

Gary Ray

THE DISCIPLESHIP HANDBOOK

A resource to help
you understand the key
teachings of Christianity

[iAMA WATCHMAN.com](http://www.iamaWATCHMAN.com)

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iAMAWATCHMAN.com

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I Am A Watchman
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The I Am A Watchman ministry desires to equip and encourage
believers, reach the lost, and see individuals prepared for the
return of the King.

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This discipleship resource has been prepared by Gary Ray for the I Am The Watchman ministry (IAmAWatchman.com).

This easy-to-read book is designed to provide a general overview of the main tenants of the Christian faith. This study resource provides information on dozens of important theological topics, and includes links to hours of complimenting teaching videos prepared by the author.

The desire is to help individuals know, and be able to share and live-out Scriptural directives. Above all, the I Am A Watchman ministry team desires to see all be spiritually prepared for the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

To be a disciple is to be a learner (Acts 17:11). To be a Christian is to be a 'doer' (James 1:22-25). To be a Watchman for the Lord is to lead in making the world aware of what God has done, what God is doing, and what God is going to do (Ezekiel 33:1-8). The prayer is that this discipleship resource will be a blessing to those who desire to grow both in wisdom, and in their witness.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Ray has served in pastoral ministry for more than 30 years. He is a student of the Word and has a passion for presenting Scripture in ways that are interesting and clear—particularly for those with limited or no church background.

Other books and booklets by this author include: *The Prophecy Book*, *The Story of Jesus*, *Reasons for Faith*, and *What the Post-Rapture World and Church Will Look Like*. These books (and an abundance of free discipleship resources) can be accessed through the www.IAmAWatchman.com ministry website. Informative and encouraging teaching videos by this author are also posted at www.Vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman.

Gary is happily married and lives in the Pacific Northwest with his wonderful wife, children and grandchildren.

He is a Watchman for the Lord—and encourages you to be one too. He can be contacted through the I Am A Watchman website contact portal.



**Be a good worker, one who does not
need to be ashamed and who correctly
explains the word of truth.”**

2 Timothy 2:15b (NLT)

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SECTION ONE

FOUNDATIONAL INFORMATION

- ➔ **How to become a Christian**
- ➔ **What every disciple should DO**
- ➔ **What it means to be a WATCHMAN**

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN



God will bless, forgive, help, and save those who believe in Him, love Him, and are committed to follow Him. It is not enough to believe that God exists, or to know many facts about the Bible or Jesus. Even the demons can do that much (James 2:19). The questions are: Do you believe in God, that He sent His Son Jesus to earth 2000 years ago, that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross and rose to life on the third day so that your sins can be forgiven? Do you love God and wish to serve Him? Are you a committed follower of Jesus Christ? Becoming a Christian is your first and best next step on the path to hope in this new world. Trying to bypass that first step in this new world is like trying to drive a car across the United States with only a gallon of gas. You'll make it a few miles down the road, but then will end up pushing the car, becoming weary, giving up, and never getting to where you want to go. First step—become a Christian! That decision will not only help you in this new world, it will determine your eternal destiny.

This section of the book presents a simple, four-step plan to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior. Some refer to this process as being saved (1 John 2:2; Acts 4:12) or born again (see John 3:3 and 2 Cor. 5:17). Born-again believers are disciples and followers of Christ.

Additional information on the subject of salvation follows this simple four-step outline. A link to a 20-minute video teaching on this vital topic is noted below:

<https://vimeo.com/260646426>

FOUR STEPS TO SALVATION:

1. **Acknowledge that you have sinned, that God has not been first place in your life, and ask Him to forgive your sins.** Scripture notes that God is rich in mercy and that Jesus will forgive the sins that are confessed to Him.
 - ➔ “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.” (John 1:9)

2. **Believe that Jesus died to pay (atone) for your sins, rose again, and is alive today.** There is a link between the words, believe, trust and faith. A true believer will not just believe that Jesus lived, they will strive with all their heart to live for Him.
 - ➔ “If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)
 - ➔ “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name [Jesus] by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

3. **Accept God’s gift of salvation.** Believe that God loves you. Believe that Jesus came and died for you. Believe that God’s grace is greater than your sin. Do not let regret, bitterness, or shame keep you from falling into the loving arms of God.
 - ➔ “For it is by *grace* you are saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - ➔ Remember: We are not saved by anything we do, but by what Jesus has done for us.

4. Ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and be Lord of your life. God through Jesus Christ offers grace, forgiveness, hope, purpose, love, and eternal life. It is available to all, but not forced on any. Ask to receive His gift today.

- “To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God.” (John 1:2)
- [Jesus said] “Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.” (Revelation 3:20)

You can begin a new life in the faith by praying a simple prayer of commitment to God. A sample prayer is noted below:

“Dear Jesus. Thank you for making me and loving me (even when I’ve ignored you and went my own way). I realize I need You in my life, I’m sorry for my sins, I ask You to forgive me. Thank you for dying for me on the cross so that my sins can be forgiven. Please help me to understand Your love and Your Word. Help me to learn more about who You are and Your will for my life. As much as I know how, I want to follow You from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person. I accept Your gift of salvation, and pledge to live for You and tell others about You.”

THANK YOU JESUS!

WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO



Many ask: “What do I do now that I have committed to be a follower and disciple of Christ? What are the best next steps?” Noted below are five suggestions.

The *next* chapter profiles what the highly committed disciple (*the Watchman*) should keep in mind and pursue. **The FREE resources on the www.IAmAWatchman.com website will help you on your spiritual journey. But first, here’s an overview of What every believer/disciple should DO.**

1. **Join a good, evangelical, Bible-teaching church:** When looking for a church, do not be unduly influenced by congregation size, building design, or professional music, drama and preaching presentations. Look for heart. Look to see if the people love each other. Discern whether or not the staff are good teachers and shepherds. Ask for information about church goals, study opportunities, beliefs, and missions involvement. Determine if staff teach and preach in a way that communicates the need to be prepared for the imminent return of the Lord. If this book is being read after the Rapture, be sure the church or small group you attend understands what has happened, and desires to be study Scripture to understand what prophecy notes will happen next. Ask to meet with a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon to discuss the church vision, how the church can be a blessing to you, and how you can be a blessing to the church.

2. **Join a small group.** The Bible Disciple-making ministry notes that some of the benefits of sharing in a small group include:
 - ➔ **You will begin to feel like part of God’s family:** It is easy to get lost in a crowd—to go to church and worship but stay invisible and anonymous. Meeting with a small group of fellow believers provides an opportunity to build relationships. It also provides the opportunity to share, learn, pray with and for others, and walk with others on your spiritual journey. When you are connected to fellow believers, you are part of a family and never stand alone.

- ➔ **You will grow faster spiritually in a group than alone:** The Word notes that we have been “predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29). Spiritual growth involves life change. Life change is optimized in the context of a small group. 2 Timothy 2:22 teaches that we are to “run after” godly character and “run away” from the passions of youth. This verse instructs us not to do this alone but “with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart.” It’s always easier to exercise, physically or spiritually, in a group rather than alone (1 Timothy 4:7b).
- ➔ **You will not have to go through struggles alone:** It’s not only possible but probable that you could walk into and out of large group (worship) events with hurts, heartaches, and questions, but never connect with someone who will show an interest in you or identify with your difficulty. Many think their struggles are unique, but in a small group setting, it becomes clear that most struggles are universal. It’s encouraging to find that members of your group have not only struggled with common problems but have also found helpful solutions in God’s Word (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- ➔ **Pray, Pray, Pray:** Many are hesitant to pray in front of others, especially in a large group setting. In a small group of 6-12, you will learn to participate in prayer by having a conversation together with God. As you see prayer modeled by others you know, you will become more comfortable joining in prayer. It is good to pray for one another—it is even better to pray with one another.
- ➔ **You will understand the Bible better:** Have you ever listened to a message at a worship service and wanted to stop the speaker and ask, “But what about....?” If so, then a small group is for you. The message presented in a worship service is one-way communication. You listen while the speaker speaks. It’s fine for imparting knowledge, but not as effective for personal application. In a small group setting, you can ask questions, participate in a discussion of the text, and hear others share their insights. The truth in the Bible is practical, timeless, and designed to be applied to our everyday lives—participation in a small group helps individuals know how that is possible.

3. **Develop your personal prayer life:** Many have busy schedules and hesitate to schedule something new—particularly a new time commitment every day. However, prayer is not only important, it is essential. Jesus prayed constantly and encouraged his disciples to pray. Paul noted that believers are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). A great evangelist once said, “I have so much to do today, it would be impossible for me not to pray.” That’s a proper mindset. A few suggestions to help you develop a meaningful daily prayer time are noted below:
- ➔ **Schedule it:** For many, if it’s not on the schedule it doesn’t get done. It may take some time to get into a routine, but the benefit of setting aside this time will become clear.
 - ➔ **Seek out a prayer partner:** This needs to be a confidant who will pray for you and with you—someone who will encourage you and challenge you. Pray with and for this person about specific needs. Keep a list of your prayer needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know you are praying for their needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know how God is working in your life. Be positive, be encouraging, and be perseverant. Ask church leadership to pair you with a prayer partner if one is not apparent.
 - ➔ **Keep a prayer journal:** Note when you began praying for the specific needs, and when/how God moves. Review your prayer journal often and rejoice in seeing how God moves to answer specific requests.
4. **Plan to give:** Christian stewardship is the mark of Christian maturity. When believers give, believers receive. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). A few suggestions are noted below:
- ➔ Make a plan to provide regular financial support for God’s work. Note: there is a chapter on Christian Stewardship in this book, and articles on Christian finances on the iamaWatchman.com website.
 - ➔ Ask for a copy of your church budget and familiarize yourself with church finances.
 - ➔ Give cheerfully, regularly, and generously. Give your time, talent, resources, and finances.

- ➔ Rejoice in being able to support mission and outreach efforts through the local church. Seek God’s leading regarding providing above-and-beyond support (funds, time, encouragement) to address particular needs and ministry projects.
 - ➔ Remember, God expects His people to be good and faithful stewards of the resources He entrusts to them (Luke 14:13-14; Matthew 25:14-30). Ask God to help you do what He desires you to do.
5. **Read and study the Word:** Titus 2:15 notes that disciples are to study and “rightly handle” (understand and share) Scripture. Acts 17:11 notes that the Bereans (a small group of believers living in Berea) were commended for their diligence in studying the Word. Acts 2:42 records that the early church committed themselves to learn from the Apostles. It honors God when His people strive to learn what the Word says, how to share it, and how to incorporate it into a daily walk. A few suggestions are noted below:
- ➔ Take notes during sermon and teaching times. Write down important points and questions. Follow-up with spiritually mature individuals.
 - ➔ Write down your questions as you read—share these with a staff member or Small Group/Bible Study teacher.
 - ➔ Consider purchasing a **STUDY BIBLE**—A Bible that has study/commentary notes on each page of the text. This will aid in understanding difficult passages.
 - ➔ Listen to good Bible Study Teachers online, on TV, and/or radio. Church leadership may be able to share recommendations.
 - ➔ Establish a Bible reading routine. Read for a certain number of minutes at a regular time each day.

WHAT IS A WATCHMAN?

This section profiles the work of a **Watchman**, and what it means to be a **Watchman** for the Lord. A complimenting teaching video on this important subject is posted at: <https://vimeo.com/259965426>

The English term **Watchman** is found more than a dozen times in Scripture, perhaps most notably in Ezekiel 33:1-9. In that passage of Scripture God makes it clear that the bold and faithful believer is to exercise a concern beyond self. The **Watchman** will know the Word, be attuned to the Lord's working and expectations, and find ways to inform and warn others about what God has done, what He expects, and what He has promised to do. Being a **Watchman** is biblical and God-honoring. The work of a **Watchman** is challenging, but I believe that when one lives to honor God, God will honor them. Noted below are thoughts on what the **Watchman** (and **Watchwomen**) should know and do. This information is provided by members of the I Am A Watchman ministry team.

16 CHARACTERISTICS OF A FAITHFUL WATCHMAN

FROM JOE KERR

What is a Watchman? What does a Watchwoman do? The Hebrew term for Watchman is šōmēr. In Hebrew, it is expressed in many ways depending on the context and who or what it describes. The idea of keeping watch or a sense of "keep this safe" exists throughout Scripture.

Various forms of the term šōmēr occur 469 times in the Bible. Most of the characteristics can be applied to both Watchmen and Watchwomen.

16 Characteristics of a Faithful Watchman

God's definition of a Watchman is demonstrated throughout the Old and New Testaments. A Watchman is a keeper. A Watchwoman is trusted. Both protect. Each sees. All serve.

16 CHARACTERISTICS OF A FAITHFUL WATCHMAN

1. God is a faithful Watchman Who keeps [רָמַשׁ] His covenant and fulfills His promises. (Deuteronomy 7:9)
2. The Watchwoman keeps [רָמַשׁ] her word as God keeps His. She speaks the Word of God when she calls out a warning. (Daniel 9:4)
3. Watchmen are trusted keepers [רָמַשׁ] of the sheep. God trusts His flock to Watchmen until He returns. (1 Samuel 17:20)
4. A Watchman is a bodyguard [רָמַשׁ] who personally protects those in battle. Note that the Deut. 7:9 reference to God uses the same Hebrew word!
5. Watchmen do not fight alone. Israel was keeping watch [שָׁמַר] over allies. Watchmen fight together. (2 Kings 9:14)
6. The Watchman is the trusted keeper [שָׁמַר] of those most important to the King. Watchmen see people as God sees them. (Esther 2:3)
7. A Watchwoman is a keeper [שָׁמַר] overseer, and producer of the King's resources. Building God's Kingdom depends on her diligence. (Neh. 2:8)
8. A Watchman rebuilds broken homes. Shecaniah, keeper [שָׁמַר] of the East Gate, repaired the wall in front of his home. (Nehemiah 3:29)
9. The Watchman depends [שׁוּמַר] on God's protection. Hurt people, hurt people. Healed people, heal people. Watchmen are healers. (Psalm 127:1)
10. A Watchwoman protects [שָׁמַר] strangers. Watchwomen have God's heart for widows, orphans, single parents, and refugees. (Psalm 146:9)
11. The Watchman heeds [שׁוּמַר] instruction. Watchmen understand the order and hierarchy of leadership and submit to authority. (Proverbs 10:17)
12. A Watchwoman is one who keeps [שָׁמַר] a clear vision of the time she lives in. She sees ahead and prepares herself and others. (Proverbs 19:8)
13. Watchmen guard themselves [שׁוּמַר] from temptation. Their lives are clear demonstrations that God has power over the enemy. (Proverbs 22:5)
14. A Watchwoman sees [שָׁמַר] through the darkness. Hidden things are visible to her trained eyes because of her earnest prayers. (Isaiah 21:11)

15. A Watchman is a doorkeeper [שֹׁמֵר] opening the way for people to enter God's presence. Watchmen lead people to God. (Jeremiah 35:4)
16. A Watchwoman understands [שֹׁמֵר] the power of worship. She lives in God's presence, both openly and silently. (Isaiah 56:6)

Watchmen and Watchwomen are responsible for much, see everything, but are seldom seen. They recognize the enormous task set before them, but few of those they watch will understand the Watchman's sacrifice. The enemy will attack, but God promises victory. The work will garner little praise, but those obedient to the call of God will one day stand before God on the day of judgment and hear Him say, "Well done My good and faithful servant."

God will reward those who finish well!



I AM A WATCHWOMAN

FROM RANDI GRAY

I am a Watchwoman.

I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend.

I believe that what The Word says is true: about the past and the future. As a Watcher, I prepare for that future as a wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend.

The Bible states that no one will know when Jesus is coming again. Mark 13:32 reads, “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Yet we can be vigilant and decide to be prepared - whether Jesus comes in our lifetime, our children’s lifetime, or their children’s lifetime.

So what can we do to prepare ourselves and the ones we love?

Don’t be afraid:

Facing the possibility that our time on earth could be winding down can be simultaneously joyful and challenging. What about our homes? Our coworkers and friends? Our spouses who don’t know the Lord? Wherever you are in life, it’s hard to think about leaving it all behind. Even with all the glories that Heaven promises – it is still the unknown, and thinking about leaving the places, and people we love is daunting.

Yes, facing these thoughts can be overwhelming. But Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid” more than any other statement in His lifetime. In fact, variations of ‘fear not’ appear more than 365 times in the Bible. The Word emphasizes that fear should not hold us back from living and loving as Jesus did. If Jesus worked so hard to get this message across, I want to listen.

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27

We can find hope and joy in knowing that the Lord walks beside us and will never leave us, no matter what comes. So let us choose to not live in fear, but to seize the opportunities that come every single day.

Examine your life:

When you're on an airplane, the flight attendant always warns you that in case of an emergency, you should secure your own oxygen mask before helping your neighbor with theirs. It's easy to see the wisdom: how can you help someone else breathe when you have no air?

The same model is true within the Word. We must get our own hearts right with the Lord before we can effectively reach out to other people. This does not mean we must be perfect before we have permission to act. No! This simply means that we should be actively pursuing God before we can ask the same of others.

Speak in Love:

There was a time when I didn't often think about my family and friends facing judgment without the peace of heaven on the other side. Those thoughts were painful. It was easier to not think about it at all.

Yet we must. We must keep our eyes fixed on heaven and the future, and speak what we know to the ones around us.

The prophet Ezekiel received a warning from the Lord, "When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved." Ezekiel 33:8-9

Ultimately, another's decision to believe in and accept Jesus or not will be a personal choice they make. This is outside our control. Yet our willingness to speak the truth in love is in our control – and it is our responsibility as believers, as Watchmen and Watchwomen. We were given a blueprint for the days that are coming, and whether it comes to fruition within our lifetimes or not, we will be held accountable for sharing the knowledge we have been entrusted with.

Be Watchful:

If we saw a car hurtling toward an unsuspecting person, we wouldn't hesitate to shout out a warning to save their life. Let us use our voices for life! Use your eyes to watch and your voice to bring hope to those around you. We don't know what tomorrow may bring, so we must live for today and with renewed purpose, hope and courage. Watch for opportunities to connect with those around you, and be brave when the time comes to share your faith.

I am a Watchwoman.

I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend.

I will not simply wait for the Lord to return, I will be active in my faith and live well in the days that I am given. We know what comes next. Let us choose not to be afraid, to live in hope and take advantage of the days we are given.

I am a Watchwoman, are you?



A WORD-BASED WATCHMEN

FROM JOE KERR

Define a Watchman. Describe a Watchwoman. Explain what Watchmen do and how they live. James W. Goll does that in his excellent 21 Day Journal, *The Lifestyle of a Watchman*. The book lists various modern-day and historical Watchmen and Watchwomen. One particular section of the book discusses what it means to be a Word-based Watchman. Mr. Goll names his personal friend Dick Simmons, who exemplifies those virtues.

Dr. Goll describes his friend, Dick Simmons, as a “Word-based Watchman.” What is a Word-based Watchman? The following list is Mr. Goll’s description of a Word-based Watchman, but they are virtues to which all Watchmen should aspire.

“I am sharing with you a dedicated, current-day Watchman few others know but whom God knows deeply. He has radically influenced who I am today, as he has been one of my mentors and friends for many years. His name is Dick Simmons, and I have co-authored and dedicated this book to him. He is a veteran, a radical intercessor, a leader of intercessors, one who has worked all his life behind the scenes, tirelessly calling heaven to earth. I call him a Word-based Watchman.”¹

The following is a breakdown of those characteristics with short applications for all Watchmen. Some have been slightly re-worded for context, but individual terms are taken from the book’s description of Dick Simmons.

Veteran – Watchmen are not immature Christians or rookies in big-league Bible matters. They fully grasp the immensity of God, the message, and the seriousness of their role in fulfilling God’s call on their lives.

Radical Intercessor – Watchmen know how to pray. It’s not enough to pray for hours on the clock. Watchmen pray for personal time with God, not for themselves, for others. I know people who at 5, 4, or 3 a.m. are already on their knees. They rarely divulge that practice, because they don’t do it for any recognition. I hear testimony after testimony about their power in ministry, and I know, I am convinced – unequivocally so – their authority is merely a reflection

of the One with Whom they spend so much time.

A Leader of Intercessors – Watchmen and Watchwomen are strong warriors who can defend others. They're experienced and capable, but they recognize that even leaders need leaders. Leadership expert, John Maxwell says, "The bottom line in leadership isn't how far we advance ourselves but how far we advance others...serving others and adding value to their lives."²

Works behind the scenes – A Watchman does not serve to be seen or heard. Their calling is to protect those who must be seen. Anonymity is a strength that allows a Watchman to fight the enemy without detracting from the King's purpose. Watchmen are unseen, and they never make a scene.

Tirelessly calling Heaven to Earth – Watchmen know the King personally. They speak and trust as friends. When a Watchman prays, he prays from the perspective of someone who knows the One with all the power. He prays the King's authority into his daily business, knowing He hears, and recognizes his voice, and knowing He will respond as He has in the past.

Is Dick Simmons a Watchman who speaks to God that way? Yes, and he has the impact and personal experiences to back it up. He leads the ministry, Men for Nations. It holds a place of prominence – in Washington, D.C., on Capitol Hill ...next to the Supreme Court. Yes, God has used Dick, but rest assured he does not attribute that fact to his mighty prayers, but to the fact, God honors His Word. His post, overseeing the Supreme Court, is where God would station a veteran Watchman or Watchwoman.

Where is your post, Watchwoman or Watchman? Be faithful to stand it. Faithfulness produces veterans. Be radical as you intercede and relentless when you recruit. Be busy serving unseen, supporting others, not yourself. Be inexhaustible in prayer; not praying your words, but God's Word.

1. The Watchman And His Message - Watchman Research Media, <http://Watchmanmedia.org/index.php/2017/06/25/the-Watchman-and-his-message/> (accessed November 18, 2017).
2. The 21 Irrefutable Laws Of Leadership Quotes By John C ..., <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/467474-the-21-irrefutable-laws-of-leadersh> (accessed November 18, 2017).

SECTION TWO

APOLOGETICS MATERIAL /

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- ➔ **Introduction**
- ➔ **Information for skeptics**
- ➔ **Attacks on the Bible**
- ➔ **Apparent discrepancies in the Bible**
- ➔ **Historical markers verifying the Bible**
- ➔ **Archeology and the Bible**
- ➔ **Historical support for the Bible**
- ➔ **Bible prophecy**

APOLOGETICS / REASONS TO BELIEVE

INTRODUCTION: Many ask: Is Christianity the only true religion? How can I know what is true when there are more than 3000 religions in the world?

Having faith is important—having faith in what is right and true is essential. Having faith in what is right and true not only impacts the sense of purpose one experiences in the present but also determines the destiny of one’s eternal soul. The importance of putting one’s faith in the right God is paramount. God created humans with inquisitive minds, and in His mercy has provided both reasons to believe, and helps to believe.

Many religions speak of God, the Spirit, Jesus, love, heaven, eternity, Scripture, and peace. It is important to note that different religions define those terms differently. For example, in Islam, Jesus was an important teacher (Who’s true message has been corrupted by the west). The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe Jesus is Michael the Archangel. To Mormons, Jesus was the son of God as we are all children of God (though Jesus was created first).

To Christians, Jesus is the Son of God and one in essence with God (John 1:1; Col. 1:16, 2:8-10). To many, Jesus presented just one of many ways to heaven. To Christians, Jesus is the only way to heaven (John 14:6). Therefore, knowing the terminology is not enough. How one defines key terms is vital.

It is true that we are to “walk by faith and not by sight” ([2 Cor. 5:7](#)), but God in His mercy has provided an abundance of evidence to help those with questions discover the truth. I believe God has provided this evidence not only so we can be confident in His love, but also so that we can be confident in our faith, and be well positioned to provide a compelling defense for the what we know in our heart to be true.

Christians are called to impact the world for Christ and persuade individuals to believe ([2 Cor. 5:11](#)). It is not enough to be able to state *what* we believe—to be a powerful witness we must also be able to articulate *why* we believe what we believe. **The information in this section is designed to equip and aid believers in that important quest.**

REASONS TO BELIEVE



We live in a time when many have questions about God, faith, and Christianity—but we also live in a time when science and technology make gathering answers easier than ever before. Our world is in transition. After many centuries of numerical growth and significant influence on culture, the Christian Church has entered into a period of decline. There are more ministers than ever before—but a relatively small number hold conservative views consistent with the historic Christian faith. The number of churches is growing, but the percentage of ‘churched’ people is decreasing.

There are more Bibles in America than ever before—but the Bible literacy rate is arguably lower than ever before. We live in a time in history when there is an increasing number of questions about church doctrine—but few are well prepared to present a strong defense for their faith. Now is the time for followers of Christ to be the strong witnesses God has called them to be ([Matthew 28:18-20](#); [Acts 1:7-8](#)).

There are good reasons that good people have questions about faith. The message of the church seems, at times, to be confused or inconsistent. Rules and laws regarding morality seem subject to change. Many high-profile ministries and minister failings have led to a breach of trust. Satan capitalizes on every opportunity and area of weakness. With evil growing, there is an opportunity and need for the church to be the light God desires it to be. All believers are called to study (2 Timothy 2:15), to be prepared to provide answers (1 Peter 3:15) and to be a witness for the Lord ([2 Timothy 4:2](#)).

Reasons To Believe is a three-part video teaching series. The prayer is that these resources will embolden faith and better the witness of every believer.

Part one of this teaching series includes information on how the scope and precision of the universe points to Intelligent Design. The Bible presents God as the Master Designer and proves His existence through His unique and inspired creation. The link to this video teaching is provided on the next page.

Part two of this study profiles historical and archaeological findings which validate the biblical record and answers some of the apparent inconsistencies in Scripture.

Part three of this study notes how science and theology can complement each other, and how Bible prophecy sets Christianity apart from every other religion. The links to this three-part study are presented below:

Reasons to Believe Video Teaching Series:

- ➔ Part 1: <https://vimeo.com/260668664>
- ➔ Part 2: <https://vimeo.com/260668764>
- ➔ Part 3: <https://vimeo.com/260668947>

INFORMATION FOR SKEPTICS

Also, see the section on Bible prophecy



Did you know...

A summary of why many have questions:

- ➔ Many have argued that outside of the Bible, there is no literature supporting the existence of several main biblical characters including Moses, Joshua, Isaac, David, Jacob, and Abraham. If these people truly existed and interacted with other cultures as the Bible portrays, shouldn't historical records verify their existence?
- ➔ Many cultures have flood and creation stories similar to what is recorded in Genesis - some were written centuries before Moses wrote Genesis. Did Moses plagiarize the story?
- ➔ Some suggest that the Old Testament genealogy listing puts the creation of Adam and Eve at about 4004 B.C. This timetable seems to be at odds with archaeological evidence.
- ➔ The historical time-line/marker for the exodus found in 1 Kings 6 appears to be off by several centuries.
- ➔ There are apparent contradictions in Scripture: For example, the King James Translation notes that Judas is the brother of James (Acts 1:13); whereas, NIV, NASV and RSV translations refer to Judas as the son of James. Also, the King James Translation includes an expanded version of Matthew 6:13, which is not found in the NIV or RSV translations. Further, within each Bible translation there seem to be inconsistencies. For example, noting how many went to the tomb on the Sunday following the cross should be a rather straight-forward endeavor; but Mark notes that there were three, Matthew's record shows two, and John mentions one. Can all these accounts be correct?

- ➔ There have been many changes in language through the ages - most who are proficient in English would be hard-pressed to read a thousand-year-old English text. Therefore, even if the Scriptures were accurate at one time, how can these 2000+-year-old writings be accurately interpreted today?
- ➔ In the last 80 years, archaeologists have found nine new Psalms, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of Phillip and the writings of Mary Magdalene. Doesn't this prove that the Bible is incomplete?

There are reasons that many have questions—but answers are available. Presented on the following pages is an overview of how some have questioned and challenged the Christian faith over the years, and links to three teaching videos profiling reasons to believe.

SKEPTICISM AND PERSECUTION ARE NOT NEW

- ➔ Celsus wrote that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier and introduced what has become known as the 'Swoon Theory.' The 'Swoon Theory' postulates that Jesus was put into a drug-induced coma and was later revived. He writes: "The teachings of the Scriptures are altogether absurd" (True Doctrine, 178 AD).
- ➔ Roman Emperor Diocletian, wanting to eradicate Christianity from the imperial capital in 303 AD, ordered the burning of all collections of Scripture, and churches or houses in which they were found.
- ➔ Episcopal Bishop John Spong's 1992 book, 'Born of a Woman' presents the virgin birth as a myth and suggests that Jesus was born of a sexually violated girl.

RECENT ATTACKS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE BIBLE

The book, 'The DaVinci Code' suggests that...

- ➔ Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. She escaped the persecution of the church leaders by fleeing to France (Gaul), and there had a daughter, Sarah (who carried-on the bloodline of Christ).
- ➔ "The New Testament is based on fabrications" (Pg. 341). "Nothing in Christianity is original." (Pg. 232)
- ➔ The Church has two thousand years experience pressuring those who threaten to unveil its lies." (Pg. 407)

The "Jesus Seminar" (The mid-1980's)

- ➔ Purports that Jesus said less than 20% of the sayings attributed to him in the Gospels, and manifested very few if any miracles. The seminar classifies most of the Bible as myth.
- ➔ The Jesus Seminar doctrine rejects the Lord's Prayer, the sayings from the cross, all claims to Jesus' divinity, the virgin birth, most of Jesus' miracles and his bodily resurrection. Only one verse in the Gospel of Mark is accepted as being authentic and accurate.

Strange quotes from Gnostic writings found in he last 60 years

- ➔ **Gospel of Thomas:** "Jesus will make her [Mary Magdalene] a male so that she may become a living spirit like the male apostles: for every woman who makes herself a man will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."
- ➔ **Gospel of Philip:**
 - » "Those who say that the Lord died first and then rose up are in error..."
 - » "The world came about through a mistake."
 - » "There are two trees growing in Paradise. One bears animals, the other bears men. Adam ate from the tree which bore animals. He became an animal and brought forth animals. For this reason, the children of Adam worship animals."
- ➔ **The Infancy Gospel of Thomas:** Depicts a five-year-old Jesus bringing dried fish and clay sparrows to life, and portrays him making a playmate drop dead after accidentally hitting his shoulder.

In many ways, the enemy seeks to demean church doctrine and cast doubt on the integrity of Scripture. It was foretold that this would happen in the last days:

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

Let us remember that God is good, and does provide answers to tough questions. If we seek them, we will find them ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)). Now is the time for believers to not just know *what* they believe—they must also know *why* they believe it, and be able to articulate their convictions. The material in the next section supports that goal.



DEALING WITH BIBLE DIFFICULTIES AND APPARENT DISCREPANCIES

Some of the information in this section is adapted from Archer's "Bible Difficulties."

Most apparent discrepancies are easily resolved. Unraveling the mystery often begins by placing the apparent discrepancy into one of four broad categories. A notation of the four categories, and examples of how apparent discrepancies can be resolved, are presented in this section:

- ➔ **Timing issues:** Not every book in the Bible was written in Israel, or with the Hebrew people being the primary target audience. Writing to different target audiences accounts for there being a number of apparent discrepancies. For example, there seems to be a contradiction between John 19:14 and Mark 15:25. One Gospel writer notes that Jesus was crucified at the 'sixth' hour and another notes that it was the 'third' hour. This apparent contradiction is easily resolved when one understands that one Gospel writer is using a Roman system of timekeeping, while the other is referencing a Hebrew system. This is the same as noting Noon, 12:00 PM, or 1400 hours.
- ➔ **Weights and measures:** The fact that the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years and over a wide geographic area contributes to the Bible referencing a number of different systems for weights and measures. This can be confusing. For example, 2 Chronicles 24:14 references 100,000 talents of gold. 1 Chronicles 29:4 (same story) notes that there were 3000 talents of gold. Is this a contradiction? **No.** One references a **Royal Shekel** and the other the **Mosaic Shekel**. Two different (but similarly named) measurement systems are being referenced - similar to 1 pound equals 454 grams.
- ➔ **Cultural issues:**
 - » In Matthew 13:31-32 Jesus notes that the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds. However, scientists note that there are several seeds smaller than the mustard seed. Was Jesus' teaching in error? Does this prove the Bible to be in error? No. Resolving this issue

begins with realizing that Jesus was not speaking as a scientist or botanist. He was speaking to an agricultural community, in common language, in broad terms, to make a spiritual point.

- » The timing for Nebuchadnezzar's first raid into Palestine: Daniel 1:1 notes that it was in the 3rd year of his reign. Jeremiah 46:2 notes that it was the 4th year. This discrepancy is reconciled by recognizing that in Babylonian culture, the first year of a new reign was not counted as it was considered an 'ascension year.' Daniel is writing in a Babylonian context, so he records the timing of the raid in the Babylonian system of recording time. Jeremiah, writing in a pure Hebrew context, references the more standard was of identifying the starting point of the king's reign.
 - » Was Jesus mistaken in John 12:25 and Matthew 13:31-32 in saying that a grain of wheat dies (rather than saying that it germinates)? No, Jesus as with the mustard seed illustration, Jesus was not making a scientific statement, He was making a spiritual point.
- ➔ **Perspective issues:**
- » Absalom's sons: 1 Sam. 14:27 notes that Absalom had three sons. 2 Sam. 18:18 notes that Absalom did not have any sons and moves to erect a monument to maintain his name. The stories do not present contradictory accounts. The fact is, Absalom did have children, but his three sons died in infancy (hence the monument).
 - » Was the commandment to 'Love' (John 13:34-35) a 'new' commandment? Isn't the commandment to love found in the Old Testament? (see Lev. 19:18). The commandment to love in John 13 does have a new component in that the level and *scope* of love is new (we are to love others as Jesus loves us).
- ➔ **The Resurrection:**
- » There are differences in the Gospel accounts regarding who was at the tomb on the Sunday morning after the crucifixion. These differences do *not* indicate discrepancies, but rather add detail to, and substantiate the reliability of, the resurrection story. In a court of law, if multiple independent accounts are the same, the witnesses are likely to be discredited on the grounds of collusion.

