensations change? How do we know that the new doctrines being taught are legitimate? For instance, there were a great many fundamental doctrines changed when we moved from the Age of Israel to the Church Age. How do we know that these changes are legitimate?

How Do We Know that There are Legitimate Changes for the Church Age?

- (1) Jesus taught some fundamental Church Age doctrines in the Upper Room Discourse, which teaching is found only in the book of John (John 13–17).
- (2) Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to believers once He had ascended (Acts 1:5 2:1–4).
- (3) God provided certain miraculous gifts to the Apostles and to some of their disciples, which gifts acted as a credit card, if you will; as proof that they were from God. These gifts included the ability to speak in a known foreign language which is unknown to the speaker; the ability to heal sick people; and the ability to perform signs and wonders (although we do not have many examples here). Once the authority of the Apostles was established and Church Age doctrine committed to writing, these gifts began to fade away and were all gone by the end

How Do We Know that There are Legitimate Changes for the Church Age?

of the 1st century.

- (4) Men who were clearly known to be disciples of Jesus attested to the authority of the teaching of others (Peter endorsed the writings of Paul in 2Peter 3:16–17).
- (5) God provided other temporary gifts to early believers which allowed them to speak Church Age doctrine in their congregation (the gifts of knowledge and the gift of prophecy). These gifts also faded from the scene once Church Age doctrines were established (see Introductory Lesson #6).
- (6) Certain Jewish rituals were no longer compatible with the Christian faith. Animal sacrifices looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus has come in the flesh, these sacrifices are no longer needed in order to present a shadow image of Jesus and His work on the cross. The writer of Hebrews spends much of his book explaining why we do not continue with the rituals found in the Law of Moses: **We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest indeed stands day by day ministering and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, but He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. So when these [sins] have been forgiven, an offering to take away sins is no longer needed** (Heb. 10:10–12, 18).

The New Testament epistles give us the changes for this new dispensation. These changes primarily have to do with (1) the historicity of Christ's offering for sin (we now look backward rather than forward) and (2) the giving of the Holy Spirit to all believers.

Early church fathers spoke specifically to the concept of canonicity. Cyrus of Jerusalem (circa 315–386 A.D.) recognized the same set of books of the New Testament as we do, with the exception of the book of Revelation. Eusebius (circa 325–340) recognizes today's canon (including Revelation), but lists James, 2Peter, 2 and 3John and Jude as disputed books. Jerome (circa 340–420) and Augustine (circa 400) both recognize the same canon as we do today.

Canons were officially established by Marcion (circa 140), and there are the following named canons: the Muratorian (circa 170), Barococcio (circa 208), Cheltenham (circa 360), and Athanasuis (circa 367). Although Marcion's canon was fairly sparse, the other 5 canons agree in almost all books (2 do not list Revelation, one does not list Jude, 2 do not list Hebrews or James, one rejects the Petrain epistles, and one lists 2Peter, 2 and 3John as disputed).

Four councils of note met between 325–410 and discussed which books ought to be considered canonical and which should not. Some of the tests which I have spoken of were a part of these discussions. Although most of the New Testament had been informally accepted as authoritative, at some point, this needed to be formalized. The final

3 agreed on our present New Testament canon; the first one questioned James, 2Peter, 2 and 3John and Jude. People mistakenly think that the Catholic Church did all of this, but the Catholic Church was only one component of the recognition of canon of the New Testament.

One controversial section in some Bibles is called the Apocrypha, which are writings made after the closing of the Old Testament canon and before the 1st Advent of Jesus Christ. Much has been written about the Apocrypha, and why it is not a part of God's Word. Some writings on this topic which appear to be accurate are:

<http://www.inplainsite.org/html/apocrypha.html>

The most lengthy and thorough treatment of the apocrypha:

http://www.studytoanswer.net/rcc/rvb_apocrypha.html

One source does not appear to take sides, but seems to be relatively accurate:

http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4225141/k.1102/The_Old_Testament_Apocrypha_Controversy.htm

There are a few quick points to be made about the Apocrypha:

1. Neither Jesus nor the Apostles quoted from the apocrypha.
2. Josephus, the great Jewish historian, explicitly excluded the apocrypha from the canon of Scripture.
3. Some early church fathers spoke out against the apocrypha (Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius).
4. No canon or council for the first 4 centuries recognized the apocrypha as inspired.
5. The Catholic Church did not claim that the apocrypha was canonical until 1500 A.D.
6. Although these books should not be a part of the canon of Scripture, this does not mean that they are wholly false. There is certainly some accurate history in Maccabees and some accurate doctrines found in the apocrypha. However, there is inaccurate history and false doctrine also found in the apocrypha.
7. Early church fathers who spoke on this matter rejected the apocrypha as canonical. Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzus rejected the apocrypha as canonical. Even Jerome, who made the Latin translation for the Catholic Church, and specifically separated the apocrypha from the rest of the Old Testament.

One more thing: there are no books out there which *almost* made it into the Old or New Testament Canon. There is not some additional gospel of Judas or Stephen such that there were great arguments over its inclusion. Every disputed Old and New Testament book which was ever disputed is found in the Bible.

The Bible is said to be the Word of God and it is often referred to as *inspired*. Although there are several [false] approaches to the concept of *inspiration*, what is known as *Verbal Plenary Inspiration* is the correct understanding of the inspiration of the Bible. We define inspiration as, **God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture that, without waiving their intelligence, their individuality, their personal feelings, their literary style, or any other human factor of expression, His complete and coherent Message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture: the very words bearing the Authority of Divine Authorship.**⁴

The Bible is the Word of God and it presents itself as the Word of God. In the KJV (the King James version), the phrase, *saith the Lord* occurs 815 times. *God said* occurs 46 times. The *Lord said* occurs 222 times. The Bible presents itself as *God's message to man* rather than *man's message to man about God*. The Bible reveals what God has done and what God will do. Everything which we see and everything that we do not see is created by God and subject to God; yet portions of God's creation have free will which can operate independently of God (man and angels). Yet His created creatures with free will find their best and greatest fulfillment when acting in accordance to His will.

This is why we can have so many different authors, who have completely different literary and writing styles, all communicating the Word of God. John's style of writing is deceptively simple—he uses very simple and basic Koine Greek, yet communicates very profound thoughts and doctrines. John was probably not an educated man and the Koine Greek was probably his second language. His literary shortcomings are quite apparent in his writings. Paul, on the other hand, uses very complex Koine Greek, using words now and again from other Greek languages or dialects (Classical, Attic, Doric, Aeolic) to illustrate a point; and Paul's thought may continue for 10 or 20 verses at a time.

God's complete and coherent message is found in the Bible. We can find all that we need to know about the reason for our being alive, our relationship to God, as well as divine guidance, all from knowing the Word of God. Since the Canon of Scripture was completed, there is no need for additional revelation from God. "I solemnly declare to every one who hears the words of the prophecy contained in this book, that if any one adds to those words, God will add to him the plagues spoken of in this book; and that if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take from him his share in the Tree of Life and in the holy city—the things described in this book." (Rev. 22:18–19).

⁴ I don't know who originally developed this particular definition. I cannot find it in these exact words in Chafer's Systematic Theology; however, I have heard it dozens of times from R. B. Thieme Jr. in Berachah Church.

The means by which God spoke to and through these men differs greatly. The Mosaic Law presented in much of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers is a result of dictation—God spoke and Moses wrote down what He said. However, the only Mosaic psalm and book of Deuteronomy represent a great departure from that approach. In Psalm 90, Moses has been in sort of a limbo with these recalcitrant Jews, stuck out in the desert, and he writes this psalm, despairing somewhat of their situation, not even realizing that what he is writing is a part of the Word of God. Before Israel is about to cross over into the Land of Promise, to take it, Moses speaks to his people, and this is what we find in the book of Deuteronomy. Although his words were clearly inspired by God the Holy Spirit, it is quite a departure from him carefully writing down the exact words which God speaks. We also have God speaking to men through dreams and visions; on occasion, there are times when God speaks through men, but we are not told the exact process; and there are times when certain believers, like Paul, have such a build-up of doctrine in their souls that they can speak or write, and the result is the Word of God.

There is a parallel between the written Word of God and the living Word of God, Jesus Christ.

The Written Word of God and the Living Word of God	
The Bible	Jesus Christ
<p>The Bible is the written Word of God. Ex. 24:4a: <i>And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD.</i> See also Ex. 34:–27–28. <i>Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him (Jer. 36:4).</i></p>	<p>Jesus is the living Word of God. Jesus is God the Son, the 2nd member of the Trinity. <i>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1–3, 14).</i></p>

The Written Word of God and the Living Word of God

The Bible	Jesus Christ
<p>The Bible is clearly written by man. Deut. 31:22: So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel. God Himself divine institution did not physically write down the words of the Bible and there are never claims that some angel came down and wrote the words of the Bible.</p>	<p>Jesus is true humanity. Since therefore the children [of men] share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things [flesh and blood], that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery [to sin and the sin nature]. For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the children of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect [Jesus had to be true humanity], so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:14–17).</p>
<p>The written Word of God was to be studied with all diligence. You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut. 11:18–20). Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2Tim. 2:15).</p>	<p>Jesus is to be studied with all diligence and known. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life (1John 5:20). We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him (Rom. 6:9). Look to Jesus [which requires knowledge of Him], the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted (Heb. 12:2–3).</p>
<p>The Bible is all about Jesus Christ, in both the Old and New Testaments. [Jesus said] “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me” (John 5:46).</p>	

I have done several studies of the concept of inspiration, and in far more detail at:

<http://kukis.org/page10.html>

We should also spend some time on the original languages. The Bible was written in Hebrew, Chaldean, and Koine Greek. These languages are no longer extant today, but they have been studied far more than any other ancient tongue. Within arm's reach, I have about 50 books on the (ancient) Hebrew and Koine Greek languages. This is a small percentage of the books written about these languages.

Most of the Old Testament, apart from a couple of books and a few passages here and there, is written in Hebrew. The original written form of Hebrew is written from right to left (the opposite of English) and they only wrote down consonants. The Jews knew enough about their own language to be able to read the Bible, automatically filling in the vowels as they spoke. Later, when the language of Hebrew had begun to die, what was being lost was the pronunciation, so that vowel points were added to the text. These are tiny marks made above and below the consonants, so that the original text could be maintained precisely.

Hebrew Tenses	
Tense	Meaning of the Tense
Perfect	Completed action
Imperfect	Incomplete or continuous action, generally referring to present or future action.

Each verb can have a different stem, which affects the meaning of the verb.

Hebrew Stems	
Stem	Meaning of the Stem
Qal	simple active action
Niphal	simple passive (and sometimes reflexive) action
Piel	intensive action (sometimes causative)
Pual	intensive passive action
Hithpael	reflexive action
Hiphil	causative active action
Hophal	causative passive action

There are more stems than these, and these stems are not hard and fast rules, but they are guidelines. The meaning and understanding of language is based upon its actual usage. Also, it is rare for a verb to occur in all of the stems above.

Not every verb in the Hebrew is found in every stem; nor do the meanings conform exactly to my over-simplification of the stems.

Examples of Hebrew Stems				
Stem	ʾâkal (אָכַל)	nâthak (נָתַן)	qâtsaph (קָצַף)	tâphas (תָּפַח)
Qal	<i>to eat; to devour (of fire, sword), to consume;</i>	<i>to pour out [forth],</i>	<i>to be angry, to be furious</i>	<i>to lay a hold of, to seize [capture, arrest]; to grasp; to use skillfully</i>
Niph'al (passive)	<i>to be eaten, to be devoured, to be consumed</i>	<i>to be poured [out]</i>		<i>to be seized; to be arrested [caught, taken]</i>
Piel (intensive)	<i>to consume</i>			<i>to catch, to grasp [with the hands]</i>
Pual (intensive passive)	<i>to cause to eat, to feed, to cause to devour</i>			
Hithpael (reflexive)			<i>to put oneself into a rage, to work oneself into an anger</i>	
Hiphil (causative)	<i>to feed, to cause to eat</i>	<i>to pour out, to melt</i>	<i>to provoke to anger</i>	
Hophal (causative passive)		<i>to be melted</i>		

These are just a few examples, and it helps to explain why the same verb may be translated in several different ways (if you follow out the various places where the same verb is used).

The morphology of a Hebrew verb also includes the person, number and gender. Therefore, we can look at any verb in the Hebrew and decide, "That must be a 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect" (or whatever). That would mean that we would be looking at the common definition for this verb, that the action is continuous or future, and that the person doing the action of the verb is a man (or a thing which has a masculine gender).

E-sword provides a Bible with a basic morphology (with the stem and the tense); there is a 4 volume set of books by Joseph Owen, which provides a complete morphology for the entire Old Testament, which set of reference books, I depend upon.

The Greek is quite different from the Hebrew and the English. We are used to a past, present and future tenses. The Greek present tense refers to continuous action; the Greek imperfect tense refers to continuous action in the past; the perfect tense refers to action which was completed in the past, but which has results which continue into the future; the aorist tense refers to a point in time or to points in time (often past, but possibly present or future); and the future tense is similar to our future tense.

Each Greek verb can be identified by its tense, voice and mood, as well as person and number.

Even though the Koine Greek is a dead language, we know almost as much about this Greek as we do any modern language. First of all, it is equivalent to Latin—it was spoken at the same time by the same people, so these languages became essentially equivalent languages; and secondly, we have a huge amount of Koine Greek literature, ranging from contracts and deeds to literature to grammar books.

The final result is, we know with great precision what every verse in the New Testament means, and we know with a reasonable amount of precision what each verse in the Old Testament means.

Probably of less interest to most people are further studies which I have done in the original languages, some of which can be found at the following page:

<http://kukis.org/page9.html>

One of the things which I do is, I take a book from the Old Testament and examine it word by word in the original Hebrew, present the essentials of the meaning and morphology of every single word, and I note whatever discrepancies that there are for each verse. Most of the discrepancies are quite trivial. The Greek verb used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) may not match the Hebrew verb exactly. The Latin Vulgate may have a singular noun where the Hebrew has a plural due to the usage of that language (for instance, *face* in the Hebrew is a plural noun; in the English, we would translate it as a singular). The book of Samuel is supposed to be the most poorly transmitted book of the Old Testament, and I am about $\frac{3}{4}$ ^{ths} of the way through exegeting it. Although I have found dozens of discrepancies in each chapter, I have only found 2 in the entire book of 1Samuel which are significant. Apart from these discrepancies, there are no differences between any of the Hebrew texts or between the Hebrew and the Greek, Latin and/or Syriac texts which are serious enough to affect any major or minor theological doctrines.

To give you an idea of what I spend most of my time on, here are the links to the chapters of Samuel which I have studied and written about:

http://kukis.org/Samuel/Samuel_links.htm

Teaching and spiritual growth:

We grow in the Church Age through a grace system and through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Peter commands us: **Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** (2Peter 3:18a). God makes it possible for all believers to understand the doctrines of the Word of God, regardless of their human I.Q. Paul prays, **According to the riches of His glory, He gives you [this gift] to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may be at home in your hearts through faith—so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the ability to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses [human] knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God** (Eph. 3:16–19).

This is a very technical prayer, and actually requires several hours to exegete it. Let me briefly run through it.

A Short Exegesis of Eph. 3:16–19

Scripture	Commentary
According to the riches of His glory	Jesus Christ was resurrected, to show that His work was accepted by God, and He was glorified; and in this glorification, He has great spiritual riches to bestow upon us. These riches will be herein discussed.
He may give you [this gift]	In the Church Age, we have a power not previously given to all believers—the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not have to earn this power, we do not have to work for it or agonize for it. The Holy Spirit is given to all believers. That this gift is the Holy Spirit and spiritual growth will be covered.
to be strengthened	The Holy Spirit strengthens our spiritual life; it is not an experience and it is not a 2 nd blessing (i.e., it does not happen sometime after salvation). The strengthening process is next described.
with power through His Spirit in your inner being,	By means of the Holy Spirit, we are strengthened in our inner being, which is the human spirit. The Holy Spirit is our power; He makes our spiritual growth possible.
so that Christ may be at home in your hearts	The heart is often used for the soul and the spirit of the believer; our entire ability to think and to relate to God. The process herein described has to do with Jesus Christ being <i>at home</i> in our thinking.

A Short Exegesis of Eph. 3:16–19

Scripture	Commentary
through faith	An integral part of this process is <i>faith</i> . We cannot just learn Bible doctrine; we have to also believe it. We all know that faith is key in salvation; but it is also key in the subsequent Christian life.
--that you, being rooted and grounded in love,	There are a couple of very common phrases found throughout the New Testament which are rarely given their due: <i>in love</i> and <i>in Christ</i> are two of these phrases. <i>In love</i> does not mean that we have to run around and feel something inside of us, either for God or for other people. It is a technical phrase referring to the filling of the Holy Spirit, which is achieved by naming your sins to God after you have sinned (1John 1:9). One of the essentials to spiritual growth is being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is identical to being in fellowship with God, which is called here, being rooted and grounded in love .
may have the ability to comprehend with [in association with] all the saints	This is the phrase which tells us: with these other factors in place, we may understand Bible doctrine along with all other believers. This tells any believer that he or she is able to understand along side all other believers the doctrines of the Bible.
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,	These are all aspects of Christian doctrine. The <i>length</i> refers to human and angelic history—we know the beginning from the end. The height refers to the Godhead and the totality of theology (as much as He wants us to know). The depth refers to the Angelic Conflict, with the emphasis upon the fallen angels and their interrelationship with our lives. The breadth is our own Christian life, from beginning (salvation) to death and beyond.
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses [human] knowledge,	The words here indicate that we are able to understand all aspects of the plan of God which He needs for us to understand. This spiritual understanding goes beyond human knowledge and human comprehension. The word for <i>knowledge</i> here can refer either to <i>human knowledge</i> or <i>doctrine which has been taught but not yet believed</i> .
that you may be filled with all the fullness of God	The end result is, we are filled with the fullness of God, which is another way of looking at spiritual maturity. What are we filled with? The comprehension of all aspects of the plan of God designed for our lives. This is what God has designed for us in this life.

What we are doing is bringing our thinking in line with God's thinking. We are bringing every thought into captivity for Christ (2Cor. 10:5). We are renovating our thinking (Rom. 12:1–2). This goes far beyond simply being moral or making attempts to stop ourselves from sinning.

So, God has given us the ability to comprehend with all other believers all that there is to know about the plan of God for our lives, this thinking which surpasses human thinking. This is done by means of God the Holy Spirit in us, Who fills us (after we have named our sins to God the Father), which strengthens and fills our inner being, so that Jesus Christ is comfortable (at home) in our thinking.

My primary point is this (although this passage covers a great deal of ground): if you have a human I.Q. high enough to understand and to respond to the gospel, then you can understand and respond to the doctrines of the Bible.

A person with a low human I.Q. can have as rich a spiritual life—based upon growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ—as a believer with a high human I.Q.

In the Church Age, a person should be primarily taught under a pastor-teacher in a church. However, there are actually very few pastor-teachers who do their jobs. Many churches, unfortunately, teach nothing more than a Biblical morality; and a few even teach some sort of contemporary morality—including things like, care of the planet and climate awareness—and that is the thrust of their ministry. Finding a church where the Word of God is being taught regularly and accurately is extremely important.

The second approach is to gather with other believers regularly and listen to sermons by a good pastor-teacher by means of a computer. It is here where modern technology meets with the importance of good teaching.

The third approach is to do this on your own. Getting access to accurate teaching nowadays is quite easy, given the Internet. Bible doctrine can be listened to while on line, by means of MP3 files on CD's, on ipods or other such devices, or even on a cellphone. Personally, this is how I began my own spiritual growth, but it was with a tape recorder and many boxes of tapes, and, for a short time, I thought I was about the only person in the world who was growing in this way.

At best, my basic teaching here will compliment what a good pastor-teacher teaches.

Below is a list of a number of churches and pastors, most of which have their sermons available either online or by ordering. None of these churches charge for their materials (most of which are sent out as MP3 files).

<http://kukis.org/Links/thelist.htm>

What is *not* recommended is for you to read the Bible and study on your own. This is how cults are formed. What people tend to do is, they glom onto a handful of verses and hold tight to these verses, which, in most cases, are in agreement with the norms and standards

they had prior to becoming a Christian. Then they interpret all other portions of the Bible in accordance with these verses which they really like (some people emphasize the Mosaic Law; and others emphasize the Sermon on the Mount). Prior to believing in Jesus Christ, you learned certain norms and standards which you may or may not have adhered to. If, after believing in Jesus Christ, you hold to a majority of these norms and standards, and, the primary difference between you before and after salvation is, now you are more moral, then you do not understand the Christian way of life. I am not saying that you need to, after becoming a believer in Jesus Christ, start being immoral; I am simply saying that morality is not the Christian way of life.

Let's say that you are hired by a large apartment complex to handle their plumbing problems. This does not mean that you go around the complex cleaning the toilets. Now, it may be a very good thing that you are cleaning toilets, but that is not your actual job. Your job is more complex than that. Most Christians who should be plumbers are wandering about cleaning toilets. That is not their primary function.

My point is, apart from a good pastor-teacher, you are going to wander about aimlessly in the Christian life, even if you read and/or study your Bible each and every day.

Here is what you do *not* look for in a pastor. Is he kind, does he make you laugh, is he the kind of guy you want to be friends with and hang out with; does he seem holy and dedicated and sincere? These things are related to the personality of the pastor, which is not an issue. The pastor's personality is unimportant. You may or may not like the personality of your right pastor. The first pastor I listened to and grew up under, I disliked for the first few months of listening to him. After a time, I grew to like the man and appreciate his sense of humor, but that was certainly not my initial reaction to him.

What to Look for in a Pastor-Teacher and in a Church

1. The primary thrust of the church should be Bible teaching. You may sing now and again, there may be a nursery, there may be plays or activities—but, the primary focus of the church should be upon teaching the Word of God. I would think that 4 one-hour classes a week are bare minimum for spiritual growth.
2. The pastor should have a working understanding of the Greek and the Hebrew, and he should be able to communicate this to you. To have a full understanding and appreciation for certain passages of Scripture, you need to know what is being said.
3. The pastor should have a full understanding of theology, which, in most cases, requires a degree from an accredited seminary. Although some pastors can teach without this degree, that should be the exception, not the rule. If your pastor has been a believer for, say, less than 5 years, then he is not ready. It takes time for a new believer to grow into maturity, and then time for that believer to recognize their spiritual gift. Then preparation for the pastorate is involved (seminary).
4. The pastor should regularly remind his congregants to name their sins silently to God. You cannot grow spiritually apart from this. A pastor who does not make this an issue prior to teaching is like going on a long drive without putting gas in your car—you are not going to get anywhere without it.

5. The pastor should not counsel. If he spends his time counseling, then he cannot be spending enough time studying and teaching. Counseling will occur within the function of his spiritual gift, which is teaching his congregation.
6. A church should have available somewhere their basic doctrinal beliefs (online or as a handout), which should include the following:
 - a. A belief in the Trinity of God, that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are co-equal and coeternal members of the Trinity.
 - b. That Jesus Christ went to the cross to bear our sins. It is by faith in Him alone which is the man-ward side of salvation. No works are involved in salvation for us. We do not need to be baptized, follow some set of rules or sacraments of the church, and we do not have to become nice people. It should be clear that, after believing in Jesus Christ, you can go out and commit the most heinous sins you can imagine, and you will remain saved. However, the pastor should quickly add, when you sin after becoming a believer, then God potentially will discipline you. Furthermore, there are natural results to sinning. For instance, if you break the law, you might be arrested and jailed. If you take drugs, you might become addicted to them. If you go out of your way to act like an ass, people may not want to be around you. But, to be clear, insofar as God is concerned, if you have believed in Jesus Christ, then you are saved and you cannot lose that salvation.
 - c. Jesus Christ is the God-man, the only mediator between man and God. Jesus is fully man, having been born of a woman, but without a sin nature. Jesus is fully God, and these attributes are not mixed or compromised or heightened.
 - d. Salvation is permanent and it cannot be lost through sin or a later loss of faith.
 - e. At salvation, all believers are given the filling of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit. The filling is lost the first time that we sin; the indwelling is never lost. The filling of the Holy Spirit is regained when we name our sins to God. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are not separate experiences from salvation.
 - f. The Bible, in the autographs (completely accurate copies of the original) is the Word of God to man and all that we need to know is found in the Word of God. We do not require additional revelation for divine guidance or doctrine.
 - g. Learning and believing Bible doctrine is the key to spiritual growth.
 - h. The church must believe in dispensations; they must clearly differentiate between Israel and the church and they must clearly understand that the Jews today are still God's people, so to speak. God has not cast the Jews aside. In terms of their function at the present time, a believing Jew functions the same as a believing Gentile. However, their genetic line is going to come to the forefront of God's plan in the future.

7. Giving should never be an issue at a prospective church. You church should not use emotional tactics in order to get you to give them money. They should not send you offering cards in the mail unless you have requested them. If a Bible class is held several times a week, an offering does not need to be taken each and every time. That seems too much like you are paying for the Bible class. Taking up an offering once a week is reasonable, but, again, this should be done without theatrics or emotional bullying. You should never receive emergency offering letters in the mail. If I received one letter, I might ignore it. If I received two, I would find another church. The church should not prescribe a specific percentage that you should give and then, in some way or another, try to hold you to that percentage. A church should never ask for or know anything about your own personal income. The longer I have been a believer, the more I believe that Christians should not give a dime until they have grown spiritually.
8. The pastor should teach more than morality; the pastor should teach more than, *it is wrong to sin*. The spiritual way of life is not simply to stop sinning (which you cannot do anyway) or to reduce the number of sins you commit. The Christian way of life is not simple morality.
9. Do not be shocked that finding such a church is almost impossible. It is amazing how few churches carefully teach the Bible verse-by-verse, teach the basic mechanics of spiritual growth, and which operates on grace principles.

If you have a local church which is available, or you are able to gather with 2 or more other believers to study the Word of God under a specific pastor-teacher, that is always preferable to studying alone at home. My personal experience is that many who study under a pastor-teacher on their own, when there are other alternatives, become disconnected from the body of Christ in their own thinking.

It takes a pastor-teacher to pull Biblical concepts together, so that you do not emphasize one verse over all other verses in the Bible. **Love your enemy** (Matt. 5:44) does not preclude you from shooting someone who breaks into your house; however, this should not keep you from giving him the gospel while he is laying there dying with your bullet through his stomach. You may have a man who has committed a vicious crime against your family who is sentenced to die by execution—this should not prevent you from forgiving him and giving this man the gospel. You may be at war, fighting for your country, killing as many of the enemy as possible while filled with the Holy Spirit. However, this does not mean that you ought to hate any of these people you are killing nor does it mean that, under the right circumstances, that you withhold the gospel from one of your captured enemies. Killing the enemies of your country is a part of your service to your country; giving him the gospel is a part of your service to God. These actions do not have to be mutually exclusive. You should still endeavor to kill the enemy of your country (and you should not try to simply incapacitate them, unless those are your orders).

My point, in all of this is, you can go off on a theological tangent if you choose this or that passage to be the be-all/end-all of Christian theology. Often, what appear to be clear declarations are modified elsewhere. A good pastor-teacher is going to be able to explain

the proper application which you may not quite get by reading your Bible. This is why, in the previous study, I spoke of finding a pastor-teacher to learn under.

Introductory Lesson 11: The Bible

Translations, Textual Criticism

Translations:

The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in human history. The version which sells the most copies today (the last time I looked) was the NIV (the New International Version). In the last few centuries, the King James Version reigned supreme, and it did so for two reasons: it was very accurate and it had a great literary style. In the past 20 years, this translation has been all but abandoned.

It is very difficult to determine how to translate the Bible. Do you do a word-for-word translation, maintaining, as much as possible, the word order found in the original, and consistency throughout the translation? Is it most reasonable to render one Greek word *to set free* in one passage, and yet translate it *to faint* in another?

Sometimes, a passage has a very literal translation, but it represents a fairly common figure of speech. In the English, we can say things like, *I am dead tired*, and this phrase has nothing to do with being dead or being near death. What should we do in cases of hyperbole, metonymy, ellipsis, or alliteration? I use a very excellent book written by E. W. Bullinger on the various figures of speech found in the Bible, and this book is as thick as the Bible. A translator has to make a decision here: *should I be absolutely literal here, or should I take into account the literary idioms involved?*

There is the problem of accuracy versus readability. The sentence structure of the Old and New Testaments is much different than our English sentence structure. We generally have the subject, then the verb, and then the direct object or the predicate nominative, followed by a period. The Greek and Hebrew do not have marks of punctuation. They may start a sentence with the verb, the direct object, or the subject. You have to know Greek and Hebrew in order to figure out where a sentence starts and stops. Furthermore, in Hebrew narrative, it appears that some passages are one very, very long run-on sentence, held together by a series of conjunctions (called *wâw* consecutives).

A second problem is, *if you cannot understand a translation, regardless of how literal it is, what good is it?* This is where the pastor-teacher comes into the picture. In some areas, a verse means exactly what it appears to mean. John 3:16, where we are advised to believe in Jesus Christ in order to receive eternal life, it means just that, and this is repeated several times in the book of John. However, there are other verses which require a careful approach in context: **Love your enemies**; does this mean, if a thief breaks into your home, armed with a weapon, that you do not protect your own family? Elsewhere in the New Testament, a person who gives so much to the church that he neglects his own family is called **worse than an infidel**. Surely, allowing your family to be terrorized is far worse than neglecting the physical needs of your family.

When Jesus physically ejected the moneychangers from the Temple, when He called the religious types of His day, *a pit of vipers*, were these examples of how you love your enemies? Or, can we take our Lord's actions and the words that He says and make sense out of them? Again, a good pastor-teacher, aware of most of the Bible, is able to pull these things together for us.

For the serious Bible student (which should be all believers), you ought to have 2 or 3 versions of the Bible. If you use your computer as a tool to study the Bible, then I would strongly suggest the free program e-sword, available at www.e-sword.net where you can get dozens of free translations (I use about 50 translations in my own studies). Make certain that you download the BDB Lexicon for the Hebrew and the Thayer Lexicon for the Greek, if you want to know more about the Hebrew and Greek words behind our English words. On e-sword, you can get Bible modules which are keyed, word-by-word, to the original Greek and Hebrew languages and some give some of the morphology of the words. However, the only place I have found a complete morphological listing for the Old Testament is Owen's 4-volume set, *An Analytic Key to the Old Testament*, which very few people would have a real interest in (apart from pastors and commentators).

The Accurate Translations		
Accurate and Readable	Accurate but not as Readable	Reasonably Accurate and Readable
The New King James Version; the New American Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible, the World English Bible, the Modern King James Version, the Amplified Bible, Green's Literal Translation, the Voice in the Wilderness, The Scriptures, the American KJV.	Young's Literal Translation (which is probably one of the most literal and consistent translation available); The Emphasized Bible, the King James Bible, the Third Millennium Bible, and the Concordant Literal Version.	New Revised Standard Version, the NIV, the NIV-UK, New Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible, the NET Bible ⁵ (aka the NEXT Bible), Holman Christian Standard Bible, Bible in Basic English.

Of all these, the NKJV is probably the most readable and the most accurate followed closely by the NASB, which is slightly less readable (in my opinion). Don't be afraid of the name and do not confuse it with the KJV. It is as readable today as the KJV was in its day. The ESV is excellent, except that they do not capitalize pronouns which refer to members of the Trinity, which is my biggest problem with the ESV.

⁵ When this Bible strays from an careful translation, it takes note of this in its extensive footnote section.

The Bible translations which are not always word-for-word

Moderately Accurate	More of a thought-for-thought translation	Too imaginative
<p>The Bible in Basic English, the Complete Apostles Bible, God's Word™, the Holman Christian Standard Bible, the JPS Tanakh (which is an excellent OT translation), the various incarnations of the NIV (I think there are 4 or more), and the <i>Scriptures</i> (1998). At this point in time, the NIV is the best selling Bible translation.</p>	<p>The New Living Bible (a personal favorite). The Revised English Bible, the New American Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible, the New International Readers Version. Of this group, the New Living Bible is probably the most readable and generally as accurate as the other translations listed.</p>	<p>The Contemporary English Version, although it lines up with mainstream Christianity, is what charitably might be described as <i>imaginative</i>. <i>The Message</i> and the <i>Good News Bible (Today's English Version)</i> are also <i>imaginative</i> translations. This does not make these versions worthless; there have been a handful of times when, after looking at one of these translations, that their interpretation of a verse opened it up for me.</p>

The thought-for-thought translations need to be read with a grain of salt. They vary greatly in accuracy, but are generally very readable. Those in the first column are moderately trustworthy when it comes to accuracy, and those in the second, less so (however, the translators do all that they can to give us an accurate translation, within the confines of their translation philosophy). However, when making this or that doctrinal point, do not go to any of these Bibles to back it up. Between the reasonable and the imaginative versions fall the New Century Bible and the New Life Bible. They could not be classified as particularly accurate, but they stray less from the text than does, for instance, the CEV.

You should have a Bible which you find reasonably easy to read and understand. For me, the ideal is the NKJV followed by the NASB. If you find that reading of any of these to be difficult, then go to the second list, first column, and choose a Bible from there. If you simply want to read through the Bible and you want one which flows well, let me suggest the NLT.

If you have access to the internet regularly, there are several places that you can go to in order to use or examine other translations:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/> or www.studylight.org
<http://www.studylight.org/par/view.cgi?query=gen+1§ion=0&l1=en&t1=lit&l2=en&t2=erv&Enter=Search>

You may use these two websites either as your Bible or to preview Bibles until you find 1 or 2 or 3 which appeal to you. The other option is to use e-sword on your computer and

restrict yourself to the modules available there <http://www.e-sword.net/bibles.html> The first group of Bibles must be paid for and the second group are free.

There are user modules at <http://www.e-sword.net/usermods/> and you can often find other modules on the internet by using a search engine to find “e-sword modules.” www.esnips.com is a good site for finding user modules, as is <http://esword.pbwiki.com/>

Textual Criticism is the science of determining what is the original text. When reading this or that translation, we often have no idea as to the behind the scenes choices which were made. Some Bibles, like the NRSV, list several alternate readings. Most do not.