- » The resurrection story is credible because the chief witnesses are women—in the first Jewish century women were not allowed to testify in court. If one were making up a story, one would not have the chief witnesses be women. Further, one of the witnesses (Mary Magdalene) had such a negative past that should would normally not be considered a credible witness even among women.
 - » The resurrection story is cited by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian Church (a writing that predates the Gospels). Paul's reference to the resurrection is part of a creedal statement, which indicates that within 20 years of the cross, the entire resurrection story was well-known and commemorated with formal creedal statements far outside of Israel.
 - » The resurrection story is referenced by the first-century AD Jewish historian, Josephus.
 - » The resurrection story is cited by the Roman historian Tacitus as being so meaningful to the followers of Christ that many willingly suffered a martyr's death rather than deny what they believed to be the absolute truth.
- ➔ **The Triumphal Entry:** Matt. 21:2 notes that there was a donkey **and** a colt at the Triumphal Entry. Luke 19:30 notes **only** that there was a donkey. The stories do not present contradictory accounts—they note a difference in perspective. There were two animals. Mark's focus is on Jesus' entry to Jerusalem. Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, focuses on how the Triumphal Entry is the fulfillment of the Zech. 9:9 prophecy (that prophecy notes that there would be two animals).
- ➔ **Animals in the Ark:** Genesis 6:19 notes that there were 2 of every animal species on the ark. Genesis 7:2 notes that there were 7 of some 'birds' and 'clean animals' on the ark. The two of every kind phrase is a general statement—the seven of some kinds phrase is a more specific statement focusing on the animals that were brought for sacrifice.

HISTORICAL PROBLEMS RESOLVED:

- ➔ **Christ and the census:** Until very recently, there were no non-biblical records of Caesar Augustus ordering non-Romans to be registered. There are records of Augustus ordering Roman citizens to be registered, but only in 28 BC, 8 BC and 14 AD. The only known census that Quirinius, governor of Syria ordered is in 6 AD, which is nearly a decade after the death of Herod, a key figure in the Matthew nativity story. New Testament Scholar Nigel Turner suggests that the Luke 2:2 passage: “This was the **first** census that took place while Quirinius was...” should read, “This was the census taken **before** the census taken while Quirinius was governor.” This is because the word for **FIRST** and **BEFORE** is the same word in Greek (Protos). **PROTOS** is always translated **before** in the Gospels when followed in the genitive case, as it is in this verse.
- ➔ **Christ and the slaughter of infants:** There is no non-biblical record of Herod giving an order for infants in the region of Bethlehem to be killed. However, it is certainly plausible that an order like that could have been given. Herod is known to have had Torah scholars burned alive for removing Rome’s golden eagle from the Temple Gate in Jerusalem. He had his wife, and several sons murdered because he considered them a threat to his throne. To assure there would be great mourning associated with his death, he ordered thousands of men locked inside the Hippodrome, and ordered that they be massacred when he died. Caesar Augustus is quoted as saying, ‘I’d rather be Herod’s pig than his son.’ It is also important to note that some scholars suggest that the population of Bethlehem 2000 years ago would likely to have been in the 1000 range. This would have meant the number of infant males could be as few as 10-15. Killings of this magnitude could easily have gone unnoticed by historians of the day, particularly in a period of constant human suffering and slaughter.
- ➔ **Conquest cities:** Archaeologist have found 16 cities that are said to have been destroyed by Joshua, yet only three show signs of being destroyed in the late Bronze Age (Hazor, Lachish, and Bethel). Joshua

10 can easily be understood to mean that Israel smote, laid siege to, or captured cities, and/or that the inhabitants were annihilated, but the actual cities were left standing. For example, Josh. 10:20 notes that the army ‘wiped out’ its enemy, but in the very next phrase Scripture notes what became of ‘the survivors.’ This is typical period writing. Note: A 15th century BC. Egyptian Stele commemorating the exploits of Thutmose III notes that ‘The heads of the Asiatics were severed, none escaped death.’ However, a few lines later the Stele references thousands of prisoners were captured. Further, Joshua 13:1 notes that when Joshua was ‘very old’ there were ‘still very large areas of the land to be taken.’

- ➔ **Exodus time-line:** 1 Kings 6:1 provides a historical marker for the time of the exodus (480 years between the exodus and the fourth year of Solomon’s reign, 962 BC). This does not seem to fit with Exodus 1:11, which notes that the Hebrews were ‘building the supply cities Pithom and Ramses,’ an event that took place 200 years *after* the exodus date (extrapolated from 1 Kings). The 1 Kings 6:1 time-line reference has symbolic value. It references 12 generations of 40 years, 40 being a number representing a long, God-ordained period of time (see 1 Sam. 4:18; Num. 14:33; Josh. 5:6; 2 Sam. 5:4; Judges 3:11, 5:31, 8:28, 13:1, etc.). Further, based on the date in the books of 1-2 Kings, another 480 years elapsed from the 4th year of Solomon’s reign (marking the building of the temple) and the end of Israel’s exile in Babylon. Hence, the Bible writer wanted to place the building of the temple as a central historical marker.
- ➔ **Did the disciples receive the Spirit right after the resurrection (John 20:22) or about 40 days later (Mark 15:25)?** The answer is both. The disciples received a special anointing of the Holy Spirit in Mark 15 and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in John 20.
- ➔ **The voice from heaven:** Acts 9:7 notes that those with Saul heard the voice from heaven—Acts 22:9 seems to suggest those with Saul did not hear the voice. This apparent contradiction is resolved by noting that there are two different words in the original Greek text translated as hear/hearing in our English text. One of the words means to hear

with understanding (i.e., to hear a conversation). The other word means to hear without understanding (as in to hear an indiscernible noise). Therefore, in this story, the men with Saul did hear the voice but did not understand the conversation as the words were meant for Saul alone.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE VALIDATES THE INTEGRITY OF SCRIPTURE

More than 100 significant archaeological finds in the last 125 years verify the accuracy of the biblical record. There has never been an archaeological find showing the biblical record to be in error. Presented below are a few examples of recent archaeological finds which validate the biblical record:

- ➔ The Amarna Tablets, discovered in 1930, confirm the disputed biblical account of Joshua's conquest of Gezer, Ashkelon, and Lachish.
- ➔ The first (non-biblical) reference to Nebuchadnezzar (verifying that he was an actual historical figure) was found in 1899.
- ➔ The biblical city of Bethel was found in 1919.
- ➔ The biblical city of Jericho was found in 1930.
- ➔ The Mari Tablets were found in 1933. These tablets confirm the existence of the disputed city, Nahor, as recorded in Genesis 24:10.
- ➔ The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, confirm the accuracy of the Old Testament.
- ➔ The only lithic (and non-biblical) reference to Pilate was found in 1961.
- ➔ The biblical city of Nazareth was found in 1963.
- ➔ The Elba Tablets were found in 1970. These verify the existence of the long-disputed listing of cities Moses recorded in Genesis 14.
- ➔ The burial chamber of the High Priest Caiaphas was found in 1990. Its contents verified several aspects of the crucifixion story.
- ➔ The biblical city of Dan was found in 1993.
- ➔ The biblical city of Hazor was found in 1996.

- ➔ The first non-biblical reference to David was found in 1976.
- ➔ The Roman Historian Tacitus wrote that Jesus was executed under Pilate during the reign of Tiberius, and was the head of the Christian movement known as The Way.
- ➔ The Jewish Historian Josephus wrote that “Jesus was a wise man...who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher...of truth. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. And when upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross...He appeared to them on the third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things...” [Jewish Antiquities, 18.3.3 §63]

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS ALSO VERIFY THE INTEGRITY AND ACCURACY OF SCRIPTURE

- ➔ The Dead Sea Scrolls are comprised of approximately 830 documents dating from 250BC—65AD. The documents were found in 1947, near the ancient village, Qumran, and are thought to have been written by an isolated Jewish community known as the Essenes. The documents were discovered in a complex of 11 caves. Of the more than 800 documents, 202 are biblical texts; the others are legal and historical documents, poetry, etc. The biblical scrolls include all Old Testament books in the Protestant canon of Scripture (except Esther).
- ➔ The great question was: What would happen if the Dead Sea Scrolls Old Testament (Cir. 100 BC) was compared to the next oldest complete Hebrew Bible (Cir. 900 AD). The two Bibles were copied in different ways, by different people, more than 1000 years apart—would the text be similar? Careful comparison work was done, and the two Old Testaments were found to be 99+% identical—and the less than 1% variance did not pertain to matters of doctrine, but rather, variant spelling of proper nouns. This affirms the accuracy and integrity of Scripture.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL SUPPORT

- ➔ **Slave Commerce:** Genesis 37:28 notes that Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 silver shekels. Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen notes that this precisely matches the price of slaves in Joseph's region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries BC, as affirmed by documents recovered from ancient Mesopotamia and Mari (modern Syria). Move the story forward 100 years and the price moves to 60 shekels. Move the story forward 200 years, and the price becomes 120 shekels. The Genesis account is exactly right, and could not be a 5th century BC work as some suggest.
- ➔ **The Mari Tablets:** This is a collection of legal documents found in Northern Syria, dated to the early second millennium BC. These documents note the particular pattern (and stipulations) for oaths, agreements, and treaties made in a particular region, at a particular point in history. This information matches perfectly with the form and structure of the treaties Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob entered into with their neighbors, as described in Gen. 21, 26 and 31. This nullifies the argument that Genesis was written more than a thousand years later than Bible Scholars contend as someone writing at in the 5th or so century BC would not be aware of these subtle but important cultural practices and customs.
- ➔ **Ancient Law:** Genesis 49 provides instructions regarding inheritance law. A few hundred years later, Deut. 21:15-17 notes a change in the inheritance law. This matches perfectly with the time-line for changes in the law in the Mesopotamian region and validates the dates for Moses and Joseph and the Genesis record. It is true that Egyptian writings do not specifically mention the Hebrews, Moses or the exodus. However, Josephus, citing Egyptian sources, notes that a group of people known as the Hyksos (Egyptian for 'captive shepherds') were in Egypt as the biblical record notes. That Joseph could rise to power in Egypt is plausible as writings note that an 'Asiatic' named Irsu came to power in Egypt during a period of hardship about 1200 BC. A stele at the Karnak Temple in

Luxor notes that in the middle of the sixteenth century BC, Egyptian rulers in Thebes waged war against 'Asiatic interlopers.' Following this conflict, the political environment in Egypt would have been decidedly unfriendly against Semitic people who remained in the eastern delta. This sudden turn of events lays a foundation for the biblical account of the events leading up to the exodus—a new king arose, who did not know Joseph and conscripted the Hebrew people into forced labor.

- ➔ **Leiden Papyrus 348:** An ancient Egyptian document known as the Leiden Papyrus 348, which dates to the time of Moses, notes an order that food was to be distributed to the 'Apiru who were dragging stones for the great project.' Apiru = non-Egyptians.
- ➔ **The Merneptah Stele:** (circa 1217 BC), commemorates Ramesses II, and references the Israelites' servitude.
- ➔ **Hazor:** Hebrew University Professor Amnon Ben Tor found the city of Hazor in 1996. The temple areas had been razed by fire, mud bricks had melted and turned into glass, and statues of Canaanite deities were decapitated and strewn about the Temple. This perfectly matches the Deut. 7:5 record.
- ➔ **Jericho:** An Archaeological Review publication notes that "...evidence has shown that fiery destruction did occur at Jericho, in uncanny detail, just as the Bible describes it. The upper med-brick wall of the city collapsed outward, piling up at the base of a lower wall to form a narrow ramp of debris large enough to allow an invading army to clamber into the breach."
- ➔ **Jesus:** The Roman Historian Josephus wrote: "Jesus is widely known as a doer of amazing deeds and a teacher who won over many Jews and Greeks." The Babylonian Talmud (a compendium of Jewish law and commentary) notes: "On the eve of Passover, Yesju was hanged... because he practiced sorcery and led Israel astray."

THE ACCURACY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

There are different ways to count the number of prophecies in the Bible, but at a minimum, there are more than 1000, and about 100 are yet to be fulfilled. The fulfillment of Bible prophecy, like archaeological finds, serve as empirical proof, and validate the Biblical record to be both amazing and true. And like archaeological finds, no Bible prophecy has ever been found to be in error.

Unlike the many very general fortune-cookie-like predictions which grab magazine headlines today, most Bible prophecies are precise and easily verifiable. **The section on Bible Prophecy in this book provides additional information on this vital subject, but as the purpose of this section is to provide reasons for faith, let me note the statistical probability of Bible prophecies coming true:**

- ➔ The odds of just **seven** of Ezekiel's prophecies concerning Tyre coming true are approximately **75,000,000 to 1**. Remember, there are more than 1000 prophecies in the Bible—none have been proven to be inaccurate.
- ➔ Jesus fulfilled more than 120 specific Messianic prophecies. No Messianic prophecy pertaining to His first coming was left unfulfilled. The probability of Jesus fulfilling fewer than half of the Messianic prophecies He did fulfill is calculated to be 1 in ten to the 157th power (1 followed by 157 zeros) which is roughly the number of electrons in the universe).

SECTION THREE

An alphabetical listing of important theological subjects:

- ➔ **Angels**
- ➔ **The Bible**
- ➔ **The Disciples (What happened to them?)**
- ➔ **Catholic and Protestant Churches**
- ➔ **The Church (Its ministry)**
- ➔ **The Church (It's doctrine)**
- ➔ **Communion**
- ➔ **Comparative Religion Information**
- ➔ **The Deity of Christ**
- ➔ **Eschatology**
- ➔ **Finances (Christian stewardship)**
- ➔ **Forgiveness**
- ➔ **Is America A Christian Nation?**
- ➔ **The Holy Spirit**
- ➔ **If God is Good Why Do Bad Things Happen?**
- ➔ **Prayer**
- ➔ **Satan**
- ➔ **Science and the Bible**
- ➔ **The Ten Commandments**
- ➔ **The Trinity**
- ➔ **Women in Scripture**

ANGELS

Angels are a wondrous part of God's creation. In Scripture, angels are messengers, warriors, and servants of God. Angels are created beings—they are powerful but not divine. The word “angel” comes from the Greek word “angelos,” which means messenger. Angels are spiritual beings (without flesh or bone), though they have the ability to appear in human form (Genesis 19:1-22).

Angels were created by God and have many functions. They praise God (Psalm 103:20), serve as messengers to the world (Luke 1:11-20, 26-38; Luke 2:9-14), watch over God's people (Psalm 91:11-12), and are sometimes instruments of God's judgment (Matthew 13:49-50).

The Bible notes that at some point in the distant past, Satan led a rebellion in heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15). Most theologians believe that angels were given a one-time opportunity to choose for or against God, and that those who chose against God were removed from heaven. Some believe that Revelation 12:4 indicates that a third of the angels followed Satan in this rebellion. Many of those fallen angels (demons) currently work with Satan, on earth, to oppose God's plan and oppress God's people. However, some fallen angels are currently bound in a kind of prison, awaiting their judgment (I Peter 3:19-20; II Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6). Satan, his followers, and his angels will be subject to the great judgment at the end of time:

“Then shall He [Jesus] say also unto them on the left hand, depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:41)

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” (2 Peter 2:4)

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness [until]...the judgment.” (Jude 6)

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (Revelation 12:9)

The Bible notes that angels were created by God (Col. 1:16), and carry out the will of God (Psalm 103:20; Matt. 6:10). They worship God (Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:6), are wise and mighty (2 Samuel 14:20; Psalm 103:20), and are innumerable (Heb. 12:22). Though great in beauty, power, and glory, angels are not to be worshiped (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:9) or prayed-to.

There are orders or classifications of angels: The Bible notes that there are different kinds or orders of angels—each having different characteristics and roles. **Cherubim**, **Seraphim**, and **Archangels** are three such distinctions.

Seraphim: The word “seraphim” (singular of seraph) is likely a translation of ‘fiery ones’ and probably stems from the fiery imagery often associated with the presence of God (Cf. Ezek. 1:27). The prophet Isaiah noted that “Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings;; with two [they] covered [their] face, and with two [they] covered [their] feet, and with two [they] flew” (Isaiah 6:2). These unique spiritual beings have the great privilege of standing in the presence of Almighty God and leading the heavenly realm in praise (Isaiah 6:3).

Cherubim: Cherubim are typically depicted as having wings, feet, and hands. However, their form is so majestic and mysterious that their descriptions can vary—sometimes they have two faces (Ezek. 41:18) and sometimes four (Ezek. 10:21). Cherubim are angels of special honor. Their likeness was incorporated into the design of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 4:4; Psalm 80:1, 99:1) and the Temple (Exodus 26:31; 2 Chronicles 3:7; 1 Kings 6:26). Ezekiel 28:14 indicates that Satan (Lucifer) was of this order of angelic beings.

Archangel: The word “archangel” is not found in the Old Testament. References to Michael the Archangel are found in 1 Thess. 4:16 and Jude 9. Archangels appear to be angels of authority—a kind of Captain of the heavenly hosts. Only two archangels are noted by name in Scripture (though some non-canonical writings note additional names. The book of Enoch names Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel as Archangels (9:1, 20:9). The book of Tobit references seven Archangels (12:15).

Michael the Archangel seems to be a warrior angel (Rev. 12:7; Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1). He is also given the privilege of announcing the return of Christ.

“For the Lord, himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” (1 Thess. 4:16)

The other archangel noted by name in Scripture is Gabriel. He is referenced in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, he is referenced in Dan. 8:15-26 and 9:21-27. In the New Testament, he is mentioned in Luke 1:11-20, 26-38. He leads in delivering significant messages from God to humanity (i.e., Gabriel was sent to inform Mary that she was with Child).

Is Satan an angel? The word Satan is more a descriptor or title, than a name or reference to a classification of angel. The word Satan comes from the Hebrew transliteration of the word adversary. Therefore, Satan is the one who opposes God. Satan is the most powerful of the fallen angels. Satan is also known as Lucifer (a word that comes from the King James Bible translation of the phrase, “Morning Star” in Isaiah 14:12). It is important to note that Satan is not a symbol or personification of evil - he is a personality, a created being who desires to destroy all that God loves. For additional information, please see the **Satan** and **Demons** sections of this book.

BAPTISM

Some material adapted from online commentary
and Saddleback Church resources

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING BAPTISM

Q: WHY SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE BAPTIZED?

A: Jesus was baptized. As Christians, we are to follow the example set by Jesus (John 13:15).

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John...” (Mark 1:9)

A: Jesus noted the importance of baptism by incorporating it into the “Great Commission.”

“Jesus said, ‘Go then, to all people everywhere and make them My disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.’” (Matt. 28:19-20)

Q: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

A: It symbolizes the burial and resurrection of Jesus, and a new believer’s commitment to die to the ‘old man’ and live a new life in Christ (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:4)

*“Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and He rose again.”
(1 Cor. 15:3-4)*

“For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism, you were also raised with Christ.” (Col. 2:12)

A: It illustrates one's new life and faith in Christ.

“When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a new person inside. The old life has passed away, and a new life has begun!” 2 Cor. 5:17 (LB)

“By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that just as Christ was raised...so also we may live a new life!” (Rom. 6:4)

Important considerations:

- ➔ Baptism doesn't make you a believer – it's a testimony that you already believe.
- ➔ Baptism does not “save” you, only faith in Christ can do that.
- ➔ Baptism is like a wedding ring – it is the outward symbol of the commitment you've already made in your heart.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...it is the gift of God– not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Eph.2:8-9)

Q: WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

A: Every person who believes in Christ and commits to live in obedience to His teachings (as presented in Scripture).

“Those who believe and accepted His message were baptized...” (Acts 2:41)

“...When they believed Philip as he preached the Good News... and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)

Q: WHEN SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

A: As soon as a person accepts Christ into their heart as Savior and Lord.

“Those who believed...were baptized...that day!” (Acts 2:41)

“As Philip [talked with the Ethiopian]...and told him the Good News about Jesus...they came to some water, and the man said, ‘Look, here is water! Why shouldn’t I be baptized right now?’ Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ The man answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So...Philip baptized him.” (Acts 8:35-38)

| THE HISTORY OF BAPTISM:

Though not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament, extra-biblical historical writings verify that water baptism has Old Testament period origins. Note that John the Baptist came on the scene (Matt. 3:1-2) and began his work without any explanation about what baptism was. Therefore, there must have been some understanding and cultural reference point concerning baptism.

Historians note that during the period of the second temple (roughly the 500 years leading up to the ministry of John the Baptist), there was widespread conversion of the Gentile world to Judaism. During this period the Hebrew word, ‘ger’ (stranger), came to be synonymous with a proselyte (new convert). Rabbinical instructions for receiving a proselyte called for an immersion basin filled with about 100 gallons of water. Into this water went the new convert, with Jewish elders present to serve as witnesses. Following the baptism, the proselyte was considered ‘newborn,’ as if he had been born of Jewish parentage.

Jewish proselyte baptism references the exodus experience and Israel crossing the Red Sea. The Apostle Paul notes, “Israel was baptized in the cloud and in the sea...” (1 Cor. 10:2). Thus, converts to Judaism in effect, belatedly reenacted Israel’s exodus, vicariously sharing in the experience of crossing over from

bondage to freedom, through the waters of the Red Sea, appropriating this history as their own and thereby becoming part of the covenant people produced by this historic event.

The exodus story is a grand prototype for New Testament baptism—first instituted by John (the Baptist) and later developed by the apostles. It is important to note that John located his ministry in the wilderness at the Jordan, near where Israel crossed-over from the desert into the Promised Land.

In the first century AD, there was a transition in the meaning of baptism. The Old Testament baptism of the Jews centered on a desire to identify with the Hebrew nation. The baptism of John centered on a desire to identify with righteousness and a commitment to forsake sin. The baptism of the New Testament Church (in Acts) centers on a desire to identify with the risen Lord and the gift of the Spirit (which believers have access to through the death and resurrection of Christ).

In the first century BC, most Jews did not believe baptism was important for those of Hebrew heritage, nor was it considered an act that associated one with repentance or righteousness. According to Jewish tradition, righteousness was a birthright. The baptism of the New Testament Church reminds individuals that it is not our bloodline, but the blood of Christ that assures our salvation.

“It is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:7)

The baptism of John the Baptist focused on repentance, a commitment to God, and righteous living. After Pentecost (Acts 2), baptism took on another dimension.

In Peter’s first sermon (Acts 2:38-42), baptism signified repentance and reception of the Gospel message of Jesus. Those baptized were, “added to the church...[and] they devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and Christian fellowship...” No longer were individuals baptized to join with Israel and the Old Covenant of Law; believers were baptized to identify as followers of Christ and the New Covenant of grace.

In the Epistles, baptism centers on faith in Christ, a belief in His death and resurrection, and is associated with a commitment to walk in ‘newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4,7; Col. 2:12). Linking baptism to believing in Christ as the Son of God is evident in the story of Phillip’s baptizing the Ethiopian (Acts 8:37). In Phillip’s ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 8:12-17), baptism **followed** “believing the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:14).

| **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT BAPTISM:**

Baptism comes from the Greek verb baptidzo, which means to immerse. Strictly speaking, baptidzo is a technical term which speaks to the method, not the meaning of baptism.

Baptism emphasizes unity. According to Scripture, baptism is ‘by one Spirit’ and ‘into one body’ (1 Cor. 12:13). Baptism unites believers who share one faith, have one hope, and live to serve one Lord.

As the baptism of John represented a desire to turn from sin toward righteousness, baptism was not necessary for Jesus as there was no sin in his life. But just as Moses, who lived a privileged life, forsook the privileges of Pharaoh’s court and became one with the Hebrews (the oppressed), walking with them through the Red Sea to freedom, so too Jesus identified with the Jews by being baptized.

| **BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

As the previous subsection indicates, there were changes in the meaning of baptism and the working of the Holy Spirit in the three decades that followed the cross. Just prior to the crucifixion, orthodox Jews believed that baptism made it possible for a Gentile to identify with the Old Covenant and receive the blessings promised to nation of Israel. The disciples of John the Baptist taught that baptism was a testimony of one’s decision to turn from sin. And virtually all who believed in Jehovah God prior to the cross also believed that

the Holy Spirit was a temporary anointing that God extended to humans on rare occasions—such anointing gave Elijah the ability to manifest miracles and run faster than chariots; it made Samson strong, Daniel wise, and Joseph able to interpret dreams. All of this changed following the resurrection and Pentecost (the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the New Testament Church [see Acts 2]).

The ‘Great Commission’ directive to baptize is designed to help individuals testify to their faith (and new identity) in Christ. No longer was baptism an indication of a desire to identify with Israel, the Old Covenant, or simply a decision to turn from sin. Also, individuals who believed in God and Christ were no longer anointed by the Spirit, but *indwelt* by the Spirit. This made the New Covenant connection to God through the Spirit far superior as the blessing of the Holy Spirit became permanent, not temporary. These were monumental changes and required time for New Testament believers (particularly Jewish converts) to understand and embrace. The rapid spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire accounted for a delay in this happening. However, before the close of the first century, it was uniformly understood that:

- Believers receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.
- Baptism is a testimony to one’s faith in and desire to follow Christ.
- The fruit and gifts of the Spirit are given to aid the believer in “Great Commission” work, and develops as one grows in Christ.

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance... to the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:13-14)

The Holy Spirit is the “seal” of our salvation. Baptism does not “seal” nor save—it serves as a testimony to the commitment we make to Christ. The Apostle Paul would not neglect to baptize any new convert if it were necessary for salvation (as noted in 1 Cor. 1:17).

The fruit (Gal. 5:22-23), attributes (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 28) and working of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-13) can develop and become more evident in our lives as we mature in Christ. However, the idea of receiving a higher-level infilling of the Holy Spirit via a human ceremony (i.e., the laying-on of hands) does not have a strong Biblical foundation.

To facilitate our effectiveness in His Great Commission work, God blesses believers with spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12). There are a variety of spiritual gifts, and all gifts have equal value (1 Cor. 12:21-25). The gift of tongues evidences a wondrous working of the Spirit, but does not evidence spiritual maturity or salvation.

REGARDING THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN:

- ➔ The act of baptizing children is called pedobaptism. The precedent for baptizing infants or young children is not found in Scripture. Scripture does note that some ‘families’ were baptized (Acts 16: 29-33), but the guiding principle is that those who are baptized must first believe (Mark 16:16) and be old enough to understand and accept the Gospel Message.
- ➔ Church Father Tertullian (cir. 200 AD) noted that “believing children” could be baptized, but specifically prohibited the baptism of infants.
- ➔ Church Father Gregory of Nazianzus (cir. 390 AD) defended the baptism of children, but noted that, “individuals being baptized should have some understanding and memory of the experience.”
- ➔ Church Father Origen (250 AD) suggested that the baptism of infants may, in some regions, date back to the time of the apostles. However, it is important to note that in the late 3rd century, the ‘Church Fathers’ who came from well-established Christian families, whose members

had been believers for multiple generations, were *not* baptized as infants. Note that *none* of the following church leaders (born into strong Christian families) were baptized as young children:

- » Ambrose was baptized when 34 years old
- » Jerome was baptized when 20 years old
- » Augustine was baptized when 30 years old
- » Gregory of Nazianzus was baptized when 30 years old

THE SERIOUS AND SOLEMN NATURE OF BAPTISM

An excerpt from the writings of Church Father Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 AD) provides insight into how important and serious the early church believed baptism was:

“First the candidates gathered in the vestibule of the baptistery and, facing west with outstretched hands, formally renounced the devil and all his works... then, turning to the east they said, ‘I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, and in one baptism. Candidates then went into another chamber and were anointed with oil. Then, one by one, they were led by the hand to the ‘holy pool of divine baptism,’ where after a second profession of their faith they were immersed three times...to symbolize the three-days burial of Christ...”

Baptism is an **Ordinance**, not a **Sacrament**. The Catholic Church views baptism as a **Sacrament** (a ‘grace-earning event’). A sacrament is an act which leads to receiving a heavenly reward. The Protestant Church views baptism as an **Ordinance**, which is a command of God. The Protestant Church teaches that believers are to pursue baptism first and foremost out of a desire to faithfully and obediently follow the commands of God (rather than from a motivation to receive a reward or special measure of grace in heaven). The two ordinances of the Protestant Church are Baptism and Communion.

THE BIBLE

WHY BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS DIVINELY INSPIRED?

The mandate is clear:

“Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have within you.” (1 Peter 3:15)

“...Proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch. Challenge, warn, and urge your people. Don’t ever quit. Just keep it simple.” 2 Tim. 4:2 (The Message translation)

To be ‘ready at all times’ with spiritual answers requires a deep, intimate knowledge of Scripture. A deep and intimate knowledge of Scripture is facilitated by having strong confidence in its unique and inspired nature. Information in this section is designed to show that the Bible is not just special, historically accurate, or even unique—but rather that it is divinely inspired, and has been miraculously preserved by God through the ages.

General information about the Bible

- ➔ The Bible is amazingly consistent, despite being written by about 40 different human writers over a period of about 1500 years. There are no definitive contradictions in the Bible.
- ➔ The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history.
- ➔ More than 2000 times in Scripture the writers note that they are speaking or writing the Word of the Lord and not their own.
- ➔ The Bible is unique in that it is totally honest: It notes how Abraham lied, how David was involved in adultery and murder, and how Peter had great lapses in his faith.
- ➔ There are about 3000 faith groups in the world today—many have

‘sacred writings.’ What sets the Bible apart is not its age or its historical accuracy. What sets the Bible apart is its inspired nature.

How the Bible came to be:

- ➔ The Bible is a collection of 66 books—this collection is called a Canon. The term Canon indicates a fixed, unchangeable collection. The phrase, “The Canon of Truth” was first used in the year 367 AD.

Criteria for admission into the Canon

- ➔ Writings must be viewed as divinely inspired (Deut. 18:18; 2 Pet. 1:21).
- ➔ Writings must be consistent with established truth (Gal. 1:8).
- ➔ The prophet and his prophecies must be rejected if marked by error (Heb. 2:3-4).
- ➔ New Testament material must be written by an eye-witness to the ministry of Jesus and/or birth and expansion of the New Testament Church, and/or someone working in conjunction with an Apostle (for example, the physician Luke).

The development of the Old Testament

- ➔ The writings of the Old Testament were divided into sections (i.e., the Law, the Prophets, etc.) and were, in most cases, immediately accepted as divinely inspired.
- ➔ Old Testament writings were translated from Hebrew to Greek in the 3rd century BC. This translation of the Hebrew Bible is known as the Septuagint and was instrumental in making what we refer to as Old Testament writings much more available throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus often quoted from this version of the Hebrew Bible.
- ➔ Old Testament material (the Law, the Prophets, History Literature, Wisdom Literature, etc.) was compiled into a single volume/work to form a sacred Canon (a complete, unchangeable collection) at the Council of Jamnia in 97 AD.
- ➔ The writings of the Apostle Paul and the Gospels were quickly accepted as divinely inspired and were copied and circulated throughout the Roman Empire with unprecedented speed.
- ➔ The church moved underground in the second and third centuries

as persecution increased. In 303 AD the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued a decree that all copies of Scripture be destroyed. For a time, the intense persecution of believers and swift expansion rate of the New Testament Church made it difficult for all church leaders to have access to all New Testament material. Consequently, some churches or regions had access to one or more of the Gospels and some of Paul's writings, whereas others had all the Gospels, some of Paul's writings and the Epistles of Peter, James, Jude, and John. As persecution of the Church eased in the fourth century, church leaders from various parts of the Roman Empire gathered to pray and discern God's leading regarding the formation of a uniform Canon of New Testament material.

- ➔ A Canon of Scripture (Old and New Testaments) was finalized at the Synod of Hippo in 393 AD.

The Apocrypha

- ➔ The Apocrypha is a collection of fifteen books written between 300—30 BC. The collection includes I & II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Song of the Three Children, the Story of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manassas, and I & II Maccabees.
- ➔ Because Apocryphal books were written before the birth of Christ, they would technically be Old Testament material, but were not included in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible. A further testimony against their inspired nature is the fact that Apocryphal writings were never quoted by Jesus or any of the New Testament writers, and they were not included in the official Canon of Old Testament material (formalized on at the Council of Jamnia in 97 AD).
- ➔ The formal and official church Canon of Scripture (from the Synod of Hippo, 393 AD) did not include the Apocrypha.
- ➔ Though Apocryphal writings include some interesting and accurate

historical information, NO Apocryphal book claims to be inspired—and several specifically deny that they are inspired (see 1 Maccabees 9:27 and 2 Maccabees 2:23, 15:38).

- ➔ The Apocrypha was not officially recognized by the Catholic Church (as being divinely inspired) until 1546.

Are there “Lost Books?”

There are more than a dozen books referenced in the Bible, but not included in the Bible. For example, Numbers 21:14-15 quotes from the “Book of Wars,” Exodus 24:7 references the “Book of the Covenant.” Genesis 5:1 references the “Book of the Generations of Adam.” Joshua and Samuel quote from the “Book of Jashar.” 1 Kings 11:41 references the “Book of the Acts of Solomon,” 1 Kings 14:19 references the “Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel,” and 1 Kings 14:29 references the “Book of the annals of the Kings of Judah.” This does not indicate that the Bible is in error or incomplete. In fact, the Apostle John notes (John 21:25) that the all the books in the world could not do justice to what Jesus said and did. A wise pastor said it well: “We may not have it all, but we have enough.” What the Bible includes is sufficient for leading to salvation and spiritual life development. Further, it is important to note that though the Bible references other writings, it does not implicitly indicate that those writings are divinely inspired. Rather, it indicates that either they were historically accurate and/or were known to ancient peoples in such a way that their mere reference somehow reinforced what is now the biblical narrative.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS



BETWEEN THE 5th AND 17th CENTURIES, MOST BIBLES WERE AVAILABLE ONLY IN LATIN.