First of all, it is important to recognize that there are very few actual variants in the Biblical text. John Lea, in *The Greatest Book in the World* (published in 1929) wrote *It seems strange that the text of Shakespear, which has been in existence less than 208 years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over 18 centuries old, during nearly 15 of which is existed only in manuscript...With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves. But, in every one of Shakespear’s 37 plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur.*

However, there are variants, and most of which are trivial. I do a word-by-word examination of the book of 1Samuel and I list every variant which I am aware of. The book of Samuel is famous for have a great number of variants. However, there are only two times in this book where a doctrinal understanding of something is called into question. Saul, when needing some guidance, calls for the Ark of God. The Ark of God is never used in the Bible for guidance. In fact, few people actually ever even saw the Ark of God, as it was kept inside of a partition which was inside the Tabernacle (called the Holy of Holies), and only the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. The alternate reading for this verse is Ephod of God, which word which is quite similar in the Hebrew. This would make sense, as the Ephod was used to provide divine direction. In any case, Saul called for one of these two things, and then, in this passage, he never used it in any way. In the book of Samuel, there are more glaring differences and variants, but none of them seriously affect the overall meaning.

When I examine the original Hebrew text, I line it up against the Greek text of the Septuagint and note any of the differences. I have English translations made from the Latin and from the Syriac, to which I also refer. You do not need to do this. The person or group who translated your Bible depended upon a Greek and a Hebrew text which was carefully examined by textual critics (if you read the preface of your Bible, they will generally tell which texts they depended upon (for instance, they may specify that the Westcott-Hort text was used for the New Testament, or the Nestle-Aland Ovum Tetamentum was their NT text). This is not something that you as an individual believer need to worry about. I mention these things so that you understand that there are variant

readings, that most of these variant readings have been figured out already, and that there is this entire Biblical science process which goes on behind the scenes which is absolutely necessary in order for us to have an English translation in our hands or on our computer.

If you were interested in some of these topics, e.g., how did we get our Bible, how did these books get chosen, but not others, etc., I have 2 general suggestions for further reading:

Norman Geisler, in conjunction with several other authors, has written a number of excellent books. As a very young believer, I was fortunately exposed at a Bible institute to *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Geisler and Nix. Few people have any appreciation for the actual background and history of the Bible. In this particular book, there are 3 topics covered: Inspiration of the Bible, Canonization of the Bible and the Transmission of the Bible.

See:

http://www.amazon.com/General-Introduction-Bible-Norman-Geisler/dp/0802429165/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1219836867&sr=1-2

Geisler and Nix also wrote a book called *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible*. Although I have not read this book, it deals with the following questions: *Where did the Bible come from? How do we know the right books are in the Bible? Does the Bible contain errors? What are the oldest copies we have of the Bible? How do we know that the Bible hasn't been changed over the years? Why are there so many translations of the Bible, and which one should I use?* It sounds like an excellent book to me, but there was a criticism on Amazon.com that it was too intellectually rigorous for one reader.

Introductory Lesson 12: The Bible Christian Apologetics and Biblical Prophecy

Christian apologetics is all about taking what we know about the Bible and what is in the Bible and determining whether these things are reasonable and logical. Just as textual criticism does not mean that we sit around and criticize the text of the Bible, apologetics does not mean that we meander about apologizing for our faith. Some of the topics may include: *is it reasonable to believe in God? Is it reasonable to think of the Bible as the Word of God? Shouldn't we just take it as a great religious work? Who is Jesus really and did He even exist? Does it make sense that He is God? Didn't people just later decide to make Him out to be God, but isn't that just religious nonsense? What is the most logical and reasonable approach to God, the Bible and Jesus? Isn't the Bible filled with errors? Aren't the prophecies of the Bible written after the events occurred? Aren't the prophecies of the Bible so general that they could apply to almost any set of historical events?* These are the kinds of questions which new believers often have, and certainly the questions which skeptics come up with. We ought to know the answers to these questions ourselves. Now and again, we are going to run into an unbeliever who poses one of these questions, not as a sign of negative volition, but as an indication that he has thought about these

things and the question which he has is a roadblock to him. **Honor Christ the Lord in your hearts as set apart [different from all else], always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the confidence that is in you; yet do it with grace orientation [i.e., without arrogance] and with respect (1Peter 3:15).**

Jesus and apologetics:

There have been hundreds of books written about Christian apologetics. Let me briefly cover one topic: Who is Jesus? I will let the famous Cecil Adams deal with the question, *did Jesus actually exist* at http://www.straightdope.com/classics/a2_275.html Insofar as I know, Cecil does not believe in God nor is he a Christian (things may have changed over the past decade or so), but Cecil does claim to know everything and asserts that he is never wrong. He is also a very entertaining guy to read.

The question, however, that I want to deal with is, *Exactly who is Jesus?* Most people have an opinion as to Who Jesus is. Most people, including atheists, will say that Jesus was a great teacher of high moral standards. Some portray Him as this great social reformer, looking out for the poor (Liberation Theology). Those who think of themselves as being spiritual but not religious will often lump Jesus in with the great religious figures throughout human history, like Buddha or Mohammed. However, it is important to recognize that Jesus claimed to be God. He said, **"I and the Father are One."** (John 10:30). We can, 2000 years after the fact, try to put some sort of spin on what Jesus really meant, but those who heard Him understood exactly what He meant. In the next verse, they took up stones to stone Him. They understood Him perfectly and this sort of claim was blasphemous. Jesus did *not* put up His hands and say, "Whoa, brothers, I didn't mean what you thought I meant! Let me explain."

One of Jesus' disciples asked Jesus **"Show us the Father, and that is enough for us [i.e., that would completely convince us that You are from God]."** (John 14:8). Jesus answered him, **"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. So, how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"** (John 14:9).

There was the incident where the religious crowd confronted Jesus because He was healing on the Sabbath. John 5:16–18: **And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His Own Father, making Himself equal with God.** As before, we may try to give a variety of interpretations to what Jesus said, but those who heard Him understood what He said, and were quite upset that ***He made Himself equal with God.***

There are many examples from the gospels like this, but let's deal with the question, *exactly Who is Jesus?* If you will accept that He is a great moral teacher, I have given you 3 instances where He claimed equality with God (there are many more). If Jesus is not God, then, (1) He is a liar or (2) He is quite insane, no different from any crazy person wandering about today claiming to be God. It is completely illogical to assert that Jesus

is a liar or insane and, at the same time, claim that He is this great moral teacher. You may want to offer up some illogical explanation like, *there is a fine line between insanity and brilliance*; but even in such a statement, you are saying, *there is a line*. You may offer up the explanation, *Jesus was just showing man that in all of us, there is the divine*; but Jesus never called anyone else divine; Jesus never turned to Peter and said, “Before Abraham, you existed eternally.” He *never* turned to a pharisee and said, “I am called the Son of God, but you are the son of God as well.” The most logical explanation is, *Jesus is a great, moral teacher and Jesus is God*, exactly as He claimed. The other options, that Jesus is either a liar or insane, just do not comport well with those things which people will readily accept—that He is a great teacher, a great man of God, a great religious figure. Therefore, from a subjective point of view, you ought to either reject Jesus as a liar, as a crazy man (and, therefore, repudiate His teachings), or you accept the entire package, Jesus Christ, the hypostatic union, the God-man, Who was a great teacher.

This argument is an apologetic argument. It approaches Who Jesus is, based what He said, and examines His words and His character and how He is perceived in the light of human logic. The skeptic says, “Obviously, Jesus was a good man and a great moral teacher, but this stuff about Him being God is just silly.” This apologetic approach takes this person’s opinion examines it and shows that it is illogical. A good man would not pretend that He is God; a great moral teacher would not teach things which He knew to be untrue (and Jesus Himself knew whether or not He was God).

Unbelievers make a lot of illogical statements in order to explain why they do not believe in Jesus Christ (the Living Word of God) or in the Bible (the written Word of God). These statements often sound reasonable and well-thought out, but, most of the time, they are not. When you witness to an unbeliever and they make a statement like this, they are either expressing their negative volition or they are indicating that they have given these things some thought. In any case, apologetics, in part, examines such statements of unbelievers logically.

I want you to notice something else about Jesus, which is not true of any other religious figure: people are always trying to mold Jesus as endorsing or embodying their own beliefs. I heard Michael Moore, the far left film maker, argue that Jesus supported his politic. This was more than an aside; this is something which he was arguing passionately and repeatedly. I’ve read letters to the editor, where people would name this or that cause, and then, somehow, pull Jesus into it, saying that this is what He would be petitioning for. There is Liberation Theology (and its offshoot, Black Liberation Theology) where Jesus is molded into some sort of an idealized Che Guevara or Fidel Castro figure, a person of the people, moving people toward revolutionary change (despite the fact that Jesus never made any political statements, beyond telling us to pay our taxes; and despite the fact that Jesus never led any political movement). Even Mohammed tried to claim Jesus as one of the prophets of Allah. No one in history is so taken out of history and given such wide application to the most contradictory systems of philosophy, religion and politics as Jesus. We don’t find people who are animal rights activists saying, “Now, if Mohammed was here today, he would be running an animal shelter;” or civil rights leaders claiming Confucius would be marching right along side them; or socialists and communists, in the guise of

Liberation Theology, asserting that they are teaching the essence of Brigham Young's religion. However, I have heard people from all of these movements somehow claim Jesus. People all seem to want Jesus to sign off on their particular agenda or cause. However, what is really happening, whether they realize it or not, is that they are making God in their own image.

The Bible, prophecy and historical trends:

Let me give you another topic from apologetics. In our lifetimes, God is not going to appear to us, point to the Bible and say, "That is My Word." So, is there anything about the Bible which logically indicates that it is the actual Word of God? Certainly. The Bible is filled with prophecy in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. In a previous lesson, I have reasonably explained how we know the Old Testament was written long before the New Testament (we actually have copies of the Old Testament from the Dead Sea Scrolls which predate our Lord; furthermore, a Greek translation of the Old Testament was made prior to 100 B.C.).

Let's look at some of these prophecies about Jesus Christ:

Prophecies About Jesus Christ	
Old Testament	New Testament
<p>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel [that is, <i>God with us</i>] (Isa. 7:14). Now, critics suggest that the Hebrew word here does not mean <i>virgin</i>, but <i>young woman</i> instead. This is illogical. It is <i>not</i> a <i>sign</i> for a young woman to have a child; it is a sign, on the other hand, for a virgin to bear a Son.</p>	<p>Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit...Now, being roused from sleep, Joseph does as the messenger of the Lord bids him. And he accepted his wife, and he did not have intimate relations with her until she brought forth a Son, and he calls His name Jesus (Matt. 1:18, 24–25).</p>
<p>Besides all of this, there are theological reasons why Jesus must be born of a virgin, which go back as far as Gen. 3:15. The sin nature is passed down through the man and not the woman; so if a woman, apart from a man, gives birth, her child will not be born with a sin nature.</p>	
<p>As an aside, I hope you recognized that Isa. 7:14 also reveals that prophecies about the Messiah include the fact that He is God.</p>	
<p>Jesus would be born in the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Jesse and David (Gen. 21:12 Num. 24:17 Gen. 49:10 Isa. 11:1 Jer. 23:5).</p>	<p>Our Lord's legal and matriarchal lines both come through these men (Matt. 1 Luke 3).</p>

Prophecies About Jesus Christ

Old Testament

New Testament

It is also fascinating to see how these prophecies about the line of the Messiah are scattered throughout the Bible, and in places where one would not expect them to be found (e.g., Isaiah and Jeremiah). When Jacob spoke about the Messiah coming through his son Judah, bear in mind that Jacob highly favored his sons Benjamin and Joseph.

Although there are many genealogies throughout the Bible, the genealogies of the Messiah are repeated on many occasions, in many different books, and often, but not always, tied to the Messiah. Furthermore, the only complete genealogy from Adam to the New Testament is the line of Jesus (the 400 silent years are filled in, in Matthew and Luke).

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem: *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one Who is to be ruler in Israel, Whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days* (Micah 5:2).

Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1). You will note that Jesus had nothing that He could do about these prophecies listed so far. I have heard one critic suggest that Jesus took a check list with Him and did stuff in the Old Testament, and then checked it off the list.

Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." (Jer. 31:15).

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men (Matt. 2:16).

This introduces the concept of the double-fulfillment of a prophecy. Jeremiah was speaking of what would happen when Judah was overrun and dispersed by the Chaldeans. However, the overall passage in Jeremiah was Messianic (see Jer. 30:20–33:26). Such dual fulfillments are found throughout the prophetic passages, and were understood as such even by the theologians prior to the time of Jesus.

The Messiah to come would be called *Lord*. Psalm 110:1

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11; see also Matt. 22:43–45).

I will pour a libation on My King, On Zion, My holy mountain (Psalm 2:6).

And they place above His head His charge written: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." (Matt. 27:37).

I have listed 5 prophecies, and there are probably a hundred or so prophecies which deal with Jesus the Messiah. When it comes to the cross, it should be fascinating that what occurred on the cross was covered in greater detail in Psalm 22 or Isa. 53 (written centuries prior to the cross), than what is found in any of the gospels. When you examine these prophecies and compare them to their fulfillment, hundreds of years later, they are quite amazing.

The skeptic may argue two things: (1) these were not prophecies to begin with, but something which people later decided to apply to Jesus. (2) the writers of New Testament Scripture just made up stuff in order to match the Old Testament.

The answer to the first objection is, these passages in the Old Testament were generally accepted by Jewish theologians for centuries to be about the Messiah. We have commentaries written by ancient Jews to indicate this (the Talmud and the Mishna).

Those who wrote the New Testament did so when people were alive who saw and even met Jesus. There was a lot of writing from this time period and thousands of people could have written, "No, it just wasn't like this at all." However, they did not. New Testament writings were all done within the first century by those who actually knew our Lord. Claiming to be a Christian would subject a person to persecution, discrimination and possibly even death. Being a leader among Christians almost certainly doomed a person to death. It is illogical for Jesus' disciples, like Matthew and Peter, who ran for their lives when their Messiah was taken into custody by the Jewish authorities and Roman soldiers, to then turn around, *after* their Messiah was dead, and become more emboldened in their faith. How logical is it for these people, who are shown to have little nerve to begin with, to later write and promote things which they know are false, which would ensure their deaths.

As an aside, you cannot say, "Well, there are Muslim extremists today who will die for their faith." It is not the same thing. Muslim extremists believe in what they are doing. These disciples, who promoted faith in Jesus, either saw Jesus raised from the dead or they did not. These disciples, prior to the crucifixion, showed themselves to be men without courage or conviction and, quite frankly, men who were quite stupid about theological matters. Something dramatically changed them all after the crucifixion. What these disciples were willing to die for in the latter half of the first century was something which they knew to be true or they knew to be false. How often is a coward willing to die for something he knows to be categorically false?

I have compiled several lists of the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus Christ:

<http://kukis.org/Doctrines/JesusChristOT.htm>

http://kukis.org/Doctrines/Chart_Jesus_Old_New.htm

http://kukis.org/Charts/Messianic_Prophecies.htm

I need to add one more thing: the Old Testament is filled with prophecies and shadow images of Jesus Christ. The New Testament does not explicitly identify them all. Even though Matthew will give a narrative about something in the life of Jesus, and then tell what Old Testament verse was being fulfilled, he does not do this for each and every Old Testament Messianic prophecy. In my studies, 2000 years later, I have discovered at least one shadow image of Jesus in the Old Testament which is not specifically identified in the New nor has it ever been written about before. The Bible is filled with such things still awaiting to be discovered.

That Christianity got off the ground in the first place is amazing in itself. Religious figures like Buddha and Mohammed had long ministries where they themselves produced religious literature. They spread their teachings far and wide, Mohammed going so far as to use the military to impose his religion on others. Jesus wrote nothing down, nor did He seem to require His disciples to write anything down. Although He said, **“I am the way, the truth and the life,”** He did not then direct Peter to “Write that down.” His public ministry took place over a very short period of time: 3–4 years. The area where He taught was smaller than most of our states. The response which He received, in many cases, was quite negative.

Believers did not begin to commit anything to writing until at least 10–15 years after His death, burial and resurrection. They were too busy spreading the word, **“Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”** However, His disciples did write down His history (called the gospels) while thousands of other witnesses were still alive and could attest to the truth of their biographies of Jesus. The gospels were written before enough time had elapsed for Jesus to have been mythologized. That would have taken several generations, and the first writings would have had to have been written not by eyewitnesses, but by religious adherents several complete generations after the fact. The idea that anything came of this faith is amazing and does not fit the mold of any other religion or cult.

The Jews as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies: In order for future prophecies to be fulfilled, there must be a number of Jews living on this earth. Jews date back to the time of the Philistines, the Hittites, the Chaldeans, and a host of other ancient peoples. Almost every one of us knows several Jews. None of us knows a Chaldean, or a Philistine or a Hittite, as these groups were wiped out. Every time you see a Jew, you are a witness to God’s future prophecies.

The Jews have a unique history as well. No other religious and racial group has faced what they have faced. For instance, the Egyptians have been around as long as the Jews have been around. We do not hear about nation-wide movements to purge the Egyptians from their midst, or to gather and execute all Egyptians. However, Jews, because of their unique history, assimilate well into any society, and become great assets to this society, and yet, there will be outbreaks of hatred against the Jews which are incredibly surreal.

The Jews occupy 0.2% of the land in the Middle East. This is a postage stamp-sized country. They occupy land which has no oil. Yet there are millions of Arabs completely up in arms about this Jewish state. Some blame their every national problem on the existence of Israel. There are national leaders who call for the destruction of Israel; there

are various nations who have bonded together in order to wipe out this little nation; and we have various terrorist groups who bomb Israel every single day—groups who, if they did not continually bomb Israel, would be able to easily coexist with these Jews, and even benefit by such a coexistence. They choose not to. Millions of Arab families bring their children up to believe that Jews are descendants of pigs and monkeys, and to have a deep and abiding hatred for Jews. We have prejudice in America, but nothing quite like this.

Yet God preserves His people and Satan does everything in his power to destroy them, something which is as true today as it was 4000 years ago. Anyone who reads the Bible would expect for this persecution of the Jews to be true throughout human history. There is no other book and no other people so indelibly intertwined, where historical trends are set and continue even to this day.

Just think about recent history: we (speaking of us in the United States) were at war with the Germans and the Japanese, and we saved the French. Here it is, 70 years later, and we have a great relationship with all three groups of people. We don't like the French a little more because they were our allies; we get along well with all of them. There have even been public reconciliations (one of the top generals of the WWII Japanese military spoke at our church some years back). I have met and gotten to know people from Germany, Japan and France, and there exists nothing by way of bitterness or anger even though we came out of an incredibly vicious conflict. But Arabs and Jews, on the other hand—that is a different story. There will always be animosity toward the Jews; there will always be antisemitism. That is a modern fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and the historical trends set in the Bible.

Old Testament prophecies about nations and cities: The Bible is filled with prophecies concerning various nations and cities.

The city of Tyre is a notable example. The book of Ezekiel is filled with dates. It begins with: *In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest (Ezek. 1:1–3a).* For this reason, we are able to put an exact date to the writings of Ezekiel. The Old Testament was completed around 400 B.C., a date which can be confirmed by hundreds of various sources. A book with as many dates in it, as we find in Ezekiel, could never have been accepted into the canon of Scripture, if these dates were spurious. Ezek. 26 claims to have been written in 586 B.C., *the 11th year of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah. On nine separate occasions throughout the chapter, the writer claims to have been inspired by God with statements such as "thus says the Lord GOD."* The text describes the fall of mainland Tyre to the armies of Nebuchadnezzar the following year. It further describes the events of Alexander the Great's siege against the island fortress of Tyre (a half mile off the coast of mainland Tyre) 253 years later [70 years after the completion of the Hebrew canon]. The chapter describes how the invaders would tear down the ruins of mainland Tyre and throw it into the sea. That they would *"scrape her dust from her and leave her as the top of a rock" (v4). That "they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water" (v12).*

"I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets" (v14). Secular history records that Alexander the Great laid siege to the island fortress of Tyre in 332 B.C. His army demolished mainland Tyre and threw it into the sea. In their effort to construct a causeway to the island, they scraped even the dust, leaving only bare rock. Historian Phillip Myers in his history textbook, General History for Colleges and High Schools (Boston, Ginn & Co.), writes, "Alexander the Great reduced Tyre to ruins in 332 B.C. Tyre recovered in a measure from this blow, but never regained the place she had previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now as bare as the top of a rock -- a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry" (pg.55). The fate of mainland Tyre was accomplished as foretold in the book of Ezekiel.

This text was taken from <http://www.allabouttruth.org/biblical-prophecy.htm> There are other accounts of this prophecy and its fulfillment which are much longer and go into much greater detail. However, it ought to be amazing that Bible takes one of the greatest cities of the ancient world and tells us that it will become a place of fishermen, and, 2700 years later, that is still true. It would be like someone saying the same thing about New York City or London or Paris today, and then having that prophecy come to pass and remain in place for 3000 years.

In this particular lesson, I barely scratched the surface of Biblical prophecy and Biblical apologetics. The idea is, there is no book quite like the Bible. There are many things which I have left out, and even major topics which I have left out. I just wanted to present enough material so that you could see, it is reasonable and logical to believe what the Bible says. You do not have to set intellectual curiosity or rigor aside in order to believe in Jesus Christ or trust that the Bible is the Word of God. That is the function of Christian apologetics.

Introductory Lesson 13: The Bible

Natural and Logical Apologetics, Faith

Natural and Logical Apologetics:

This is an area where believers present logical and well-reasoned arguments for the existence of a Creator God. This approach will *not* convince any unbeliever who is simply negative toward God. This approach will not change the mind of someone who believes in God but is involved in some cult or false religion. Natural and logical apologetics simply approach God in a theoretical way and in a logical way. There are a few unbelievers teetering on the edge of belief where this approach gives them enough reason to believe in Jesus Christ. Although these arguments do not deal with Jesus Christ directly (or even with the Bible), they make faith in God reasonable, which is a good thing. Apologetics in this realm were very helpful to me when I first believed in Jesus Christ. I knew a lot of Christians, both intimately and from afar, and the last thing I wanted to do was to be like them. Some of them were like pod-people to me. Let me give you a specific example. My girlfriend at the time when I believed in Jesus Christ, hauled me off to a Campus Crusade meeting. All of the guys there had fashionably long hair (not hippy long), they were

otherwise, clean-cut and good looking, and very personable. When they would talk to some nubile believer, they would appear to be extremely sincere, often making innocent-appearing, but clear physical contact (putting their arm around the young lady), and the whole thing struck me as being rather phony. I was personally uncomfortable when every single guy seemed to be cut from the same mold. I did not dislike them; I was not threatened by them; they seemed like very nice guys. However, they were so, so similar that it concerned me. So, personally, I found solace and confidence in reading and studying apologetics to give me confidence in believing in God and believing in Jesus Christ. Whatever path I found myself on, at that point, I had at least begun with premises which were intellectually honest.

These are approaches to apologetics which do not deal with the Bible but with the logical reasons why we believe in God.

There is the *first cause* approach. We live in a world of cause and effect. We open our refrigerator doors, the light goes on inside; we press buttons on the remote and the channel changes; we apply for a job and we either get hired or rejected. For everything which occurs in our life, there is a cause or causes which cause that thing to occur. There is nothing which is, nothing which occurs, which was not the result of the thing or things which caused it. When we go backwards in history, we keep going back to a point where it has to begin, where there must be a *first cause*; and that *first cause* we call God.

The *image of God* approach: All men have certain characteristics—some sense of right and wrong, some sense of justice, some concept of love. We may disagree as to the exact tenets of right and wrong, we may disagree on how justice should be brought about, and we may have wildly differing ideas when it comes to love; but we still have these notions, these concepts, these ideals. We are simply reflecting the ideal which is God, Who is perfect justice, righteousness and love.

There must have been a designer approach: When we find a watch laying on the ground, no one supposes that watch sort of evolved; no one thinks that the watch is a result of cars driving by, people walking by, wind and rain, all acting to shape this thing into a watch. We know that something created this watch. If we gathered up all the watches in the world, we would never suggest, 0.1% of these occurred in nature while 99.9% of them were made by a watchmaker. We all know and agree that 100% of all watches in the world were created by men. We—our bodies and our minds—are exquisitely made. The complexity of the human being is far beyond our ability to explain or to know. The point which I have made before, you could take just one cell of your body and write a doctoral thesis on this one cell. Our bodies are made up of millions of cells, all of which interact in specific and complex ways, some of which can be explained, but most of which are still to be studied and quantified and qualified by science. Much of what was settled science about the body decades ago is no longer. We used to believe in vestigial organs (organs which no longer have a real function in relationship to the body, which function fell out of use due to evolution). We have since found uses and functions for pretty much every organ in the body.

Outside of our body, there are the laws of nature, of gravity, of motion, etc.; are all very specific and can be studied and quantified. All things which we observe have been very carefully designed and demand a Designer, Whom we call God.

There is the universal concept of *right and wrong*. Societies make laws which protect life and personal property. These are laws which are very similar from society to society and laws which seem to have very little to do with Darwin's survival of the fittest. Few societies condone behavior where a young, strong, healthy good-looking guy can walk into the house of someone who is weaker and not as attractive physically, and simply take it because he is the fittest of the species and the original owner of the house is from inferior stock. Most societies universally agree that, the most attractive and intelligent of their population do not have a right to kill those who are less attractive and less intelligent. When this sort of thing happens (the killing of Down Syndrome babies/fetuses; the mass killing of Jews in Germany), there is often outrage from people both within and outside of that society. In what society could you obtain the general approval of that society if you took a gun and killed the people who lived in a home that you liked, and then began living in that home? There would be almost universal scorn for such an act. If man had evolved and one of the cornerstone's of his evolving was survival of the fittest, then the concept of survival of the fittest should override the concept of life and property in *most* societies. My point is, we have an essentially universal concept of *right and wrong* which is at odds with our supposed origins. This concept of *right and wrong* can be found in the Ten Commandments, many of which are found, in one form or another, in essentially every nation on earth. This almost universal concept and agreement upon *right and wrong* (at least in some areas) suggests that we reflect a divine standard.

As a caveat, we have societies where the protection of life and property is done imperfectly, including our own society. However, that simply reflects the sin nature which all men have.

The argument of the *human brain*. Science is able to measure certain aspects of the brain and to recognize that there is a relationship between various parts of the brain, electric signals in the brain, and the sloshing around of various chemicals in the brain and thinking of all sorts. However, science cannot fully explain the human brain. We are thought to die when the *spark* leaves our brain (the electrical signals) and it is just as reasonable to suppose that there is some sort of life when our brains begin to have the electrical impulses (which can be measured in a fetus as early as 3 weeks old). We do not know what starts up these electrical impulses and we do not know exactly how they function within the brain, except for the fact that, they mean the difference between life and death.

The human brain...simultaneously processes an amazing amount of information. Your brain takes in all the colors and objects you see, the temperature around you, the pressure of your feet against the floor, the sounds around you, the dryness of your mouth, even the texture of your keyboard. Your brain holds and processes all your emotions, thoughts and memories. At the same time your brain keeps track of the ongoing functions of your body like your breathing pattern, eyelid movement, hunger and movement of the muscles in your hands.

*The human brain processes more than a million messages a second. Your brain weighs the importance of all this data, filtering out the relatively unimportant. This screening function is what allows you to focus and operate effectively in your world. A brain that deals with more than a million pieces of information every second, while evaluating its importance and allowing you to act on the most pertinent information... did it come about just by chance? Was it merely biological causes, perfectly forming the right tissue, blood flow, neurons, structure? The brain functions differently than other organs. There is an intelligence to it, the ability to reason, to produce feelings, to dream and plan, to take action, and relate to other people. How does one explain the human brain?*⁶

How does the human brain just come about? Why is it this complex? Why am I able to transfer the thoughts of my brain to the thinking of your brain without us even being in the same room? The human brain is one of the most amazing things on this earth. The human brain has made it possible for tens of thousands of people to fly all over the world every single day. The human brain has made it possible for us to develop buildings which stand hundreds of feet high. The human brain has developed processes for growing, processing and moving food so that, in some societies, there is an incredible choice of foods, including fresh ones. The human brain has developed things far more complex than the average person can even understand. I use a computer and a television and a car almost every day. If I had a lifetime, I could not have developed any of these things even in their most rudimentary form. Yet the combination of tens of thousands of human brains developed these things. Some people believe that the human brain just happened; it just evolved. Others of us believe that it is the marvelous creation of God.

The argument of *man's universal faith in God*: billions of people on this earth believe in God. Throughout the course of recorded human history, billions of men have believed in God. A huge number of people are willing to die simply for this belief. People have been literally given the choice between professing a disbelief in God in order to live, and they have chosen death instead. In the Bible (as well as in other religious books), some men lay claim to actually communicating with God. Obviously, some people are nut cases, but, *how does a man write down words 3000 years ago, claiming direct contact with God* and how is it possible that these words are still relevant today? If these words come from God, then such a thing makes sense; if these words are simply the ravings of a nutcase, how can they have such a fundamental impact on people today? We have had atheists write all kinds of clever things like, *If God did not exist, then man would have had to invent Him*. But what does that really mean? *Why* would man have to invent God? Men like to exalt *themselves*; that is man's normal inclination. That so many men have a strong faith in God and that ancient words which claim to be the words of God are relevant today, are strong arguments for the existence of God.

As I have mentioned in a previous lesson, more people purchase a Bible every month than any book on the best-seller list. No matter how good a book is and no matter how much

⁶ Quote from <http://everystudent.com/features/isthere.html> accessed October 8, 2008. The amount of data processed by the brain comes from *The Wonders of God's Creation*, Moody Institute of Science (Chicago, IL).

Oprah Winfrey touts this or that book, the Bible will still outsell it. How can that be in a society where we celebrate youth and we want the newest thing? If this is the Word of God, that makes perfect sense; if the Bible is the religious ramblings of some old religious guys (and arguably, crazy religious guys, as they claim that God speaks through them), this makes little or no sense.

Argument from *the subjective witness of God in man*: There are two parts to this argument: the internal workings of the person who believes in and depends upon God and the way this person is perceived. People who believe in God tend to be happier. Surveys and polls conducted year after year confirm this. They tend to be better adjusted to life and they tend to enjoy their life more than the person who either does not believe in God or claims that he is an agnostic. If faith in God is self-delusion, *why does such a delusion cause a person to be happier and better adjusted to his life?* The second part is, from the viewpoint of other people: we all know people who were their own worst enemies, who destroyed their lives with drugs or alcohol or with gambling, or who were simply difficult to be around because of their personality; and we have observed these same people after they developed a faith in God, and their self-destructive tendencies tend to become less and less a factor in their lives. If we know such people well, we may know of the illegal and immoral behavior; which is lessened or even completely disappears after professing faith in God. Let's say you were walking down an almost empty street in the middle of the night, and 6 or so big men of a different race are walking toward you—do you feel better or worse, knowing that they have just come from a Bible study? Obviously, people are hypocrites and obviously religious people do bad things; but, as a general rule, when a person claims to have been touched by God, his life tends to become better for him and for those around him.

The argument from *life and faith*: Every person has faith and every person believes in something. A person who does not believe in God must believe that this universe just sort of happened. The most popular beliefs are the big bang theory and the evolution theory. Now, personally, I have always equated the big bang theory with, [In the beginning, God created \[out of nothing\] the heaven and the earth](#) (Gen. 1:1). But, when it comes to evolution, that became a hard pill to swallow when I began to study it. The earth was somehow here (we are not sure why it is), with all of the ingredients for life. There was some sort of soup and, in some way, not unlike what we find in superhero comic books, life came to be. A simple single cell amoeba was born from non-living matter. Perhaps lightening struck some matter and water and *poof*, it became alive, and the *simple* single cell became a living thing. As an aside, we have since found out that the functions of a single cell are quite specific and complex, and many of them, we as of yet do not understand. Like many things in this world, a PhD candidate could isolate a single cell and generate volumes of information about that one single cell, and never fully plumb the depths of this *simple* living thing. In any case, the atheist has few choices but to believe that, a creature this complexity suddenly was born from matter, for which the atheist has no explanation for either, and, perhaps by lightning striking it (like Frankenstein) or gamma rays piercing the mud (like the Fantastic Four), non-living matter became living matter. A person either ignores these fundamental questions or they have to believe something.

Believing that matter just sort of happened and that life also just sort of happened is far less logical and reasonable than believing that God created matter and that He created life.

There are a number of arguments for the existence of God, and 20 of them are laid out here:

http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics-more/20_arguments-gods-existence.htm

Faith and Evolution:

The atheist/agnostic ups the ante by believing in evolution: Out of some primordial soup, life suddenly came to be—perhaps sparked by a bolt of lightening (not unlike what we read in superhero comic book fiction). Suddenly, there are these very complex single celled living things, whose functions are more complex than contemporary scientists are able to enumerate and classify. Then, somehow and for some reason, some of these single celled creatures decided to band together into a group, and, eventually this turned into a plant. Others banded together and they turned into some rudimentary animal (despite the fact that the simplest animal in the world is wildly complex beyond our 21st century science to fully comprehend). But, evolution does not stop there. The animal somehow was able to reproduce itself, and eventually evolve into all that we see today. Reptiles somehow developed wings and turned into birds. Sea creatures decided to move onto land and change their gills into lungs. To the evolutionist, *time* is a god; and, given enough time, *anything* can happen. They have tremendous faith in *time* and in *unguided evolution*. “Reptiles did not turn into birds overnight; that would be silly. They evolved into bird over a period of millions of years,” the evolutionist explains, bowing once again to the god of time. Eventually, a scant 3 million years ago, very primitive man walked the earth, having his ultimate origins in that little bit of mud millions of years previously.

Believing in evolution requires great faith, whether the believer acknowledges this or not. Most children are exposed to evolution very, very early in school, and they have it reenforced year after year after year. *Never* is any evidence to the contrary presented and examined, and, over and over again, children are told, *this is the scientific approach; this is what scientists have studied and this is what the evidence all points to*. So, most people develop this faith through indoctrination. At age 18, I certainly believed in evolution and almost everyone I knew did as well.

What you place your faith in, is a choice. What you believe in, is a choice. Quite obviously, if you have been taught a set of principles from a very young age and have had these principles reenforced year after year, it is likely that you will believe in what you have been taught.

As a young Christian, I believed in evolution, but I was beginning to believe in the Bible more and more. Like many believers, I reconciled evolution and the first few chapters of Genesis by assuming that each day represented millions of years, and that Genesis was a simple way of looking at evolution. However, there were those who did not believe in evolution, and that idea fascinated me, because it seemed so *flat-earthly* to me. So I read

everything that I could get my hands on which refuted evolution, and, after awhile, I no longer believed in evolution. All of the so-called evolutionary science was smoke and mirrors, indoctrination, and half-truths. I came to these conclusions independently. No one brow-beat me to believe anything. I did not attend a church where I heard over and over again, "Evolution is a lie." I don't know if evolution was mentioned at all in the first few churches I attended. I cannot recall. However, for me to reject my previous faith in evolution did not come about because of some social or religious pressure; I just read and considered the evidence and eventually changed my mind, based upon logical arguments and the presentation of scientific evidence.