Wycliffe Translation

- ➔ John Wycliffe was known as “the morning star of the Reformation.” Born about 1324, he was the first person to translate the complete Bible into English.
- ➔ John Wycliffe translated the Bible from the Latin Vulgate, not from the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament Scriptures.
- ➔ In 1414, Catholic officials forbid possessing or reading the Bible in English (affirming a Latin-text only position). The Church Council of Constance declared that Wycliffe was a heretic. In 1428, over forty years after his death, his bones were dug up, crushed and burned.
- ➔ 170 copies of his work have survived to this day. One copy sold at auction on 5 December 2016 for \$1.6 million USD! Noted below is a copy of his translation of John 14:8-10 (middle English).

“Filip seith to him, lord schewe to us the fadir, and it sufficith to us. ihesus seith to hym, so long tyme I am with you: and han ye not knowen me? Filip, he that seeth me seeth also the fadir, bileuest thou not that I am in the fadir and the fadir is in me; the words that I speke to you, I speke not of my self; but the fadir hym silf dwellinge in me, doith the work is...” John 14:8-10

Tyndale Translation

- ➔ William Tyndale was born in 1494. He has been called “the father of the English Bible.”
- ➔ Persecution was so great in England that Tyndale had to do his translating work in Germany.

- ➔ William Tyndale translated from the original Hebrew and Greek text. A contemporary wrote: “He [Tyndale] was so skilled in seven languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French) that whichever he spoke you would suppose it his native tongue.”
- ➔ In 1536 Tyndale was betrayed by a trusted coworker named Phillips. Phillips was a spy sent by the Pope to trap Tyndale. When 42 years old, Tyndale was strangled to death and his body was burned.

The last five centuries

- ➔ King Henry VIII of England broke with the Catholic Church in 1534. This opened the door for the translation and printing of English Bible translations. The most notable early translation being the King James Bible (1611).
- ➔ The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (and several ancient families of Greek manuscripts) in the 20th century prompted a number of new English translations, including the RSV, NASV, NIV, ESV and others.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is one of God's great gifts to humanity. It contains the story of Jesus, the history of the development of the New Testament Church, and eternal wisdom for the ages. The New Testament does not negate the Old Testament; it fulfills and builds upon it. It is important that believers have a working knowledge of both its structure and content. What follows is a general overview of the New Testament:

- ➔ Number of books in the Bible: 66
- ➔ Number of Books in the New Testament: 27
- ➔ There are four categories of books in the New Testament (see below)

Historical Books:

- ➔ Matthew
- ➔ Mark
- ➔ Luke
- ➔ John
- ➔ Acts

Pauline Epistles to churches:

- ➔ Romans,
- ➔ 1 & 2 Corinthians
- ➔ Galatians
- ➔ Ephesians
- ➔ Philippians
- ➔ Colossians
- ➔ 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Paul's Letters To Individuals:

- ➔ 1 & 2 Timothy
- ➔ Titus
- ➔ Philemon

The General Epistles:

- ➔ Hebrews
- ➔ James
- ➔ 1 & 2 Peter
- ➔ 1, 2, 3 John
- ➔ Jude
- ➔ Revelation

Criteria for admission to the New Testament canon.

How was material selected or approved for inclusion in the New Testament?

- ➔ Writings needed to be inspired (Deut.18:18; 2 Peter 1:21).
- ➔ Writings had to be consistent with established truth (Gal. 1:8).
- ➔ The prophet and his writings were to be rejected if marked by error (Heb. 2:3-4).
- ➔ New Testament material must be written by an Apostle, an eye-witness to the ministry of Jesus, or birth of the New Testament Church, and/or by someone working in conjunction with an Apostle (such as the historian Luke).

HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ➔ Early 40's: The oral traditions regarding the ministry and teachings of Jesus began to be recorded in writing.
- ➔ 50–70 AD The earliest New Testament works appear (James, Mark and Paul's Epistles). These were followed by Matthew, then Luke. Note: Paul never quotes a written work about Jesus.
- ➔ 95 AD: Clement of Rome refers to the "Words of Jesus," but doesn't quote specific writings.
- ➔ 95 AD: The book of Revelation is written by John—this will close the canon of New Testament Scripture.

- ➔ 90–130 AD: The Epistle of Barnabas refers to a teaching of Jesus by saying, “As it is written...”
- ➔ 107-120 AD: The writings of Ignatius of Antioch is filled with allusions to, and paraphrases of, New Testament texts.
- ➔ 140–155 AD: Polycarp cites a letter of Paul, calling it “Scripture.”
- ➔ In the 140’s Marcion (who was deemed a heretic) constructed his own canon which included most of Paul’s letters in edited form, along with Luke’s Gospel.
- ➔ 150–160 AD: Justin (the Martyr) refers to a written Gospel and quotes from Luke.
- ➔ 160-220 AD: Tertullian of Africa supported the idea of a New Testament canon of 22 books, including the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and Revelation. He did not consider Hebrews to be canonical.
- ➔ 170-175 AD: Tatian, a disciple of Justin, created a harmony of the four orthodox Gospels known as the Diatessaron.
- ➔ 170–180 AD: Irenaeus refers to a “New Testament,” and also refers to four Gospels, comparing them to the four directions (north, south, east, and west) and thus suggesting their completeness.
- ➔ As early as 200 AD: The Muratorian Fragment, considered by many to be proof of a Christian canon by 200 AD, is a document whose actual date is widely disputed. It omits the books: Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John. Many scholars date this document much later (some say after 350 AD).
- ➔ 195-225 AD: Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria (195-202 AD) and Tertullian (205-225 AD) were prolific writers and referenced every New Testament book except 3 John and Jude.
- ➔ 334–336 AD: Constantine, the Roman ruler who converted to Christianity, commissions New Testament material to be copied and circulated, but these Bibles include writings such as the Shepherd of Hermas and Didache, which were not accepted in later canons of the New Testament.
- ➔ 367 AD: Athanasius writes a Festal Letter (a religious writing on the

occasion of a festival) that contains a listing of the 27 books of the New Testament canon as it is known today (he was also the first to use the word “canon” in reference to this list). Historians agree that this is the oldest clear expression of a finalized New Testament canon.

- ➔ 393 AD: The first time a Church Council ruled on the list of “inspired” writings was at the Synod of Hippo.
- ➔ 397 AD: A list (canon) of New Testament books was confirmed at the third Synod of Carthage.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

	MIRACLES OF HEALING	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1.	Jesus Heals an Invalid at Bethesda				5:1-15
2.	Jesus Heals a Man With Dropsy			14:1-6	
3.	Jesus Heals Two Blind Men	9:27-31			
4.	Jesus Heals Ten Lepers			17:11-19	
5.	Jesus Heals Many Sick in Gennesaret	14:34-36	6:53-56		
6.	Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man		7:31-37		
7.	Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
8.	Jesus Heals Many Sick in the Evening	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41	
9.	Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
10.	Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind				9:1-12

11.	Jesus Cleanses a Man With Leprosy	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-14	
12.	Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
13.	Jesus Heals a Paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
14.	Jesus Heals a Man's Withered Hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
15.	Jesus Heals a Woman in the Crowd	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:42-48	
16.	Jesus Heals a Blind, Mute Demoniac	12:22-23		11:14-23	
17.	Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman			13:10-17	
18.	Jesus Heals a Servant's Severed Ear			22:50-51	
	MIRACLES OVER THE ELEMENTS	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
19.	Jesus Turns Water into Wine				2:1-11
20.	Jesus Walks on Water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
21.	Jesus Calms a Storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
22.	Jesus Withers the Fig Tree	21:18-22	11:12-14		
	POWER OVER LIFE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
23.	Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter to Life	9:18,	5:21-24, 35-43	8:40-42, 49-56	
24.	Jesus Raises a Widow's Son in Nain from the dead	23-26			
25.	Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead				11:1-45

	GREAT NEEDS MET	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26.	Jesus Heals a Man Unable to Speak	9:32-34			
27.	Jesus Feeds 4,000	15:32-39	8:1-13		
28.	First Miraculous Catch of Fish			5:1-11	
29.	Jesus Feeds 5,000	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
30.	Miraculous Temple Tax in a Fish's Mouth	17:24-27			
31.	Second Miraculous Catch of Fish				21:4-11
	POWER OVER THE SPIRIT REALM	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
32.	Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit		1:21-27	4:31-36	
33.	Jesus Heals a Gentile Woman's Demon-Possessed Daughter	5:21-28	7:24-30		
34.	Jesus Casts Demons into a Herd of Pigs	8:28-33	5:1-20	8:26-39	
35.	Jesus Heals a Demon-possessed boy.	17:14-20	9:14-29	9:37-43	
36.	Jesus Restores Sight to Bartimaeus	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS WAS ASSOCIATED WITH MIRACLES TO SHOW THE LOVE OF GOD, AND TO FULFILL PROPHECY:

Isaiah 35:4-6

“Say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...he will come to save you.’ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”

Isaiah 61:1-3

[The Messiah would] “heal the brokenhearted...proclaim liberty to the captives...[open prison doors for] those who are bound... proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...comfort all who mourn...that He may be glorified.”

▲ GENERAL PROFILE OF EACH BOOK IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ➔ **MATTHEW:** Though placed first in the New Testament, the book of Matthew was the second Gospel written. His writing is unique in that it was written in Hebrew, to Hebrews, whereas the other Gospel writers present their writing in Greek and have a more Gentile audience in mind. Matthew’s name was not always Matthew. Before he was a follower of Jesus, he was known as Levi. He was a Jew who worked for the Roman government as a tax collector. As a tax collector, he was despised by the Hebrews and considered an outcast by religious leadership. Yet, Jesus saw in him great potential and extended to him a call to be His disciple. He immediately

accepted Jesus' invitation and promptly threw a party, at his own expense, inviting many of his friends to meet and listen to the Messiah.

- ➔ **MARK:** Mark was a follower of Jesus. He was related to Barnabas (a leader in the early Church), and also had close ties to Peter. Many Bible scholars believe Mark was Peter's scribe and that the Gospel of Mark is Peter's account, but penned by Mark. Mark was the first Gospel written.
- ➔ **LUKE:** Like Mark, Luke was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. Luke was a physician. The Gospel record, and his account of the development of the church in the 30 years that follow the cross (the book of Acts), are detailed and scholarly. Luke writes as a historian and is the only Gospel writer to presents his material in chronological order.
- ➔ **JOHN:** John was the last Gospel to be written, and was written by the only disciple who did not suffer a martyr's death. John lived a long life and wrote not only the Gospel of John, but also 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and the book of Revelation. The focus of John's Gospel is to present Jesus as being much more than a man—his focus is to present Jesus as the Son of God, and one with God. John's Gospel is an apology (a theological term for making a legal case) for the divinity of Christ. John writes with an extremely limited vocabulary (about 600 words). Though his vocabulary, puts his writing on a 3rd to 4th grade reading level, there are a number of complex spiritual truths woven into his writing.
- ➔ **ACTS:** The book of Acts was written by Luke. His goal was to carefully record the moving of God and development of the New Testament Church in the 30 or so years that follow the cross.
- ➔ **ROMANS:** Romans is a profound, theological writing that profiles the sinful plight of man, the holiness of God, and the offer of salvation made possible by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
- ➔ **FIRST CORINTHIANS:** Whereas Ephesians is concerned with the "universal church," First Corinthians provides a glimpse inside one struggling first century local church. The primary issues this book addresses include

marriage and divorce, purity, liberty and responsibility, and the exercise of spiritual gifts in the church body.

- ➔ **SECOND CORINTHIANS:** In this letter, the Apostle Paul defends his apostleship, the Gospel message, and rebukes heresies and false teachers who were finding their way into the church.
- ➔ **GALATIANS:** In this weighty work the Apostle Paul encourages believers to move away from legalism and focus on the New Covenant of grace, and justification by grace alone. This book also notes how believers are blessed with the anointing power of the Holy Spirit.
- ➔ **EPHESIANS:** The theme of the book of Ephesians is love (love for Christ and the love believers are to show for each other). This letter begins and ends with references to love (1:4, 6, 6:23-24).
- ➔ **PHILIPPIANS:** Paul wrote the book Philippians when in prison in Rome. His letter is a “thank you” to believers in Philippi for their for their generous support and encouragement. In this book, Paul shares his affection for the believers and addresses several issues in the church (2:3-4; 3:1-3; 4:2).
- ➔ **COLOSSIANS:** The rise of Gnostic heresy prompted Paul to write this letter. In this writing Paul argues for the deity of Christ (1:18; 2:9), and implores believers to move toward spiritual maturity (1:28; 2:6-7).
- ➔ **FIRST THESSALONIANS:** In this epistle, Paul encouraged believers to persevere despite their persecution, and he refuted false teaching—particularly regarding the return of Christ.
- ➔ **SECOND THESSALONIANS:** In this epistle, Paul continues to address false teaching, and warns of apostasy and the coming Antichrist.
- ➔ **FIRST TIMOTHY:** This pastoral epistle is addressed to Timothy, Paul’s coworker and “child in the faith.” It is a highly personal and practical writing addressing matters of church order and leadership.
- ➔ **SECOND TIMOTHY:** Paul was a prisoner in Rome when he wrote this, the

last of his pastoral epistles. He knew his death was imminent, but had no fear, and used his circumstances to encourage others to remain faithful.

- ➔ **TITUS:** Titus was a Gentile convert. He was a courageous and faithful companion to Paul, and leader in the New Testament Church. After serving with Paul for several years, Paul left Titus in Crete to provide leadership for the dozens of churches there (Titus 1:5). This epistle addresses matters of church leadership and the need for faithfulness.
- ➔ **PHILEMON:** Philemon was a wealthy man. His slave, Onesimus, had stolen from him and run away. According to Roman law, the punishment was death. By divine providence, Onesimus came in contact with Paul, who led him to Christ. Realizing that Onesimus had a responsibility to his master, Paul had him return with this letter (the book of Philemon). Onesimus was forgiven and released, and became a valued co-worker in Paul's ministry.
- ➔ **HEBREWS:** The authorship of the book of Hebrews is not certain, though many believe that the author was Paul. The book provides a strong argument for faith in Christ and particularly addresses the needs and questions of unbelieving Jews.
- ➔ **JAMES:** Most scholars believe this letter was authored by James, the half-brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19). This letter was addressed to those driven from their homes due to growing persecution. His writing is exceedingly practical and speaks to how to live out the Christian faith.
- ➔ **FIRST PETER:** First Peter was written to Christians who were persecuted and scattered across the Roman Empire. Peter challenged believers to remain faithful.
- ➔ **SECOND PETER:** The focus of this book is to warn against the rise of evil, apostasy, and events associated with the last days.
- ➔ **FIRST JOHN:** This epistle challenges believers to be united and strong in their walk with the Lord.
- ➔ **SECOND JOHN:** This letter (along with First John) addresses the growing

Gnostic heresy (which denied the deity of Christ and condoned sensuality).

- ➔ **THIRD JOHN:** This encouraging letter was written to a believer (Gaius) who exhibited well the gift of hospitality. The letter affirms generosity, service, and obedience.
- ➔ **JUDE:** Most scholars believe Jude was the brother of James and half-brother of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 13:55). The brief book reminds believers there is a spiritual realm, and that a judgment is coming.
- ➔ **REVELATION:** The book of Revelation is the last book in the New Testament, and was the last book to be written (an important notation as the Bible is not presented in chronological order, and the book of Revelation closes the canon of divinely inspired writings). The title of the book (Revelation) means, the revealing. The book provides a glimpse into Tribulation period happenings but focuses on how, in the epic battle of good versus evil, Jesus is the ultimate and eternal Victor. For additional information, please see the **ESCHATOLOGY** section of this book.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

(1) THE APOSTLE JAMES, SON OF ZEBEDEE

James, the Apostle of the Lord, was the second recorded martyr after Christ's death (Stephen was the first). Clemens Alexandrinus and Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History II.2) both note that when the executioner witnessed the courage and faith of James, he was convinced of the resurrection, became saved, and was executed along with the Apostle.

Date of Martyrdom: 44-45 AD.

- ➔ According to the Book of Acts in the New Testament, James was killed by Herod:

“And at that time Herod the king threw on his hands to oppress some of those of the church.” (Acts 12:1)

*“And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”
(Acts 12:2)*

- ➔ This is confirmed by Hippolytus:

“James, his brother, when preaching in Judea, was cut off with the sword by Herod the Tetrarch, and was buried there.”

- ➔ Eusebius described more precisely what was done:

“First Stephen was stoned to death by them, and after him, James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, was beheaded...” (Book 3, Chapter 5)

(2) THE APOSTLE PETER

Peter, just as Jesus indicated in John 21:18-19, was crucified by Roman executioners. Peter was at first slow to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world, but after a vision (Acts 10), he became a dynamic witness in the west, following Paul through Grecian and Roman cities. Peter, like Mark and Paul, was martyred in Rome, under Nero. According to Eusebius, he thought himself unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Master, and, therefore, he asked to be crucified “head downward.”

Date of Martyrdom: Cir. 64 A.D.

- Eusebius, quoting Papias of Hierapolis (Cir. 110 AD), records a tradition that the Gospel of Mark preserved the Gospel as preached by Peter:

“Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered...he accompanied Peter...” (Book 3, Chapter 39)

- Irenaeus (180 AD) records a similar tradition, and mentions that Peter and Paul founded the Church in Rome:

“Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter...” (Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” Book 3, Chapter 1)

- Eusebius records that Peter was put to death under Nero in Rome:

“It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day.” (Book 2, Chapter 25)

- ➔ Hippolytus confirms that Peter was crucified by Nero in Rome:

“Peter preached the Gospel in Pontus, and Galatia, and Cappadocia, and Betania, and Italy, and Asia, and was afterward crucified by Nero in Rome with his head downward, as he had himself desired to suffer in that manner.”

| (3) THE APOSTLE ANDREW

Andrew, who introduced his brother Peter to Christ, was martyred six years after Peter. After preaching Christ’s resurrection to the Scythians and Thracians, he too was crucified for his faith. As Hippolytus tells us, Andrew was hanged on an olive tree at Patrae, a town in Achaia.

Date of Martyrdom: 70 A.D.

According to Hippolytus:

- ➔ “Andrew preached to the Scythians [modern day Georgia] and Thracians [modern day Bulgaria], and was crucified, suspended on an olive tree, at Patrae, a town of Achaia [Greece]; and was buried there.”

| (4) THE APOSTLE THOMAS

Thomas is known as “doubting Thomas” because of his reluctance to believe the other Apostles’ witness of the resurrection. After being told that Jesus was alive, Thomas stated “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). After this, Jesus did appear to him, but Thomas believed and was faithful all his days (though he was tortured with hot plates of steel, pierced with spears and burned alive).

Date of Martyrdom: 70 A.D.

- Hippolytus records that Thomas was a missionary and that he traveled first to Syria, then to India. Tradition has Thomas preaching to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Hyrcanians, Bactrians, and Margians. Hippolytus notes that he was thrust through in the four members of his body with a pine spear at Calamene, the city of India, and was buried there.

| (5) THE APOSTLE PHILIP

Philip was corrected by Christ when he asked Jesus to “show us the Father, then this will be enough for us” (John 14:8). Jesus responded, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9). Philip grew to become a powerful evangelist in North Africa and parts of Asia. When in Phrygia (Turkey), hostile Jews had him tortured and then crucified.

Date of Martyrdom: 54 A.D.

- According to Hippolytus, Philip preached and was executed in what today is eastern Turkey. Philip preached in Phrygia, and was crucified in Hierapolis in the time of Domitian, and was buried there.

| (6) THE APOSTLE MATTHEW

Matthew (Levi) was a former tax collector and strong disciple and evangelist for Christ. He had a particular heart for the Jews and originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. After the great persecution he fled Jerusalem and rewrote his Gospel in Greek. He preached the resurrected Christ in Ethiopia and then in Persia. He was beheading at Nad-Davar, Ethiopia.

Date of Martyrdom: 60-70 A.D.

- ➔ According to Hippolytus:

“Matthew wrote the Gospel in the Hebrew tongue, and published it at Jerusalem, and fell asleep at Hieres, a town of Parthia.” [Parthia is near modern day Tehran]

(7) THE APOSTLE NATHANAEL (BARTHOLOMEW)

Nathanael’s name means “gift of God.” He was among the first to profess that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:49). A great traveler and evangelist, Nathanael is said to have ministered in India with Thomas, Armenia, Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. Unwilling to recant of his proclamation of a risen Christ, he was martyred in what is now the Republic of Georgia by being flayed and then crucified.

Date of Martyrdom: 70 A.D.

- ➔ According to Hippolytus, Bartholomew preached in India:

“Bartholomew, again, preached to the Indians, to whom he also gave the Gospel according to Matthew, and was crucified with his head downward, and was buried in Allanum, a town of the great Armenia” [modern day southern Georgia].

- ➔ Eusebius confirms the ministry of Bartholomew in India, and adds an eyewitness account:

“About that time, Pantaenus, a man highly distinguished for his learning, had charge of the school of the faithful in Alexandria... Pantaenus...is said to have gone to India. It is reported that among persons there who knew of Christ, he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the Apostles had preached to them and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew

language, which they had preserved till that time.” (Book 5, Chapter 10, Church Histories)

| (8) THE APOSTLE JAMES (THE LESSER)

This James is noted as the head of the Jerusalem church in Acts 15-16. His ministry was in Syria and the greater Jerusalem area. In an attempt to see James deny Christ’s resurrection, hostile Jews positioned him at the top of the Temple for all to see and hear. James, unwilling to deny what he knew to be true, was cast down from the Temple, stoned, and beaten to death with a fuller’s club to the head.

Date of Martyrdom: 63 A.D.

- ➔ Hippolytus identifies that James was stoned to death in Jerusalem:

“And James the son of Alphaeus, when preaching in Jerusalem, was stoned to death by the Jews, and was buried there beside the temple.”

| (9) THE APOSTLE SIMON (THE ZEALOT)

Simon was a Jewish zealot who in his younger years tried to set his people free from Roman oppression. After the resurrection, he assisted the leadership of the Jerusalem Church (becoming a bishop there after James) and then became a great traveling evangelist. He preached the Gospel in Egypt, Cyrene, Africa, Mauritania, Britain, Lybia, and Persia. Tradition notes that he was martyred (perhaps by crucifixion) by a governor in Syria for refusing to worship a local deity (sun god).

Date of Martyrdom: 74 A.D.

- ➔ According to Hippolytus, Simon the Zealot was the second Bishop of Jerusalem:

“Simon the Zealot, the son of Clopas, who is also called Jude, became bishop of Jerusalem after James the Just, and fell asleep and was buried there...”

(10) THE APOSTLE JUDAS THADDEUS (THADDAEUS IS ALSO KNOWN AS LEBBAEUS.)

Judas was martyred while preaching in what is now Beirut. He was attacked by pagan priests and beaten to death with sticks.

Date of Martyrdom: 72 A.D.

Hippolytus records: “Jude, who is also called Lebbaeus, preached to the people of Edessa, and to all Mesopotamia, and fell asleep at Berytus, and was buried there.”

(11) THE APOSTLE MATTHIAS

Matthias replaced Judas Iscariot (the betrayer of Christ who hanged himself) as the twelfth Apostle of Christ (Acts 1:26). It is believed by most that Matthias was one of the seventy that Christ sent out during His earthly ministry (Luke 10:1). Matthias, of which the least is known, is said by Eusebius to have preached in Ethiopia. He was later stoned while hanging upon a cross.

Date of Martyrdom: 70 A.D.

| (12) THE APOSTLE JOHN

John is the only one of the twelve Apostles to have died a natural death. Although he did not die a martyr's death, he did live a very difficult life. He was exiled to the Island of Patmos under Emperor Domitian for his proclamation of the risen Christ. It was there that he wrote the book of Revelation. Some traditions note that he was thrown into boiling oil before the Latin Gate, in the hope that he would recant his faith. He never did.

Date of Martyrdom: 95 A.D.

- ➔ Eusebius wrote of the reason that John wrote his Gospel:

“Matthew and John have left us written memorials, and they, tradition says, were led to write only under the pressure of necessity...And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.”
(Book 3, Ch. 24).

- ➔ According to Hippolytus, John was banished by Domitian to the Isle of Patmos, and later died in Ephesus:

“John was banished by Domitian the king to the isle of Patmos, in which also he wrote his Gospel and saw the apocalyptic vision; and in Trajan’s time he fell asleep at Ephesus, where his remains were sought for, but could not be found.”

| (13) THE APOSTLE PAUL

Paul's name was once Saul—Saul was a leading Pharisee and chief persecutor of the Christian faith (Galatians 1:13). He was brought to repentance on his way to Damascus by an appearance of the risen Christ. After his encounter with Jesus, Paul devoted his life to Christ and served as an evangelist and missionary to the Gentile world. His ministry was marked by danger and trials.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul tells of his sufferings for the name of Christ: "In labors more abundant, in beatings above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeys often, in storms on the water, in danger of robbers, in danger by mine own countrymen, in danger by the heathen, in danger in the city, in danger in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness:"

(2 Cor. 11:23-27)

Paul was sentenced to death and was beheaded in Rome under the orders of Emperor Nero.

Date of Martyrdom: (Cir. 67 A.D.)

TIME-LINE: JESUS' MINISTRY IN THE GOSPELS



PART ONE: Leading Up to the Birth of Jesus

- ➔ The nature of the Messiah (John 1:1-5)
- ➔ The genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:1-17)
- ➔ The parents of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-22)
- ➔ The announcement of the birth of Christ (Luke 1:26-38)

PART TWO: The Birth of John and Jesus

- ➔ The birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-80)
- ➔ The birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 2:1-16)

PART THREE: Infancy and Childhood

- ➔ The Infancy of Jesus (Luke 2:21-28)
- ➔ The visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)
- ➔ The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23)
- ➔ Jesus at 12 years old (Matthew 2:40-43/Luke 2:44-52)

PART FOUR: The First Year of Ministry

- ➔ The Messiah announced by John the Baptist (John 1:6-9; Matt. 3:1-6)
- ➔ The ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:15-18; Matt. 3:13-17)
- ➔ The temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13)
- ➔ The calling of the disciples (John 1:10-12, 35-51)
- ➔ The first miracle (John 2:1-12)
- ➔ Jesus cleanses the temple (John 2:13-21)
- ➔ The meeting with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
- ➔ Ministry in Judea (John 3:22-36)
- ➔ Ministry in Samaria – “The woman at the well” (John 4:5-43)

PART FIVE: THE SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

- ➔ Opposition in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30)
- ➔ Opposition in Capernaum (Luke 4:31-36; Mark 3:8-12)
- ➔ Jesus heals Peter's Mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-44)
- ➔ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ➔ The compassion of Jesus (Mark 1:40-45)
- ➔ The listing of the disciples (Luke 6:12-16)
- ➔ The affirmation of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2-19)
- ➔ A lesson on gratitude (Luke 7:36-50)
- ➔ The source of Jesus' power (Matt. 12:22-45)
- ➔ Jesus teaches in parables (Matt. 13:1-52)
- ➔ Women support the ministry of Jesus (Luke 8:1-3)
- ➔ Jesus calms the sea (Mark 4:34-41)
- ➔ Jesus heals a demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1-20)
- ➔ Jesus heals a paralytic (Luke 5:18-26)
- ➔ The call of Levi (Matt. 9:9-13)
- ➔ Jesus heals on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14)
- ➔ Jesus heals Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-43)
- ➔ Jesus heals one blind/demon-possessed (Matt. 9:27-34)
- ➔ Jesus heals a lame man (John 5:1-15)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of His true nature (John 5:16-47)
- ➔ Jesus as Lord of the Harvest (Matt. 9:35-38)
- ➔ Jesus sends the 12 (Mark 6:7-13/Matt.10:14-42)
- ➔ The death of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-12)
- ➔ Jesus feeds the 5000 (John 6:1-15)
- ➔ Peter walks on water
(John 6:16-20/Matt.14:28-31 John 6:21/Mark 6:53-56)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of commitment (John 6:22-71)

PART SIX: THE THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY

- ➔ Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees for not following their traditions
(Mark 7:1-15)

- ➔ Jesus privately instructs His disciple (Mark 7:16-23)
- ➔ Jesus helps the daughter of a Greek woman (Mark 7:24-30)
- ➔ Jesus heals the deaf and mute (Mark 7:31-37)
- ➔ Jesus feeds the 4000 (Matthew 15:32-38)
- ➔ The Pharisees demand a sign (Matthew 16:1-8,12/Mark 8:18-21)
- ➔ Jesus heals a blind man in Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)
- ➔ Peter proclaims Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 16:13-28)
- ➔ The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)
- ➔ Jesus heals the demon-possessed mute (Mark 9:14-30)
- ➔ Jesus speaks again of His coming suffering (Mark 9:31-32)
- ➔ The miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish (Matt. 17:24-27)
- ➔ Teaching in Capernaum (Mk. 9:33-35; Lk. 9:47-48; Matt.18:5-9)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about forgiveness and confrontation (Matthew 18:10, 13-35; Mark 9:38-40)
- ➔ Jesus delays going to the feast (John 7:1-9)
- ➔ Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:10-42)
- ➔ Temple guards are sent to arrest Jesus (John 7:43-52)
- ➔ A woman is caught in the act of adultery (John 7:5-8:11)
- ➔ The Pharisees challenge Jesus (John 8:12-59)
- ➔ Jesus heals a man born blind (John 9:1-41)
- ➔ Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-17)

PART SEVEN: LONG JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

- ➔ Jesus begins the long journey toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of commitment (Luke 9:57-62)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of accountability (Matthew 11:20-24)
- ➔ The great invitation (Matthew 11:25-30)
- ➔ Jesus heals ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19)
- ➔ The seventy are sent out (Luke 10:10-1-20)
- ➔ The greatest commandment (Luke 10:25-29)
- ➔ The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
- ➔ Mary and Martha wait on Jesus (Luke 10:38-42)
- ➔ Jesus urges believers to be ready for His return (Luke 13:1-13)

- ➔ Jesus at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-39)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about salvation and heals a man with dropsy (Luke 13:22-35; Luke 14:1-6)

PART EIGHT: SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE CROSS

- ➔ Jesus speaks of the importance of humility (Luke 14:7-23)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:24-33)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of our witness (Luke 14:34-35)
- ➔ The parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7)
- ➔ The parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
- ➔ The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)
- ➔ The parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-15)
- ➔ The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about the sovereignty of God (Matthew 20:1-16)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about the power of prayer (Luke 18:1-17)
- ➔ Jesus speaks to the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-34)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about divorce (Matthew 19:3-12; 20:1-16)
- ➔ The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-57)
- ➔ The Pharisees plot to kill Jesus (John 11:53-57)
- ➔ The request for preferential treatment (Mark 10:35-45)
- ➔ Jesus heals the blind at Jericho (Mark 10:46-52)
- ➔ Jesus ministers to Zacchaeus at Jericho (Luke 19:1-10)
- ➔ The parable of the talents (Luke 19:11-27)

PART NINE: THE LAST WEEK

- ➔ Mary honors at a dinner (John 12:1-11)
- ➔ Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28-35, 39-49; Matt. 21:4-16)
- ➔ Jesus curses the fig tree (Mark 11:12-18)
- ➔ Greek Jews seek an audience with Jesus (John 12:20-36)
- ➔ Jesus speaks in parables (Matthew 21:33-44)
- ➔ The Herodians attempt to trap Jesus (Matthew 22:15-22)
- ➔ The Sadducees attempt to trap Jesus (Luke 20:27-40)

- ➔ The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus (Matthew 22:34-40)
- ➔ Jesus rebukes the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-36)
- ➔ The widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44)
- ➔ Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:5-7)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of end-time events (Matthew 24:4—25:46)
- ➔ Jesus seeks to comfort the disciples (John 12:27-35)
- ➔ Jesus pleads with people to believe (Luke 21:37-38; John 12:37-38)
- ➔ Jesus at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1-13)
- ➔ The Last Supper (Matthew 26:20; Luke 22:15-20)
- ➔ The Last Supper (John 13:1-9)
- ➔ Jesus washes the feet of the disciples (John 13:10-39)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of His leaving and the coming of a gift, the Holy Spirit (John 14:1-31)
- ➔ Our calling and God's expectation (John 15:1-27)
- ➔ The coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:1-33)
- ➔ The high priestly prayer (John 17:1-26)
- ➔ Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46)
- ➔ The arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56; John 18:4-10)

PART TEN: THE CRUCIFIXION AND ASCENSION

- ➔ The trial of Jesus (Matthew 26:57-68)
- ➔ Peter denies Jesus (Matthew 26:69-74; Luke 22:61-62)
- ➔ Jesus before Pilate (Luke 22:66-71; Matthew 27:2-10)
- ➔ Jesus before Herod (Matthew 27:11-14; Luke 23:7-12)
- ➔ Pilate orders Jesus beaten (Luke 23:13-16)
- ➔ Pilate seeks to release Jesus (Matthew 27:15-26)
- ➔ Pilate turns Jesus over to be crucified (Matthew 27:27-31)
- ➔ Simon carries the cross / Jesus is crucified (Matthew 27:32-36; Luke 23:27-31; John 19:18-22)
- ➔ The mocking crowd (Matthew 27:39-43; Luke 23:39-43)
- ➔ The death of Jesus (Matthew 27:45-56)
- ➔ Legs broken and Jesus pierced (John 19:31-37)

- ➔ Joseph of Arimathea and the tomb (Matthew 27:57-61)
- ➔ Pilate orders the tomb secured (Matthew 27:62-66)
- ➔ The resurrection (Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:4-8)
- ➔ At the tomb / Mary's encounter with the risen Lord (Luke 24:9-11; John 20:3-17)
- ➔ Religious leaders try to conceal the truth (Matthew 28:11-15)
- ➔ Jesus meets with the disciples / Jesus meets with Thomas (Luke 24:13-36; John 20:20-29)
- ➔ Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-15a)
- ➔ Jesus restores Peter (John 21:15b-22)
- ➔ The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)
- ➔ The ascension of Jesus (Luke 24:50-52; John 20:30-31, 21:24-25)



CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES

What is the difference?