Books on apologetics:

Everyone has different interests. I developed a strong interest in apologetics when I believed in Jesus Christ and was saved for fairly simple reasons—I knew some Christians and many of them seemed foolish to me, and I did not want to be trapped in some theological cage where I had to be phony or intellectually dishonest. For this reason, I mostly kept my head down, my mouth shut, and I did a lot of reading and studying, to find out what I gotten myself into. The most obvious question to me was, *do I believe in something which actually makes sense?* Apologetics provided the answer to that question.

There are a number of arguments for the existence of God, and 20 of them are laid out here:

http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics-more/20_arguments-gods-existence.htm

In this study, I have only scratched the surface of this particular topic. Geisler and Nix have written several outstanding books on a variety of topics; allow me to recommend the following *From God to Us: How We Got our Bible*:

http://www.amazon.com/God-Us-How-Got-Bible/dp/0802428789/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1219836867&sr=1-1

There are hundreds of books on apologetics, but I think that some of the very best are written by Josh McDowell, who has, more or less, written the same book a half-dozen times, with many revisions and additions.

[*Evidence That Demands a Verdict Volume 1*](#)

[*A Ready Defense*](#)

[*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*](#)

There is a volume 2 of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, but the topics are less interesting to most people.

One of my favorite books which I read very early as a Christian was [Mere Christianity](#) by C. S. Lewis.

One of my favorite books on evolution and creationism is [Bones of Contention](#) by Lubenow.

Introductory Lesson 14: The Bible

Apologetics, Science and the Bible

The Christian faith, Apologetics and Science:

The earth is very well-suited for its inhabitants. Oxygen makes up 21% of the atmosphere, which is a perfect amount. If it were 25%, fires would be set off continually. If it were 15%, we would die from lack of oxygen.

The temperature range of our planet is unusually temperate for this universe, ranging, for the most part, from about -30° to 120° . Such a narrow temperature range is highly unusual in our universe, and ideal for life. Minor alterations in the sun or in our orbit would change these temperature range dramatically, making the earth uninhabitable.

According to one source, if the gravitational force was altered by 1 part in 10^{40} , the sun would not exist and the moon would either crash into the earth or careen off into space. In order for us to put a satellite over the earth, we have to have very precise calculations. There has to be a precise balance between the gravitation pull of the earth on the satellite and its centrifugal force. It has to have the exact amount of inertia in order to move it away from the earth equal to the force of gravity, so that the free fall of the satellite maintains an orbit around the earth. This is true for all the planets in our solar system. The sun's gravitational pull, their location in space, the speed with which they move, along with their mass, are all factors in their maintaining nice, elliptical orbits. Some people believe that this *just happened* and that all of life and environment is a lucky accident (or a tragic accident, if they are pessimistic). Others believe that our solar system is perfectly designed by God; and that the earth is perfectly designed for our lives. Either choice requires faith.

The size of our oceans combined with a 24 hour day maintains our temperate climate, which allows for an abundance of life. The tilt of the earth on its axis also preserves a relatively mild temperature range, perfectly suited to life. The atmosphere which we have is also conducive to maintaining the temperate climate in which we live.

The actual size of the earth is ideal and maintains the atmosphere that we need. A larger or smaller earth would affect the atmosphere, which is one of the many factors which preserves life.

Here is one thing which you probably do not consider: the importance of the moon. Most of us have seen stagnant ponds, and how, at the beginning, they might be pleasant, but if there is no water movement or exchange of water, they become stagnant pools of water,

and bacteria-ridden. Since most of the earth is covered with oceans, these oceans would become huge, stagnant bodies of water, except for the moon, whose gravitational pull keeps the oceans in constant movement, preserving the life in them, and making the water clean and refreshing.

Speaking of the oceans, 97% of the water on this planet is salt water, and we humans require fresh water, so that makes most of the water on this earth unusable. However, there is a water cycle, where only the pure water of the oceans evaporates and is carried over dry land, and dropped in the form of rain and snow, which is necessary to our lives. The temperature of the earth combined with the gravitational pull of the moon combined with the distance we are from the sun allows for this water cycle to continue, which water cycle preserves our lives. Rain and storms also keep the water in the oceans from becoming stagnant as well.

There are thousands of natural factors, all in a perfect balance with one another, with respect to the earth and the sun, which allow life to flourish on this planet. Some choose to believe that this just sort of happened—a wonderful confluence of nature—and others of us believe that this came about by design. Changing any of these things, even slightly, would make the earth uninhabitable.

One scientist relates our ever expanding universe with the temperature of the earth, saying that a slight change in the expansion of our universe could raise the earth's temperature to 10,000°.

Speaking of the temperature of the earth, did you realize that one of the rarest things in the universe is *water*? H₂O is not quite as rare, but water is. There is a rather small temperature range within which H₂O manages to remain as water—as a liquid. On the earth, we have water in abundance. About $\frac{2}{3}$ ^{rds} of our earth is covered in water, which preserves life in hundreds of ways. The evolutionist just has to believe that this was a happy coincidence; that we here on earth just happened to luck out. “There’s millions of planets, so, it is reasonable that on one of them, there would be a lot of water.” How auspicious that we have the perfect amount of water, the perfect amount of oxygen, the perfect amount of gravity, the perfect amount of orbital forces, the perfect amount of everything to produce an incredible abundance of life, which just seemed to happen by the god of time, in the opinion and faith of the evolutionist. It is all a happy coincidence to the evolutionist. To him, it is like walking down the street and finding a million dollar bill on the ground and then looking up and seeing a bank which specializes in cashing out one million dollar bills. It is not going to happen everyday, but once in a great while, the evolutionist believes that he is going to find that negotiable million dollar bill.

The evolutionist has great faith in chance and time. Wayne, of *Wayne's World*, had the saying, “And monkeys might fly out of my butt.” For the evolutionist, given a few billion years and enough people on this earth, and, eventually, monkeys *will fly out of someone's butt*. Given enough time and chance, *anything* can happen in the world of the evolutionist.

Evolution is the key to understanding liberalism. An evolutionist believes that nearly anything is possible, because of the amazing confluence of time, raw materials and evolution on this planet. A social evolutionist believes that, in this fallen world, in this world of sin, there are programs and governments which can make everything equitable and just and good. They might have to take away one's freedom in order to do this, but, the greater good prevails in their philosophy. They have an unrealistic expectation of what is possible on our planet. Despite all evidence to the contrary, there are people who believe that, (1) we could live in a world free of war; (2) we could eliminate nuclear weapons; (3) we can have a society where everyone is truly equal. If we started out as chemicals sloshing around in a lifeless gunk, and somehow evolved into what we are, then just about anything is possible.

The mechanics of a car amaze me (back when I used to understand most of what was under the hood). Everything is designed with exact precision. If a piston is 1/32" off, it is not going to work. If the AC belt is an inch too long or short, it cannot be used. An exact temperature range is maintained by the radiator—wind travels through the radiator, to cool the water; there is the proper amount of space around the engine, which expels some heat. The engine will heat up to a specific temperature and then it will hold that temperature, which becomes the ideal temperature for the operation of that vehicle. It cannot vary from a particular temperature range. There are thousands of parts in a simple automobile, and they all have to work together and interact with great precision. A well-designed automobile may drive for 200,000 miles or more. A poorly-designed car may begin to have problems as early as 20,000 miles. The key is the interaction of thousands of parts and materials. Our earth is similarly designed—the specific gases in the air, the gravitational pull of the sun, moon and earth, the amount of water on this earth, the temperature range, etc. all function like a well-designed automobile, all designed to accommodate life in great abundance. And, just as man drives the car, man rules over this planet. There are life forms so small that we can barely see them with microscopes, and these life forms are able to kill us (viruses and parasites); and there are life forms which dwarf us in size and strength; yet man rules the earth. God put us in charge.

With regards to all of this, we choose where to place our faith. We can believe that all of the factors which allow the earth to host millions of life forms just sort of happened—the universe exploded, the earth cooled for a few million years, and then, life just came to be on this earth in all of its wonder. Or we can believe that God created the earth and the universe with great specificity, and then created life in all its forms and abundance, perfectly suited for its environment.

For me, it makes more sense that a creative God designed a universe and an earth of great complexity and great perfection, with the intention of sustaining life for a long period of time. No matter how much time passes, we will never come across a watch created by nature and monkeys will never fly out of anyone's butt (nor will one out of a million monkeys pounding on a million typewriters end up writing the first chapter of the Genesis by chance).

You need to recognize the *faith* is a choice. Our parents and our schools tell us thousands of things, and, we tend to believe most of them until a certain age, and then we begin to choose what we believe in. What 18 year-old believes in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny? At the earliest age, whatever our teachers taught us, we believed. However, as time progresses, as we hear more opinions, witness more evidence, we stop believing in some of the things which we were taught. Most of the science teachers today *want* their students to believe in evolution. They teach it as if it is a fact and only a tiny percentage ever present evidence contrary to evolution, even though such evidence exists in abundance. When we step away from this classroom environment, when we no longer have to give the teacher the answers he or she wants, we can either choose to believe all that this teacher taught us or we can examine alternate theories and evidence never presented in the classroom. We choose that which we want to believe, and very intelligent people make opposite choices in what they believe. There are brilliant scientists who believe in God and brilliant scientists who do not, and there are brilliant scientists who believe that we cannot know one way or the other. It all is a matter of faith, and faith is a matter of one's free will.

Let me add one more thing to this topic: there are 3 systems of human perception: faith, empiricism and rationalism. Faith means, we hear or read something, and we believe it. People have told me over and over again, that there is a country called England. I hear about it in the news and many people I know claim to have been there. I believe that England exists, even though I have never been there and seen it with my own eyes. Empiricism is something which we observe, and we base our opinions upon these observations. I firmly believe that, if I put milk in the refrigerator, it will last longer than if I leave it out on the counter. That is a matter of empirical evidence, having gone without electricity for stretches of time (prior to this, that was a matter of faith). Rationalism is based upon logical arguments. It is estimated that 75–95% of everything that we know at any given period of time is based upon faith. There may be some empirical evidence or some rational arguments presented to sway our decision, but, in the final analysis, most of what we believe to be true is based upon faith.

The Bible and science:

The Bible is not a scientific textbook and, at times, it sees things from a very anthropocentric view: e.g., the Bible speaks of the sun rising and setting, which is how we perceive things to be, even though, that is not exactly what is happening.

However, there are times when the Bible says some surprisingly accurate things with respect to science. Isa. 40:22 reads: *It is God Who sits above the sphere of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.* First of all, the idea is, when you stand back far enough, you can see that the earth is a sphere and the inhabitants of the earth would seem very small from there. There is also a reference to the atmosphere in this verse, which was not known in those days as we know it now. We understand that there is a blanket (curtain) of atmosphere about the earth, which makes it possible for us to survive. Science today differentiates between the earth's atmosphere and space; this would have been an

unusual concept for someone to have in circa 700 B.C., when Isaiah spoke these words. In Gen. 1, God spends an entire day making the atmosphere for the earth, an aspect of our existence which we took for granted for thousands of years. Science figured out that air has weight and took up space in 1643 by Torricelli.

Job 26:7 reads: [God stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth upon nothing](#). This is also an unusual concept, that the earth is just out there, not attached to anything, just hanging there upon nothing. We know this to be accurate in our day and age, but it is amazing to find this in writings which are between 3000–4000 years old.

Psalms 96:11a reads: [The heavens rejoice and the earth goes in a circle \[in joy\]](#). I personally believe that the Holy Spirit has a sense of humor, and sometimes injects things into a verse to have more than one meaning. The psalmist speaks of the heavens and earth rejoicing, but the verb used with the *earth* is one which means *to dance around in a circle in joy*. The purpose of this verse is to speak of the heavens and the earth rejoicing; however, the Holy Spirit just picked a very unusual word for expressing joy when it comes to the earth, a word not used of the heavens. The orbit of the earth is suggested by the use of this particular verb, which orbit was only recently understood by science.

God promises Abram that his progeny would be like the sand of the sea or the stars in the sky in number (Gen. 22:17 Jer. 33:22). This is known as hyperbole, as there are 10^{25} grains of sand on this earth. However, it is quite fascinating that God spoke of the number of stars in the same way. Science today estimates that there are 10^{21} number of stars. However, when these words were written (and this promise was given several times), only about 3000 stars were visible to the naked eye. So, 4000 years ago, in the Bible, we have a comparison between the sand of the sea (which is obviously great in number) and the stars in the sky (not as obviously great in number). However, God knows how many stars He created and whether or not these stars increase or decrease in number. God knows that there are a huge number of stars, and so, the hyperbole used with respect to Abram's children is apt.

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible lists a number of passages which anticipate modern scientific discovery: the undulatory theory of matter is seen in Gen. 1:2; wireless telegraphy is seen in Job 38:35; the concept of parallax is seen in James 1:17; atomic theory of matter (Heb. 11:3); atomic binding forces (Heb. 1:3); light as the basis of all substance (Gen. 1:3); nuclear fission (Gen. 1:4); anesthesia and modified cloning (Gen. 2:21–23); a final chain reaction (Isa. 34:4 Luke 21:25–28); an expanding universe (Isa. 40:22); motor cars (Joel 2:3–4); airplanes (Isa. 31:5); radio (Eccles. 10:20); television (Rev. 11:3–12); the sphericity of the earth (Job 22:14 Prov. 8:27 Isa. 40:22 Mark 13:35–37); the concept of air having weight (Job 28:25); the water cycle (Job 26:8 36:27–28 37:11 Psalm 104:10, 13 135:7 Prov. 8:28 Eccles. 1:6–7 Isa. 55:10); the uniqueness of stars (1Cor. 15:41); that planets, moons and stars all function according to specific laws set up by God (Jer. 31:35–36); that our bodies are made out of the chemicals of the earth (Gen. 2:7); the close association of a person's mental and spiritual health with his physical health (Prov. 12:4 14:30 15:30 16:24 17:22); nuclear weapons (2Peter 3:10); and the concept of a world I.D. number which can be assigned and imprinted

on one's hand or forehead, which number would be associated with credit and debit accounts (Rev. 13:16–18—something which made little sense then, but makes perfect sense to us today). Some of these examples came from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 295; others from <http://www.clarifyingchristianity.com/science.shtml>; and others I was aware of through personal study. In most cases, the intervening time between the Bible and the scientific observation of these principles is thousands of years.

An outstanding page which lists most of these scientific principles as found in the Bible is: <http://www.creationists.org/foreknowledge.html> There are more principles listed here which I have not included in the previous paragraph. A greater explanation is given, along with the approximate time that the pertinent verse in the Bible was written compared to when science first made the same observations.

When 1 or 2 scientific principles are found embedded in the pages of Scripture, we could explain that away as a misunderstanding of the verse or as coincidence. However, we are speaking of dozens of things, presented with accuracy in the Bible, thousands of years prior to their discovery.

The point I am making is, although the Bible is not a scientific textbook, it has a great deal of scientific information and allusions in it to suggest that the Bible is the Word of God. Is it by a lucky coincidence that there a dozens of scientific principles found in the Bible which, thousands of years later, are confirmed as accurately presented? My attempt here is to give you another set of reasons *why* the Bible can be reasonably understood to be the Word of God. If someone's mind is made up that there is no God and that the Bible is just an assembling of various myths and fables, then there is little that I could say which would convince such a person. Their mind is made up; they have placed their faith in opposition to God and the Bible. As the Bible says, *The fool tells himself that there is no God [lit., the fool says in his heart that there is no God]*. However, if you are reading this, that indicates that you have some positive volition toward God and toward the Word of God. This information helps to show you that your faith is not a blind faith, that there is great evidence for that which you believe in.

The general content of the Bible:

The Bible contains history, prophecy, and doctrine. The format of the Bible varies from book to book. Some books are strictly historical narratives, but some of the things which are said within these books are prophetic (Genesis, Samuel and Matthew are examples of this). Some of these books are written in a poetical form (like Job, the Psalms and Song of Solomon), and sometimes, slightly different rules of interpretation are applied. There are many words found only in poetry, and certain words have a slight difference in meaning when found in poetry. Some of the books are the words of the prophets, but these words are woven into an historical narrative in most cases (Isaiah and Jeremiah, for instance).

The first 5 books of the New Testament are historical. 4 books are devoted to the life, death and gospel of Jesus Christ; and one covers the early history of the church. When I was a new believer, I did not quite understand why there were 4 gospels. However, these are historical witnesses to the life and death of Jesus Christ, and to many of the historical events which took place around Him. 2 of the gospels were written by those who were actual eyewitnesses to the events which they observed (Matthew and John). Mark wrote his gospel based upon the eyewitness of Peter. Luke based his gospel on the documents available to him at the time, as well as personal interviews with people who were there. The end result is, there are no events in history which are as well-attested to as the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These gospels were written and distributed during a time when Christianity was hated by the Romans and the Jews; and during a time when there were many eyewitnesses to these events who were still alive. This means that, any historical event which you are aware of which took place, say, 400 years ago or before, is not as certain as what we read about Jesus Christ in the gospels. 4 gospels makes these events as certain as anything that you read in your newspaper (in fact, more so).

Some of the New Testament books are letters, written from an Apostle (or someone recognized by the Apostles as authoritative) and sent to either a local church or to a group of believers. The final book, Revelation, is a vision which John has, and it speaks of the end times. However, prophetic passages of what is still to come is found throughout the Bible, in nearly every book.

Interestingly enough, it is unheard of for a Biblical author of any type of writing, to say, "Okay, right here, I am going to tell you everything that you need to know about soteriology (the doctrines about salvation)." This is actually quite fascinating, when you get right down to it. Some of the men who wrote Scripture were very devout men who had devoted most or all of their lives to the teaching of God's Word, yet did not sit down to explore any theological subject in its entirety. Paul, in some of his epistles, would cover a topic in some detail, but all such topics still need to be further examined by studying passages from elsewhere. At the end of the book of Corinthians, Paul examines spiritual gifts and contrasts the gift of tongues (foreign languages and dialects) with the gift of prophecy (speaking divine truth), but not everything on this topic is found in 1Cor. 12–14. Paul also deals with the great resurrection in the next chapter, but one must go to other books to have a thorough knowledge of that subject. So, even Paul, who more than anyone else, explores specific topics, does not develop an end-all, be-all doctrine of anything (although his covering salvation and justification in the book of Romans comes pretty close). In any case, those who attempt to teach entire concepts today are either pastors or writers who write books called *Systematic Theology*, where the author takes the most important and fundamental doctrines of the Bible and lays them all out, one by one.

Insofar as I am aware, the greatest of these books is L. S. Chafer's [*Systematic Theology*](#), which is an 8 volume set, one volume of which is a set of indexes, given that his work is so vast. My only caution here is, stick with the *unabridged version*.

The individual books of the Bible are each complete literary works in and of themselves. Genesis covers the history of man from the beginning to Joseph as the prime minister of

Egypt. Esther tells us all about Jewish life in Persia, and a specific incident which occurred, which reveals how God has continued to preserve the Jewish people, regardless of their spiritual status. Each letter of Paul to a church deals specifically with the problems of that church as well as doctrinal points which were causing confusion among some of the congregants. However, together, all of these books form one cohesive whole, the Bible, which has a clear beginning and a clear ending; a book where many of the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New; a book where human history is taken from its inception to the final age of human history. Each book, in some way or another, tells us just a little bit more about God's relationship to man and how God is involved in our lives here on earth. The entire Bible gives us a grand sweeping revelation of the history of man and individual portions of the Bible give us specific incidents which in turn increase our understanding of our relationship to God.

Old Testament Summary Charts:

When I was first saved, one of the most instructive sessions in church that I had was a guest speaker who summarized the Old Testament for us in about 45 minutes. The general information which he gave is below, which I have expanded upon ever so slightly. I do not recall this person's name, but the overview was very helpful.

The dates given herein are not precise dates, but simply approximate time frames for you to hang your hat on.

The Torah (the Law of Moses) + Job

Approximately 6000–1400 B.C.

Genesis

The book of beginnings: the earth, mankind, the Jews. All of this took place prior to Moses. At the end of the book, the family of Jacob moves to Egypt because of a famine. They will live in Egypt for about 400 years, which is the chronological gap between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus (interestingly enough, there is the same chronological gap between the Old and New Testaments).

A book of poetry about a man named Job who was tested by Satan, which God allowed. This probably took place prior to the life of Moses. This is an extremely tough book to exegete, as it is essentially a theological discussion between Job and 3 friends. God does enter into the picture at the end of the book to straighten everything out.

Job

The key to this book is, Job and his friends ponder Job's situation without taking into consideration the Angelic Conflict (which is what his suffering is directly related to).

Since this book does not mention the Jews, the Levitical sacrifices, the Land of Promise, or anything else related to Israel, most assume that this book was written long before Abraham.

Exodus

The book of redemption and deliverance. The Jews living in Egypt had become enslaved by the Egyptians. God raises up Moses, a Jew raised up to be a ruler in Egypt; but who leaves Egypt and later returns to lead the Jews out of Egypt. Circa 1520–1440 B.C.

Leviticus

The book of worship. The sacrifices and the ceremonial days are covered.

Numbers

The book of wanderings. After receiving the Law of God, the Jews go to Land of Promise, but back away in fear of those in the land. God keeps these Jews in the desert wilderness until the adult generation (Gen X) dies off. This leaves those who were children at the time of the exodus or who were born after the exodus. This is the Generation of Promise. Circa 1440–1400 B.C.

Deuteronomy

Summary of the Law. Moses, who is not allowed to go into the Land of Promise, speaks to the Jews, reminding them of the Law of God and what is expected of them once they enter into the land of Canaan. There are several lengthy sermons of Moses herein, and this book probably takes place over a month or so. What is particularly remarkable about Deuteronomy is, in previous books, Moses is very careful to distinguish between the events which took place and the words of God. Deuteronomy are primarily the words of Moses, but they are given with the authority of God the Holy Spirit.

The Jews Enter the Land of Promise

1400–1100 B.C.

Joshua	A book of success. Joshua leads the Jews into the Land of Promise and they conquer the land and the peoples in it. One key verse: “This book of the law will not depart from your mouth, but you will study it day and night so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it, so that when you make your way, you will be prosperous and enjoy success” (Joshua 1:8). Circa 1400–1390 B.C.
Judges	A book of failures. The cyclical nature of the Jews. They had freedom, and they used this freedom to worship idols. God would then discipline them, they would call out for a deliverer; and God would send them a deliverer who would free them. Key verse: <i>there was no king in Israel in those days, and every man did what was right in his own eyes</i> (Judges 21:25). Circa 1390–1100 B.C.
Ruth	A book of faith and redemption. A Gentile woman (Ruth, a Moabite) goes to Israel with her mother-in-law after their husbands have died, and their misery and hardship is turned to blessing and prosperity through the Kinsman-Redeemer, Boaz (a type of Christ).

Although Boaz is a type of Christ, so was Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Joshua before him.

The United Kingdom

1100–930 B.C.

1Samuel	Preparation. Samuel’s ministry; Saul’s reign; the life of David.
2Samuel	Establishment. David’s reign.
1Kings 1–11	The kingdom achieved. Solomon’s reign.

Literature of the Kingdom

Psalms	These are poetry written primarily by David, but at least one was written by Moses; and many were written even a century or more after the time of David.
Proverbs	Solomon wrote this set of couplets about wisdom.
Ecclesiastes	Solomon delves into philosophy, much of it detailing his attempt to find meaning in this world apart from God.

Song of Solomon

Solomon, despite have 1000 wives and mistresses, chases after this Shulamite woman, who rejects him. The Shulamite woman is dedicated to her right man, whom she keeps in her soul.

The Kingdom Divided

930–586 B.C.

1Kings 12–22

Division. The history of Israel (the 10 tribes in the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the 2 tribes in the Southern Kingdom) is followed side-by-side in 1Kings 12–2Kings 17. Elijah is a prophet during the end of 1Kings. Major events and the kings of both kingdoms are covered.

2Kings 1–17

Division. Elijah continues as a prophet at the beginning of 2Kings, later being replaced by Elisha. Major events and the kings of both kingdoms are covered. Israel undergoes the 5th Cycle of Discipline circa 721 B.C. (there are 5 cycles of discipline discussed in Lev. 26, which God would impose upon His people when they strayed from Him; under the 5th cycle, the people would be removed from the land given them by God).

2Kings 18–25

The Southern Kingdom’s history and kings and prophets are recorded and we are taken from the fall of the Northern Kingdom down to the 5th Cycle of Discipline of Judah, circa 586 B.C.

1Chronicles

The Chronicles is God’s Post Mortem. Chronicles, like Samuel and Kings, is actually one book. However, Chronicles is written after long the fact; from the dawn of man in the genealogies to the proclamation to return the Jews to the land after the dispersion of both kingdoms. The first 9 or so chapters of 1Chronicles are genealogies; 1Chron. 10 picks up with the death of Saul and parallels the history of the last couple chapters of 1Samuel, and all of 2Samuel and 1 and 2Kings.

2Chronicles

The Chronicles is God’s Post Mortem. Chronicles, like Samuel and Kings, is actually one book. However, Chronicles is written after long the fact; from the dawn of man in the genealogies to the proclamation to return the Jews to the land after the dispersion of both kingdoms. The first 9 or so chapters of 1Chronicles are genealogies; 1Chron. 10 picks up with the death of Saul and parallels the history of the last couple chapters of 1Samuel, and all of 2Samuel and 1 and 2Kings.

Prophets to the Northern Kingdom

**Joel
(850–700 B.C.)**

A great locust invasion of the land is the basis for Joel’s warning to Israel, that their land would be invaded. His ministry appeared to be successful.

Jonah (800 B.C.)

Jonah is really more of a prophet to Nineveh in Assyria, although he was not that interested in that particular assignment. Jonah is one of the best known of the prophets, simply because God prepared a great fish which swallowed him for 3 days. However, few know much about Jonah apart from *being swallowed by a whale* (which is *not* what happened, as it was not a whale). Very few people know the actual meat of this story.

Prophets to the Northern Kingdom

Amos
(780–755 B.C.)

Amos is one of the easiest prophets to place into time, as in the first verse, he identifies the kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms during his ministry. Amos warned both Israel and Judah of judgment to come.

Hosea
(760–710 B.C.)

Hosea's life with Gomer, the woman he loves, parallels God's relationship to Israel. Hosea's love was powerfully strong and could not be destroyed; Gomer's unfaithfulness was wicked, hurtful, and resulted in her own undoing. We often wonder, why do we, as faithful believers in Jesus Christ, face incredible difficulties at times; an examination of this book may help to explain how God uses our personal pain and how He is able to comfort us. God used Gomer's actions to teach Israel about its own attitude toward God.

Prophets to the Southern Kingdom

Micah (740 B.C.)

Micah makes predictions concerning the destruction of Israel and Judah; however, southern kingdom kings are mentioned in the text. He warns of an attack by Assyria. Micah tells us that the Eternal Ruler will come out of Bethlehem.

Isaiah
(740–680 B.C.)

Isaiah had a long public ministry to several kings in Judah. His presentation of the gospel is clear and unmistakable in Isa. 53. He also presents the Trinity in Isa. 48:16. Isaiah is one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. Because of him, Judah turned itself around to turned to God.

Obadiah (685 B.C.)

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and some place him during the captivity and others prior to. This deals with Edom and the Day of the Lord. The date here is only a wild guess.

Nahum
(666–615 B.C.)

Nahum warns of the eventual destruction of Nineveh. This should be taken as a parallel book to Jonah (but written much later in time).

Zephaniah
(630–620 B.C.)

Zephaniah warned of the upcoming judgment against Judah.

Habakkuk
(627–586 B.C.)

Habakkuk is a contemporary of Jeremiah. Whereas Jeremiah seemed to be concerned that God's people would not turn from their evil ways, Habakkuk seemed to be more concerned that God was not judging Judah more quickly.

Prophets to the Southern Kingdom

Jeremiah (626–580 B.C.) and

Jeremiah was one of the last prophets to warn Judah of its imminent discipline. He had a long public ministry (approximately 40 years). His book may be difficult for some, as it is not in chronological order. Interestingly enough, Jeremiah did not encourage the Jewish people to resist their Babylonian captivity, when it became clear that they would not refrain from their evil.

Lamentations

Jeremiah also wrote the book of Lamentations, his sad elegies about Israel being conquered.

Like Isaiah, his ministry cannot be summed up in a few words.

70 Years in Captivity

586–516 B.C.

Only the Prophets listed below wrote during the time that Judah was in captivity. However, even though some Jews did return to the land under the edict of Cyrus, many remained outside the land, having been born and raised there. The book of Esther deals with those who remained in the land.

Prophets While in Captivity

Daniel (604–535 B.C.)

Daniel is well known for his prophecies concerning the coming kingdoms, as well as giving us a time line for future events. Daniel's 70th Week is equivalent to the 7-year Tribulation.

Ezekiel (593–570 B.C.)

Ezekiel was a prophet to the people during their Exile. God continued to speak to His people through Ezekiel, despite the fact that they were under the 5th Cycle of Discipline.

Interestingly enough, we find many of the same Hebrew words in Leviticus and in Ezekiel.

The Jews Return to the Land

538–400 B.C.

Esther
Circa 483–479 B.C.

The Book of Esther, like the book of Haggai below, is dated according to the reign of Ahasuerus, the Persian king. Esther is one of the best known books among Jews, and rarely studied by Church Age believers. God is clearly involved in the lives of the Jews, but He acts in the background. I believe that this book, almost more than any other, will evangelize the Jews at the beginning of the Tribulation. They will recognize the similarities between the Jews of this book and themselves as Jews who are scattered throughout the world, who have moved away from God.

Ezra
Circa 538–457 B.C.

We have the history of the Jews, from the time that Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon, and then allowed Ezra to return to the land and to build the Temple of God there.

Nehemiah
Circa 445–444 B.C.

Nehemiah was a high ranking official in Persia, and he chose to return to Jerusalem to build walls about the city.

Prophets During the Return to the Land

Haggai (520 B.C.)

Haggai was involved with the building of the Temple.

Zechariah
(520–518 B.C.)

Although Zechariah was a prophet to Judah when the remnant returned to the land, what stands out in my mind is Zech. 12:10: I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look to me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for his firstborn.

Malachi
(450–400 B.C.)

Malachi was the final prophet to Judah, both in time, and in the Bible.

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The Book of Genesis Introduction Part I: Inspiration and Progressive Revelation

Up to this point, I have been giving you some background material on the Bible itself. Now, I will begin to exegetically examine several books in the Bible. The previous 14 lessons were designed to prepare you for such a study. The first book I will exegete is the book of Genesis.

The book of Genesis is an amazing book. Although the authorship and time of writing is disputed, it is clearly written before there was any idea in the mind of the author or authors that there would be a Bible, a collection of divinely-inspired books to form a unified whole. Furthermore, the book of Genesis is clearly the first book of the Bible, and intended to be the first book of the Bible, despite the fact that it was put into writing long before such a concept [the idea of a Bible] existed.

If some religious group was going to sit down and put together this great religious book called the Bible, then the book of Genesis makes a great deal of sense. If you stand back from the Bible, and look at the book of Genesis, it makes perfect sense for this to be the first book of the Bible (just as Revelation is the most perfect book to end the Bible); but this book was put into writing long before the rest of Scripture. It would have been absurd for someone to sit down and say, "Over the next 3000 years, the Bible will be composed, so we need to start with the first book where the seeds of all that will be written about will be

found in an introductory book. So I am going to write this religious book which goes all the way back to the beginning of man and include such concepts in it like the Trinity, Satan, man's fall, the judgment of man and the judgment of Satan, several remarkable shadows of the Messiah to come, and references to the Angelic Conflict." Obviously, the idea that someone would consciously think those things and write the book of Genesis is ridiculous; however, someone (or, several men), somehow, wrote a book with all of the major themes of the Bible in it—sin, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, sanctification, and the Christ to come, Who is these things to us—and all of these themes are explained and developed over the next 3000 years. There are ties in the book of Genesis to almost every book of the Bible, Old and New Testaments; it is the perfect first book, and yet, when it was written, these other books did not exist. No other book of the Bible contains so much by way of introduction. If the Bible is the Word of God, God-breathed, and, at the same time, the word of man, then this makes sense. The Divine Author, God the Holy Spirit, knows the end from the beginning, so He knows what the first book of the Bible should contain.

A critic may say, without any real knowledge, that maybe someone just wrote the Bible down all at once, and in this way, we have a beginning and an end. Historically, this just does not hold water. The Jews, since the inception of Holy Writ, have held to a progressively produced Word of God, which writing stopped in 400 B.C., which writing was translated then into Greek circa 200 B.C., which translation was then used by the Apostles and by Jesus. The Old Testament was not a collection of all Jewish writings; there was the Mishna, the Talmud and the Apocrypha, none of which was ever given the same standing as the Old Testament (that is, these other writings were not ever seen as the Word of God).

The Old Testament is a complete unit in itself, albeit unfulfilled; and the Jews, over thousands of years, have preserved the Old Testament by itself up until this day. Furthermore, they have historical writings substantiating that it is a separate literary unit from the New Testament). So, even if one held to the goofier and unsubstantiated theories of the unlearned (like the JPED theory of authorship or the idea that, in some way, all the Old Testament was composed at the same time), it is still remarkable that Genesis has within it the seeds of every important doctrine, which doctrines are fulfilled completely in the New Testament. The weirdest theories do not cancel out how remarkable it is that Genesis is what it is. If you understand that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is inspired by God, then all of this makes perfect sense. If you hold to the view that the Bible is just a collection of religious writings with a questionable history and authorship, then the idea of a very first book containing the seeds of almost every major theological concept and the perfect coalescence between the Old and New Testaments is beyond remarkable.

This leads us to the doctrines of progressive revelation and inspiration.

Progressive revelation: the Bible tells us everything *we need to know* about God; however, the Bible does not tell us everything that we need to know about God in the first chapter of Genesis. When we compare what God reveals of Himself, first in this verse, then in another, we eventually get a complete picture of Him (as complete as God wants us to

have). God reveals *enough* of Himself and *enough* of the doctrines that we need in each period of time (in each dispensation).

Under progressive revelation, the book of Genesis introduces us to almost every single major doctrine and topic that God wants us to know. For instance, the concept of the Trinity is introduced in the very first chapter of Genesis, although this is not a doctrine which comes to fruition until we reach the New Testament, written 1500–3000 years later).