Many ask, what are the primary doctrinal differences between Catholicism and Protestantism? Let me begin by sharing two foundational facts:

1. Being a Christian is **not** tied to being a part of a particular denomination. Being a Christian is based solely on being in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Believing in Jesus, serving Jesus, seeking forgiveness from Jesus, and living for Jesus are the requisites for eternal life with Jesus (John 3:16).
2. Though there are many denominations, practices, and traditions under the umbrella of Protestantism. All hold the following core doctrinal beliefs:
 - ➔ The first century AD Council of Jamnia finalized the Old Testament Canon of Scripture and excluded Apocryphal writings.
 - ➔ The 66-book Bible Protestants recognize today was officially codified as a Canon of Scripture, by Catholic Church leaders, at the Synod of Hippo in the fourth century AD.
 - ➔ The Trinity doctrine is true: God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are separate, distinct, but equal with God. The Trinity doctrine notes that the Father, Son, and Spirit are more than just one in purpose, they are one in essence. This doctrine is well-supported in Scripture.
 - ➔ Salvation is through Christ alone.
 - ➔ Scripture is sufficient, and supersedes church law or human traditions.
 - ➔ There is a heaven. Those who choose to enter into a relationship with Jesus are promised a heavenly home.
 - ➔ There is a hell. Those who choose not to become a follower of Jesus choose eternity in hell, without Him.
 - ➔ Jesus came to earth approximately 2000 years ago and will come again.
 - ➔ There will be a final judgment.

About the Catholic Church:

The term Catholic means “Universal.” The term is positive as it speaks to how Christ came for all and the Gospel message is universal.

The Catholic Church was the only Christian Church or denomination in existence for centuries following the resurrection. Bible scholars are not in agreement as to when non-Catholic Christian groups were first established. However, there is agreement that a split occurred (“the great schism”) between the Western Church (based in Rome but focused on Europe), and the Eastern Church (based in Constantinople and having its focus in what is now Turkey, the Ukraine, and Russia). The split happened about 1000 AD. A major splintering of the Catholic Church followed in the early 16th century. This move away from the Catholic Church is referred to as the “Protestant Reformation” (so named because the reformation began with many protesting against the teachings and practices of the Church).

The Protestant Reformation began in Germany in 1517. It was led by a priest (Martin Luther) who posted a list of theological concerns (the famous 95 Thesis of Contention) on the door of a prominent church. Luther had many followers who shared his concerns. In the following decades Catholic leadership held numerous meetings to consider Luther’s theological arguments, but in the end, labeled him a heretic and excommunicated him from the church. Luther’s concerns regarding Catholic theology led to the establishment of many new denominations in the 17th-20th centuries (Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, etc.). In large part, the theological concerns Luther outlined in 1517 delineate the primary differences in Protestant and Catholic doctrine today. The significant differences are outlined below:

Important views Catholic and Protestant Churches share:

1. The Trinity: God has revealed Himself in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The existence of angels (archangels, cherubim, and seraphim)
3. The reality of demons and Satan

4. The power of prayer.
5. The gifts of the Holy Spirit.
6. The existence of heaven and hell.
7. Jesus came to earth 2000 years ago, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified, rose from the grave on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come again.

Areas of marked disagreement:

1. Catholics place ultimate interpretive authority in the Pope. Protestants place ultimate authority in the Word of God (the Bible).
2. Catholics view the Pope as having the ability to speak “ex-cathedra,” that is, without error and with the voice of Christ. In this, the Pope is referred to as the ‘Vicar of Christ’ (the presence of Christ) on earth. The Protestant view is that all humans are fallen creatures (Rom. 3:23, 6:23), and no one can claim to speak with the voice/authority of Jesus Christ.
3. Protestants believe in “Sola Scriptura,” which means that only Scripture is to be used in the formation of doctrine. The Catholic position is that Scripture **and** church tradition are to be used in the formation of church doctrine. The practice of Infant Baptism illustrates the differences between Catholic and Protestant teaching. Protestant churches do not baptize infants because there is no biblical model or Scriptural support for the practice. The Catholic Church baptizes infants for the protection of their souls, not because there is a biblical precedent, but because it was long embraced as a Catholic Church tradition. The Catholic position is that doctrine can be established based on church tradition, because church traditions are believed to be equally binding in force as Scripture.
4. Protestants believe in “Sola Gratia.” which means, grace alone - that is, believers are saved by grace alone (not by works or good deeds - Cf. Ephesians 2:8-10). The Catholic position is that one is saved by grace, but that the sacraments of the church (confession, communion, baptism, confirmation, last rites, etc.) are vehicles by which one receives this grace.
5. Since 1215 AD, the Catholic Church has supported the doctrine of

Transubstantiation, which holds that during the mass (service), the priest has the power and authority to manifest a change in the communion elements of bread and wine, such that they actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Protestant position, known as Consubstantiation, holds that the communion elements are symbolic and thus represent the body and blood of Jesus.

6. Since the early 13th century, the Catholic Church has taught that sins must be confessed to a priest in order to be forgiven. The priest, therefore, stands as a mediator between humanity and God. The Protestant position is that Christ alone is the Mediator and that the biblical model is for believers to confess their sins to Christ (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 1:9).
7. Since 1090 AD, the Catholic Church has made praying the Rosary (a series of prayers which focus on honoring Mary, the mother of Jesus) a required work. Praying the Rosary is mandatory for adult Catholics during the Easter (Lenten) season. It is asserted that Mary has appeared about a dozen times since the year 1500, each time promising that if individuals pray the Rosary, there will be peace on earth (a promise which stands in stark contrast to the prophecies in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6).
8. In 1079 Pope Gregory VII announced it was God's will that priests and nuns remain celibate. Before this, the Pope and all priestly orders could marry. Protestant clergy do not have similar prohibitions.
9. The doctrine of Purgatory was formalized in 1459. However, the teaching was popularized by Church leaders during the Crusades several centuries prior (leaders suggested that those who fought in the Crusades would escape Purgatory). The teaching is that most die with unconfessed or unresolved sin. Therefore, the deceased must be cleansed or purged before going to heaven. This is done in a place called Purgatory. There is no biblical foundation for this teaching, though it is possible the belief of a "midway station" (between heaven and hell) is peripherally mentioned in the non-canonical books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees. The Protestant position is that the concept of Purgatory is not supported in the original canon of Scripture (the 66 book Bible we have today). Further, the idea that the living

can pray for, or offer money to the church on behalf of, (sometimes referred to as indulgences) to hasten the removal of the departed from Purgatory, is blatantly contrary to Scripture.

10. In 1220 the Catholic Church forbade laity to read, study, interpret, translate or print the Bible. The only Bibles available for more than 1000 years were in Latin—a language which only priests and a select few could understand. Early English Bible translations (by Tyndale and Wycliffe), were aggressively opposed by the Church. Tyndale and Wycliffe were branded heretics and murdered by church officials. It was not until the late 19th century that Catholic Church officials permitted personal Bible reading and study.
11. The traditional Catholic position is that infants should be baptized (for without experiencing this Sacrament one cannot enter heaven). Catholics believe that baptism cleanses one from original sin. The Protestant position is that baptism is a witness of one's desire to turn from sin and walk with Christ. It is to be a thoughtful decision and powerful witness, and therefore cannot be made by an infant. Protestants hold that baptism does not cleanse or atone for sin (only Jesus can do that, and only after our sins are confessed to Him). Though baptism is important, it is not a requisite for salvation. For example, the "thief on the cross" who asked Jesus to "remember Him" was told, "Today you will be with Me in paradise." The man was not baptized but did inherit eternal life.
12. The traditional Catholic position is that it is a sin for a Catholic to date outside the faith. Communion can be denied to anyone who marries outside the church. This compromises heavenly reward (as communion is a grace-earning sacrament) and can fate one to time in Purgatory.
13. The Catholic Church requires parishioners to observe "holy days of obligation." This includes Lent (the 40 days leading up to Easter), during which parishioners are required to attend mass, recite the Rosary, abstain from meat on certain days, and sacrifice something as a form of fasting. Failure to properly observe "holy days of obligation" is considered a sin.
14. The Catholic Church highly exalts Mary, the mother of Jesus. Catholics

take issue with the Protestant charge that they worship Mary. The official Catholic position regarding Mary is referred to as the “Veneration of Mary.” The Catholic Church has established traditions about Mary such that her life parallels that of Jesus. In Catholic teaching, Mary had a miraculous birth (a kind of immaculate conception), lived a sinless and celibate life, did not die but ascended into heaven, mediates our prayers and has returned to earth several times to give comfort and counsel. There is no biblical foundation for these teachings.

15. The Catholic Bible includes fifteen more books than the Protestant Bible. Collectively, these books are referred to as the Apocrypha. They are Old Testament period writings, covering the 400 or so year history between Malachi and Matthew. The Jews established a canon of Scripture which became our Old Testament—Apocryphal books were known, but not included in the Old Testament canon. A few centuries after the Old Testament canon was established, a Catholic priest named Jerome began translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin (which was quickly becoming the intellectual language of the day). This translation is known as the Vulgate translation, or Latin Vulgate.

The Pope wanted the Vulgate translation to include Apocryphal writings. Jerome translator of the Latin Vulgate refused but died before his work was completed. Church officials completed it, and added Apocryphal writings to the displeasure of many. The Apocryphal books were not included in the Bible when the Church formalized the canon of Scripture (Old Testament and New Testament writings) at the end of the fourth century AD. The Catholic Church did not elevate the status of Apocryphal books (to being equal to the inspired nature of the 66 books in the Protestant Bible), until 1546. These books present interesting history, but good, accurate, and true is not the same as being inspired (which is the standard for admission to the canon of Scripture). Apocryphal books provide context, interesting history, and profile some spiritual events (such as the background to the celebration of Hanukkah), but from the very beginning, Jewish and early Christian church leaders did not consider them to be divinely inspired.

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Some information in this chapter is drawn from
Church Growth and Ministry Development workshops

The church is God's gift to this age. Jesus came, died, and rose again so that the Spirit could come (at Pentecost) and the church could be established (Acts 2). In Matthew 16, Jesus noted that Peter's statement, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" would be the foundation stone (truth) upon which the church would be built. Jesus also promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church.

The church is a gift of God, birthed by the Holy Spirit and designed to provide an organizational structure for believers to effectively and carry-out the 'Great Commission' of Jesus Christ. The church is not without faults, but it is God's gift and a great instrument for discipleship, teaching, and evangelism for this age. The church is to be respected and supported. Note what the Apostle Paul said about the church:

"His intent is that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known." Ephesians 3:10

The word 'Church' is not found in the Old Testament. The New Testament (Greek) word for Church is Ecclesia. It means a formal assembly of individuals sharing a common purpose and bond. Below is an example of how the word **Ecclesia** is used in Scripture:

"The Church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened, and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, with all living in the fear of the Lord." (Acts 9:31)

What the Church is NOT: The church is not a building or denomination, but people—followers of Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:9; Heb. 3:6b; 1 Cor. 3:16).

What the Church IS: A “house of God” (Jud. 18:31; 2 Chr. 5:14; Psa.42:4), the “house of the Lord” (Exod. 23:19; Deut. 23:18; Isa. 2:2), a “house of prayer” (Matt. 21:13; Isa. 56:7) , a “family” (Eph.2:19), a “place to rejoice” (Deut. 12:11-14), a place to praise God (Psa. 111:1, 134:1-3), a “sanctuary” (Exod. 25:8; Nu. 3:28; Psa. 20:2), the “bride of Christ” (Gal. 6:16; Rev. 21:2,9, 22:1), a special place (1Kings 9:3b), a “...special shoot that God planted” (Isa. 60:21), and a body (1 Cor. 12) **comprised of believers committed to:**

- ➔ Pray for one another (James 5:16a)
- ➔ View others as valuable and important to the Kingdom’s work (1 Cor. 12:14-24)
- ➔ “Confess to one another” (James 5:16b)
- ➔ “Love one another” (1 John 4:7)
- ➔ “Encourage one another” (Eph. 4:29; 1 Peter 4:11a)
- ➔ “Forgive one another” (Eph. 4:32)
- ➔ “Bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2)

The church is a body of believers united not by a common heritage or set of preferences, but by a common need, calling, future, and Lord.

A BIBLICAL OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE, MISSION, AND OFFICES OF THE CHURCH:

The Structure of the New Testament Church:

The design or structure of the New Testament Church comes from God, not man. It is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which made possible the gift of the Holy Spirit and birth of the Church (Acts 2). The following paragraphs note the primary mission and structure of the Church.

The mission of the church is to accomplish the Great Commission noted in Matthew 28:18-20.

“Go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18-20)

From this passage we see the mission of the church is three-fold:

1. The church is to **make disciples**: Through the ministries of the church, believers should grow to be the disciple God calls them to be through involvement in service, Christ-centered worship, fellowship, witnessing, loving, forgiving, and prayer.
2. The church is to **teach**: Through the ministries of the church, believers should learn the Word and be equipped to share and teach the Word to others.
3. The church is to **baptize**: Certainly, the Great Commission refers to the act of being baptized, but it also points to the church’s mission to effect changed hearts and lives. One evidence of having a spiritual impact in one’s mission field is to witness the public testimonies (baptism) of those making new commitments to live for Jesus.

The Head of the Church is Jesus Christ. In Scripture, believers are referred to as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), and the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3; Rev. 19:7). Jesus is the Groom and head of the Church. He is the beginning and end, the first and last, and in Him, all things are held together (Colossians 1:16-18).

The Structure of the Church: Scripture notes that the Holy Spirit draws individuals to His Church and equips individuals for service (1 Cor. 12:18). In addition to being equipped (gifted) by the Holy Spirit for special service, Ephesians 4:11-12 notes that God has established particular offices in the church. The key offices or leadership positions referenced in Scripture include:

- ➔ **Pastor:** A pastor provides spiritual leadership and teaching support to a congregation (1 Peter 5:2).
- ➔ **Overseer:** A general reference to the Pastor or Elders of the Church (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1).
- ➔ **Bishop:** This could be a general reference to a Pastor or Elder of a Church, or it could refer to individuals having leadership over more than one ministry area or body of believers.
- ➔ **Elder:** Assists the shepherd/pastor in providing spiritual guidance, instruction and administrative oversight for the church (Titus 1:5-2:15).
- ➔ **Deacon:** The term deacon means servant. The first deacons, chosen in Acts 6, led in service ministry and meeting the practical needs of the fellowship. In Scripture, deacons are differentiated from Elders as they are not specifically charged with teaching or administrative responsibilities. (Acts 6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).
- ➔ **Teacher:** A teacher is one who is gifted by the Spirit and called of God to impart (teach) Spiritual truths in a formal way (Ephesians 4:11).

The calling of the church

- ➔ Be a “light” to the world (Matthew 5:14)
- ➔ Be “salt” (Matthew 5:13)
- ➔ Teach, reach, and baptize (Matthew 28:18-20)
- ➔ Preach the Gospel/Aggressively share the truth of God (2 Timothy 4:1-2)
- ➔ Follow Jesus’ example (1 John 2:6; John 13:15)

THE DOCTRINE OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH



This author believes that a good, Bible-based church will be in agreement with the following statements:

- ➔ **God and the Trinity:** There is one God (Deut. 6:4), and this one God has revealed Himself in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; II Cor. 13:14; John 14:16). The triune nature of God is known as the Trinity. Each component of the triune nature of God is separate but equal, distinct in the tasks they fulfill but one in nature.
- ➔ **Jesus Christ:** Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah and the Savior of the world. He was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18,20) in Bethlehem about 2000 years ago. The ‘fullness of deity dwelt in Him’ (Col. 2:9), and so He was both fully divine (John 1:1; Phil. 2:6), and fully human (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3; I Tim. 2:5). His dual nature allowed Him to experience temptation as a man, but He lived a sinless life and was, therefore, able to offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice on the cross, making salvation possible for all who believe in Him (John 3:16). Believers are called to anticipate and prepare for His imminent return.
- ➔ **Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is part of the triune Godhead, equal in glory and power with God the Father, yet has a distinct role and purpose to fulfill. For believers, the Spirit enters the heart and is the abiding presence of God. The presence of the Spirit brings peace (Philippians 4:6-7), power (Acts 1:8), and gifting (I Corinthians 12:11). The Spirit leads, comforts, and enables the believer to serve with effectiveness (I Corinthians 14:3-5, 12-26). ‘Speaking in tongues’ is not an evidence of a salvation experience. The working of the Spirit is both profound and orderly.

- ➔ **The Bible:** The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is without error and useful for addressing the struggles and challenges of today (II Timothy 3:16; John 17:17; II Peter 1:21). God has and will continue to preserve the integrity of His Word.
- ➔ **Salvation:** Jesus Christ is the means of our salvation. He died for all (Romans 5:18; II Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:2), but only those who confess their sins and commit to receive and follow Jesus as their Lord will be saved (Romans 5:1, 15, 18). Individuals are saved by grace (not by works) through faith (Eph. 2:8-10). A true salvation experience is evidenced by good works (John 8:31,14:15; James 1:21-23, 2:26).
- ➔ **Baptism:** Baptism comes from the Greek verb baptidzo, which means to immerse. It is a symbolic act which identifies the believer with a new life in Christ. Baptism emphasizes unity. According to Scripture, baptism is 'by one Spirit' and 'into one body' (1 Cor. 12:13). Baptism unites believers who share one faith, have one hope and live to serve one Lord. In Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:38-42), baptism signified repentance and reception of the Gospel message of Jesus. The outcome of those baptized was that they were, "added to the church; they devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and Christian fellowship" (Rom. 6:4,7; Acts 8:12-17; Col. 2:12). Baptism is a significant decision and witness to one's faith in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, baptism is an act (Ordinance) restricted to individuals old enough to understand its meaning.
- ➔ **Communion:** The Lord's Supper is a symbolic ceremony which reminds believers of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through communion, believers remember the sacrifice of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:24), acknowledge the New Covenant made possible by Jesus' work on Calvary (1 Cor. 11:25), thank Jesus for His coming and sacrifice, and acknowledge that He is coming again. (1 Cor. 11:26). All who receive communion should first enter a time of prayerful reflection and ensure they are right before man and God before sharing in this ordinance (1 Cor. 11:29).

- ➔ **Eschatology** (the study of the last things): There are more than 100 Bible prophecies that pertain to the last days. As it is clear this topic is important to God, it should, therefore, be a priority study topic for followers of Christ. Though there are points of disagreement among leaders in the Church today regarding the what and when of last days events, there is much common ground. This author believes it is important for churches to hold the following positions:
- » The Bible is true and Jesus Christ will return as promised.
 - » A time of Tribulation is coming (7 years).
 - » There will be a Rapture. The word “rapture” indicates a sudden taking away of believers from this world by the Lord Jesus Christ. Implied is that this taking away is an act of mercy—a rescue from the coming tribulation.
 - » A series of judgments (21) will befall the earth through which God will attempt to draw a stubborn humanity to Himself. These are outlined in the book of Revelation.
 - » An Antichrist will rise to power.
 - » A false prophet will lead a one world religion that will oppress Jews and Christians.
 - » The Antichrist will control the world economy and use it as a weapon to force the world to honor him.
 - » Enemy armies will surround and attack Israel in a battle known as Armageddon.
 - » Christ will return in glory at the end of the Tribulation period. He will destroy the armies surrounding Israel, see that the Antichrist and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire, and usher in His Millennial Kingdom.
 - » Following the Millennial Reign there will be a final judgment.
 - » The calling for believers today is twofold: 1) watch for the signs of the Lord’s return for His return is promised and imminent and 2) be active in serving the Lord, and active in Great Commission Watchman work.

COMMUNION

*Some content adapted from
Saddleback Community Church*

To celebrate communion is to commemorate the life, ministry, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus. This chapter will note the meaning of Communion for the New Testament Church, and its Old Testament origins.

THE MEANING OF COMMUNION FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth. He did, however, instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (“ordinances”) as reminders of His ministry, death, and resurrection. These two ordinances are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper or Communion. The Lord’s Supper is an object lesson that commemorates and represents a great spiritual truth for believers. A simple profile of this ordinance is noted below:

I. What is the Lord’s Supper? (I Corinthians 11:23-26)

1. It is a time to remember.

“...And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; eat it in remembrance of Me.’

(V. 24)

2. It is a symbol of the sacrifice made for us on the cross. “

“In the same way, He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; drink it to remember Me.’” (V. 25)

3. It is a proclamation of our faith.

“For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes back.” (V. 26)

II. Who should partake of the Lord’s Supper?

Only those who are already saved. (Mark 14:22-26)

“For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks the judgment upon himself.”

(I Cor. 11:29)

III. How do I prepare to receive communion?

Personal, spiritual reflection

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.”

(I Cor. 11:27-28)

This is accomplished by...

1. Self-examination: I Corinthians 11:27
2. Confession of sins: I John 1:9
3. Re-commitment: Romans 12:1
4. A commitment to restore relationships: Matthew 5:23-32

MOSES, THE PASSOVER, AND COMMUNION

The New Testament celebration of Communion did not originate with the Jesus at the Last Supper—the foundation for Communion is the Passover Festival, which commemorated God’s deliverance of the Hebrews in the days of Moses. The Festival of Passover was established about 1450 years before the birth of Christ (see Leviticus 23). The Festival had a prophetic element, linking how the blood of an unblemished lamb facilitated a rescue from oppression and death in the days of Moses, to the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

The high points of the Festival were the Passover meal and the sacrifice of the lamb (which made possible the forgiveness of sins). A few elements of the Passover Festival that point to the Messiah are noted below:

Passover is a word picture of God’s desire

- ➔ Passover = PASS-OVER YOU: The word for Passover (Exod. 12) is unusual. It is not the Hebrew words, a-bhar or gabhar in (which are common terms), it is pesah which comes from the Egyptian word pesh, which means to spread wings over (i.e., protect. Note Jesus words on his final descent into Jerusalem in Luke 13:34).

Passover represents a new beginning

- ➔ The Passover redemption from Egypt changed Israel’s reckoning of time. By tradition, the Jewish people celebrated the fiscal new year in the fall, and the religious new year in the spring, with the month of Nisan—the first month. The deliverance from Egypt is so historic that the nation was to rearrange/reset their calendar (i.e., a new beginning).

The Passover lamb foreshadows Jesus Christ

- ➔ Families were commanded to keep a lamb in the house - “On the 10th day of the month you shall take a lamb into the house and keep it until the 14th day...then sacrifice it.” According to Deut. 15:21 the lamb needed to be perfect. Jesus showed himself in public ministry to be perfect in heart and deed. Even Pilate found no fault in him (Heb. 4:15). 1 Pet. 1:19 describes Jesus as a Lamb without blemish or spot. Jesus is

- referred to as the Lamb of God more than 30 times in Scripture.
- ➔ The Passover lamb was, from early in life, marked for death (John 1:29).
 - ➔ After sacrificing the lamb, they roasted it with fire. Fire speaks of God's judgment.
 - ➔ Not a bone of the lamb was to be broken (Exod. 12:46).
 - ➔ Redemption through the death of the Passover lamb was personal **and** national. National because the high priest offered a lamb on behalf of Israel—personal because Exod. 12:3 reads, “take a lamb.” Exod. 12:4 reads, “take the lamb.” Exod. 12:5 reads, “take your lamb.”
 - ➔ On the 14th of Nisan, Priests at the Temple led in the sacrificial work amidst the sounding of silver trumpets, while the Levitical choir chanted the HALLEL (the recitation of Psalm 113-118). The congregation joined in the liturgy by repeating the first line of each Psalm after the Levites sang it. At times they would add to the HALLEL, the word YAH, which is a reference to YAH-WEH or the Lord God - adding Yah to Hallel gives us Hallel - jah.

The Unleavened Bread points to Jesus Christ (Ex. 12:8)

- ➔ Unleavened bread symbolizes the quick retreat out of Egypt. It also symbolizes sin. It was essential to remove all leaven from home (a search was done) and for homes to remain leaven-free for seven days. Note: they did not put away leaven to become redeemed, they put away leaven because they were redeemed.
- ➔ In the days of Jesus, the process of purification began seven days before the celebration of the Passover meal (note that in 1 Cor. 11, self-examination is necessary). Paul writes in 1 Cor. 5:7 to “Purge out, therefore, the old leaven...” All leaven was removed from the home or stored away. Even pots and pans went through a cleansing ritual.
- ➔ The Hebrew word for leaven is Chometz - meaning sour. Note: Leaven causes bread to become puffed up so that the end product is greater in volume, but not more in weight (substance). An allusion to pride.
- ➔ The Hebrew word for unleavened bread is Matzo - which means, “sweet or without sourness.”
- ➔ On the night of Passover, the Father would use a candle to search the

home one last time for any leaven. Zech. 1:12 notes: “I will search out Jerusalem with candles.”

PASSOVER OBSERVANCES FROM THE MISHNAH

1. Passover meals began with a prayer, the KIDDISH. This prayer accompanied the first of four cups of wine from which sips are taken. The traditional prayer is something like: “Blessed art Thou our Lord our God, who has created the fruit of the vine. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who has sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.” Luke 22:17-18 records that the Last Supper Passover meal began with these words, “And He took the cup and gave thanks.” (Cf. Psa. 113:24-25)
2. A ceremonial washing of hands followed the prayer. John 13:4-5 notes that Jesus rose from the table, and in an interesting adaptation of this tradition, laid aside his garments, took a towel and began to wash the disciple’s feet.
3. Next, a portable table was brought into the room, upon which the first dipping of food took place. Usually, lettuce, which was considered a bitter herb, was taken by the head of the household, and dipped into the salt water, then passed around to all at the table. This reminded all of the many tears Hebrews shed while in bondage in the land of Egypt.
4. After this, the table was moved, and the host poured the second cup of wine, but they did not drink it yet.
5. Curiosity was raised because the table was moved, along with some of the food, before the end of the meal. At this point the father or host of the meal would pose a question: “Why is this night different from all the other nights?” or “On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but this night we eat only bitter herbs. Why is this?” The Father would help answer this question and recount the story of Abraham’s calling and the redemption of the people in the days of Moses. Note: the command to expound on the story of redemption is mentioned three times in Exodus (10:2; 12:26-27;

13:8). This was followed by the reading of first part of the Hallel (Psa. 113-114, and the drinking of the second cup of wine.

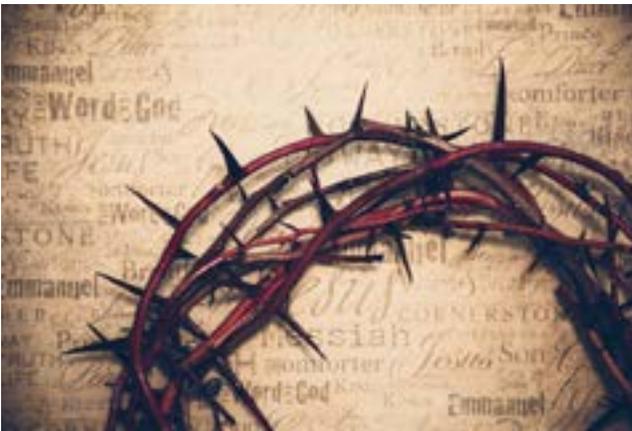
- The 4 cups of wine are symbolic of joy. Tradition demanded that even the poorest must provide wine for the meal, even if one had to sell himself into servitude or borrow money to procure it. The wine was served warm, to link the blood of the lamb to the joy of redemption.
- The Mishnah teaches that the four cups of wine correspond to the four verbs in Exodus 6:6-7, which outline God's redemptive work:
 - 1) I will bring you out
 - 2) I will deliver you
 - 3) I will redeem you and
 - 4) I will take you to be My people.

6. Then they washed hands a second time as they prepared to receive the unleavened bread. But first there was a second ceremonial dipping of bitter herbs - this seems to link cleansing and redemption with sorrow and suffering. It was at this time in the Last Supper meal that Jesus said to the disciples, "One of you is going to betray Me" (Cf. Matt. 26:21). Jesus then took the bread and pronounced two blessings; the first was a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His blessings: "to Him who brings forth bread from the earth." The second was a prayer of thanksgiving for God's commandments. The host then gave a piece of this broken bread dipped in bitter herbs and the sweet CHAROSETH mixture, to each person (the first person to receive this bread was usually the guest of honor). John 13:26 notes that Jesus gave this piece to Judas.

- Then they ate the lamb. After which no food was to be served. - It was at this point that Jesus, according to 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, in strange fashion "took a new piece of bread, gave thanks, and brake it and said, take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me."
- Tradition holds that the piece of bread mentioned above is the AFIKOMEN, which is the center piece of the bread. This piece is usually removed from the matza loaf early in the meal, carefully wrapped in cloth and hid in the home. Later, after the meal, children enjoy searching for this bread and eating it with sweet CHAROSETH. It is said that the center piece of bread (the Afikomen) represents

the centerpiece of the Trinity, the Son, who was removed for a time, carefully wrapped in cloth (in the tomb), and whose return would result in sweet joy.

7. After the supper, the host poured the third cup of wine. All in attendance shared in a time of recounting blessings. According to Luke 22:20, it was at this point in the Last Supper Passover Meal that Jesus said, "And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. This is the cup of the new covenant which is shed for you.'"
8. After the third cup, they recited the second portion of the HALLEL (Psalm 115:118), then drank the fourth cup.
 - ➔ The Seder meal came to an end with the singing of a hymn. Matthew 26:30 notes that they went out into the Mount of Olives after they sung a hymn.



COMPARATIVE RELIGION STUDY

This section profiles how the writings, goals, and God of Christianity are very different from the religions of this age.

AREN'T ALL RELIGIONS BASICALLY THE SAME?

NO. Though many suggest that there are many paths to God, the truth is, there is but one true path. And though there are similarities in religious terminology, there are profound differences in key terms such as God and Allah, and the Holy Spirit and the Great Spirit.

Believing in a higher power, 'being good,' doing good, and praying does not guarantee eternal life in heaven. Only by believing in God, the Gospel message, acknowledging and confessing sins to Jesus, and inviting Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life are you guaranteed escape from hell and home in heaven. Noted below is a brief presentation of how the writings and teaching of Christianity make becoming a devoted follower of Christ the reasoned choice:

1. The teachings of Christianity are clear. Scripture notes:

- ➔ "God is not a God of confusion." (1 Cor. 14:33)
- ➔ He is the one true God and grants insight into what is right and true (1 John 5:7-9)

Note how other world religions are different:

- ➔ "The eye cannot see him, nor words reveal him...He cannot be known."
Hinduism: Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.8
- ➔ "The Tao is eluding and vague...deep and obscure in essence..."
Taoism. Tao Te Ching 21
- ➔ The Baha'i faith teaches that Jesus was only one of nine manifestations of the divine being.
- ➔ The Sioux Indians worshiped 16 gods.
- ➔ "Then Vidogdha...asked him, 'How many gods are there?'...'303 and 3003.'" (Hinduism) Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.9.1

2. The teachings of Christianity are unchanging. Scripture notes:

- ➔ Joshua 21:45, Isaiah 55:11, 2 Corinthians 1:20, and Romans 4:20-21 (and many other verses) note that God is unchanging and faithful to bring about what He has promised.
- ➔ “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today **and forever.**”
(Hebrews 13:8)
- ➔ “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who **does not change** like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17)

Note how other world religions seek to distort what the Bible declares is true:

- ➔ “Jesus was the way, the truth, and the life for His time, but certainly **not** for all time.” The Bahai Faith: Wisdom of Abdul Baha
- ➔ “Some wrongfully expect a literal fulfillment of the statements of the Bible...no one will ever see the glorified son.” Jehovah’s Witnesses, Let God Be True (Pg.186)
- ➔ The wisdom and words of Abdul Baha are to be considered the final authority in matters of faith...” Bahai Faith, The Wisdom of Abdul Baha

3. The God of Christianity is merciful

- ➔ “For You, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon You.” (Psalm 86:5)
- ➔ “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)
- ➔ “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children...” (Psalm 103:10-13a)

Note how other world religions seek to distort what the Bible declares is true:

- ➔ “The wise one knows he must reap the fruits of deeds of former births...” Buddhism: Anguttara Nikaya iii.33
- ➔ “God exacts punishment for every deed.” Ovamp Proverb (Angola)
- ➔ “There is no supernatural intervention, way or refuge...”
Linszen, Living Zen Pg. 73

4. In Christianity, God demonstrates His care, help, and involvement:

- ➔ “God is an ever-present help in times of trouble.” (Psalm 46:10)
- ➔ “God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ came and died for our sins.” (Romans 5:8)
- ➔ “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Note how other world religions seek to distort what the Bible declares is true:

- ➔ “In the Gospel of John Jesus promised another Comforter Who would abide always. We understand this to be the coming of Bahu’ u’ Allah, a direct fulfillment of the words of Jesus.” Bahai Faith: The Wisdom of Abdul Baha
- ➔ “God’s help is not likely to come to those who ‘cast all their burdens on the Lord...” Unitarianism. Dr. Chorowsky, What is a Unitarian?

5. In Christianity, God is superior—the ultimate power.

- ➔ “For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones...or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17)
- ➔ “For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods...”
(Psalm 95:3)

- ➔ “For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.” (Psalm 97:9)

Note how other world religions seek to distort what the Bible declares is true:

- ➔ “Deity is immanent in man, and man is inherent in deity... there is no difference in essence at all between them.” Shinto: Genchi Kato
- ➔ “God himself was once as we are now, and is now an exalted man...” Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; Journal of Discourses, Vol. VI.
- ➔ “When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body and brought Eve, one of his celestial wives...” Church Latter Day Saints: Journal of Discourses, Vol. I.
- ➔ “Jesus Christ is a prophet of Allah. He was a prophet for His people in his day. He is not the Son of God or God himself.” Islam: Surah 4:17

6. In Christianity, the writings are inspired and do not change

- ➔ “The word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.” (1 Peter 1:25)
- ➔ “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” (Isaiah 40:8)
- ➔ *Multiple studies have shown that there is NO significant or doctrine-altering variance between the oldest families of biblical manuscripts and current Bible translations. God can, and has, maintained the integrity of the Bible through the ages.*

Note how other world religions seek to distort what the Bible declares is true:

- ➔ The Jehovah’s Witness Church has changed the date for the final coming of Christ at least 14 times.
- ➔ When you compare the 1830 Book of Mormon with the 1960 version, there are more than 50 changes in the passage 1 Nephi 19:16—20:1, and over 30 changes in Alma 28:14—29:11.
- ➔ The Book of Mormon (allegedly a direct translation of manuscripts

[plates] predating the King James text by more than 1000 years) contains at least 25,000 words from the King James Bible. Compare Moroni 10 with 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; II Nephi 14 with Isaiah 4; and II Nephi 12 with Isaiah 2.