Revelation means that God has revealed Himself to man. This is the basis for the Bible. However, there are people today (and in the past 2000 years) who claim to have direct revelation from God. Mohammed was one of these men, and the result was Islam, which is a particularly violent and vile religion (and Mohammed himself was a violent man). Joseph Smith told others that he received direct revelation from God (if memory serves, he wore some special glasses which allowed him to read and translate the text of books written in reformed Egyptian, and his translation just happened to be in King James English rather than in the English which people spoke in those days). The end result was Mormonism, which teaches a host of false doctrines (e.g., salvation requires works, children are born without sin, and that the members of the Trinity are all physical beings). However, the Bible claims that it is the final revelation: **I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book** (Rev. 22:18–19). So, there is the first book of the Bible and the last book, and we are not to add anything to these books of the Bible. That means, there will be no more new divine revelation.

When people claim today to have revelation from God, in some form or another, there are two results: (1) their revelation adds absolutely nothing to the existing Word of God, the Bible. For instance, there are charlatans and self-deluded people who claim to speak in tongues and others who claim to be able *to interpret* what is said. Most of the time, when an *interpreter of tongues* speaks (which rarely happens when tongues are spoken), he says nothing new, so why bother? If someone starts speaking in tongues and then someone else stands up and interprets this, saying, for instance, the first few verses of Psalm 2, why not just go to Psalm 2 and read and exegete these verses? (2) What occurs most of the time is, those who claim to have revelation from God since the completion of the Bible (circa 96 A.D.), often introduce a whole host of doctrines which contradict the Bible, and the end result is, they form some sort of a cultic religion. They never come up with a set of doctrines which complete or complement orthodox Christianity. The two examples which I have given—Mormonism and Islam—neither complements or completes orthodox Christianity, but are filled with doctrines in opposition to the Christian faith. Inevitably, these new doctrines will involve salvation by works. Mormonism or Islam may capture a few sheep here and there, but there will never be this great unification of, say, Islam and Christianity, where Christians en masse examine Islam and say, “Oh, now we understand and see the light. We are now going to hang with you guys.” When new and different revelation is alleged, those who allege this revelation and those who believe it move further away from Christianity rather than closer to it.

On occasion, prior to the entire Bible being written, God contacted man directly, either through dreams, by means of another man who acts as an intermediary, or as a theophany (God coming to man and revealing Himself in some way, e.g. presenting Himself as a burning bush). Once the Bible was completed, there was no reason for God to contact us in these same ways. The Bible was designed to be our contact with God. We do not need a bolt of lightning to strike us on the left shoulder in order to guide us to make a left turn at the stoplight ahead. The Bible is designed not only reveal to us why we are here, what our life is all about and Who God is, but to guide us day-by-day as well.

That God communicates to man by His Word is a part of the doctrine we know as inspiration. The term inspiration comes from the King James translation of 2Tim. 3:16: **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.** However, the word which is found there is *God-breathed*, so that this verse ought to read: **All scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.** I will cover the correct understanding of what it means for the Bible to be *God-breathed*, or *the inspired Word of God*; however, first let's examine the false approaches to inspiration:

There are a lot of false views of inspiration, some of which are found below:

False Doctrines of Inspiration	
Scripture	Commentary
The Bible <i>becomes</i> the Word of God	The Bible, in whatever form, is not the Word of God. However, there are times when we are reading or studying the Bible when portions of it <i>become</i> the Word of God to us. That is, inspiration is an occasional and subjective experience.
The Bible <i>contains</i> the Word of God	God did speak to man, but the entire Bible is not God's Word. For instance, the 10 Commandments or the words of Jesus are the words of God, but some other things which are presented are not. Some teach that the Bible needs to be <i>demythologized</i> ; that is, we need to throw out certain sections which are myths and legends, but keep other parts. For instance, Jesus teaching the Sermon on the Mount might be seen as accurate, and true and inspired; but Jesus feeding 5000 people with a basket of a couple fish and bread could not have happened.
The Bible is inspired like great literature is inspired.	There are a variety of books which have been written which inspire us as human beings, as this view simply suggests that is all that the Bible is.
The dictation theory	God dictated the Word of God to man. The problem here is, each book of the Bible has its own style and its own vocabulary. There are portions of the Bible which are clearly dictated to man; but the bulk of Scripture is not.

Under the first two systems, man is the ultimate authority, not the Bible. The third system means that the Bible is just like any other great work of literature. The fourth theory means that man was just a secretary. With regards to this 4th theory, there are portions of the Bible where this was true, and, in most cases, this is clearly noted by the author. For instance, Moses in the book of Exodus clearly distinguishes between what is happening historically (which he records) and what God says to him, which he records word for word. However, what should be clear to anyone with a superficial knowledge of Scripture, is that the writing styles of Moses, David, John and Paul are dramatically different. That would make the dictation theory, like the other 3, a false theory.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration means that God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture that, without waiving their intelligence, their individuality, their personal feelings, their literary style, or any other human factor of expression, His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture (in the autographs), the very words bearing the Authority of Divine Authorship. Paul tells Timothy that the Bible is *God-breathed* (2Tim. 3:16). Because the Bible is inspired, God speaks to man through and in His Word.

Let's examine the definition of inspiration and examine it phrase by phrase:

Verbal Plenary Inspiration (the Accurate Understanding of Biblical Authorship)	
Definition	Explanation of the Definition
God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture...	There is a human author and a divine Author of each book of the Bible. The Holy Spirit guided or directed the human author, but did not dictate Scripture to the human author.
...that, without waiving their intelligence, their individuality, their personal feelings, their literary style, or any other human factor of expression,...	Writers of Scripture did not turn into human secretaries nor did their minds go blank, and God filled their minds with His Words. All that the human authors possessed with regards to their literary skills (or lack thereof) was maintained. Their intelligence, their individual personalities, their personal feelings, their literary style, their vocabulary, their use of common literary devices were all retained and used in the writing of Scripture.
...His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded...	All that we need to know in this life about God, Jesus Christ and our place in the world is found in the Bible. This message makes sense. God reveals Himself in His Word; He does not obscure divine truth.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration (the Accurate Understanding of Biblical Authorship)

Definition	Explanation of the Definition
...with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture (in the autographs),...	What God wanted to say is found written with exactly the way He wanted it to be written. The <i>autographs</i> are either the original writings or an exact copy of the original writings. As first written down, these are the words of God.
...the very words bearing the Authority of Divine Authorship.	Even though the Bible was written by man, subject to each man's style of writing and his thinking at the time of writing, it is, at the same time, the Word of God. Just as Jesus is the Living Word of God, fully God and fully man (John 1:1–14), so the Bible is fully God-breathed and, at the same time, a product of man (as more than just a secretary).

We know this first: that no prophecy [divine utterance; i.e., the Words of the Bible] of Scripture came into being from someone's personal application [interpretation or explanation of things]. For prophecy [divine utterance] was not carried along at any time by the will of [any] man, but set-apart men of God spoke being carried by [God] the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:20–21).

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is beneficial [in the following areas]: for [the teaching of] doctrine, for testing, for correction [of error], for instruction [training and education] in integrity [righteousness and justice], so that the man of God may be prepared, thoroughly furnished [equipped] to every good [of divine quality] work (2Tim. 3:16–17).

Scripture is unable to be undone [annulled, declared unlawful, destroyed or subverted] (John 10:35b).

Every word of God is pure [refined, free from impurities]; It is a shield [protection] to those who take refuge in it. Do not add to His words, or He will correct you, and you will be shown to be a liar (Prov. 30:5–6).

And Jesus answered him, saying, "It stands written, Man will not live [be sustained] only by food, but [he will be sustained] by every word of God." (Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3).

To the contrary, we renounce any personal [and secret] agenda of shame [or disgrace], not habitually living our lives by means of specious [or false] wisdom; nor do we corrupt [dilute or adulterate] the Word of God, but rather, we exhibit [or manifest] the Truth, uniting ourselves face to face with every man's conscience before God (2Cor. 4:2).

We continually thank God that, when you received the Word of hearing, [the Word] of God, you welcomed it as the Word of God, not as a word of men, because it is truly the Word of God, which also effectually works in you who believe (1Thess. 2:13).

For the Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, as well as the joints and marrow, and is able to [accurately] judge [and evaluate] the thoughts and intents of the heart [i.e., our thinking] (Heb. 4:12).

The Inspiration of Scripture is one of the more fascinating topics to me, and I have explored this topic at great length at: <http://kukis.org/Inspiration/StudyInspiration.htm>

The Book of Genesis Introduction Part II: Authorship and the Historical Narrative

There are several views on who actually wrote the book of Genesis. What appear to be the most popular view is, the book of Genesis existed in oral form, being passed down from generation to generation, as well as added to in each generation, and that Moses finally put these things in writing. Who the human author or authors of the book of Genesis is an interesting discussion, so let me give the basic theories below:

The authorship of Genesis is questioned, since it is one of the two oldest books of the Bible (Job is the other ancient book).

The Author of Genesis	
Author	Commentary
Moses	Most attribute this book to Moses, which he wrote down as a result of getting this from the <i>oral tradition</i> . That is, men throughout the centuries kept repeating these specific events, sometimes adding to this history, and Moses finally committed them to writing. Although the Bible indicates that Moses is the author of the next 4 books of the Bible, the authorship of Genesis is never specifically attributed to him.

The Author of Genesis

Author	Commentary
A group effort	<p>There is a weird theory out there which is taught in many seminaries, that there were several groups of people involved in the writing of the books of Moses: one guy who used the name <i>Jehovah</i> a lot; and another who used the name <i>God</i> (that is, <i>Elohim</i>) a lot. A group of men later took the writings of these two men and wove them together. Then a priest, many years later, edited the final version. Somehow, in this, there was another writer who apparently wrote Deuteronomy. I may have some of these details wrong, but the general notion is the same: this first 5 books of the Bible were a team effort, written over a period of several hundred years. The foundation for this approach is, certain <i>Biblical scholars</i> decided that writing did not exist during the time of Moses; therefore, there must be someone who wrote these things down later. Even though the basis for this theory has been shown by archeology to be false, the theory continues. I call this the JEPD theory. Essentially, this theory says that many of the statements in the Mosaic Law are just outright lies or stuff that someone just made up. It is unequivocally a false theory.</p>
Someone else	<p>Someone else wrote Genesis and Moses copied it down, doing some editing.</p>
Several successive authors	<p>This is my theory: I believe that several men recorded the history found in the book of Genesis. This was passed down either orally and/or in writing (although men could clearly write during the time of Moses—Ex. 17:14 34:1, 27—we do not know at which point men developed a written language. I think that there is a formula in Genesis, that when you see the phrase <i>and these are the generations of</i>, you are looking at a new author. I base my theory entirely on internal evidence and on how personal some verses are (for instance, Gen. 29:20 describes how Jacob felt in working for Rachel's father in order to marry her: <i>So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her</i>). This is very personal and subjective, and words we would expect Jacob to write, but not words we would ascribe to any later author. This means that there could have been as many as 10 authors of the book of Genesis, some of them writing as little as a chapter or two. The primary reason that this approach is not considered by many is, we do not know when man decided to begin writing things down. As already mentioned, for a long time, some archeologists believed that Moses was incapable of writing because they could find no other writings from that time period or before (archeology has since shown that writing pre-dated Moses).</p>

Apart from the JEPD theory under a *group effort*, a false theory, Christians can certainly disagree as to the authorship of Genesis without breaking fellowship with one another.

I think that if we are alert in examining the book of Genesis, we are going to come across passages which imply that man had a written language (for instance, we may come across a treaty or a binding agreement).

The book of Genesis begins with the creation of the earth, which is both majestic and very matter-of-fact. There is no fight between gods, with the creation of 11 monsters in order to carry out vengeance. No god feels a terrible pain in his stomach and vomits up the sun, stars and moon. There is no huge serpent whose movement along the ground creates the valleys and the rivers. A bear and a tiger do not wish to become human. No one is shooting arrows at the two suns. Now, that is not to say that there are not striking similarities between the various creation myths and the first few chapters of Genesis, but, very few people today would point to any other creation story and suggest that it is accurate and worthy of note.

There are aspects of the Genesis account of creation and restoration that people will scoff at. For instance, there is light before there is a discernable sun; God takes a rib from Adam and from it makes Eve. These same people who scoff will believe that matter suddenly appeared (the Big Bang theory⁷) and that, in a mixture of some kind of goo, non-living matter became living matter, and that living matter evolved to what we see today. For instance, a fish washed up on shore, hung out on the beach for awhile, decided, *hey, I like it out here*; and, after millions of years, sprouted legs and a set of lungs, so that it could hang out on the beach rather than in the sea. At some point in time, one of those reptilian creatures looked at the air and said, *hell, I'd like to fly too*; and so, after millions of years, it sprouted wings, its body became a mass of feathers, and it flew. To the evolutionist, this makes perfect sense, because they always throw in the phrase *after millions of years*; because, if there is enough intervening time, *anything* can happen. Time is a magic wand to the evolutionist, and when you wave that magic wand, whatever you want to happen can happen. Often, it is this same evolutionist does not believe that man and animals can adapt to pollution in the air and water, but that is a whole different discussion.

In the book of Genesis, man begins in a perfect environment and man begins in a sinless state. Man is given only one way in which he may disobey God, and he chooses to disobey God, changing human history dramatically. God both judges man and offers him redemption in Gen. 3. Mankind's redemption involves child-bearing, something which apparently was not a part of perfect environment. Having personally witnessed on film 2 or 3 births and having changed a diaper in my past, child-bearing reasonably appears to me to fall outside the concept of perfect environment.

⁷ Which theory is not anti-Biblical, if we understand that the cause of the creation of all matter is God.

Man's redemption also involves the killing of an innocent animal, and it is at this point when the Bible's subtlety becomes known. God clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins, which, quite obviously, involved the death of one or more animals (however, the Bible does not make a big deal out of this). From this point on, it will be clear that man must be redeemed by the death of an innocent; and in the Old Testament, this is illustrated with animals. The Bible tends not to clobber you over the head with its doctrines and precepts. The death of an animal is involved here, but no details are given. Later, their sons, Cain and Abel, will offer up sacrifices to God, and Cain will bring God vegetables that he has worked hard to grow and Abel will bring an animal which he kills as a sacrifice to God. Again, there is no heavy-handed approach; God respects the sacrifice of the animal but not the one of fresh produce. I mentioned progressive revelation. Adam and Eve are covered with animal skins, but no details are given beyond that. God respects the animal sacrifice of Abel, but the Bible does not say why. As we move further into the Bible, it is clear that God requires the sacrifice of an innocent lamb in order to pay for our sins, but we have to go all the way to the book of Hebrews to read, **Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness** [or, *release from bondage*] (Heb. 9:22b).

With each chapter of the Bible, we understand a little more and a little more; and finally, the idea of being redeemed by the blood of an innocent finds its fruition in the person of Jesus Christ, Who dies for our sins. The approach the Bible takes is subtle and progressive, but leading to a clear doctrine, with unmistakable clear roots.

What is amazing about Genesis is, it presents all of the seeds of the fundamentals of the faith; and that, throughout the Bible, these seeds grow until they become a full-blown doctrines. In a good novel, the first chapter sets the tone and lays the foundation for what is to come. The author of a good novel plants many seeds in the first chapter, primarily because he knows where he wants to take his novel. The same thing is true of the book of Genesis, even though the actual writing of this book is separated from the New Testament by at least 1500 years. It is as if the author of Genesis knows where all of this is going, and so he sets the foundation and the tone.

There are 3 male children which are mentioned in Genesis: Cain, Abel and Seth. Cain murders Abel, and what follows is a theme which resonates throughout the Bible: the fallen line (Cain's) and the line of redemption (Seth's).

There is a threadbare history which takes us to the time of Noah, who was born about 100 years after the death of Adam. Even though very little information is given about this time, man apparently genetically superior then than now, many of them living for nearly a millennium.

However, at the time of Noah, there is a corruption of mankind. Many theologians simply believe that man just became more and more degenerate until God finally decided that He needed to wipe most of mankind out. Others believe that there was an intermixing of angelic creation (the fallen angels) with man, and that, God allowed for that sort of corruption to take place. However, when all of mankind, apart from Noah and his family,

became corrupted, God brought a great flood upon the earth, yet saved Noah and his family in an Ark (built by Noah) in which was a representative pairing of all the animals.

I should point out that, there are many cultures who have traditions similar to what we find in the Bible. Many cultures have stories of half-man/half-gods living on this earth; many cultures speak of a great flood; many speak of a creation event; and many confound these events as one. This could be what is occurring in Genesis 6, but, unlike mythology, it is a very subtle approach.

Because the narrative of Genesis is sometimes fantastic, some believe these stories to be allegorical rather than factual. I am not one of those. These are elements of doctrinal information which we are to gain from our understanding of the history presented in Genesis, but there is nothing in the Bible which suggests that these stories are simply fanciful imaginings. We have a large segment of our society that looks around and concludes that this is the way things have always been. Because they have never witnessed a miracle, they categorically state that a miracle cannot be true (the very same people, who have never witnessed any event approximating evolution believe in evolution). Since they have never seen an angel or a demon, they conclude that such things cannot exist. Some will take this further to proclaim that, since no one has seen a soul, that no one really has a soul, and all that is going on in our lives and rattling around in our heads are a combination of neurons randomly firing and a variety of chemicals sloshing around in our cerebral cortex. These same naturalists have fooled themselves into thinking that man is no different from animals and that our thinking, our norms and standards, and our emotions are nothing special. These are just chemical and electrical impulses and nothing else. Such people see God as simply a creation of human thought, which, strictly speaking, does not really exist.