- ➔ Alma 7:9 (in the Book of Mormon) notes that Jesus was born in Jerusalem (rather than Bethlehem).

Noted below is a partial listing of internal discrepancies in the Qur'an

1. **How many days did Allah need to destroy the people of Aad?** One day [54:19]. Several days [41:16; 69:6,7]
2. **Was there six or eight days of creation?** Sura 7:54, 10:3, 11:7, and 25:59 state that God created “the heavens and the earth” in six days. However, in 41:9-12 notes that it took eight days.
3. **How many angels spoke to Mary?** Sura 3:42,45 notes several angels while it is only one in Sura 19:17-21.
4. **Which was created first?** First earth and then heaven [2:29]. First heaven and then earth [79:27-30].
5. **Do angels protect humans?** Sura 2:107, 29:22 notes that there is, “No protector besides Allah.” However Sura 41:31 notes that angels have testified: “We are your protectors in this life and the Hereafter.” Also, other Suras note their role as guarding [13:11, 50:17-18] and protecting [82:10].
6. **Can slander of women be forgiven?** Yes [24:5]. No [24:23].
7. **Can angels disobey?** No {Sura [16:49-50]. Yes [Sura 2:34].
8. **Noah's son:** According to Sura 21:76, Noah and his family were saved from the flood. However, Sura 11:42-43 reports that Noah's son drowns.
9. **Will Christians go to heaven (paradise)?** Sura 2:62 and 5:69 say “Yes.” Sura 5:72 and 3:85 say “No.”
7. **Did Pharaoh drown in the Red Sea?** No[10:92]. Yes [28:40, 17:103, 43:55].

Is there hope in other ‘sacred’ writings?

- ➔ “God’s help is not likely to come to those who cast all their burdens on the Lord...” Unitarianism. Dr. Chorowsky, “What is a Unitarian?”

- ➔ “There is **no** supernatural intervention, way or refuge...”
Linssen, Living Zen p. 73
- ➔ Every breath you take is a step towards death.”
Islam Nahjul Balagha, Saying 72
- ➔ “The wise one knows he must reap fruits of deeds of former births...”
Buddhism. Anguttara Nikaya iii33

True hope from the Bible:

- ➔ “God is the father who is full of goodness and mercy—He comforts us every time we are in trouble.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- ➔ “For the Lamb...will be our Shepherd, and He will lead us to springs of living water...And God Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes.” (Revelation. 7:17)
- ➔ “For since Christ Himself has now been through suffering. He knows what it is like when we suffer, and He is wonderfully able to help.” (Hebrews 2:18)
- ➔ “Long ago, even before he made the world, God chose us to be His very own...His unchangeable plan was to adopt us into His own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us...And He did this because he wanted to!” (Eph. 1:4-5)

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DEMONS?

Demons are evil spirits. They oppose God and oppress God's people. They are fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) and are primarily (but not exclusively) referenced in the New Testament.

- ➔ "And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gerasenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road." (Matthew 8:28)
- ➔ "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebub, and He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." (Mark 3:22)
- ➔ "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be quiet and come out of him! And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him without doing him any harm." (Luke 4:35)
- ➔ "The Jews answered and said to Him, Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon? Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me." (John 8:48-49)

Demons are able to cause illness, paralysis, blindness, and enhance strength in the individuals they possess. Demons apparently strongly desire to reside within people (Matthew 8:28), and can even indwell animals (Matthew 8:32).

In the future, there will be a judgment on demonic entities. Jesus' exorcism of Legion (who possessed the Gerasene demoniac) in Mark 5 notes the Lord's authority over the demonic world: "And behold, they cried out, saying, 'What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'" (Matthew 8:29)

What does the Bible say about Spirits and Demons?

- ➔ The Bible references the existence of 'ghosts': "Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (Luke 24:39)
- ➔ The Bible notes that there are different kinds of spirits: "Do not believe

every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God... This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ...is from God..." (1 John 4:1, 2)

- ➔ Jesus recognized that some are under Satan's influence and power: "You know about Jesus...He went everywhere, doing good and healing all who were under the power of the Devil..." (Acts 10:38)
- ➔ Dealing with demonic activity was a significant focus in Jesus' ministry: (Luke 10:17; Matt. 4:24, 9:32-33, 10:1; Mark 1:23, 3:11, 7:2, 16:9, 16:17).
- ➔ Multiple possessions: Various passages refer to possession of a single individual by multiple demons. Luke 8:30 describes a man who was possessed by many demons.
- ➔ **Attributes/Abilities:** Demons can grant special powers to people. In Acts 16:16 a woman was given the power to foretell the future by her indwelling evil spirit. In Mark 5:4 an indwelling spirit allowed its victim to exhibit great strength.
- ➔ Illnesses and disorders generated by demons: Luke 9:39 describes epilepsy-type symptoms caused by a demon. Luke 11:14 documents a person unable to speak because of an indwelling demon.
- ➔ **Demonic speech:** Numerous passages in the Bible describe indwelling demons speaking to the exorcist, presumably by taking control of the possessed individual's vocal chords.
- ➔ Exorcisms require prayer and preparation: Jesus' disciples were unable to rid a boy of an evil spirit. Jesus was able to cure the child and explained that the only way to rid a person of this type of demon was through prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29).
- ➔ There is power in the name of Jesus: Acts 16:16 describes a girl possessed by a spirit. Paul exorcised the spirit—commanding the spirit to leave "in the name of Jesus."

Verses noting demon possession

- ➔ Matthew 4:24 "...They brought unto [Jesus] all sick people that were possessed with devils..."
- ➔ Matthew 9:32-33 "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil."

- ➔ Matthew 10:1 “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits...”
- ➔ Mark 1:23 “And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out...”
- ➔ Mark 3:11 “And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried...”
- ➔ Mark 7:2 “A certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:”
- ➔ Mark 16:9 “...Jesus...appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”
- ➔ Mark 16:17 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils...”

Verses of promise: Believers are promised that...

- ➔ “Greater is He that is you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).
- ➔ Victory (1 Cor. 15:57; John 8:32).
- ➔ If we resist, Satan will flee (1 Pet. 5:9; James 4:7)
- ➔ Believers can stand firm (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Good advice:

- ➔ “Be on alert and guard against him (Eph. 6:10-14)
- ➔ “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17)
- ➔ Know/use/rely on the Word (Eph. 6:17)
- ➔ Stay connected to strong believers (Acts 2:32)
- ➔ Do not give the enemy an opportunity to establish a foothold in your life.” (Eph. 4:27)

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Belief in the Trinity and deity of Jesus Christ is the preeminent doctrine of the Christian Church. It is because Jesus has a divine nature that believers have the hope of forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life. Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many other groups deny the deity of Christ because of a desire to minimize or negate the authority of His teachings. This section, and the section of this book entitled, the Trinity doctrine, support the truth that Jesus is not just one in purpose with God, but is one in essence with God. Note the following passage from Colossians 1:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” Col. 1:15-20

Six declarations regarding the deity of Christ

1. **Jesus is the image of God**

V.15...IMAGE. The word image is εἰκών (eikōn) in the original text. It means identical image; as in a mirror. This word supports the truth that Jesus is identical to God. Note what the writer of Hebrews says:

“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...”
(Hebrews 1:3a)

2. **Jesus is preeminent in all creation**

V.15...FIRSTBORN. The word for firstborn is **πρωτότοκος** (prōtotokos) in the original text. It is a word linked to birthright and the unique inheritance rights and authority of the firstborn in Old Testament times. (Gen. 49:3-4; Lk 2:7; Ro 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6; 11:28; 12:23; Rev 1:5+; Mt 1:25; Rev 2:8).

3. **Jesus has authority over creation**

V. 16...CREATED. The word for created is **κτίζω** [ktizo] in the original text. The word communicates the idea of proprietorship, designer, creator. This word, and the word used for HEAD in verse 18 (see below) supports the truth that Jesus is not a created being, but the Creator.

“ Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” Rev. 4:11

V. 18...HEAD. The word for head is **κεφαλή** (kephale) in the original text. It is a metaphor meaning supreme, chief or prominent. See: Heb. 1:10; John 1:3, 10; Col. 2:8-10.

4. **Jesus is one with God - the same as God**

V. 16...for by HIM... **αὐτός** (autos) in the original text, meaning, **the same** or that which is **identical** to something (see John 1:1; 10:30, 38).

V. 19...FULLNESS... **πλήρωμα** (plērōma) in the original text, meaning, completeness, fullness, total quantity. This word, and the word translated

DWELL in verse 19 below, supports the truth that Jesus is one in essence with God the Father (see also Col 2:9, Rom 9:5b). The theological term for this is Hypostatic Union.

V. 19 DWELL For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (John 1:1, Phil. 2:6). The fullness of the nature and presence of God dwelt in Jesus in bodily form (Col. 2:8).

5. **Jesus is over all**

V. 16...ALL...**πᾶς** (pas) in the original text. The word ALL is a powerful word indicating that scope of Jesus' authority has no measure. All = every, each, whole (Mt. 8:32; 24:34; 26:56; Lk. 4:5; 1 Cor. 3:21; Gal. 5:14; John 8:2).

6. **Jesus is the Author of all**

V. 16...THROUGH or BY him all things were created and are held together

- ➔ This verse, combined with John 1:3 and Col. 2:8, provides support for the doctrine that Jesus is the Creator.
- ➔ Verse 17 notes that Jesus did not just share in some (the lesser) aspects of creation (as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach). Verse 17 notes that all of creation continues to be HELD TOGETHER and maintained by His grace and glory.

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:3)

“...In Him all things hold together.” (Col. 1:17b)

VERSES NOTING THE TITLES AND NATURE OF JESUS

Noted in this section is a collection of titles and references to Jesus (gleaned from online Topical Bible reference sources): Almighty, Rev. 1:8. Alpha and Omega, Rev. 1:8. Author and perfecter of our faith, Heb. 12:2. Blessed and only Potentate, 1 Tim. 6:15. Bright and morning star, Rev. 22:16. Chief Shepherd, 1 Pet. 5:4. Christ, a King, Luke 23:2. Christ the Lord, Luke 2:11. Christ the power of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. Christ the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. Consolation of Israel, Luke 2:25. Cornerstone, Eph. 2:20. Deliverer, Rom. 11:26. Emmanuel, Isa. 7:14. Everlasting Father, Isa. 9:6. Faithful and True, Rev. 19:11. Finisher of faith, Heb. 12:2. First and last, Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13. Foundation, Isa. 28:16. Glory of Israel, Luke 2:32. God, John 1:1. God blessed forever, Rom. 9:5. God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3:16. God of Israel, the Savior, Isa. 45:15. God of the whole earth, Isa. 54:5. God our Savior, 1 Tim. 2:3. God with us, Matt. 1:23. Head of the church, Col. 1:18. Holy one, Psa. 16:10; Acts 3:14. I Am, John 8:58. Image of God, Heb. 1:3. Jehovah, Isa. 40:3. Judge, Acts 10:42. King of saints, Rev. 15:3. King of kings, 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14. King of glory, Psa. 24:7–10. King of Zion, Matt. 21:5. King over all the earth, Zech. 14:9. Lawgiver, Isa. 33:22. Life, John 14:6. Light, John 8:12. Light, everlasting, Isa. 60:20. Light of the world, John 8:12. Light, true, John 1:9. Living bread, John 6:51. Living stone, 1 Pet. 2:4. Lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev. 5:5. Lord, Rom. 1:3. Lord of lords, Rev. 17:14; 19:16. Lord of all, Acts 10:36. Lord our righteousness, Jer. 23:6. Lord God Almighty, Rev. 15:3. Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. 15:47. Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 1:11; 3:18. Lord of glory, Jas. 2:1. Lord of Armies, Isa. 44:6. Lord, mighty in battle, Psa. 24:8. Lord of the dead and living, Rom. 14:9. Lord of the Sabbath, Mark 2:28. Lord over all, Rom. 10:12. Mighty God, Isa. 9:6. Most holy, Dan. 9:24. Most mighty, Psa. 45:3. Only wise God, our Savior, Jude 25. Potentate, 1 Tim. 6:15. Power of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. Propitiation, 1 John 2:2. Ransom, 1 Tim. 2:6. Redeemer, Isa. 59:20. Resurrection and life, John 11:25. Righteous judge, 2 Tim. 4:8. Righteousness, 1 Cor. 1:30. Rock, 1 Cor. 10:4. Ruler in Israel, Mic. 5:2. Savior of the world, 1 John 4:14. Shepherd, chief, 1 Pet. 5:4. Stone, Matt. 21:42. Sure foundation, Isa. 28:16. True God, 1 John 5:20. True vine, John 15:1. Truth, John 14:6. Unspeakable gift, 2 Cor. 9:15. Way, John 14:6. Wisdom, Prov. 8:12. Wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. Wonderful, Isa. 9:6. Word of God, Rev. 19:13. Word of life, 1 John 1:1.

Scriptural references linking Jesus to God: Jesus as Jehovah, Isa. 40:3, w/ Matt. 3:3; Jehovah of glory, Psa. 24:7, 10, with 1 Cor. 2:8; Jas. 2:1; Jehovah above all, Psa. 97:9, with John 3:31; Jehovah the first and the last, Isa. 44:6, with Rev. 1:17; Isa. 48:12–16, with Rev. 22:13; Jehovah’s fellow and equal, Zech. 13:7; Phil. 2:6; Jehovah the shepherd, Isa. 40:10, 11; Heb. 13:20; Jehovah, for whose glory all things were created, Prov. 16:4, with Col. 1:16; Jehovah the messenger of the covenant, Mal. 3:1, with Luke 7:27. Invoked as Jehovah, Joel 2:32, with 1 Cor. 1:2; as the eternal God and Creator, Psa. 102:24–27, with Heb. 1:8, 10–12; the mighty God, Isa. 9:6; the great God and Savior, Hos. 1:7, with Tit. 2:13; God over all, Rom. 9:5; God the Judge, Eccl. 12:14, with 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Emmanuel, Isa. 7:14, with Matt. 1:23; King of kings and Lord of lords, Dan. 10:17, with Rev. 1:5; 17:14; the Holy One, 1 Sam. 2:2, w/ Acts 3:14; the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. 15:47; Lord of the Sabbath, Gen. 2:3, with Matt. 12:8; Lord of all, Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:11–13; Son of God, Matt. 26:63–67; His blood is called the blood of God, Acts 20:28. One with the Father, John 10:30, 38; 12:45; 14:7–10; 17:10. As sending the Spirit equally with the Father, John 14:16, preserver of all things, Neh. 9:6, with Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3.

Jesus: His eternal nature: Prov. 8:22–25, Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Mk. 12:36–37; John 1:1–15; John 6:62, 8:23, 58; 12:41, 17:5, 24–25; Eph. 3:21; Eph. 4:10; Col. 1:17; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 1:10–12, Psa. 102:24–27, Heb. 7:16, 24–25, Heb. 6:20, Heb. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 1:1, 2; 1 John 2:13, 14; Rev. 1:8, 11, 17, 18; Rev. 5:13–14.

Omnipotence of: Jesus Psa. 45:3–5, 110:3; Isa. 9:6, 40:10, 50:2, 63:1. Matt. 8:3, 16, 27; Matt. 10:1. Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1. Matt. 12:13, 28, 29, Mark 3:27; Luke 11:20–22. Matt. 28:18; Luke 5:17; John 2:19; 5:21–29; 10:17–28; 17:1–2. Phil. 3:20–21; Col. 1:17; 2 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:16; Heb. 1:3; Heb. 7:25.

Omnipresence of Jesus: Matt. 18:20, 28:20; John 3:13; Eph. 1:23.

Omniscience of Jesus: Prov. 8:14–16; Isa. 11:2–3; Isa. 50:4; Matt. 9:4; 11:27; 12:25; 13:54; 22:18; 24:25; Mark 14:42; 2:8; 5:30. Luke 2:40–52; 5:22; 6:8; 9:46–48; 22:10–13; Mark 14:13–15. John 1:48; John 2:24, 25; John 3:32; John 4:16–19, 28, 29; John 5:30, 42; John 6:64; John 8:16; John 13:1, 3, 10, 11; John 16:30, 32; John 17:1; John 18:4, John 21:17; Acts 1:24; Col. 2:3; Rev. 2:18, 23; Rev. 5:5, 12.

ESCHATOLOGY (STUDY OF THE END TIMES)

The Lord's coming is imminent—the wise will be ready. This section profiles what the Bible says about what is to come. The calling of a Watchman (see Ezekiel 33:1-9) is to have a keen understanding of the prophetic passages in Scripture, and watch for and warn others about the promised return of the Lord.

“The day of the Lord is coming...It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.”

Luke 12:37a

For additional information on this important topic, please see the Prophecy themed resources (provided at no cost) on the ***I Am A Watchman*** website:

<http://www.IAmAWatchman.com>



A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLE PROPHECY:

Many are aware that there are prophecies in the Bible, but few realize that more than 27% of the 31,124 verses in the Bible are prophetic. The J. Barton Payne's Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy notes that there are 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. These encompass 8,352 verses. There are two schools of thought regarding how to count Bible prophecies.

General: Some record prophecies in a broad or general way – this is appropriate but does reduce the number of prophecies by about 50%.

The Bible records that Jesus was a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. A general way to view the fulfillment of this prophecy is to acknowledge that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham—hence, one prophecy was fulfilled.

Specific: Most Bible scholars record prophecies in a more precise way—counting each part of the fulfillment of a general prophecy as an independent prophecy fulfillment. For example, the Bible notes that Jesus was a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. Therefore, four prophecies (not one) are fulfilled—Jesus was a descendant of Abraham (1), and Isaac (2), and Jacob (3) and David (4).

The precision of prophecy

Most psychics today speak in very general terms and offer what I call 'Fortune cookie-type counsel.' It is important to note that Bible prophecies are specific and measurable. And though many have tried, no one has been able to prove a Bible prophecy to be in error. There are approximately 1000 general prophecies in the Bible; about 900 have come to pass, 895 have been verified to be true. 5 are unverifiable at this time, but as they are unverifiable they cannot be used to prove the prophecies are false. Jesus fulfilled more than 120 specific prophecies.

Scholars note the probability of Jesus fulfilling just eight prophecies picked at random is approximately 1 in 10^{17} . These odds approximate the likelihood of blindly picking the one marked silver dollar mixed in with coins two feet deep in an area the size of Texas. Scholars have noted that the probability of Jesus fulfilling just 48 prophecies is 1 in 10^{157} – that is one, followed by 157 zeros! Which is roughly the number of atoms in the universe.

It is not difficult to illustrate the precision of Bible prophecy. Ezekiel 4 provides one example. The prophet Ezekiel wrote at a time in history when his nation, Israel, had fallen to invaders. Many were forced to serve as slaves in Babylon. Ezekiel chapter 4 notes how long it would be before Israel would again be a sovereign and independent nation. Let's take a look at this prophecy.

Ezekiel chapter 4 records that the prophet was bound on his left and right sides for a certain number of days. The number of days (430) prophetically point to the number of years it would take before Israel would be restored as a nation (Ezek. 4:4-6). To represent the duration of Israel's and Judah's judgment, respectively, Ezekiel was bound with cords and lay on his left side for 390 days, and on his right side for 40 days (Ezek. 4:4-8). Again, the 430 days (390 days for Israel plus 40 days for Judah) in Ezek. 4:6 represents 430 years. Jeremiah prophesied that the period of captivity would last exactly 70 years. Historians note that Babylon captured Israel (and took inhabitants away as slaves) in the spring of 606 B.C. and that exiles were allowed to return precisely 70 years later (just as foretold) in the spring of 536 B.C.

The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years of exile (Israel not being an independent nation) took place in 536 B.C. when exiles returned to Jerusalem. However, that still left 360 years of judgment to be served ($430 - 70 \text{ years} = 360 \text{ years}$). Though exiles were allowed to return to Israel, Israel would remain part of the Persian Empire for some years. One might ask: What happens 360 years later? Did Israel become an independent nation at that time (176 B.C.)? The answer is no. In fact, when Jesus ministered on the earth, Israel still had not re-established as a nation. At the turn of the 20th century, Israel still had not become an independent nation, and this is why.

Leviticus 26:18 indicates that in the face of stubborn rebellion, the Lord “will punish you seven times more for your sins.” Many Hebrews returned to Israel, but most quickly fell away from true faith. Therefore, the 360 years noted were to be multiplied by seven, equaling a total of 2520 biblical years [360 day years]. To convert the 2,520 prophetic years into solar [365.25 day] years, one must multiply 2,520 by the 360 days in the prophetic/biblical year (907,200 days). The next step is to divide 907,200 days by 365.25 (the length of a solar year). The answer is 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days. Therefore, Ezekiel’s prophecy indicates that the end of Israel’s displacement/judgment would occur 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days after the end of the Babylonian exile (which took place on July 23, 537 B.C.). When one adds 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days to July 23, 537 BC (the year in which the Babylonian captivity ended), they arrive at May 14, 1948 (the precise day Israel regained their independence under UN Charter).

BIBLE PROPHECIES PRINCIPALLY FALL INTO ONE OF THREE CATEGORIES

Prophecies concerning Israel: There are many prophecies about the land of Israel. They speak of the formation of the nation of Israel, wars against Israel, the exile of the Hebrew people and their return to the land, the restoration of the nation of Israel and prophetic events in and near Israel in the last days.

Prophecies concerning the Gentile World: Many prophecies profile the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms; for example, Daniel 11-12 presents more than 100 such prophecies.

The Messiah: There are several hundred specific prophecies concerning the Messiah. During His first coming the Messiah fulfilled more than 120 specific prophecies – scores more will be fulfilled in the last days.

THERE ARE FOUR PROMINENT CONCENTRATIONS OF PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

The 100-year period surrounding the birth of Israel (roughly 1450–1350 B.C.) marks the first significant concentration of prophetic fulfillment. During this time Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt and Joshua led Israel to possess the promised land. Prophecies include:

- ➔ God told Abraham that from him would come a nation.
- ➔ God revealed the nation's borders.
- ➔ God foretold of an upcoming time in Egypt.
- ➔ God foretold that plagues would befall Egypt.
- ➔ God foretold of Israel's new home in the new land.
- ➔ God foretold that Israel would eat quail and manna as they traveled in the wilderness with Moses.
- ➔ God revealed which armies Israel would face, and conquer.

The period surrounding the exile of Israel (roughly 620–520 B.C.) marks the second significant concentration of prophetic fulfillment. During this time Israel turned away from the Lord, was overrun by Babylon, served 70 years in captivity and then returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Prophecies include:

- ➔ Judah will make treaties with other nations, but these will not save her.
- ➔ The northern kingdom will fall first, followed by Judah.
- ➔ Jerusalem will fall.
- ➔ The “Jews will be scattered.” (Deut. 28:64; Ezek. 36:17-24)
- ➔ Invaders will destroy the Temple.
- ➔ The Hebrews will be taken away in bondage (for 70 years).
- ➔ The Temple treasure will be taken but returned.
- ➔ A foreign king will issue a decree to return the treasure and provide for Hebrew rebuilding projects.
- ➔ Permission will be given to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

The 100 year period surrounding the birth and ministry of Christ (roughly 5 B.C.—95 A.D.) marks the third significant concentration of prophetic fulfillment. During this time the Messiah was born, crucified, and rose again, the Church was established, and believers received the Holy Spirit. Prophecies include:

- ➔ A star will announce the birth of the Messiah.
- ➔ The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.
- ➔ His birth will be associated with the slaughter of innocents.
- ➔ His ministry would be marked by miracles.
- ➔ His ministry will be in the region of Galilee.
- ➔ He will be falsely accused, tried, convicted and crucified.
- ➔ He will rise on the third day.
- ➔ The New Testament Church will be born.
- ➔ The Gentile Church will bring the Gospel message to the world.

The final concentration of prophetic fulfillment will unfold in the last days. Many believe that we are now in the final period of prophecy fulfillment and that this last prophetic cycle began when Israel became a sovereign and independent nation (1948). During this time ‘birth pains’ will increase, the tribulation period will begin, and the Antichrist will come to power. Prophecies include:

- ➔ Knowledge and birth pangs will increase. (Matt. 24; Daniel 12)
- ➔ Jews will return to Israel. (Zech. 8:7-8)
- ➔ The Hebrew language will once again be the predominant language spoken in the land of Israel. (Zeph. 3:9)
- ➔ Israel will bloom and prosper. (Isaiah 35)
- ➔ A confederation of 10 nations will attack Israel. (Psalm 83)
- ➔ Destruction will befall the city of Damascus. (Isaiah 17:1)
- ➔ There will be technology for global commerce. (Rev. 13:16-18)
- ➔ The Gospel preached to all. (Matt. 24:14, 28:18-20)
- ➔ A peace agreement or covenant will be signed. (Daniel 9:27)
- ➔ Permission will be given to rebuild the Temple. (Matt. 24:15)

WHY IS THERE SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE?

The gift of prophecy is an expression of God's love. Because He loves us, He warns us. God wants His people to know He is aware of what is happening, and what will happen. Prophecy is given as an empirical proof for the existence of God. It shows God is master of past, present, and future, and can be used to validate the integrity of Scripture. The 100% accuracy rate of biblical prophecy is unmatched among the religious writings of the world.

Speaking of prophecy, the prophet Isaiah noted: "I declared them (prophecies) to you long ago, before they took place I proclaimed them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them...'" (Isaiah 48:5). God uses prophecy to declare that He is the author of all that is good. He is in control, He has a plan for the future, and nothing takes Him by surprise. Noted below are a few prophetic verses which provide insight regarding what to expect in the last days.

Key Verses:

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book UNTIL the time of the end many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). This verse indicates that the ability to understand the meaning of the more difficult Bible prophecies will increase in the last days.

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2:28-31). This verse indicates that prophetic visions will be given (to the young, old and the unlikely) in the last days.

A syllabus of prophetic language:

The language of prophecy: The language of the Old Testament is Hebrew. Therefore, it is essential to interpret Old Testament prophecies in light of ancient Hebrew culture. For example, in our culture, someone might say, “After I watch the Hawks and 49ers on the 60” plasma, I’m going to drive the Ford to SeaTac then catch the Red Eye to the Windy City. Most today would have little difficulty understanding that sentence. However, if we went back in time just 100 years the sentence would not make sense. Remember, Bible prophecies are more than 2000 years old, and are presented in a different cultural context. Therefore, interpreting prophetic words and phrases must be done with great care. A few common words with uncommon meanings follow.

- ➔ Days = often equal years.
- ➔ Week = a week of years or 7 years.
- ➔ Horn = represents power.
- ➔ Biblical years = 360 days (the ancient calendar followed lunar cycles).
- ➔ Animals can be used to represent kings and kingdoms.
- ➔ Wind = can describe a war or a unique working or moving of God.
- ➔ Water = means life or cleansing; it can also represent judgment.
- ➔ Oil = a sign of blessing.
- ➔ Virgin = signifies purity.
- ➔ Prostitute/harlot = unfaithful or false church.
- ➔ The numbers 3, 7, 10, 12, 40, 70, 120, 1000, 144,000 have spiritual (and symbolic) importance.
- ➔ The number 1000 = was considered perfect and uncountable.
- ➔ A generation = 40, 70 or 80 years (depending on the verse or specific context).
- ➔ Fire and various signs in the heavens warn of or announce divine judgments and appearances.
- ➔ End days/Last days/End times = the period from Pentecost to the end of the Great Tribulation.
- ➔ Birth Pangs = The end of the Last Days to the beginning of the Tribulation period.
- ➔ The Tribulation = The last 7 years.

THE RAPTURE



Foundational thoughts:

- ➔ The beginning of the Tribulation period may not necessarily coincide with the timing of the Rapture.
- ➔ The Tribulation begins with the signing of a 'peace covenant' (Dan. 9:27), not the Rapture. The pre-trib position is that a Rapture precedes the beginning of the Tribulation.
- ➔ The word Rapture is not the Bible (the English, Hebrew or Greek text), but the concept **is** present in Scripture. For example, in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 we read:

“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord, himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thess. 4:14-17

- ➔ Implicit in the Rapture teaching is the thought that the church (Gentile believers) will be caught-up by Christ and thereby escape the fullness of God’s wrath on earth. Supporting verses include:

The church will be “kept from the hour of testing that shall come upon all the world.” (Rev. 3:10)

The exhortation to be comforted by the “coming of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:18) is valid only in the context of the pre-tribulation view. It could be a fearsome thing in a post-tribulation view.

- ➔ It is the Holy Spirit (which dwells in the hearts of believers) that is currently holding back Satan: “And you know what restrains him [Satan] now...For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he [the Holy Spirit] who now restrains will do so **until he is taken out of the way...**” (2 Thess. 2:6-7). The church (believers) is the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit resides in the hearts of believers. It is the Holy Spirit which currently restrains Satan and is keeping him from destroying the earth. The Antichrist then, will not be able to take the world stage until the removal of the Holy Spirit on earth (which is to say, the removal of the church or believers in Christ). This taking away of the church is the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).
- ➔ Paul speaks of a time when the **time of the Gentiles** [Church] will come to an end (a reference to the church being removed via the Rapture):

“Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Lk. 21:23-24; Rom. 11:25-26)

A few additional support verses for the Rapture include (Matt. 24:30-31; John 14:2; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52)

PRIMARY RAPTURE VIEWS:

Pre-tribulation view: This view holds that the church will be raptured (caught up to be with Christ) at some point before the commencement of the seven-year tribulation period. There are several primary supporting arguments for this position.

- » The Tribulation describes a period of suffering unsurpassed, “such as was not since there was a nation, no, nor shall be” (Dan. 12:1). The Tribulation period will be a time of wrath (Rev. 6:16-17, 11:18; 14:19; Zeph. 1:15, 18). However, we see in 1 Thess. 5:9 that the Church is not appointed unto wrath, but unto salvation.
- » 1 Thess. 4:13-18 seems to support the pre-tribulation view: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this, we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”
- » 1 Cor. 15:51-55 supports the pre-tribulation view. “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

- » Many Scriptures note the “Jewishness” of Tribulation events profiled in the Bible. It is said to be “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” it concerns “Daniel’s people,” a “false Messiah,” the city of Jerusalem, the twelve tribes of Israel, the “son of Moses,” and a “flight on the Sabbath.” The Church is not specifically mentioned in the book of Revelation after the judgments begin. It may be that the Gentile Church is simply outside the Hebrew focus or narrative of the book. The I Am A Watchman ministry believes the church is not specifically mentioned because the Church is raptured before the beginning of the Tribulation.
- » Jesus’ teaching on the end times in Matthew 24 seems to indicate that the timing of the Rapture is immediately after the ‘Birth Pains’ and before the Tribulation.

“Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky...’ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds...“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken, and the other left. “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” Matt. 24:29-44

Pre-wrath view: The Pre-wrath position holds that a Rapture of the true Church takes place near the midpoint of the Tribulation (hence, this view is also known as the mid-trib view). The second half of the Tribulation period is known as the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, The Great Tribulation and The Time Of God’s Wrath. The Apostle Paul writes that God has not destined his people to wrath

(1 Thess. 5:9). “His people” are the Church. Therefore, the Lord will remove His Church before the commencement of the outpouring of God’s wrath. The outpouring of God’s wrath is said to take place during the Great Tribulation (the second half of the seven-year Tribulation period).

Post-tribulation view: There are several schools of thought in the post-tribulation camp. The two most prominent are 1) the Church is destined to exist in a perpetual state of tribulation--the seven-year Tribulation period is not future, but the past, present, and future. The Church will be received by Christ when He returns at the end of the Tribulation period. 2) The second (and dominant) view in this school of thought is that the seven-year Tribulation period is yet future, the Church will exist during the Tribulation period, but the Church will be sheltered by God’s protective hand through the Tribulation period.

- » Some have supported this view by noting that although 1 Thessalonians 4:16 refers to a resurrection of the dead in Christ (a verse commonly quoted by pre-tribulationist) and Revelation 20:1-6 speaks of the first resurrection. The argument is that if the Revelation 20 resurrection is the first resurrection, there cannot be a Rapture—and the 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 20 resurrections are in fact the same.

Summary:

Eschatology is a weighty and solemn subject—but there is hope. It is possible to have peace in the midst of tribulation. The Apostle Paul wrote of a “peace that surpasses understanding” (Phil. 4:6-7). The first step toward experiencing this peace is to accept Jesus into your heart as Lord and Savior.

The timing of some key future events may be unknown, but we can know that Jesus will return, and in the epic struggle of good versus evil, God will prevail.

THE TRIBULATION

Bible prophecies provide a clear picture of what will happen during the coming Tribulation period. Some believe Bible prophecies regarding judgments appear to indicate that God is angry or mean. However, the opposite is true. God is not angry—God warns whom He loves, and only as a last resort does He use drastic measures to turn individuals toward a better way.

This writer believes that if the world turned to Christ today, the prophesied future Tribulations would not occur. But God knows that humanity is willful, and knows the choices they will make. Therefore the prophecies will come true. In the last seven years of our history, God will bring Tribulation and wrath to the earth. To prove He's angry? No. To bring humanity to repentance and offer salvation. This section provides a biblically-based overview of the Tribulations period events that are prophesied to come.

TRIBULATION PERIOD PROPHECIES

Note: The following prophecies are not in chronological order

- ➔ **Israel will enter into a peace treaty:** The Antichrist will impose a “covenant with the many” which will include Israel (Daniel 9:27; 8:23-25). This ‘covenant’ initiates the seven-year Tribulation period.
- ➔ **Israel will be at peace and “without walls”** before the invasion from the north (Ezekiel 38:8-11). The sense of security is likely, in large part, the result of the peace covenant noted above. The invasion from the north will likely come after the mid-point of the Tribulation period.
- ➔ **The third Temple will be built in Jerusalem:** Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and John refer to a Temple being in Jerusalem in the last days. This event is referenced in Daniel 9:27, 12:11; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:4; and Rev. 11:1-2. Note: Some believe that plans for the construction of the new Temple are already complete.