I believe that, through human history, there have been different environments and relationships, although man, in his essence, has always been the same (with the exception of going from a perfect state to a fallen state of being).

After the flood in Noah's time, he and his family emerge from the Ark and begin civilization. There are several changes: God allows man to eat meat, life is shortened dramatically, and fermentation occurs.

The Bible throughout focuses on a particular line. In fact, this is a fascinating aspect of the Bible—it follows the line of Adam all the way to Jesus Christ. It is not all found in one place (apart from Luke 3), but this genealogy is found in several parts of the Bible.

The line which Genesis follows next in the book of Genesis is the line of Abram, who is later renamed Abraham. Today, he is known as the father of the Jewish race because he is the first Jew. God promises Abraham a son by his wife Sarai (later renamed Sarah). God makes additional promises to Abraham which are to be fulfilled through the line of this promised son. Abram, like all figures of the Bible, has some missteps, but he comes to age 100 and finally fathers his son Isaac by Sarah. After many years pass and this son, Isaac, grows to be a young man, and God tells Abram to sacrifice his son. This is one of

the more unusual stories from the Bible because, throughout later portions of Israel's history, they will be told to slaughter various peoples who sacrifice their own children, and here is God telling Abraham to sacrifice the son whom he loves.

Many try to pass this off as God merely just seeing how far would Abraham go in his faithfulness to Him; but it should be clear that, what we find here is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins, told 2000 of years before the fact. If this sort of thing happened once or twice, we might easily pass it off as an interesting coincidence; but over and over and over again, throughout the Old Testament, we find what are known as *types* which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the *antitype*. A *type* is a person or an incident or something which stands out as being somewhat unusual—such as, God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son—and this type does not make a lot of sense until we get to the New Testament, where it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. I primarily study the Old Testament, and I find this to be a phenomenal thing. The person who studies about *types* becomes more and more convinced of the accuracy and the divinity of the Bible.

We follow Abraham's line through Isaac and then to Jacob, and Jacob is a man which gives a lot of believers pause. He has a twin brother and, by all accounts, his twin brother seems to be a much better person than Jacob. Jacob is self-centered and selfish, but, he has apparently believed in Jehovah Elohim and it is not as clear about his brother Esau. So the line is continued through Jacob.

Jacob has 12 sons who make up the patriarchs (fathers) of all Israel, by 2 wives and their 2 personal assistants (maids), and, again, we are struck by the fact that these guys are not nice, kind or religious. They sell their own brother, Joseph, into slavery, simply out of jealousy, as their father played favorites.

In all of this, God has a plan. God has chosen to keep this family alive, and their land is about to go into a drought. Joseph ends up in Egypt as a slave, but rises to a position of great power, and not only saves his family from starvation, but is reunited with them, as they all move to Egypt.

The history of the Bible in general and Genesis in particular is quite incomplete. Hundreds of years will pass with barely a word; important events will be left out. God has information which is important to pass along to us, but it is not the complete history of man nor is it the complete history of Israel.

The Book of Genesis Introduction Part III (Themes and an Outline of Genesis)

Allow me to quote from *The New American Standard Bible* in its introduction to Genesis: *Another important feature of Genesis should not be overlooked, namely, the eminently satisfactory way in which it answers our questions about origins. Man will always want to know how the world as a whole came into being. He also will want to know how man originated. Moreover, he feels rather painfully that some major disorder has come upon the world and would like to know what its nature is; in short, man must know if a basic and*

*sure hope of redemption exists for this world and its inhabitants, what that hope is, and how it came into the possession of man.*⁸

The scope of Genesis exceeds that of any other book in the Bible. It begins with the creation of the earth and the universe, which may be several billion years ago, and takes us to the Jews in Egypt several hundred years prior to the exodus. Human history begins anywhere from 6,000 B.C. to even as far back as 10,000 B.C. Only Revelation rivals this scope by taking us from the beginning of the church age all the way to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. It would be hard to imagine having the Bible, God's Word to us, without the inclusion of the book of Genesis.

Genesis is a book of origins or beginnings.

Genesis, the Book of Beginnings

- The origin of the universe
- The origin of man
- The first sin of man
- The first animal sacrifice
- God's first promise to man
- The first murder
- The first United Nations
- The origin of the various languages of man
- The origin of the Jewish race
- God's first promise to the Jewish race

The book of Genesis introduces us to the great themes of the Bible:

Great Themes of the Bible found in Genesis

- God, the creator and provider (Gen. 1:1-2 3).
- The Trinity (Gen. 1:1, 5, 26-27):
 - God the Father (Gen. 1:16).
 - God the Son (the revealed member of the Trinity, the Creator). Gen. 2:4, 7 3:8
 - God the Holy Spirit (the power of God). Gen. 1:2
- Sin and its results (Gen. 3:6,16-17,24 6:5-7 13:13 19:1-29).
- Categories of Sin:
 - Original sin (Gen. 3:1-7).
 - Sin nature (Gen. 4:4-5 5:4-5).
 - Personal sin (Gen. 4:4-5, 23).
 - Corporate sin (Gen. 15:17 18:20).
- The Divine institutions:

⁸ *New American Standard Bible, Study Edition*; A. J. Holman Company, ©1975 by The Lockman Foundation, p. 2.

Great Themes of the Bible found in Genesis

- Human volition (Gen. 2:16–17).
- Work (Gen. 2:5, 15 Gen. 3:17–19)
- Marriage (Gen. 2:18–23.
- Family (Gen. 2:24).
- Human government (Gen. 11).
- God's grace (Gen 1:28 2:18-24 4:15 37:8-28 45:1-15 50:15-21).
- Sanctification (Gen. 2:3).
- Satan (Gen. 3:1-6).
- Angels as a part of man's existence; however, they play an ever decreasing roll in the life of man (except for the Angel of the Lord). Gen. 3:1–6 6 19:1–29 21:16–21
- God's judgement (Gen. 3:14-19 7:17-24 19:15-29).
- Redemption through the blood of an innocent sacrifice (Gen. 3:21 4:3-4 22:1-14).
- The coming Messiah (Gen. 3:15).
- The eventual fall of Satan (Gen. 3:14-15).
- God interacting with man (Gen. 3 17 50:20).
- The concept of a covenant relationship between God and His people (Gen. 6:18 9:8–17 15:18 17:1–22).
- God's people, the Jews (Gen. 12–50).
- The other nations of the world. Gen. 11
- God's promises to the Jews (Gen. 15:4-5 17:5-8 28:13-15).
- The Angel of the Lord (a Theophany; the Revealed Member of the Trinity). This is God interacting with His creation. Gen. 16:7–14 28:12 31:11 48:16
- God offering up His only Son to be sacrificed for us (Gen. 22).
- The genealogy which will eventually lead to Jesus Christ. Gen. 5:1–32 11:10–32 46:5–27
- The rule of Judah over Israel until Shiloh comes. Gen. 49:10

In looking at my own list above, I am not sure if there are any significant doctrines which are not found in Genesis. Quite obviously, the mystery doctrines of the Church Age are not to be found, but they are not found in the Old Testament, since they are *mystery* doctrines.

Having been a teacher, I realize that the idea of outlining a book may show my age, as such an approach to literary works and to organizational thinking are taught less and less in school today. However, I believe that with an outline, a person can get a much better overall view of what is to come. However, what I will do differently in this outline is, under the sub-points, speak of things which stand out in my mind as significant from each particular section.

The Outline of the Book of Genesis

- I. The Creation of Man, the Earth and the Universe. Gen. 1–2
 - A. Much of Gen. 1 seems to be involved with the restoration of the earth, rather than the creation of it.
 - B. Although an incredible story, there seems to be nothing here by way of myth. That is, we do not have the earth beginning on the back of a turtle, we do not have some god belching out mankind (or making man in some other odd way).
 - C. We have an approach which, in retrospect, seems almost scientific. For instance, an atmosphere for the earth is created, which we recognize as being absolutely necessary, but something ancient man may not have fully appreciated. We have man being created out of the dust (chemicals) of the earth—again, a touch which we would not expect to be handed down generation after generation as some caveman myth.
 - D. We have the faint suggestion of God being more than One, as He says, “Let Us make man according to Our image.”
 - E. The concept of what our image is, is more fully developed throughout the Bible as we find out more and more about Who God is.
- II. The Fall of Man. Gen. 3
 - A. Satan is introduced with very little fanfare in the form of a serpent (snake).
 - B. The sins of Adam and the woman are quite different, and the judgment which God pronounces upon them reflects this difference.
 - C. Amazingly enough, from this, the 3rd chapter of the Bible, we have the promise of a Savior (the Seed of the Woman) with suggestions of the cross and the final judgment.
- III. Cain and Abel. Gen. 4
 - A. There is a great distinction established between the offerings of Cain and Abel, which distinction becomes more clearly defined over the next 1000 years or so. However, it is clear that, God requires a blood sacrifice as opposed to the works of man’s hands (the vegetables which Cain had worked so hard to produce).
 - B. The actual murder of Abel and the learning curve of Cain is also quite fascinating to me. Cain observes how Abel kills the sacrificial animal (probably a lamb), and then kills Abel in the same way. Like much of Genesis, that this occurs in this manner is clear, but subtle. You might read this chapter of Genesis a dozen times and never realize that this is what happened.
- IV. The Descendants of Adam. Gen. 5
 - A. With this chapter, we introduce the dreaded genealogical lines. When most people read, *When Adam lived 130 years, he sired a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. Adam lived 800 years after fathering Seth...* and our brain typically turns off until we come across the next section of narrative. These genealogies are quite fascinating, and will, by the time we get to the New Testament, provide a straight line genealogy from Adam to Jesus. That man, somehow over the period of about 3000 years, would not only record certain genealogies, but make certain that,

generation after generation, that one particular genealogy is preserved—that from Adam to Jesus—is quite amazing.

- B. There is a very specific timeline which is introduced which essentially tells us the number of years exactly between the fall of man and the great flood (I am assuming that Adam began to age after the fall).
 - C. When I chose to exegete the first few chapters of 1Chronicles, which are almost complete genealogies, I thought I would be bored to death. I wasn't. Now, whether or not I can engender the same enthusiasm in you for genealogies is yet to be seen.
- V. The corruption of mankind. Gen. 6
- A. This is probably the most fantastic section of Genesis, next to the creation. Theologians even today still argue about what is actually happening here, and how literally this chapter should be taken.
 - B. What appears to be the case is, there are these gods who are somehow able to fornicate with mankind, and a new super race is created. We find this in almost all cultures, the most well-known of which is Greek and Roman mythology. Greek and Roman mythologies go into great detail on the stories of these gods, their interaction with women, and the super race which results. The Bible does not go into this sort of detail.
 - C. There are a number of things in the Bible (the creation, the super race, the flood) which are found in almost every other culture. The Bible approaches these things in a fairly no-nonsense, matter-of-fact way. The way these things are played out in other literature is always more fantastic and, in many cases, more salacious. Furthermore, the way these stories sound as written in other cultures seem to be more myth-filled. However, if you look at *creation myths* or *the great flood (deluge)* in Wikipedia, for instance, you will notice that there are a number of striking similarities between these myths and the Biblical account. The most normal-sounding parts of this or that national/cultural myth is often very similar to the Bible's approach.
- VI. The Great Flood. Gen. 7–8
- A. All men and all land creatures who are not in the Ark die.
 - B. There is a continued importance placed upon having animals to sacrifice to God, even during the great flood.
- VII. Noah's Family after the Flood; God Covenant with Man. Gen. 9
- A. The concept of a covenant (or a contract) between man and God is introduced. These covenants can be one-sided (God promising just exactly what He will do) or there can be some requirements placed upon man.
 - B. Fermentation is introduced into the environment.
 - C. The cursing and blessing of a patriarch is introduced, and has some prophetic significance.
- VIII. Noah's Genealogy. Gen. 10
- A. Essentially, these are the great nations, cultures and peoples of the earth; those who would dominate world history for the next several thousand years.
- IX. The Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Languages. Gen. 11:1–9
- A. The building of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages is covered in a fairly short section, even though these are world-changing

events. I don't know that the meaning of the Tower of Babel is fully understood or appreciated even to this day.

X. Shem's Genealogy. Gen. 11:10–32

- A. Like many of the genealogies found in Scripture, this is a very specific genealogy with goes in a very specific direction (it will tie Shem one of Noah's sons, to Abraham, who will dominate the next several chapters of Genesis).
- B. In Shem's genealogy, we are introduced to Abraham, and it would not be unreasonable to entitle the next section of Genesis, Abraham (Gen. 12–23) or the Family of Abraham (Gen. 12–50). However, there are so many subsections to either approach, that I will look at the various events in Abraham's life separately.
- C. The ages of man decrease from generation to generation. No real explanation is ever given for this, although we do understand, to some extent, the affects of bacteria and inbreeding, both factors found in previous chapters of Genesis, which seem to limit long life.

XI. Abram (Abraham). Gen. 12–23

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the Patriarchs of Israel; since they are father, son and grandson, their lives (and, therefore, the chapters of Genesis) will overlap somewhat.
- B. That God speaks to Abram is presented matter-of-fact-ly, but without any mechanics or specifics.
- C. Abram will interact with kings, with his nephew Lot, with Sarai his wife, and he is not portrayed as always doing the right thing. Like everyone else mentioned in Scripture, Abram has feet of clay.
- D. One of the most significant events of his life is, God promises Abram a son, even though he and his wife are past childbearing years, and Abram is promised that his seed (descendants) will be like the sand of the sea and like the stars in the sky. As Abram gets older, he tries to make God's promises come true.
- E. God introduces the mark of circumcision, which was to indicate that Abraham (and those who were circumcised) belonged to God. As any male can tell you, the idea of removing any amount of flesh from that portion of a male's anatomy is something which would give any man pause.
- F. God again promises the birth of Isaac.
- G. Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, although Lot is saved.
- H. Isaac is born, but there is quite a dispute which arises between Sarai (Abraham's wife) and her Egyptian servant woman, Hagar (who bore a child for Abraham at Sarai's request).
- I. Gen. 22 is one of the most amazing chapters out of the Bible. Isaac has been born to Abraham; Abraham loves his son; and then God tells Aram to sacrifice his son, as an animal would be sacrificed. This involves several days travel (I believe that Isaac was offered up on Mount Golgotha) where Abraham is given time to ponder this request that God has made. The end result is, we have a type of Christ here—Isaac, Abraham's only son whom he loves, is offered up as a sacrifice to God. At the last moment, a substitute

is provided by God. This is a wonderful foreshadowing of the cross, that God would offer up His only Son as a substitute for us all.

- XII. Isaac. Gen. 24–26
- A. The section on Isaac is relatively short. A servant is sent out to find a wife for him, his father dies, and Isaac moves to Gerar.
 - B. Isaac also has some disputes with the Philistines, who live in that general area as well.
- XIII. Jacob (and Esau). Gen. 27–36
- A. Jacob is presented as the line of Christ, and Esau, his twin brother is not. Esau's line will be followed to a dead end.
 - B. Although many would expect Jacob to be shown to be the better man, that is not actually the case. Over and over again, Esau seems to be a nicer guy, more level-headed, and more honest. Jacob recognizes the importance of the birthright and of being the firstborn (he trailed Esau by a few minutes in this regard) and Jacob does not. Apart from this, there is really nothing to recommend Jacob over his twin brother Esau.
 - C. As I have mentioned before, there is verbiage associated with Jacob being in love with Rachel and working for her father in order to marry her, which suggests that Jacob wrote or narrated this portion of the Bible.
 - D. Jacob will have 12 sons and 1 daughter by multiple wives (2 wives and their servant girls).
 - E. Jacob, who is presented as quite hard-headed, will also wrestle with the Lord Jesus Christ (as a theophany—a form of God before Jesus was incarnated) and he will walk with a limp for the rest of his life, always recognizing that he ought not to fight God when it came to God's will.
 - F. Not only is Jacob a poor human being, in many respects, he is also a poor father, showing clear favoritism, which becomes problematic as his sons begin to grow up and recognize Jacob's favoritism. They will sell their father's favorite son, Joseph, into slavery.
 - G. Throughout this section, Jacob (a believer in Jehovah Elohim) interacts with his twin brother Esau, who apparently is not a believer in Jehovah Elohim.
- XIV. Joseph and the other sons of Jacob. Gen. 37–50
- A. The story of Joseph is quite amazing. His brothers sell him into slavery and he eventually ends up in Egypt.
 - B. Joseph is promoted to a very high position in Egypt, but not after making some very serious mistakes (he trusts in man when he should be trusting in God).
 - C. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Jacob's family is floundering, making many practical mistakes.
 - D. Joseph in Egypt recognizes, through a dream of Pharaoh, that there would be 7 good years (economic prosperity) followed by 7 lean years (economic depression), and Joseph prepares Egypt for this by setting aside huge amounts of grain which would be doled out during the 7 bad years.
 - E. Jacob's family, who had no clue as to Jacob's whereabouts or life, were forced to come to Egypt to buy grain.
 - F. Joseph is thereby reunited with his family.

- G. His father Jacob (also called Israel) speaks to each of his sons, telling them how they would end up in life as a tribe.
- H. Jacob dies and, eventually, Joseph dies, which ends the book of Genesis.

Having a general idea of what is to happen, you should be now ready to examine the book of Genesis verse by verse (which will be the next set of lessons).

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