- ➔ **Temple sacrifices will be re-instituted** in Israel in the last days (Daniel 9:27; 12:11).
- ➔ **Temple sacrifices will be forbidden:** At the mid-point of the Tribulation period, the Antichrist will seize control of the Temple, abruptly end the daily sacrifices and proclaim himself to be God. (Revelation 13).
- ➔ **Believers sealed by the Spirit:** The Holy Spirit will ‘seal’ 12,000 Jewish believers from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. This is very likely a symbolic number representing a vast and perfect number of believers God uses to evangelize the world (Rev. 7). Along with these sealed witnesses will come two great prophets (Rev. 11:3-14). These prophet witnesses will preach with power for 3 1/2 years, and then be put to death. Their deaths will be celebrated by many. Their bodies will lie in the street for three days, after which they will be miraculously resurrected and taken up into Heaven.
- ➔ **Revival:** During the Tribulation, many will turn to Jesus (Rev. 7:9-17; Daniel 12:10; Zechariah 2:11; Isaiah 19:16-25).
- ➔ **Earthquakes:** Great earthquakes will shake the world during the Tribulation period (Revelation 6:12, 8:5, 11:13, 16:18, etc.).
- ➔ **Vegetation decimated:** Revelation 8:7 notes that the first trumpet judgment will bring the destruction of 1/3 of all vegetation on Earth.
- ➔ **Meteor or Comet falls into the sea:** Revelation 8:8-9 notes that the second trumpet judgment facilitates something falling into the sea and destroying 1/3 of life.
- ➔ **Wormwood:** Similar to the second trumpet judgment, the third trumpet judgment facilitates something falling to the earth which causes fresh water to turn bitter—resulting in the death of many.
- ➔ **Reduction of light:** The fourth trumpet judgment brings about a reduction of light (from the sun, moon, and stars) by 1/3.
- ➔ **Tormenting creatures:** The fifth trumpet judgment will bring scorpion-like creatures from the demon world. These creatures torment humanity, but they do not cause death, only grievous anguish. Some suggest that these creatures will not be able to torment believers in Jesus Christ.

- ➔ **Forced worship of the Antichrist:** 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13 note that the Beast (the Antichrist) will force all to worship him. Failure to do so will result in starvation, ridicule, and death. Proof of allegiance to the Antichrist will include receiving a mark on the right hand or forehead.
- ➔ **Sores on those who receive the mark:** Revelation 16:1-2 notes that those who accept the mark of the Beast, signifying their worship of him, will contract painful sores (KJV reads, 'boils') on their body.
- ➔ **Refuge:** Ancient Petra (located in Jordan) will become a place of refuge for believers (Isaiah 16:1-4; Matthew 24:16; Revelation 12:6,14).
- ➔ **A great army from the east:** The sixth trumpet announces the coming of a vast army from the east (200,000,000). This army advances toward Israel and leaves devastation in its wake. (Revelation 9:13)
- ➔ **The Euphrates River blocked or dried-up:** The great river Euphrates will dry-up allowing armies from the east to advance toward Israel. (Revelation 16:12).
- ➔ **The Antichrist wounded:** Revelation 13 notes that the Antichrist will apparently suffer a fatal wound to the head, but will recover to the amazement of many.
- ➔ **The Woman Who Rides The Beast:** Revelation 17 (and Jeremiah 50-51) notes the judgment on this woman—also called the Whore of Babylon and Mystery Babylon. This judgment falls on a nation, not an individual.
- ➔ **Life in seas and rivers dies:** Revelation 16:3 indicates that remaining life in the sea dies as the second vial of judgment is poured out. The third vial of judgment brings about the death of life in the rivers (Revelation 16:4). Thus both fresh and salt water creatures will die.
- ➔ **Scorching heat:** The fourth vial of judgment brings scorching heat which causes misery and devastates vegetation.
- ➔ **Darkness:** The fifth vial of judgment brings anomalous darkness and painful maladies (some translations say 'plagues'). (Revelation 16:10-11).
- ➔ **War:** There will be a series of wars—the last great series of wars are collectively referred to as the battle of Armageddon.

- ➔ **Victory:** While surrounded by her enemies, God intervenes, and Israel prevails in the great battle of Armageddon. The enemy will be vanquished. Satan and the Beast will be bound and thrown into the pit. Jesus Christ will begin His Millennial Reign and bring peace and justice to the earth. (Revelation 19-21).

THE ANTICHRIST—THE BEAST OF REVELATION

The Antichrist is the Beast of the book of Revelation, and the foremost villain in history. He is evil personified. There are more than eighty references to him in Scripture—none are positive. It is true the Antichrist will be attractive, politically savvy, and wise, but these qualities are quickly overwhelmed by his vicious ruthlessness. The Antichrist is filled with rage. He loathes God, His plan, and His people. The scope of the pain and suffering he will inflict on the world during the Tribulation period will have no precedent.

The biblical foundation for the term Antichrist

An antichrist is one who opposes the will of Christ. However, during the Tribulation period, a great deceiver and enemy of Christ will appear (and reign) on the earth. This individual is known as the “Abomination of Desolation” and *the Antichrist*.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the term “antichrist.” According to the epistles of John, ***an antichrist*** is one who opposes the teachings of Christ. In this sense, many can be an antichrist—in fact, anyone who hinders the ‘Great Commission’ work and opposes the things of God is an antichrist. However, Scripture notes that during the Tribulation period, a world leader will arise. The world will praise him for leading in brokering a peace covenant in the Middle East and solving many complex global issues. In time he will gain control of global systems. Though he will claim to be divine, he is, in fact, a man indwelt by Satan. He is ***the Antichrist***. This section of the book profiles that individual, ***the Antichrist*** of the Tribulation period. This article will differentiate him from

antichrists throughout history by referencing him with a capital “A” in his title.

“...Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 7).

“...Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world” (1 John 4:3).

The Timing of His Coming:

The Antichrist will come after a period of great apostasy; his rise to power will begin with the signing of a peace agreement that includes Israel.

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed...” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

He will “confirm a covenant” for seven years. (Daniel 9:27)

His Character/Nature:

- The Antichrist will be a great deceiver. Displays of power, signs, and wonders will embolden his claim to be an agent of good (2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- Scripture notes that seven kings or rulers will precede the Antichrist

(Revelation 17:11; Daniel 5). The empire of the Antichrist will be similar to, but different from, past empires which embraced paganism and persecuted God's people.

- ➔ The Antichrist will be a man (Daniel 7:24-25).
- ➔ The Antichrist will have a fierce countenance (Daniel 8:23).
- ➔ His look will be "stouter than his fellows" (Daniel 7:20) This can have several meanings. It could mean the Antichrist will be larger in stature than others, older than others, have a greater following than others, is of higher military or political rank than others, or that he is viewed as being more qualified than others.

Peculiar Aspects of His Rule:

- ➔ A miracle-working partner, the false prophet, will support and exalt the Antichrist (Revelation 13:11-12).
- ➔ The Antichrist will be unusually wise and cunning (Daniel 8:23).
- ➔ The Antichrist will prosper in everything he does (Daniel 8:24).
- ➔ The Antichrist will not regard the desire of women (Daniel 11:37).
- ➔ The Antichrist will sit in the Temple in Jerusalem (sometimes called the third Temple) and claim to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).
- ➔ The Antichrist "will cause craft to prosper" (Daniel 8:25). It is interesting to note the definition of the word "craft" here. The word in the original Hebrew text is mirmah (meer-maw'), meaning deceiving; fraud, deceit, false, feigned, guile, and treachery. He will elevate false and deceitful beliefs.
- ➔ Revelation 17:8 notes that the Antichrist "was, and is not, and yet is." Many believe this to be a reference to his overcoming an apparently fatal wound. Some understand this to refer to a revived political career or empire.

"One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The world was filled with wonder and followed the beast" (Rev. 13:3).

The Early Years of His Rule:

- ➔ The Antichrist will arise from among ten kings (Daniel 7:8).
- ➔ The Antichrist will oversee a ten-nation union, perhaps a form of a revived Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44).
- ➔ The Antichrist will uproot three kings from the ten-nation union noted above (Daniel 7:8).
- ➔ The Antichrist will ascend to power on a platform of peace (Daniel 8:25).
- ➔ The Antichrist will form a one-world government, which he will dominate (Revelation 13:1-2).
- ➔ The Antichrist will rule a “mighty and strong kingdom” (Daniel 7:7).
- ➔ The Antichrist will “have power over all nations” (Revelation 13:7).
- ➔ The Antichrist will lead large armies (Daniel 11:31).
- ➔ The Antichrist “will plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain” (Daniel 11:45). Perhaps the Antichrist will set up small fortifications between the sea and Jerusalem.

The Final Years of His Rule:

- ➔ The Antichrist will assume complete control over the world government 3 1/2 years after he confirms the covenant with Israel. He then continues to reign for 42 months (Revelation 13:5).
- ➔ The Antichrist will endorse setting up the “Abomination of Desolation” (an image or idol unto himself that all are forced to worship). This event signals the beginning of the final 42 months and the commencement of the period called the “Great Tribulation” (Rev. 15:2; Daniel 9:27).
- ➔ The Antichrist will forbid daily sacrifices in the Temple (Daniel 11:31).
- ➔ The Antichrist will control the ability to buy and sell, and force all to prove allegiance to him by taking the mark of the beast or the number of his name—666. (Revelation 14:11).
- ➔ The antichrist will seek to kill Jews and Christians (Daniel 12:7).
- ➔ The Antichrist will wage war against Israel—culminating in the battles of Armageddon (Rev. 6-19).
- ➔ The focus of his rage will be God’s people, Israel and Jerusalem:

“Behold, a day is coming...when the nations [will] gather against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle...”

(Zechariah 14:1-2)

His Fate:

- ➔ The Antichrist will “stand against the Prince of princes” (Daniel 8:25), but his plan will fail.
- ➔ Christ will consume the Antichrist, and all enemies of God with the “spirit of his mouth,” which is the Word of God (2 Thessalonians 2:8).
- ➔ The Antichrist will be “cast alive into the lake of fire” (Revelation 19:20).
- ➔ The Antichrist will be “tormented day and night forever” in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Summary:

The Antichrist is an actual person (not a symbol of evil). He will seek to control governments, the economy, and all religions. He will be responsible for persecution, war, pain, and suffering. But there is hope—His name is Jesus.

Consider this: The focus of the book of Revelation is not the power of the Antichrist, but the power of God. The book of Revelation does not center on the victories of Satan, but on the ultimate victory of God through His Son Jesus. Yes, evil men and movements will come—there will be battles, but God and good will prevail. Scripture notes that Jesus is the Victor and that those who believe in Him will share in His victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

ADDITIONAL TEACHING RESOURCE:

Noted below is a link to a video teaching on the Antichrist:

<https://vimeo.com/260667541>

INTERPRETING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.” Revelation 1:3

Interpreting the book of Revelation generally follows one of four principle views. This article profiles these four views. Let me begin by sharing that I enjoy astronomy. I have a quality scope and an assortment of eyepieces and colored filters/lenses. Though the scope does not change, the eyepiece and colored filter/lens I choose to look through determines whether I see Jupiter as a small white ball (like a small moon), or as a large, majestic yellowish banded planet with a famous storm spot and multiple moons. In the same way, the approach (lens) one takes to read the book of Revelation will determine what they see in the book (and how the information applies to their life). This article will profile the four primary ways to interpret the book of Revelation and will include a recommendation and links to follow-up study resources.

1. The Futurist view

The first to interpreting the book of Revelation is the Futurist view—this is the view the I Am A Watchman ministry team holds. This position holds that the prophetic events profiled in the Olivet Discourse and book of Revelation (particularly chapters 4-22) will occur in the future. In general Futurists use Revelation 1:19 as a guide to divide the book of Revelation into three sections: 1) “what you have seen” 2) “what is now (present) and 3) “what will take place later.” According to this school of thought, chapter 1 is a presentation of the past (“what you have seen”), chapters 2-3 are a presentation of the present (“what is now”), and the remaining chapters profile future events (“what will take place later/in the future”).

Futurists apply a literal approach to interpreting the book of Revelation. The tribulation period (as profiled in chapters 4-19) is 2520 days or 7 (Hebrew) years. The seven-year tribulation period is viewed as Daniel’s 70th week (Dan.

9:27). During the tribulation, the earth will experience 21 particular judgments of God (divided into sets of seven and depicted as seals, trumpets, and bowls). The Antichrist and future global system that he leads (see chapter 13) are to be understood literally, as are the battles of Armageddon, the return of Christ, and the millennial kingdom. This position (and perhaps incorporation of some aspects of the Historists view—such as thinking that the seven churches in the book of Revelation could reference actual first-century churches and seven future periods of church history) is the primary approach to interpreting the book of Revelation today.

One of the key arguments in support of the Futurist view is the date of the writing of the book of Revelation. Preterists argue for a pre-AD 70 date while futurists hold to a date of approximately 95 AD. There are good reasons to argue for a later date. For example, Irenaeus, in his work *Against Heresies*, states that John wrote Revelation at the end of Emperor Domitian's reign, which ended in 96 AD. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. He thus had a connection with a contemporary of the Apostle John.

Another argument for the Futurist view is that the conditions of the seven churches in Revelation appear to describe a second-generation church, rather than a first-generation church. For example, John charged the Church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) with abandoning their first love and warned against embracing the Nicolaitan heresy. If John had written the book of Revelation in 65 AD (as Preterists allege), the book would have overlapped the time-line of Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Timothy. However, in the Apostle Paul's writing, there is no mention of either the loss of a first love or the threat of the Nicolaitans. Ephesus was Paul's base of ministry for three years—surely such grave issues would have been mentioned by him. Also, the church of Smyrna did not exist during Paul's ministry (60-64 AD). Polycarp, the first bishop of that city, documents this. It is also important to note that Jesus rebuked the Laodicean church in Revelation chapter 3 for being "lukewarm." However, when the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians (near Laodicea), he commends the church three times (2:2, 4:13, 16). It is true that Paul wrote the book of Colossians a few years earlier than the early date Preterists suggest for the book of Revelation. However, it

would likely take more than three years for the Laodicean church to decline such that there were no commendable attributes in the church in Revelation 3. Also, an earthquake in 61 AD left the region in ruins for some years. Thus, it is unlikely that in a ruined condition John would describe them as rich.

Preterists who argue for the 70 AD date for the writing of the book of Revelation pose the questions, “Why doesn’t John mention the fall of the Temple in the book of Revelation?” and, “Why does John reference the temple in Revelation 11 if the temple was destroyed 25 years earlier?” Futurists respond to these questions by noting that John’s focus is future, not past events. Also, John was writing to a Gentile audience in Asia Minor, which probably was not overly distressed about a happening concerning Hebrews in Jerusalem, 25 years in the past. Concerning the temple reference in chapter 11—Futurists argue that a reference to the temple does not imply that it existed at the time of his writing, but rather, it is a reference to a prophesied third temple (see Daniel 9:26-27; Ezekiel 40-48).

2. The Idealist view

The second view or approach to interpreting the book of Revelation is the idealist view. This approach prioritizes using an allegorical method for interpretation. The second-century church father, Origen (185-254 AD) introduced this method. It was later made more prominent by the notable Bishop, Augustine (AD 354-420). According to this method of interpretation, the events in the book of Revelation are NOT referring to (or linked to) particular historical happenings. The writing is viewed as poetic—symbolically representing the epic struggle of good versus evil (God versus Satan). In this battle, the followers of God are oppressed and persecuted, but will one day receive their reward. In this struggle good will triumph. Robert Mounce summarizes the idealist view stating, “Revelation is a theological poem presenting the ageless struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a philosophy of history wherein Christian

forces are continuously meeting and conquering the demonic forces of evil.” The concerns with interpreting the book of Revelation via the idealist view include:

- 1)** It puts the book of Revelation in a unique category as the canon of Scripture includes no other books written in that format.
- 2)** It minimizes a call to action, and the need to prepare for future tribulation events as the references in Revelation that pertain to such things are thought to be symbolic or allegorical.
- 3)** Though at times endorsed by prominent church leaders, this view has never been widely accepted by the Christian Church.

3. Two Preterist views

The third approach to interpreting the book of Revelation is the Preterist view. Preter is a Latin term meaning, “past.” There are two primary views within the Preterist approach to interpretation (full Preterism and partial Preterism). In general, both Preterist views hold that the book of Revelation profiles past events, and that the predictions presented by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) are prophecies that were fulfilled primarily during the fall of Jerusalem (which took place in 70 AD). According to this view, Revelation 1-3 profiles the conditions in seven first century churches in Asia Minor before the Jewish war (AD 66-70), and chapters 4-22 (and Matthew 24-25) profiles the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple. Detailed below are the two Preterist views:

Full Preterists believe that the fulfillment of all prophecies recorded in the book of Revelation took place by 70 AD (this includes prophecies in the Olivet Discourse [Matthew 24-25] and all prophecies in the book of Revelation). Further, full Preterists hold that humans are now living in a

redeemed state, referenced in Revelation as the new heavens and the new earth.

Partial Preterists believe that most of the prophecies recorded in the book of Revelation were fulfilled between 66—70 AD (during the Jewish-Roman war and subsequent destruction of Jerusalem). However, partial Preterists hold that the final three chapters in the book of Revelation allude to future events. Partial Preterists await the return of Jesus Christ (a view rejected by full Preterists). The partial Preterist method of interpretation is the more widely accepted of the two Preterist views. This method of interpretation has been endorsed by notable scholars as R. C. Sproul, Hank Hanegraaff, Kenneth Gentry, and the late David Chilton (Note: Hank Hanegraaff and David Chilton rejected this position later in life). Concerns with the Preterist positions include:

- 1) Biblical references record that future tribulations would be markedly different than any other time in history (which was not the case with 66-70 AD happenings).
- 2) The full Preterist position does not anticipate the glorious return/ appearing of Jesus Christ.
- 3) Preterist views do not adequately address references to the global power and system of the Antichrist.

4. The Historicist view

The fourth approach to interpreting the book of Revelation is the Historicist view. This approach holds that the material in the book of Revelation is symbolic—representing historical events that will take place in the future. These events include the rise of various popes, future empires, and rulers, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, etc. This position holds that references to the Beast and Antichrist are not to be understood literally.

Many who hold this view believe chapters 1-3 represent seven periods in church history (beginning with the first-century church and ending with the tribulation period). Further, this position holds that:

The Seals in chapters 4-7 symbolize the fall of the Roman Empire.

The Trumpet judgments in chapters 8-10 represent various invasions of the Roman Empire.

The Antichrist represents the Pope, chapters 11-13 point to the struggle between the Protestant church and Roman Catholicism.

Chapters 14-16 depict divine judgment on the Catholic Church.

Chapters 17-19 represent the future demise of Catholicism.

Prominent scholars who have used this approach to interpret the book of Revelation include Martin Luther, George Whitefield, John Wycliffe, John Calvin, John Knox, William Tyndale, Charles Finney, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Ulrich Zwingli, C. H. Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry. This view rose to popularity during the time of the Protestant Reformation because of its identification of the Pope as being evil, and the great persecution of Protestants by the Catholic Church in the 16th and 17th centuries. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, this view has declined in prominence and is no longer the primary approach to interpreting the book of Revelation.

Summary: As the structure of the Bible is much more transformational rather than informational, most scholars hold a futurist approach to interpreting the book of Revelation. The Bible is not simply a record of what was—it is living Word that calls believers to action today, and provides insight into how God will work in the future. The futurist approach, more than the other approaches to interpretation, compliments the structure and spirit of the whole of Scripture by facilitating an interpretation of the text that exhorts, engages, and encourages those who study the book.

Pray today that God will grant you wisdom as you study His Word, and help you be all that He is equipping you to be.

THE MILLENNIUM AND THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST

The Millennium and the Millennial Reign of Christ are referenced more than 2000 times in Scripture! Many view Revelation 20 as the principle (if not the sole) reference to the Millennium in the Bible. However, there are more references to the Millennium in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. Scholars note that there are more than 1800 references to the Millennium in the Old Testament and more than 300 in the New Testament. 85% of the books in the New Testament reference the Millennium. The Millennium and Millennial Reign of Christ are subjects that concern the future of the earth and believers in Christ. This section seeks to provide an informative, encouraging biblical overview of this prominent Bible subject.

Familiar references

Many do not realize that some familiar Scripture passages are actually references to the Millennial Kingdom.

- ➔ Jesus referenced the Millennium in the Lord's Prayer when He said, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9-13)
- ➔ Isaiah made reference to the Millennium in his Messianic prophecy. "For to us a child is born, to us, a son is given, **and the government will be on his shoulders**. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness.**" (Isaiah 9:6-9)
- ➔ In his vision of future kingdoms, the prophet Daniel foresaw the Millennial Kingdom and wrote: "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." (Daniel 2:1-44)

References to the Millennial Kingdom flow through the Old and New Testaments. Presented below is a profile of various prominent Millennial views, followed by a sampling of Millennial Kingdom references arranged by categories:

THREE MILLENNIAL VIEWS

- **Pre-millennialism:** This view holds that Jesus will return at the end of Daniel's 70th week (the Tribulation period), with the saints who were in heaven, and reign for 1000 years. This 1000-year period is known as the ***Millennial Reign of Christ***. The primary subjects of this kingdom will be the surviving remnant of the world that come to faith during the Tribulation. The pre-millennialists position does not fix the timing of the Rapture to a particular timetable but does place that momentous event before the 1000-year reign of Christ.
 - Most Bible scholars today hold this view.
 - The *I Am A Watchman* ministry holds a pre-millennial view and places the Rapture prior to the beginning of the Tribulation period.

- **Amillennialism:** This view holds that there will be no Millennial Reign of Christ. A general summary of the amillennial view is that the Kingdom began with Jesus' first coming (His birth) and will continue until His Second Coming (the glorious appearing at the end of the tribulation period). This view holds that there will not be a 1000-year Millennial Kingdom on earth, and favors an allegorical system of interpretation to understand prophetic events. For example, the material in the Olivet Discourse and the greater part of the book of Revelation is thought to point, symbolically, to past historical events. This position does not anticipate a Rapture but does anticipate the second coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation. This position holds that conditions in this world will continue to deteriorate up until the second coming of Christ. This view is usually traced back to Augustine (354-430 AD).

- ➔ **Post-millennialism:** This view holds that the Millennium is generally synonymous with the Church Age and is currently being experienced. The view holds that Jesus will return at the end of the Millennium, and that conditions on earth will improve until the second coming of Christ. This minor view originated in England and was advanced by Unitarian minister Daniel Whitby (1638-1726). This position does not support a literal interpretation of the 1000-year Millennial Kingdom noted in Revelation 20, and suggests the Millennial Kingdom will last an unspecified but long period of time. In his book, *The Millennium*, Loraine Boettner (a post-millennialist) states: “The millennium to which the post-millennialist looks forward is thus a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, the Church Age.” This Millennial view does not suggest there will be a time on earth when every person will be a Christian, or that sin will be no more. But it does imply that evil in all its forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be embraced and be the rule in culture, and that Christ will return to a truly “Christianized” world. In general, this view holds that conditions on earth will continually improve and that we are currently experiencing the Millennial Kingdom.

WHAT THE MILLENNIUM WILL BE LIKE

(According to the premillennial view)

Satan will no longer oppress the earth or God’s beloved

- ➔ “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations

no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things, he must be released for a little while” (Revelation 20:1-3).

The earth will be restored and renewed

- ➔ “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17-25)
- ➔ Jesus will reign as King (Isaiah 2:4; 42:1).
- ➔ The world will be at peace (Isaiah 11:6-9; 32:18).
- ➔ Jesus will serve as King and righteous judge. “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Micah 4:3).
- ➔ Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:1–3). All inhabitants will freely worship God (Isaiah 2:2-3).

The earth will be at peace

- ➔ “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness’” (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Believers who survive the Tribulation will inhabit the New Earth. Joining them will be Tribulation period martyrs and believers who are currently in heaven.

- ➔ Jesus will rule in love and with a “rod of iron” (Psalm 2:9 Revelation 2:27, 12:5, 19:15). Tribulation period believers will receive special honor (Matthew 25:23; Luke 19:16-19).
- ➔ Surviving believers from the tribulation period will live in renewed mortal bodies during Christ’s earthly reign (Zechariah 14:16-21; Revelation 20:7-10). Longevity will be the norm.
- ➔ Believers who are currently in heaven with Christ will reign with Him in this Kingdom (Daniel 7:18).

- ➔ “...For You were slain, and have redeemed us...by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue...and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on earth” (Revelation 5:9-10)
- ➔ These believers will possess the Kingdom (Daniel 7:18-27).
- ➔ These believers will lead with Christ as their King (Job 36:7).
- ➔ These believers will serve as judges, officers, and leaders (Psalm 149; Isaiah 60:17).
- ➔ These believers will teach truth (Psalm 37:29-31; Jeremiah 3:15).
- ➔ “...They shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

Israel’s borders will expand

Note: This could happen as a result of the wars leading up to (or in the early days of) the Tribulation.

- ➔ The Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)
 - » In the days of Joshua and the kings, Israel did claim some of the lands God promised to Abraham. However, Israel has never possessed all of the lands God promised in Genesis 15:18–20 and Numbers 34:1-12.
 - » The Lord made a covenant with Abram and promised: “To your descendants, I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...” Genesis 15:18-21
 - » The prophet Ezekiel reminded Israel: “Thus says the Lord God: These are the borders by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. You shall inherit it equally with one another; for I raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance. This shall be the border of the land on the north: from the Great Sea, by the road to Hethlon, as one goes to Zedad, Hamath, Berothah, Sibram (which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), to Hazar Hatticon (which is on the border of Hauran). Thus, the

boundary shall be from the Sea to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus; and as for the north, northward, it is the border of Hamath. This is the north side." Ezekiel 47:13-17

- » Through the prophet Ezekiel God further promised: "On the east side you shall mark out the border from between Hauran and Damascus, and between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan, and along the eastern side of the sea. This is the east side. The south side, toward the south, shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. This is the south side, toward the south. The west side shall be the Great Sea, from the southern boundary until one comes to a point opposite Hamath. This is the west side. Thus, you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel." (Ezekiel 47:18-21)
- » Through Moses God promised: "If any of you are driven to the farthest parts...from there the LORD your God will gather you... Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you..." (Deuteronomy 30:4-6)

There will be a new Temple in Jerusalem

- ➔ "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." (Zechariah 14:16-21)

Covenants will be fulfilled

- ➔ God's covenant regarding the land and future of Israel will be realized during the Millennial reign of Christ (Genesis 15:18-21).
- ➔ God's covenant with David centers on how his heir would sit on the throne and rule Israel (2 Sam. 7:16). Jesus is the fulfillment of this covenant, which accounts for the recording of his genealogy via both His step-father (Matthew 1:1-17) and His mother (Luke 3:23-38). The Jews acknowledged the covenant when they laid down palm

branches and their cloaks as Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1–17). However, they wrongly expected Jesus to be a military and political leader that would liberate Israel from the Romans. They did not understand that 2000 years ago Jesus was preparing to introduce a New Covenant of Grace, not fulfill the Davidic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant will be satisfied via the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (Revelation 20:4,6).

God's covenant as profiled by Jeremiah and Ezekiel

- ➔ The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)
 - » The prophet Ezekiel provides additional details: “You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36:28)

Life on earth will be different

- ➔ Longevity: “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old...they shall build houses and...plant vineyards and eat their fruit...” (Isaiah 65:20-22)
- ➔ Docile animals: “...The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; Says the LORD.” (Isaiah 65:34-35)
- ➔ Peaceful coexistence: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:6-9)

- ➔ No War: "...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks...nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Mic. 4:3). Isaiah 2:4 is a similar passage. There the prophet notes that not only will there no longer be war, but there will be no weapons, nor will battle strategies be taught.

The geography and topography of the earth will be different

- ➔ "...I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing...the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (Isaiah 65:17-19)
- ➔ An earthquake will divide Jerusalem into three parts (Rev. 16:18-19). The earthquake will occur when Jesus touches His foot on the Mount of Olives. Water will flow out from the city after the earthquake. (Zechariah 14:4-8). The millennial temple will stand over this river (Ezekiel 47:1-12).
- ➔ Jerusalem will be a prominent high point on Earth during the Millennium (Isaiah 2:2). The great earthquake at the Second Coming of Jesus will level mountains and make islands disappear (Revelation 16:20; Isaiah 40:4-5).
- ➔ There will be a new fountain of living water. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). Zechariah 14:8 notes where the waters will flow. "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former (eastern) sea, and half of them toward the hinder (western) sea: in summer and in winter shall it be." The living waters will flow out of Jerusalem in two directions, to the west to the great sea and east to the Dead Sea (or Salt Sea). Also see Ezekiel 47:1-7.
- ➔ This new fountain/river will impact the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea has no outlet and is presently seven times saltier than the oceans. No fish live in the Dead Sea at this time. Ezekiel 47:8-11 notes, however, that

the waters of the Dead Sea will be healed. “Then said he unto me, these waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that...there shall be a very great multitude of fish...”

Worship during the Millennial Reign of Christ

- ➔ Jerusalem will be a center for worship. “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship... on them there will be no rain...” (Zechariah 14:16-19)
 - » Ezekiel 40-48 notes that God will re-institute Temple worship and sacrifices in the Millennium. Many believe the purpose for these sacrifices is to commemorate the sacrificial work of Christ. This will serve as a stark picture and solemn reminder of the penalty Christ paid in dying for our sins on the cross.
 - » “But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:3)
- ➔ Gentiles will keep the Feast of Tabernacles which was formerly a Feast just for Israel. To do so, individuals will travel to Jerusalem once each year in the fall to “worship the King.” Ezekiel 43:7 notes: “And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne...[is] where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel...”

It may be that the Feast of Tabernacles takes on a slightly different meaning during the Millennial Reign of Christ as the focus will no longer be Israel’s rescue from Egypt, but rather, how Christ has saved his children from all over the world. The prophet Jeremiah notes: “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of

the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers" (Jeremiah 16:14-15).

➔ **ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:**

Noted below is a link to a video teaching entitled, The Millennial Reign of Christ: <https://vimeo.com/260667687>



FINANCES (CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP)

Material adapted from Pastors Rick Warren, Ray Stedman, and Financial Ministry leaders Dave Ramsey and Larry Burkett.

FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT:

America is a rich nation, but most of her citizens are burdened with debt. America prides itself on supporting individuals in their pursuit of happiness, but depression and suicide rates are at an all-time high. America is in trouble—God desires to help. A general financial status update appears below:

- ➔ America has more (per capita) two-income families than any other nation in the world.
- ➔ American families have less 'free-time' hours each week (down 35%+ since 1964), are more prone to depression (which is the #1 illness in America today), work more hours each week and more overtime hours each year, and carry more personal debt (per capita) than any other industrialized nation.
- ➔ Approximately one-hundred thousand personal bankruptcies were filed in America last year.
- ➔ Credit card delinquency rate is at an all-time high. In the United States, approximately one billion dollars is paid in late charges each year.
- ➔ Americans have accrued more than 13 trillion dollars in personal debt (more than one trillion dollars in credit card debt alone).
- ➔ Many of America's largest companies are in serious financial trouble. Our national debt is at an all-time high.

The significant number of Bible verses on the topic of finances note God's desire to help.

- ➔ 16 of the 38 parables have to do with finances.
- ➔ 1 in 10 verses in the Gospels have to do with finances.

- There are approximately 500 verses in the Bible on the topic of faith, 500 on the topic of prayer, but about 2000 on the topic of finances.

The many verses on the topic of finances indicate God's desire to help!

THE BIBLICAL PLAN FOR FINDING HOPE AND HELP

Ask God to help you have the right mindset. Financial freedom is not about earning more, or having more—it begins with having the right mindset about money and material possessions. God can help individuals in the area of priorities, desires, drives and perspective.

“Don’t wear yourself out trying to [have more]...have the wisdom to show restraint.” (Prov. 23:4)

*“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
(Matt. 6:21)*

“One’s life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be.” (Luke 12:15)

Honor God with your spending

Use your resources to support the Kingdom's work and things that honor God. It will yield a sense of satisfaction, support something of eternal value, and lead to a reward.

“The good man’s earnings advances the cause of righteousness.” (Prov. 10:16) [LB]

Be a good steward of the resources God has entrusted to you

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (1 Cor. 4:2)

*“Because of your generosity, others will praise God.”
(2 Cor. 9:13)*

“Plan carefully and you will have plenty; if you act too quickly, you will never have enough.” (Prov. 21:5)

Fact: Each year State Lotteries receive more than twice as much income than churches do.

Don't overspend

- ➔ Most Americans spend \$1.21 for every one dollar they earn.
- ➔ The average American family has ten credit cards and carries more than \$10,000 in personal debt. 71% of cardholders used credit cards for cash advances last year.
- ➔ Making the minimum (2%) payment on a \$2000 credit card balance will more than double your debt, and it will take you more than 12 years to pay the debt off.



“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:31b-32

EIGHT BIBLICAL FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES

1. **Giving should be a spiritual, rather than economic decision.”**

- Ronald Blue

It was a qualitative (rather than a quantitative) element that made Abel's offering more acceptable to God than Cain's.

(Gen. 4)

King Saul's great offering in 1 Sam. 13 was rejected by God, not because it did not have great monetary value, but because it was not offered in the right way with the right heart.

Our giving is an expression of our thanks to God (2 Cor.9:12).

2. **God directs his children to give**

“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...” (1 John 5:3)

“Honor the Lord by giving Him the first part of all your income, and He will fill your barns...to overflowing!” (Prov. 22:9)

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me. You ask, ‘How do we rob You, Lord? In tithes and in offerings.’ (Mal. 3:8)

3. **All we have is a gift from God (we are merely stewards)**

Abraham acknowledged this and was blessed (Gen 14:17-24)

“Everything is God's. We are stewards.” (1 Chron. 29:14-18)

God created, knows and owns everything (Psa. 50:10-12)

Every good thing you have has been given to you by the loving hand of God. (James 1:17)

4. **Putting God first leads to blessings.** *The put God first principle was:*

- ➔ Exemplified in Jacob (Gen. 28:16-22)
- ➔ Exemplified in Abraham (Gen. 14)
- ➔ Incorporated in the law (Deut. 14:22-23; Lev. 27:30)
- ➔ The directive of the prophets (Mal. 3:8-10; Neh. 10:37-39)
- ➔ The counsel of the wisest man [Solomon] (Prov. 3:9-10)
- ➔ The teaching of Jesus (Matt. 6:24; 19:16-24)
- ➔ The practice of the early church (1 Cor. 16:2)

5. **God expects that His people reflect His generosity**

“Receive in God’s name and give it away generously in His name.” (Acts 2:44-47)

6. **Your generosity can inspire others**

*“Because of your generosity, others will praise God.”
(2 Cor. 9:13)*

“Spur one another on toward good works.” (Heb10:24)

7. **God accepts no excuse for stinginess**

A number of those who generously supported Jesus’ ministry were poor widows. (Luke 8:2,3)

8. It is wise to invest in the future

Invest in the future by giving generously today (Matt.6:19-21)

“The good man’s earnings advance the cause of righteousness.” (Prov. 10:16) [LB]

Giving generously to those in need builds a treasure in heaven. (1 Tim. 6:18-19)

A TIME-HONORED, GOD-HONORING FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Pay off debts early

“Don’t withhold repayment of your debts. Don’t say, ‘Some other time’ when you can pay today.” (Prov. 3:27-28)

“Let no debt remain outstanding.” (Rom. 13:8)

“Get advice if you want your plans to work.” (Prov. 20:18)

“When your ways please the Lord, He will make your enemies into friends.” (Prov. 16:7)

- ➔ On a typical credit card bill, if you add just \$5 to your monthly payment you will reduce your term by 41 months. Adding \$50/month to a 30 year \$100,000 mortgage payment will save you \$32,000+ in interest and reduce your term by more than six years.
- ➔ If you reduce your spending by just \$1 a day and apply it to a \$100,000, 30-year mortgage, you will save about \$25,000 in interest.
- ➔ You'll save about \$2000 in finance charges on a \$15,000 loan if you pay it off in three, rather than five years.

Be wise about financing:

- ➔ If you reduce your mortgage finance rate by $\frac{1}{4}$ percent, you'll save about \$30,000 over the term of your loan.
- ➔ Many think it is wise to pay off a car when refinancing a home. But consider: If you have an 8.5% car loan and pay that off with a new 6%, 30 year home mortgage, then you will end up paying seven times as much in interest charges, and likely more than twice as much for the vehicle.
- ➔ Some have received this kind of letter in the mail: Cash this check for \$3000 – no strings attached. The Interest is 23% monthly payments are about \$60. This offer may sound attractive and reasonable, but note: After your first payment you will owe \$2989, after the second payment you will owe \$2987, after third payment you will owe \$2986.50, after your 231st payment you will still owe \$2001.68. The interest on this loan will end up being \$24,743.56.

Pay yourself and God first (the 10-10-80 plan). Let your goal be to tithe 10%, save 10% and live on 80%. Noted below is how this plan honors God.

- ➔ **Pay God first:** "Honor the Lord by giving Him the first part of all your income, and He will fill your barns...to overflowing!" (Prov. 22:9)
- ➔ "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me. You ask, 'How do we rob You Lord?' "In tithes and offerings." (Mal. 3:8)

- ➔ A recent study showed that Americans gave a higher percentage of their income to their local church in 1938, at the height of the depression than today.
- ➔ A recent national survey showed that less than 4% of committed Christians tithe.

Pay yourself (Save) 10%

- ➔ “The wise person saves for the future” (Prov. 21:20a)

“Plan carefully and you will have plenty; If you act too quickly you will never have enough.” (Prov. 21:5) [GN]

*“Foolish people spend their money as fast as they get it.”
(Prov.21:20)*

“He grows rich who accumulates little by little.” (Prov. 21:20a)

- ➔ John D. Rockefeller once said: “The secret of my success is to save 10%, give 10% to God and save the rest.”
- ➔ If you’re 25, make \$15,000/year and stick with the 10/10/80 plan, by age 45 you will have given \$30,000 to the Lord’s work and will have saved \$85,913. If you’re 40 and make \$60,000, by age 60, you will have given \$120,000 to the Lord’s work and will have saved \$343,000.
- ➔ A new worker that chooses to save and invest the \$2/day many workers pay for snacks while at work, will save more than \$115,000 over the typical work career of 30 years.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- ➔ “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)
- ➔ “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...” (1 John 5:3)

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

How does one receive and extend forgiveness? Devotional thoughts from the Old Testament story of Joseph

Forgiveness is a gift of God. It is an expression of God unfathomable mercy. The forgiveness God extends is not what we deserve, yet God offers it freely as an act of grace. Our task is to receive it, thank Him for it, and extend it to others.

Noted below is a profile of the story of Joseph, which is one of the greatest stories of forgiveness of all time. In his story (found in Genesis 37-50) one can find five important keys to receiving and extending forgiveness (see below):

1. You have to be committed to do the right thing.

Receiving forgiveness from God begins by being willing to forgive others. I understand that this may sound like $2 + 2 = 5$, but in the faith, being forgiven begins by forgiving others. Now let me double-down: I am not suggesting that believers should forgive when it's easy, or when the offender is very sorry, or after a proper apology as been given. I am suggesting that it is commanded that believers forgive first, even if the offending party is not repentant. We are not to forgive because they deserve it, but because we need it—forgiving others is the requisite to be forgiven. Matt. 6:12,14-15; 18:21-35, Luke 6:37 notes how our being forgiven by God is linked to our being able to forgive others.

- ➊ Joseph was mistreated by his brothers. They attacked him, beat him, and sold him into slavery. This led to him being falsely accused, imprisoned and more. However, after many years, Joseph was elevated to a position of power in Egypt, and unexpectedly came face to face with his brothers when they traveled there seeking supplies. Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him. Joseph, now

a powerful leader in the Egyptian government, was in a position to exact revenge. “As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger...Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him...” (Genesis 42:7-10)

- ➔ Most are familiar with this story and know that Joseph did forgive his brothers, but had he not already been committed to forgiving and doing the right thing, the decision to forgive would have been much more difficult.

2. You can forgive, and still guard your heart

Forgiving someone does not require that you allow them to be your close confidant, best friend, or business partner. It is OK to forgive and set boundaries at the same time. One of the ways Joseph worked to determine boundaries is to test his brothers to see if they were honest and sincere.

“As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger...Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him... [So Joseph said]... ‘It is just as I told you: You are spies! And this is how you will be tested...’” (Genesis 42:7-15) (see also Acts 15; 2 Cor. 2:4-11)

3. Expect that it is going to be difficult

Forgiveness is a spiritual work. Spiritual work is never easy—it is the narrow, higher, and better path. In Joseph’s story, forgiving his brothers was associated with crying-out and weeping. It was the difficult, but right thing to do. He knew it, and did it, and was blessed for it.

“Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, ‘Have everyone leave my

presence!’ So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.” (Genesis 45:1-2)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” (Matthew 5:43-47)

4. For restoration to take place, the sin must be confessed

A famous line from a well-known movie reads: “Love means never have to say you’re sorry.” This well-known line is simply not true. The ability to apologize is a requisite to true love or forgiveness; the sin must be recognized and confessed. In Joseph’s story, restoration was possible when Joseph’s brothers recognized and confessed how they had wronged Joseph:

“Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!” (Genesis 45:3-4)

[The brothers said to Joseph] “[We] ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs [we] committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of

the God of your father.” ...[And] His brothers...threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said.”

(Genesis 50:17-19a)

5. Often YOU have to lead in the forgiveness/restoration process:

Some might argue that Joseph would have been magnanimous to accept his brothers apologies and send them on their way. Joseph did accept their apologies, but did more than that. Joseph led in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness. He spoke kindly to them, hugged them, ‘wept over them’ and paved the way for restoration/forgiveness to take place.

“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you....I will provide for you... Then [Joseph] threw his arms around his brother Benjamin... and he kissed all his brothers and wept over them...[and Pharaoh said] ‘Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.”

(Genesis 45:5, 9-20) [GN]

“His brothers ...came and threw themselves down before [Joseph] and said, ‘We are your slaves.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. ‘Am I in the place of God?’ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”

(Genesis 50:18-20)

Post Script: Forgiveness is a gift God wants you to receive. He wants to forgive you of your sin, He wants you to forgive yourself, and He wants to help

you forgive others. Joseph was able to do this and was blessed for it. Here are several important things to remember as you consider how to receive and extend forgiveness:

1. Believe that Jesus is God and that He was crucified and rose again so that your sins can be forgiven.
2. Confess your sins to Jesus and accept His forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
3. Recognize that God is under no obligation to forgive you. The forgiveness He extends is an act of grace (we can not earn or merit His forgiveness).
4. Believe that when God forgives, He forgets (Micah 7:19; Isaiah 43:25; Psalm 103:1-3; 1 John 1:9). To think that your sins can not be forgiven is to question the power or completeness of Jesus' atoning work on the cross (an act of love to ensure that all sins can be forgiven).
5. Recognize that what God has done to ensure that your sins are forgiven is greater than what you will need to do to forgive others. This perspective is sometimes helpful when struggling to forgive others.
6. Seek the Lord's help to you forgive yourself and others. Scripture promises that if we seek Him, we will find Him (Jer. 29:11-13). Remember, God will help His people do what He calls His people to do.

“[Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION?

Psalm 103:1 notes that believers are to “forget not” God’s many blessings. 1 Timothy 2:1-5 notes that believers are to pray for those who lead. Psalm 122:6 notes that believers are to pray for the welfare of Jerusalem (the capital of their homeland). 2 Chronicles 7:14 notes believers are to lead their nation in confessing sin, prayer, and seeking God. This section is designed to remind believers of America’s rich Christian heritage, and the importance of seeking God’s blessing for her future.

America’s Christian Heritage:

- ➔ Approx. 90% of Americans report that they believe in God.
- ➔ Approx. 80% of Americans report that they regularly pray.
- ➔ The stats above are positive, but the fiber and flame of Christianity do not flow through the government, media, and education channels of America as it once did. The following information exemplifies the mindset and heart of America not too many years ago.

Important statements by government leaders and agencies:

- ➔ **“This is a Christian nation”** The United States Supreme Court Decision in *Church of the Holy Trinity v. the United States*, 1892
- ➔ **Congressional Resolution adopted on (12/12/07):** *“Whereas Christians identify themselves as those who believe in the salvation from sin offered to them through the sacrifice of their savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and who, out of gratitude for the gift of salvation, commit themselves to living their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Bible; Whereas Christians and Christianity have contributed greatly to the development of western civilization; Whereas the United States, being founded*

as a constitutional republic in the traditions of western civilization, finds much in its history that points observers back to its roots in Christianity; Whereas on December 25 of each calendar year, American Christians observe Christmas, the holiday celebrating the birth of their savior, Jesus Christ; Whereas for Christians, Christmas is celebrated as a recognition of God’s redemption, mercy, and Grace...Resolved, That the House of Representatives acknowledges the international religious and historical importance of the Christian faith acknowledges, the role played by Christians and the founding of the United State, and expresses its deepest respect to American Christians and Christians throughout the world. **(Resolution passed by a vote of 372-9)**

- ➔ In 1930, the U.S. Supreme Court noted: “We are a Christian people, according to our motto.”
- ➔ 1952, the U.S. Supreme Court noted: “We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.

THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS BEGAN THEIR MEETINGS WITH PRAYER:

“O LORD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, high and mighty King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who...reigns with power supreme...over all the kingdoms, empires and governments; look down in mercy we beseech Thee, on these American States...” -First Prayer in Congress 9/7/1774, Carpenters Hall, Philadelphia

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE INCLUDES STATEMENTS OF FAITH

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people

to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which **the laws of nature** and of **nature's God** entitles them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are **created** equal, that they are endowed by their **Creator** with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the **consent of the governed**. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, **appealing** to the **Supreme Judge** of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliance, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a **firm reliance** on the **protection** of **Divine Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

"The general principles upon which the Fathers achieved independence were the general principals of Christianity... I will avow that I believed and now believe that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God." [July 4th] ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."

John Adams in a letter written to Abigail on the day the Declaration was approved by Congress.

Regarding our education system:

- ➔ “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well: the main end of his life and studies is “to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.” (John 17.3) [Original Harvard University Handbook for students, 1636]
- ➔ “Let...philosophers, statesmen, and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls...with the fear and love of the Deity...and lead them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system.” -Samuel Adams
- ➔ “The Christian religion is the religion of our country.” The McGuffey Reader, a primary textbook in America for more than 100 years.
- ➔ “What students should learn in American schools above all is the religion of Jesus Christ.” -George Washington.

Statements from the Founding Fathers:

- ➔ **George Washington:** *“I now make it my earnest prayer the God would have you and the State over which you preside, in His holy protection,* that he would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow citizens of the United States at large...and, finally, that he would be most graciously pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of **the Divine Author of our blessed religion**, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation.” June 8, 1783, in a letter to Governors.
- ➔ **James Madison:** *“Religion is the basis and foundation of government.”* (1785)
- ➔ **John Adams:** *“The general principles on which the fathers*

- achieved independence were...the general principles of Christianity...** I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God." (Letter to Jefferson, June 1813)
- ➔ **John Quincy Adams:** "Why is it that, next to the birthday of the Savior... your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day [the Fourth of July]? ...Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity?" (Fourth of July Speech: 1837)
 - ➔ **Alexander Hamilton:** Hamilton worked with the Rev. James Bayard to form the Christian Constitutional Society to help spread over the world the two things which Hamilton said "made America great: 1) Christianity and 2) a Constitution formed under Christianity."
 - ➔ **Patrick Henry:** "It cannot be emphasized too clearly and too often that this nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Statements/Acts of legislation/Proclamations

- ➔ Congress printed a Bible for America and said: "The United States in Congress assembled...recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States...a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools." (US Congress 1782)
- ➔ In 1812, President Madison signed a federal bill which economically aided the Bible Society of Philadelphia in its goal of the mass distribution of the Bible. (Approved by Congress, February 2, 1813)
- ➔ The last verse of the National Anthem of the United States of America (by Francis Scott Key): "Praise the power that hath made and preserved us as a nation...And this be our motto, 'In God is our trust.'"

"Without God, there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, the most basic, expression of Americanism. Thus, the founding fathers of America saw it, and thus with God's help, it will continue to be." - Dwight D. Eisenhower

- ➔ **March 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln** issued a Proclamation appointing a National Fast Day: The proclamation stated: “The sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history...that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”
- ➔ **Congress of the United States of America (3/3/1865)** instructed the US Mint to prepare a “device” to inscribe coins with: “In God We Trust.”
- ➔ **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** not only led the Nation in a six-minute prayer during D-Day on June 6, 1944, but he also declared, “If we will not prepare to give all that we have and all that we are to preserve Christian civilization in our land, we shall go to destruction.”
- ➔ **George Washington**, during his inauguration, he took the oath as prescribed by the Constitution but added several religious components. Before taking his oath of office, he summoned a Bible on which to take the oath, added the words “So help me God!” to the end of the oath, then kissed the Bible.
- ➔ **Congress of the United States of America (January 19, 1853):** Report to the Senate Judiciary Committee: “We are a Christian people...[and] not because the law demands it...What desired, is that we shall pay due regard to Christianity.”
- ➔ **Article 22 of the constitution of Delaware (1776)** Required all officers and leaders to take the following oath: “I, [name], do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures to be given by divine inspiration.”
- ➔ **The Constitution of Vermont (1786)**, stated: “...each member [of the Legislature], before he takes his seat, shall make the following declaration: “I do believe in one God, the Creator...of the universe...I acknowledge the Scripture of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration, and own and profess the [Christian] religion. Similar statements can be found in many early State Constitutions.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” (2 Chr. 7:14) [KJV]

THE HOLY SPIRIT / SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Holy Spirit is part of the triune nature of God (the Trinity). The Spirit is part of God, one with God, possesses the same essence and shares the attributes of God, yet has a separate and distinct role in God's sovereign plan. This section notes the nature and attributes of the Spirit, identifies the gifts and blessings associated with the Spirit, and suggest ways for believers to recognize, develop and employ their gift(s) in 'Great Commission' / Watchman work.

The Bible notes that the Spirit is part of the Trinity:

- ➔ The Spirit is presented as being equal to God. According to the transitive property, when terms are interchangeable, they are equal. Note how the Spirit and God are used interchangeably in the Acts 5:3-4:

*"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the **Holy Spirit**? You have not lied to men but to **God**.'" (Acts 5:3-4)*

- » The Spirit is called Eternal (Heb. 9:14)
- » The Spirit is called Omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11)
- » The Spirit is called Omnipresent (Psa. 139:7)
- » The Spirit is called Savior (Rom. 8:1-27)

Verses which note what the Holy Spirit does:

- ➔ The Holy Spirit imparts wisdom and knowledge (Isa. 11:2; Neh. 9:20)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit facilitates victory (Zech. 4:6)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit is a 'helper' (John 14:16)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit imparts grace and comfort to the saints (Acts 9:31)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit guides (John 16:13)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit aids in prayer (Rom. 8:26)

- ➔ The Holy Spirit imparts hope (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:5)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints (Rom 8:26)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit regenerates and renews (Titus 3:5)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit imparts the love of God (Rom 5:12)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit sanctifies (Rom 15:16) and seals (1 Cor. 1:22, 5:5)
- ➔ The Holy Spirit empowers and equips (Rom. 8:13-16)

Because of free will, the Holy Spirit can be...

- ➔ Resisted (Acts 7:51)
- ➔ Grieved (Eph. 4:43)
- ➔ Quenched (1 Thess. 5:19)

BELIEVERS RECEIVE *THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT (THE INDWELLING PRESENCE OF GOD), AND A SPIRITUAL GIFT, TO AID IN 'GREAT COMMISSION' WORK:*

All believers receive *the Gift and a gift.* The gift is the abiding, indwelling presence of God. This means, when a person becomes a committed believer and follower of Jesus Christ, God places on them the seal of redemption (2 Cor. 1:21-22) and places the abiding the presence of the Holy Spirit in their heart.

*“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” (Acts 2:38)*

“God’s Spirit has His home in you.” (1 Cor. 3:16b) [NCT]

BELIEVERS RECEIVE A GIFT (AN EQUIPPING OR ANOINTING) TO AID IN FULFILLING THE TASKS THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE LORD.

The Apostle Peter wrote of the gift or anointing of the Spirit:

*“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
(1 Pet. 4:10)*

*“There are varieties of gifts...each one is given...of the Spirit.”
(1 Cor. 1:4,7)*

“All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak [and do] as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4)

UNDERSTANDING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture notes that there are three general categories of spiritual gifts. The term gift(s) is noted by one broad word in English but noted by three different and more specific words in the Greek (the original language of the New Testament). These categories of gifts are given to equip believers to effectively accomplish the Great Commission work Jesus assigned in Matthew 28:18-20. The three categories of spiritual gifts are profiled (in no particular order) on the following pages:

1. 'Manifestational' or 'sign' gifts

The original New Testament (Greek) word to note this category of gifting is *phanerosis*. The English word, **gift** is translated from the word *phanerosis* in Paul's discussion of spiritual gifting in 1 Cor. 12:7-10. *Phanerosis* is a profound exhibition or manifestation of the Holy Spirit through a believer. The primary purpose of gifts in this category is to confirm God's blessing and leading. For example, to confirm God's blessing on the New Covenant and Church leadership, God extended the gifts of healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. Noted below is a summary of the 'manifestational' or 'sign' gifts presented in Scripture (1 Corinthians 12:7-10):

- ➔ **A word of wisdom:** This is a special revelation regarding what to do or say. An example of this is Peter's first sermon where 3000 were saved and baptized (Acts 2).
- ➔ **A word of knowledge:** This is a revelation or spiritually discerned insight. An example of this is discerning that Ananias and Safira had lied about their offering (Acts 5).
- ➔ **Faith:** A faith that exudes confidence, purpose, passion, and peace. An example of this is how the disciples (who were scattered the night Jesus was arrested) boldly preached in the temple courts and testified to the Pharisees when arrested (Acts 1-8).
- ➔ **Healing:** An example of this is when Peter healed the lame man in Acts 3.
- ➔ **The working of miracles:** An example of this is when Paul was bitten by a snake but was unharmed (Acts 28).
- ➔ **Prophecy:** This is to receive and proclaim Holy Spirit given insight regarding what is to come. Examples of this include the warning of Agabus (Acts 21) and the message in the book of Revelation.
- ➔ **Discerning of spirits:** This is the ability to determine what is and is not of God. An example of this is the quick identification of Simon's motive and intention in Acts 8.
- ➔ **Speaking in tongues:** Either an unknown heavenly language (1 Cor. 13:1) or a foreign language (Acts 2:4-12). Examples of this are found in Acts 2, 10, and 19.
- ➔ **Interpretation of tongues:** A notation of this important gift is found in 1 Corinthians 14:1-33.

2. The ‘ministry gifts’

The second category of spiritual gifting is identified by the Greek word, *doma* in Ephesians 4:11. These gifts are callings and offices designed to help the church coordinate the Kingdom’s work. These special callings and offices include:

- ➔ **Apostle** (1 Cor. 12:28; Mk. 10:2; Rom. 16:7; Gal. 2:7-9). It is thought by most that a requisite for being an Apostle is to have seen the risen Lord. Hence, this office is not a part of the structure of the church today.
- ➔ **Prophet** (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 13:1, 11:28). This office is rare—the message of one who speaks as a prophet must be clear, God honoring, and consistent with the established canon of Scripture (which precludes individuals such as Joseph Smith and Charles Russell from being prophets of God).
- ➔ **Evangelist** (2 Tim. 4:5; Matt. 28:18-20). All are called to share, witness, and support ‘Great Commission’ work. However, God calls and anoints some (such as Billy Graham) with a special ability to communicate His message..
- ➔ **Pastor** (1 Peter 5:2-5; Acts 20:28).
- ➔ **Teacher** (Acts 2:42, 4:2, 5:42, 11:26, 13:1, 15:35, 18:11).

3. The ‘motivational gifts.’

The third category of spiritual gifting is identified by the Greek word *charisma* in Romans 12:6-8. Whereas the gifts of prophecy, healing and serving as a pastor are not extended to every believer, the *charisma* gifts are. That is, **every believer** receives at least one of the gifts in this category. Accordingly, this category of gifting should be the main focus of the body of Christ today. The *charisma* or ‘motivational’ gifts include:

- ➔ **Prophecy/perceiver**: One who clearly sees right from wrong and easily identifies the Spirit’s leading (1 Corinthians 14:1).
- ➔ **Service/ministering/hospitality**: One called to serve God by serving others (Galatians 5:13).

- ➔ **Teacher:** One who can share the world of God with clarity, power, and conviction (1 Corinthians 4:17).
- ➔ **Exhorter** (Hebrews 3:12-13): One who can share a word of instruction, counsel, and reproof in a way that honors God.
- ➔ **Giver:** One who gives generously in support of the Kingdom's work (Luke 6:38).
- ➔ **Leadership/administration:** One who is gifted in the areas of leadership and administrative oversight (1 Timothy 3:4).
- ➔ **Mercy/compassion:** One who exudes the grace and love of God (Colossians 3:12).

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

- ➔ The list of gifts in 1 Cor. 12:28-30 represents a general profile of gifts—it is not a comprehensive listing.
- ➔ Spiritual gifts are designed to help believers work together and be effective in the 'Great Commission' work assigned by the Father (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
- ➔ Though some gifts are more 'high profile' than others, each gift is of equal value.

IF GOD IS GOOD, WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Though this section may seem to be better suited for a devotional rather than discipleship book, I have chosen to include it because it addresses one of the top ten questions skeptics and seekers have.

It is therefore important for believers to have thought through the question, “If God is good why do bad things happen?” and be able to provide a biblically-based response when the question is posed. The information in this section is designed to help believers respond to this important question.

Why do bad things happen? Four possibilities:

1. **Bad things happen because God is not there.** That does not make sense because our experience, the scope and nature of creation, scientific evidence, theology experts and most of the world today acknowledge the existence of God.
2. **Bad things happen because God is bad.** This does not make sense because a malevolent God would not make or do good things (such as create life and beauty, answer prayer, send His Son, offer the hope of heaven, etc.).
3. **Bad things happen because God is weak.** This supposition does not make sense because God is the ultimate—supreme in power, knowledge, and ability. For God to be weak implies that something or someone is greater than God (a supposition which opposes the very definition of God).
4. **God is good even when bad things happen. *This fourth option is the only viable choice. What follows are five reasons to believe that God is good, even when bad things happen.***

God is good because all He created is good

It is important to recognize that all God has created is perfect and good. “The bad” was not God’s creation, but the result of the evil work and choices of beings God created with free will.

“Everything that God has created is good...everything is to be received with...thanks.” (1 Timothy 4:4)

“Every good gift and every perfect present comes from heaven...” (James 1:17b)

God’s goodness led Him to create us with freedom of choice. It is our willful choices that open the door to evil and brings about the pain and suffering.

“Choose this day whom you will serve...” (Josh. 24:15)

God proves His goodness in that He delays eliminating the bad. It is easy to think that if God were good, He would simply take away all ‘the bad.’ However, if God were to take away all ‘the bad’ from the earth at midnight, would you be here the next day? God knows we are “prone to wander, prone to linger and prone to leave the One we love.” It is His goodness that delays his moving to eliminate all ‘the bad’ from the world.

“God is not slow about His coming...He is patient... waiting for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

God proves His goodness when He avoids intervention that is unhealthy.

Some ask, If God cannot take away all of ‘the bad,’ then why doesn’t He just intervene and keep us safe—insulated from the consequences of the bad choices of others? Noted below are **three reasons**.

- By intervening, God would be removing our freedom of choice.
- By intervening, God would be promoting irresponsibility (a child learns

from mistakes and is duly warned and guided by the fear of negative consequences stemming from bad choices. If a child knew that his father would always protect from every bad choice—the child would not grow to be a responsible adult.

- ➔ If God always intervened, the result would be chaos and confusion. As in the movie “Liar, Liar” with Jim Carrey, our lives would be in chaos if, at the last minute, God overrode every less-than-perfect choice we were about to make.

God’s goodness helps us to cope with the bad

God is greatly concerned about the suffering in the world. He has sent angels, kings, prophets, His Son, and the Holy Spirit to help ease the suffering. Further, God has established a plan whereby those who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior will be rewarded beyond measure in the age to come. The Apostle Paul said with joy: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

God stands with His people in times of trial and suffering. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the fire, the evil king looked into the flames and saw not three, but four—the fourth was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Jesus stands with us as we move through the deep waters or intense flames. Believers serve a Lord who loves, cares, and promises never to leave nor forsake His people (Heb. 13:5). Noted below are a few verses of comfort:

- ➔ “For since Christ Himself has now been through suffering, He knows what is like when we suffer—and He is wonderfully able to help.” (Hebrews 2:18)
- ➔ “God is the Father who is full of goodness and mercy...He comforts us every time we are in trouble.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- ➔ He will be [our] shepherd; and will lead [us] to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes.” (Revelation 7:17)
- ➔ “Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning.” (Psa.30:5b)

KEYS TO PRAYING WITH POWER

Prayer is perhaps the most important daily spiritual activity for the follower of Christ. Worship, giving, and serving are important, but prayer is a more continuous action. Believers are to pray “without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Through prayer, believers strengthen the relationship they have with their Creator. Prayer draws believers into communion with God and positions the believer to receive both encouragement and direction from God.

There is power in prayer, and to minimize its importance is to compromise potential effectiveness in the service of the Lord. Prayer must be a priority aspect of one’s spiritual walk in order to achieve and receive all that God has in planned for you. Noted directly below are five keys to praying for power:

1. **Pray with PASSION:** We should approach prayer as an athlete approaches preparing for the big game. It takes effort—great effort to win the gold medal or championship game. Being a good athlete is not good enough. Winning the gold requires particular focus and intentional effort. Believers should approach prayer with equal seriousness and passion. Note how the verses below associate planning, intentional effort, and passion with a God-honoring prayer life:
 - ➔ “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, and prayed.” (Mark 1:35)
 - ➔ “[Jesus]...went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer...” (Luke 6:12)
 - ➔ “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” (Luke 22:44)
 - ➔ “...You will seek Me, and you will find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

2. **Pray with PERSISTENCE:** The grammatical structure of the word pray in the Greek New Testament indicates continual action. The original text indicates that believers are to pray, keep on praying, and not stop praying. It is said, “As long as we have a need, we need to pray.” Note the following biblical directives:
- ➔ “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)
 - ➔ “Do not be weary in prayer; keep at it, watch for God’s answer.” (Colossians 4:2)
 - ➔ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7)
3. **Pray with PRECISION:** Prayer is like light. Light diffused has little power. But a focused laser has the power to cut through steel. A focused prayer life has great power.
- ➔ “...But in everything in by prayer and supplication...let your requests be known to God.” (Phil. 4:6)
 - ➔ “...Ye have not because ye ask not.” (James 4:2b; Luke 18:40-41)
4. **Pray BELIEVING:** In 1954 Roger Bannister did what everyone said couldn’t be done—he was the first runner to break the four-minute mile. For decades elite athletes believed the four-minute mile was unachievable, and for decades the best of the best were satisfied with times in the 4:10 range. But in May of 1954, Roger Bannister showed that breaking the four-minute barrier was possible. And as others began to believe it was possible, they broke the four-minute barrier too. For decades it was said it could not be done—and so it wasn’t done. But when athletes believed it could be done, a dozen or so broke the four-minute barrier in the next few years. Equipment did not change—but perceptions and confidence levels

did. Belief, faith, confidence, the right perspective and the right motive are requisites to a powerful prayer life. A wise preacher once said, “If you’re going to pray, don’t doubt—and if you’re going to doubt, don’t pray.” Note the biblical directives below:

- ➔ “I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (Mark 11:24)
- ➔ “When you [pray], you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6)

5. **Pray WITH A THANKFUL HEART.** I am aware that life can be very difficult and praying with thanksgiving can be great challenge, but the biblical mandate becomes easier when one remembers that God is good (Exod. 34:6-7a), God is near (Psa. 46:1), God has a plan (Jer. 29:11), and God is faithful (1 Cor. 1:9).
 - ➔ “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

SEVEN REALITIES OF PRAYER

1. Prayer is pleasing to God

“The Lord is pleased when his people pray...” (Prov. 15:8)

“Then the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having...a bowl of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” (Revelation 5:8)

2. **God can do more than we expect or imagine: Impossibilities are unleashed through prayer.**

“God...is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we think or ask.” (Ephesians 3:20)

3. **We are to intercede for others through prayer.**

“I exhort therefore, [make]...supplication, prayers and intercession...for all men.” (1 Timothy 2:1)

4. **When we pray for others, we benefit.**

“Pray for each other, that you may be healed.” (James 1:5)

5. **We are to pray for direction.**

“Call unto me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3)

6. **We are to pray with perseverance.**

“Be persistent in prayer...keep alert ...” (Col. 4:2)

*“Pray at all times, with perseverance...for all the saints...”
(Eph. 6:18-19) [RSV]*

7. **The Lord hears and answers the prayers of His people.** (Mark 11:24; Luke 11:13; Psalm 91:15, 34:15, 145:18, 28:6; Isaiah 65:24; Jeremiah 29:12; John 15:7; 1 Peter 5:7).

A GUIDE FOR HOW TO PRAY

Noted below is a simple guide to aid
in your daily prayer time

1. **Begin with a time of self-examination and confession** (Psa. 32:3-5)

- Ask the Spirit to reveal to you the weak points in your spiritual walk with the Lord. Acknowledge shortcomings and humbly ask the Lord to forgive you and help you to be stronger (a better witness) in these areas in the future. Self-examination should include the following:
 - » Your thoughts – Your motives
 - » Your words
 - » Your deeds/actions
 - » Sins of commission (things that were done)
 - » Sins of omission (things that were not done, but should have been)

2. **Thank God for His blessings** (Psa. 103:1-5)

Ask the Spirit to bring to mind how the Lord has been moving in your life.

Thank God for His many blessings. This might include the following: Life/health

- The beauty of creation • His mercy/grace • Family • Friends • Forgiveness
- Friends • Possessions • Freedom • Salvation • Answered prayers • Job • Health
- Opportunities • Relationships • God's promises.

3. **Pray for yourself/your needs.**

This should include the following: Health • Safety • Relationships • Spiritual growth • Area of service • Awareness of the Lord's leading in your life • Personal concerns • Your work • Your witness.

4. **Pray for those who lead** (1 Timothy 2)

Scripture notes that it is important to pray for all “in authority.” Pray for:

- » Leaders in the workplace
- » Church Leadership
- » Leaders in government

5. **Pray for others** (James 1:5; Eph. 6:18-19)

Ask the Spirit to reveal to you the names of those who need to be upheld in the ministry of intercessory prayer. Pray for:

- » Those who need encouragement
- » Those who need salvation
- » Those with relationship needs
- » Those with employment needs
- » Those with physical or emotional needs

6. **Pray for the church**

Pray for blessing on and protection for your church ministry. Pray for the following: • Church growth • Church unity • Strengthening of existing ministries • Impact on your local community for Christ • Development of new ministries • Financial concerns • Upcoming events • Special needs

SATAN



Satan is the enemy of all that is good. Scripture notes he was once the chief of angels (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19), but became proud and led a rebellion against God. His attempt to raise his throne above all (Isa. 14:13) did not succeed, but does point to his unmitigated gall and hubris (after all, who would think there could be the slightest chance of a victory against God except some being of exceptional power).

He was cast out of heaven and now seeks to oppress God's people and thwart God's plans. He is in a rage for he knows his time is short (Revelation 12:12) and judgment is coming. He is not to be underestimated, but he is not to be feared. Noted below is a brief, biblical profile of the enemy, Satan, the destroyer.

Satan is...

- ➔ Mentioned by every New Testament writer.
- ➔ Denied by 67% of Americans.
- ➔ Defined as Adversary in the Hebrew. The Hebrew שָׂטָן = to oppose, or thwart.
- ➔ A term used 24 times in the Old Testament.
- ➔ Used 4 times as a proper noun (name or title). The name Lucifer is used only once, and only in the KJV translation.
- ➔ Mentioned 29 times in the Gospels (25 times by Jesus Christ).
- ➔ Intelligent (2 Cor. 11:3).
- ➔ Able to manifest emotion (Rev. 12:17, Luke 22:31) and demonstrates a will or desire (Isa. 14:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:26). Satan is a personality, not a symbol for evil.

Satan desires to...

- ➔ Thwart the will of God.
- ➔ Destroy, disrupt, discourage, divide, and instill doubt.
- ➔ Promote a false paradigm.

- ➔ Persecute/oppress God's people: Acts 12, Luke 2.
- ➔ Control or possess: The term 'possession' occurs 13 times in the Gospels and four times in the book of Acts.

Scripture passages profiling the fall of Satan:

“Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol...How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! ...you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’” (Isaiah 14:11-14)

“Thus says the Lord God, ‘You had the seal of perfection... perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, every precious stone was your covering...You were the anointed cherub...blameless... from...the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you... [but] you sinned...Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground...” (Ezekiel 28:12b-16)

“Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven...And there was war in heaven...The dragon and his angels waged war...and they were not strong enough...And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan...was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” (Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9)

Satan's future: (Also see the ESCHATOLOGY section of this booklet)

- ➔ Satan's final judgment is profiled in the Revelation 19-21.
- ➔ He will seek global power, and will lead armies in battles against Israel (in a series of campaigns collectively called Armageddon).
- ➔ The Armageddon campaign includes:
 - » The southern campaign (Dan. 11:40; Rev. 16:14-21)
 - » The eastern campaign (Rev. 9:16, 19:19)
 - » The final battle and judgment (Rev. 20:7ff)

VERSING NOTING THE CURRENT ACTIVITY OF SATAN:

He tempts

Satan stood against Israel and moved David to order a census of Israel. (1 Chronicles 21:1)

*Satan tempted Jesus at the beginning of His ministry.
(Matthew 4)*

He accuses

"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him." (Zechariah 3:1)

"Then I heard a loud voice ...saying, '...the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night...'" (Revelation 12:10)

He seeks to destroy

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded...to sift you like wheat...” (Luke 22:31)

“They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek, he has the name Apollyon.” (Revelation 9:11)

He lies

“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?’” (Acts 5:3)

*“...There is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”
(John 8:44)*

He deceives

“Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” (2 Cor. 11:14)

“...The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving...” (2 Cor. 4:4)

He seeks to limit or hinder the work of God

“We wanted to come to you...more than once...yet Satan hindered us.” (1 Thess. 2:18)

He persecutes the Church

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation...Be faithful...and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

Verses which note how to stand against the enemy:

*“Submit...to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
(James 4:7)*

“...Do not give the devil an opportunity.” (Ephesians 4:27)

“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:13)

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

“But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil... did not dare pronounce...a...judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 1:9)

An end to evil is promised:

“When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be

released...and will come out to deceive the nations...to gather them together for the war...And they came up...and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Rev. 20:7-10)

Admonitions:

Guard your mind and your focus:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations, and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...”

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Respect but do not fear your enemy:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

(1 Peter 5:8)

“Ye [who] are of God...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE



Question: Can there be any common ground in the teachings of science and theology?

YES. The more science develops, the more great minds are led to see that the complexity and precision of creation demand the recognition of the existence of a Master Designer (Christians know this Master Designer as God). The precision and scope of the universe cannot be attributed to a series of chance mutations and randomly matched chemical combinations. Listed below are a few points which illustrate the growing harmony between science and the biblical record.

Science and theology agree that there was a beginning point for the creation of the universe. For more than 2300 years the prevailing ‘scientific’ view (advanced by Aristotle) was that the universe was eternal. Only in recent decades have scientists proven that the universe was not eternal, but had a beginning point (as the book of Genesis suggests).

Science and theology agree on the order of creation

ACCORDING TO SCIENCE	ACCORDING TO GENESIS
The ‘Big Bang’... A burst of light. Expansion of universe	The beginning/light from darkness - Gen.1:1-5
Our galaxy/solar system forms	‘Heavenly firmament formed’ Gen. 1:6-8
Earth’s atmosphere becomes transparent/ photosynthesis begins	The Sun, moon, and stars become visible (from earth) Gen. 1:14-19
Reptiles and winged animals appear	Aquatic life abundant, followed by reptiles, then winged animals Gen. 1:20-23
Land animals appear, humanity	Land animals, humankind Gen. 1:24-31

The complexity of the universe points to 'intelligent design.'

“The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.” (Psa. 19:1)

“The odds of an explosion of energy producing the exact, specific conditions necessary for an environment suitable for life are 10 to the 10th power x 10 to the 123rd power (that is one in a billion, billion, billion – repeated more than a billion, billion times...just to speak [that number] out loud would require 18 billion years.” Dr. Penrose (Oxford Statistician)

Note the finely tuned balance at work in nature:

This information comes from “The God of Creation” (Theodore Epp), “God and the New Physics” (Paul Davies), “The Creator and the Cosmos” (Dr. Hugh Ross), and “The Language of God” (Dr. Francis Collins).

- ➔ If the bonding force within the nucleus were any stronger, there would be no elements in the universe larger than hydrogen (no life would exist). If the bond were any weaker, there would be no elements other than hydrogen.
- ➔ If the gravitational constant in the universe was greater, stars would burn too hot and would expire too quickly. If the constant were any less, stars would remain too cool, and nuclear fusion would not take place. Heavy elements could not exist.
- ➔ If the electromagnetic force in the universe were greater, there would be insufficient chemical bonding and no elements more massive than boron would be stable enough to form. If the electromagnetic force were any less, there would be insufficient chemical bonding.
- ➔ If the ratio of electromagnetic force to gravitational force were larger, no stars less than 1.4 solar masses would exist, hence shorter stellar life spans and no environment suitable for life as we know it. If the ratio were any less, no stars greater than .8 solar masses would exist, and

there would be no possibility for heavy element production. Again, no environments suitable for life.

- ➔ If the ratio of electron to proton mass were any larger, there would be insufficient chemical bonding. If it were any smaller, again, there would be insufficient chemical bonding and life would not exist.
- ➔ If the ratio of protons to electrons in nature were any larger, electromagnetism would dominate gravity, preventing galaxy, star and planet formation.
- ➔ If the expansion rate of the universe were any greater, there would be no formation of any galaxies.
- ➔ If the expansion rate of the universe were any smaller, galaxies would collapse before star formation.
- ➔ If the decay rate of protons (a constant in the universe) were greater, life would be exterminated because of the release of radiation. If it were smaller, there would be insufficient matter for life to exist.
- ➔ If the rate of decay of the element beryllium were slower, heavy element fusion would generate catastrophic explosions in all stars. If it were faster, no element production beyond beryllium would exist, and life would not be possible.
- ➔ If the polarity signature of the water molecule were greater, heat fusion and vaporization would be too great for life to exist.
- ➔ In a quantum explosion, such as in the birth of a star, there is a perfect pairing of matter and anti-matter. That is, matter and anti-matter are always formed in identical amounts. But somehow, at the beginning of time, there was an intentional miss-pairing of matter to anti-matter (one part in ten billion). This resulted in a 10,000 million-to-one ratio of photons to nuclear particles. This set in motion the conditions that determined the future of everything in the universe. Without this minuscule but significant, miss-pairing, all stars and quarks would have rapidly collapsed, and the universe would only be filled with radiant energy – no particles, and therefore, no matter would be possible.

Note the wonder of the human body:

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works...” (Psa. 139:14)

- ➔ The human brain can store the information contained in fifty million encyclopedias.
- ➔ There are about one trillion neural connections in the brain.
- ➔ There about 200 sub-atomic particles within the cell that are smaller than the nucleus or electrons of an atom. One of these sub-atomic particles is called the Zi. The Zi has a lifespan of one-ten-billionth of a second, and yet this very small particle with such a brief lifespan is essential to sustain life.
- ➔ Our DNA, if uncoiled, could reach back and forth from the sun four times.
- ➔ Each cell in the human body has approximately one billion bits of data coiled within the DNA, weighing one-trillionth of a gram.
- ➔ “The human body has 70,000 genes and 70,000 proteins which are strings of between 200-1000 amino acids. These 70,000 genes are organized into 70,000 x 1000 specific amino acid structures. This accounts for the 30 trillion cells in your body. Your finely tuned body represents one in 10^{390} possible protein combinations. It is as if someone chose one coin out of a bag of a billion, billion, billion (repeated 30 billion times) coins.” Dr. Schroeder, Physicist

The complexity of life and scope and precision of the universe are the fingerprints of the Master Designer—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:16-17)

EVOLUTION

Why “Classical Evolution” is not a plausible theory

The idea of seeing development (evolution) within a particular species (such as humans being taller now than 4,000 years ago), *is* supported in the fossil record. Interphylum development (that is, one species morphing into another species) *is not* supported in the fossil record. This fact is one of three key reasons Classical Evolution is not a plausible theory. The lack of fossil record verification, the statistical probability of random chance mutations forming trillions of cycles of favorable transformations, and multiple phylum sets developing along similar tracts (similar optical, neurological, circulatory, skeletal patterns, etc.), precludes Classical Evolution from being a plausible theory.

Evolutionists argue that life developed similarly in six different phylum systems on planet Earth (amphibian, mammal, reptile, etc.). This supposition should be well-supported in the fossil record—it is not. Further, statisticians note that the probability of this happening is theoretically, zero. The probability of duplicating the possible 10 to the 170th power gene sequences for life (just once) is 100 million billion (times 18) to one. The probability of this happening six times (in multiple phylum sets) is 10 to the 170th power raised to the 5th power—statistically zero.

There is evidence to support the position that humans, as we know them today, have only been present a very short time. For example, there is a surprisingly high level of genetic similarity among all humans. Considering the wide distribution and large number of our species, there should be significant genetic divergence among populations. That divergence is missing. Gorillas, for example, though geographically much more confined and much fewer in number, show significantly higher genetic diversity than humans. Our global similarity indicates that humans have a much more recent common ancestor.

The statistical probability that nature will produce by random mutation, two structures that are externally similar (such as two different species having similar eye structures), even though they may use different protein their construction, would conservatively require a minimum of one trillion generations. It is not statistically possible for convergent evolution to occur (as it has in the six phylum species on earth) through random reactions. There is not sufficient time in earth history for this to happen. The genetic code must be pre-programmed/ pre-designed (by God).

Evolutionists theorize that humans and chimps have a common ancestor dating back some seven million years. Scientists note that there is a similar genetic code in chimps and humans (about a 3% change in the genome sequence – the three billion nucleotide-based pairs per cell that serve as molecular points of information on the double-helix shaped strands of chromosomal DNA).

For the sake of argument, assume there is only a 1% differential in the DNA structure between chimps and humans. A 1% change (representing more than a one million point mutational difference in the DNA structure) would be impossible to develop in only seven million years. The Darwinian position is that changes in evolution result from random point mutations within the DNA – the gametes unite to form mutated zygotes which grow into mutated offspring. If the mutation is proved beneficial, then over time, through many generations, mutations or changes, it gradually becomes the dominant trait in the new, improved DNA structure. For a chimp to evolve into a human, multi-million point mutations need to be proved and established (this would take many millions of years). There is no fossil evidence for this (or for any inter-phylum species change). But assuming that this is possible, and that there would be no fatal mutations (that is, assuming that all mutations are accepted the first time which, again, is theoretically impossible, as the maximum recorded mutation rate in the human body is one in ten) it would require a minimum of 100 billion generations for the evolutionary process to bring about just a 1% change in the entire DNA genetic sequence. One-hundred billion generations are many times beyond the life history of the entire planet Earth.

There is not enough time (at most, 4.7 billion years for planet Earth) for humans to

have evolved from one-celled organisms. Assuming that inter-phylum evolution is possible, it still would take a minimum of 200 trillion generations to have developed into our present state today.

New fossil evidence (post-1970) seems to show that life on earth started soon after the earth cooled and water formed. This is in contrast to the classic evolutionary theory that life appeared after a billion years of slow evolutionary process.

The fossil record shows winged insects appeared suddenly (with a 30-centimeter wingspan). The Ichthyosaurus marine reptile first appeared with fully developed fins, paddles and bill. One-hundred million years later, it was essentially the same. There was no evolutionary process at work. In the plant kingdom, 140 million years ago, angiosperms blossomed forth, with no inkling in older fossils of their impending explosion.

In London's famed Natural History Museum, there is an entire wing dedicated to evolution, yet no one can explain why sharks have remained sharks and daisies have remained daisies. In the exhibit, there is not one example of life undergoing a major (macro) gradual morphological change.

There is no strong evidence to support Classical Evolution. There is, however, very strong evidence suggesting there is a master designer behind the beauty and precision of the universe.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS [EXODUS 20]

Though less than 300 words, the 10 Commandments have served as a foundational document for law and government for more than 3400 years. The 10 Commandments are found in Exodus 20. They have served as the key component of Jewish law since the days of Moses and continue to provide important guiding principles for Christians today. A brief profile of these very important precepts is noted below.

The structure of the 10 Commandments:

- Commandments 1-5 speak of our relationship to God
- Commandments 6-10 speak of our relationship to each other

A BRIEF PROFILE OF THE 10 COMMANDMENTS:

1. **You shall have no other God's before me**

- General meaning: Believers must make God first in their life—first in planning, first in adoration, and first in focus. No person, no work—nothing should take precedence over God in a believer's life.
- Support verses: (Deut. 6:4; Jer. 10:10; Isa. 44:8, 45:5; Isa. 45:14, 45:18, 45:22, 46:9; Dan. 3:29)
- Our challenge: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matt. 22:37)

2. **You shall not make or bow down to any graven image**

- This commandment seeks to make the worship of Jehovah God different from the pagan religions of the world (most of which have a strong emphasis on idol worship). Again, God must be first in our life.
- This commandment serves as a reminder that God is great in glory, and any idol or image man creates, no matter how magnificent, cannot begin to represent God's awesome nature.

3. **You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain**

- ➔ General meaning: Having a relationship with God requires that we represent Him accurately, sincerely and respectfully. Using the name of God in a flippant way, or as a kind of curse or expletive is disrespectful. God deserves more.
- ➔ General support verses: (Matthew 5:34-36; James 5:12)

4. **You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it holy**

- ➔ General meaning: Having a good relationship with God requires that we
 - 1) Spend time cultivating and developing that relationship
 - 2) Worship Him on a regular basis
 - 3) Show respect for God by setting aside time to focus on Him and
 - 4) Show respect for God by showing respect for our bodies (giving them rest on a regular basis).

5. **Honor your father and mother**

- ➔ General meaning: The family unit is an expression or symbol of the relationship between God and humanity. Parents provide love, care, and direction for their children. This is a picture of what God does for His children. Further, as God desires His children love and honor Him, He also desires that children honor their earthly parents.
- ➔ Learning to obey this Commandment helps children establish a lifetime pattern of respecting rules, principles, and laws.
- ➔ Children who grow up honoring and respecting their parents will have less difficulty respecting and honoring God as adults.

6. **You shall not murder**

- ➔ General meaning: This Commandment reminds believers that God is the giver of life and He alone has the authority to take it or to grant permission to take it. Note: The Hebrew word for kill is different than the Hebrew word for murder. Strictly speaking, this Commandment does not reference deaths associated with war or capital punishment. It references the willful, wrongful, unwarranted taking of life.

- ➔ God wants believers to go far beyond avoiding murder; He does not want believers to maliciously harm others in word or deed. This is why Jesus said, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” (John 3:15)

7. **You shall not commit adultery**

- ➔ This Commandment speaks to the importance of purity in relationships. Note that sexual impurity is often used in Scripture to depict spiritual unfaithfulness. (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9)
- ➔ Spiritual application in the Old Testament (Jer. 3:8-9)
- ➔ Spiritual application in the New Testament (Mark 5:38)

8. **You shall not steal**

- ➔ This Commandment is designed to safeguard our witness (Titus 3:14), our relationships (Luke 19:8), our walk with God (Malachi 3:8-9), and points to the two approaches in life: Taking or Giving (Acts 20:35b).
- ➔ Luke 6:30-35: To focus on giving is more honorable than focusing on getting. Those who focus on giving will receive (Luke 6:38).

9. **You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor**

- ➔ FALSE = sheh'-ker שקר = Untruth
- ➔ This Commandment is designed to safeguard our relationship with others and to help us better reflect the nature of God. (Eph. 4:24-25)
- ➔ God's Word is truth: (Dan. 10:21; Prov. 30:5; Psa. 100:5)
- ➔ To lie is to imitate the devil (John 8:44). Satan presents it as a quick and effortless way to gain an advantage or to escape guilt or responsibility.
- ➔ Jesus spoke the truth and is the truth: “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)

10. **You shall not covet**

- ➔ General meaning: God desires that we find our contentment (and joy) in Him. To covet the things of this world is to express dissatisfaction with Him, and puts us on the path where we will always thirst for more. In John 4 Jesus speaks of living water (an illusion to Himself) that fully and eternally satisfies.
- ➔ This Commandment speaks of our heart and motive, more than to any specific action. Paul wrote that he could be 'content in every situation' (Phil. 4:11-13). This was not because his 'every situation' was easy or comfortable, but because in every situation he felt surrounded by he love, grace, and presence of God..



SPEAKING IN TONGUES



The first occurrence of speaking in tongues occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The Apostles, being “filled with the Spirit,” were able to share the Gospel with the diverse crowd in a new and profound way—each person heard the message in their language (“we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Acts 2:11).

The Greek word translated “tongues” in Acts 2 means “languages.” The general view is that, particularly in the beginning, the gift of tongues centered on facilitating the spread of the Gospel by allowing individuals to hear the message in their own language (even though the speaker was not presenting the message in that language).

Some 20 years after Pentecost, inappropriate use of speaking in tongues was a significant problem in the Corinthian Church. The Apostle Paul addressed this issue in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. The Corinthian Church had been involved in a number of inappropriate practices (see especially 1 Corinthians 5) and Paul’s main purpose in writing 1 and 2 Corinthians was to reinstate order, proper focus, and structure in the church. Paul’s instructions on speaking in tongues can be summarized in three simple points:

- 1. Value and prioritize speaking/teaching/preaching in a language discernible by the majority, rather than just a few:** At this point in history, a number of individuals emphasized speaking in an unknown tongue (which some refer to as a heavenly language or the tongues of angels). The Apostle Paul does not deny the possibility of this being able to happen, but cautions: “But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (1 Cor. 14:19).

2. Let God demonstrate His power (and this gift) as He determines best:

Paul indicated that speaking in tongues should be viewed as a God-driven, and God-honoring event. In order to guard against confusion and satanic influence, Paul directed that there must be an interpreter if the gift of tongues is to be manifested in the church. Paul wrote: "If someone is going to speak in strange tongues, two or three at the most should speak, one after the other, and someone else must explain what is being said. But if no one is there who can explain, then the one who speaks in strange tongues must be quiet and speak only to himself and to God." (1 Cor. 14:27-28)

3. Mass or group speaking in tongues is not appropriate as it yields confusion and can compromise the witness of the church:

Paul wrote: "If, then, the whole church meets together and everyone starts speaking in strange tongues...and if some...unbelievers come in, won't they say that you are all crazy? But if everyone is proclaiming God's message when some unbelievers or ordinary people come in, they will be convinced of their sin by what they hear. They will be judged by all they hear."

(1 Cor. 14:23-24)

Some argue that 1 Cor. 13:8 notes that the gift of tongues was prophesied to die out (and that this happened at the close of the apostolic age). I do not hold this view. Believers are told, "not to quench the Holy Spirit." I believe God can give any gift to any person at any time.

However, it is possible to overemphasize or unduly focus on this gift. Some bodies of believers allow this gift to become central in their meetings and worship experience, central in what their ministry is known for, and most importantly, some congregations allow the use of this gift to draw attention to a person, rather than God.

Only a few in all of history have received the gifts of healing, prophecy. Only a

few in all of history have been called and gifted to be an evangelist or pastor. The gift of tongues is a beautiful and wondrous gift of God (as all His gifts are), but it is one of many gifts that God bestows. **No individual receives all the gifts, and no one gift is given to every individual.** Just as it would be wrong to suggest that one must exhibit the gift of healing in order to be saved, or spiritually mature, it is wrong to suggest that manifesting the gift of tongues is a requisite for spiritual maturity, or a proof of one's salvation experience.

SUMMARY:

1 Corinthians 12:1-5 encourages believers to seek the anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. With regard to the use of tongues, Paul emphasizes:

- ➔ The gift of tongues is a gift of God—it is not a qualifier for salvation, nor a primary determinant of spiritual maturity. Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the church and the glory of God. No single gift is the greatest, and no single gift is given as a sign of spiritual maturity or salvation.
- ➔ If the gift of tongues is exercised in church, it should be in accordance with the guidelines presented in 1 Cor. 14
 - » One at a time, with an interpreter, 2-3 at the most, with the attention/focus being on God, and exercised for the edification of all in the room rather than the individual].

THE TRANSFIGURATION



The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Matthew 17) is an important event as it confirms Peter's testimony (one chapter earlier) that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The transfiguration affirmed the deity of Christ and was designed, in part, to embolden the disciple's faith (which was about to be sorely tested at Calvary). Noted below are a few key truths believers are to see in the Transfiguration story.

The Scripture passage profiling the event (Matthew 17:1-9)

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him, I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell face-down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

The transfiguration of Jesus Christ is important because it...

1. Links Jesus to the divine:

The number 3 is prominent in this passage of Scripture. In the Transfiguration story, Jesus takes with Him 3 witnesses (Peter, James, and

John). During the Transfiguration the nature of Jesus is confirmed by 3 witnesses (the Father, Moses, and Elijah). In Hebrew culture, the number 3 was associated with God and the divine. The name of God in Exod. 3:14 (I Am) is comprised of three Hebrew words: ehyeh-asher-ehyeh. Other number threes in Scripture linking to the divine include:

- ➔ 3 is the number of divisions in the God's temple.
- ➔ 3 is the number of sacred items in the Ark of the Covenant.
- ➔ The genealogy of Christ in the book of Matthew is presented in 3 double sets of 7.
- ➔ Jesus went to the cross at the third hour (Mark 15:25).
- ➔ Jesus was resurrected on the third day.

2. Notes Jesus' right to lead and our need to follow:

- ➔ **Matthew 16:** We are to follow Jesus for Jesus is Lord
 - » Most considered Jesus to be more than an ordinary man. Many considered Jesus to be a prophet.
 - » Peter notes that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah.
- ➔ **Matthew 17:**
 - » The Transfiguration demonstrates that the Jesus was more than most thought He was. Jeremiah 23:5-6 and Zechariah 11:10-11b notes that the Messiah would be God *and* man.

3. Foreshadows what Jesus will do for believers

What the disciples saw:

- » Jesus' body and clothes changed: "His face shone like the sun" (V.2b). "His clothes became as white as the light." (V.2c)
- » There was a time of communion with the saints: Moses and Elijah appeared "in glorious splendor" (Luke 9:30b).

- » The very presence of God enveloped them, encouraged them and directed them: “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said...” (V.5).
- » They saw what had been hidden from them: “They beheld the glory of Jesus.” (Luke 9:32b)

What Jesus will do for believers:

- » Believers will be changed: “In a twinkling of an eye we will be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:52)
- » Believers will receive a glorified form: “The corruptible will put on incorruptible.” (Romans 1:23; 1 Peter 1:23)
- » Believers will receive a glorified body: “Believers will be given new bodies.” (Philippians 3:21)
- » Believers will be exalted: “Believers will be higher than the angels.” (1 Corinthians 6:3)
- » Believers will be clothed in glorious raiment: Believers “will be given white robes.” (Revelation 6:11; 7:14; 19:8)
- » Believers will gaze upon His beauty: “We will see face-to-face.” (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2)
- » Believers will see His true form: “We shall behold His glory.” (Revelation 21:3)

THE TRINITY

Also see the Deity of Christ section in this book

The doctrine of the Trinity is the key doctrine of the New Testament. The truth is, salvation is possible not because Jesus is good, but because Jesus is God. Many believe a man named Jesus existed—relatively few believe Jesus is one with God, fully God, and part of the Trinity. However, this truth is the foundation upon which Christianity rests. Believers must understand it, and be able to articulate a defense for it to be the witnesses God calls each believer to be. Noted below is a biblical overview of the Trinity doctrine.

Why some deny the divinity of Christ

- ➔ If Jesus is not divine, then he is not the means of our salvation. This opens the door for the introduction of new philosophies, teachings, religions, and saviors.
- ➔ If Jesus is not divine, then He does not have the authority to lead, guide, or correct. Hence, there is no accountability or coming judgment.

Verses supporting the Trinity

- ➔ “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)
- ➔ “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 17:22)
- ➔ “He [Jesus] was with God and was God.” (John 1:1)
- ➔ “In him the fullness of deity dwells.” (Col. 2:2-9)
- ➔ “I am God, and beside me there is no savior.” (Isa. 43:11)
- ➔ God (ELOHIM, in the original text) said in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” **Elohim, us** and **our** are plural words, pointing to the multi-dimensional, triune nature of God.
- ➔ “God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us.’”
(Genesis 3:22)

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT ARE EACH PRESENTED AS GOD IN THE SCRIPTURE:

The Father is God:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,” (2 Cor. 1:3)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

Jesus is God, and shares the attributes and titles of God

- ➔ Jesus is the Creator (John 1:3, 1 Cor. 8:6; Col 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2).
- ➔ Jesus is unchanging (Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8).
- ➔ Jesus is eternal (John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2).
- ➔ Jesus is omniscient (John 16:30).
- ➔ Jesus is Omnipresent (Matt. 18:20; 28:20; John 3:13; Eph. 1:23; 4:10; Col. 3:11).
- ➔ Thomas referred to Jesus as, ‘My Lord and my God! (John 20:28)
- ➔ The book of Revelation presents Jesus as God: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for *you created all things*, and by your will they were created and have their being.” (Revelation 4:11)
- ➔ The Apostle Paul refers to Jesus as God: “...the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13)
- ➔ The Apostle Peter refers to Jesus as God: “...to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.” (2 Peter 1:1)

The Holy Spirit is God

In Acts 5:3-4, the Holy Spirit is equated with God:

“Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ...What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.’” [emphasis added]

Paul explicitly equated the Holy Spirit with God:

“Now the Lord is the Spirit... And we...reflect the Lord’s likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” – 2 Cor. 3:17-18

The Holy Spirit shares the attributes of the deity. The Holy Spirit is...

- ➔ Eternal (Heb. 9:14)
- ➔ Omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11)
- ➔ Omnipresent (Psa. 139:7)
- ➔ Savior (Rom. 8:1-27)

The development of the Trinity doctrine

The teaching of the divine nature of Jesus Christ precedes the development of the Bible. Early church leaders did not use the term Trinity. However, the concept of the triune nature of God and the deity of Christ was known and taught. The Trinity doctrine was not something inserted into church theology long after the death and resurrection of Christ, it was a central teaching embraced by the early church.

- ➔ Pliny the Younger (113 AD) wrote of the divinity of Christ.
- ➔ Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and disciple of John wrote of the divinity of Christ (130 AD).
- ➔ Justin Martyr, writing between 100-165 AD, wrote of the divinity of Jesus Christ.
- ➔ Ignatius of Antioch (died 98 or 117 AD), wrote of the divinity of Jesus.

- ➔ Irenaeus (145AD) wrote of the divinity of Christ in the far west
- ➔ Tertullian (175AD) wrote of the divinity Christ in Africa.
- ➔ The Athanasius and Nicean Creeds predate the Bible. The Athanasius creed states: We worship one God in Trinity... the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three gods but one God."

Foundational truth: There is but one true God. He has revealed Himself to humanity in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

"But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath." (Jeremiah 10:10)

"We know also 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—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

"You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; beside him there is no other." (Deut. 4:35)

"This is what the LORD says- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first, and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)

"How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44)

"...There is only one God..." (Romans 3:30)

WITNESSING SHARING YOUR FAITH



I was what parents affectionately call, an active and imaginative child. The phrase is code for; He has a genius for finding danger. Not surprisingly, of the 7 in my family, I was a leader in hospital stays, trips to the ER, and number of stitches—all badges of honor for a little boy.

It is possible I would not be here today were it not for the watchful eye of my mother, who often prayed for me to play quietly, and then panicked when it became too quiet. There were times she saw me heading for adventure (toward a cliff of some sort), and called me back just in time. Typically, when my mother was aware that I began to move toward danger, an enticing campfire, for example, she would quietly caution, “Stay here, don’t go over to the fire pit.” If I took an additional step or two in that direction, her voice would elevate and grow stern, “Do not get close to that fire!” If she saw me running toward the fire, she would jump up, run toward me and shout as loud as she could, “Stop! Stop right now!” Her actions changed when the situation became more serious. When danger was imminent, she could not remain comfortable in her chair, nor be silent—she sprung to action and sounded a warning. This is love, and this is the call of a Watchman.

We are living in a time when the return of the Lord is imminent. Those who do not know the Lord are running headlong toward the fire. It is not enough for believers to sit in our chairs and know the truth that many will soon be left behind when the Lord returns to rapture His church. True love requires that we spring into action, raise our voice, sound the alarm, and rescue those closest to the fire.

Good Watchmen are good witnesses—they know how to share their faith, and do. They know what to know, and they know what to do.

WHAT TO KNOW

- All are called to serve and share. Acts 1:8 notes that individuals receive the Holy Spirit so they can effectively “...be [His] witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and the uttermost parts of the earth.” Remember, you are empowered and saved, to serve and share. God expects us to share the knowledge, insight and grace we have received from Him. I refer to this process as praying it forward.
- The time is short. In most sports, if the clock is about to run out and points are needed, the coach will call a play requiring risk in an all-out effort, to secure the win. Friends, it is important to realize that the hour is late. The return of Christ is not just sure; it is imminent. Prophecies associated with the last days and birth pains (Matthew 24) are being fulfilled. This indicates that time is short. Jesus said, “When you see these things happening, you know that it [His return] is near, right at the door” (Mark 13:29). Note: more prophecies have been fulfilled in the last 70 years, than in the 500 years leading up to 1948 (Please see the Bible Prophecy video www.vimeo.com/IAMAWatchman for more information on this exciting and vital topic).
- Hospitality and service are open doors for witnessing. We are to share the Gospel whenever and however the Lord leads. Opportunities can come at any time—we are called to be ready for these unexpected opportunities to share. However, you can create excellent opportunities to share by showing initiative in the areas of hospitality and service. You can create an opportunity for spiritual discussion by inviting a person to a café for a cup of coffee, offering to help with a project or need you know an individual has, inviting a neighbor to a BBQ, sharing a home-made baked-item or gift with someone who is ill or sad, etc. Leading in kindness often leads to opportunities to share the Gospel.

WHAT TO DO

- Pray for and spend time building relationships with those who are not saved. We tend to listen well to the people we know well. This means, our evangelistic message will likely be best received by people who know us

and trust us. This also means we must make time to build relationships with those who do not know the Lord to be well positioned to win them to the Lord.

Certainly, believers are to be ready at all times (“in season and out”) to witness and share, but there are likely a few individuals that God has put in your circle of influence so you can witness to them. Pray and ask God to reveal to you who those people are in your life. Ask God for wisdom to know how to spend time and build relationships with those who do not know the Lord.

If you do not know any ‘lost’ individuals, then widen your social circle. To some extent, this can be done online, but consider first whether or not God may be leading you to meet new people by taking or teaching a class, joining a club, sharing in community events, supporting a program that provides a community service, etc. Prayerfully consider how God might use your experience, skill, abilities, hobbies, and resources to connect with (and witness to) individuals who have not accepted Jesus into their heart as Lord and Savior.

- Share what you know. It is tempting to reason that you should leave witnessing to the experts, or defer personal evangelism until you feel more comfortable, memorize more Scripture, acquire more training, or have more answers at the ready. The desire to learn more is commendable, but do NOT allow that desire to keep you from your duty today. An amazing witness does not need to be astoundingly articulate; A powerful witness does not need to be extremely polished—the message just needs to be true, point to Jesus, and come from the heart. Jesus invited Andrew to learn more by simply saying, “Come and see” (John 1:39). The Samaritan woman in John 4 was a powerful witness by simply telling others about the amazing things Jesus did. The blind man in John 9 did not have theological training or know much about spiritual things, but his witness was powerful when he testified of how the Lord had been good to him saying, “One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see!” Share what

you know. Practice sharing your testimony—a short version (less than 90 seconds), and a longer version. Look for opportunities to share, for when you seek them, you will see them.

- Do not be afraid to share, but speak in truth and love. In Proverbs 10:10a we are told, “Whoever winks the eye causes trouble...” Our culture suggests that in the name of tolerance and peace, we should ignore sinful behavior. Proverbs 10:10 notes that the opposite is true. Further, Proverbs 24:25 notes that “...it will go well with those who convict the guilty...”

This does not mean condemn, reject, shame, or excommunicate, it means care enough about the wayward brother or lost person to let them know what Jesus expects, and love them into a right relationship with God. One verse later we read: “An honest answer [the truth] given is like a kiss of friendship” (Proverbs, 24:26, NLT). A true friend will share about Jesus and His promised, imminent return. It is not OK to be judgmental, but when the motive is pure and words are spoken in love, it is OK to make judgments about what is right and wrong and voice truth. In fact, this is the calling of a Watchman.

For additional information on this subject, please click this link to an article entitled, Is It Ever OK To Judge? <https://iamawatchman.com/is-it-ever-ok-to-judge/>

- “Do the ask” Many individuals (even preachers) do a fine job sharing about Jesus, but fall short when it comes to actually asking individuals if they are ready to surrender, confess, and enter into a relationship with Jesus. Watchmen will wisely and boldly do the ask. Pray and strive to be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading in this, but always be looking for that open door to ask, “Are you ready to become a Christian?” Then of course, be prepared to concisely and clearly explain what that means and how that can be accomplished.
- Prioritize knowing the Word and knowing how to respond to common spiritual questions. 1 Peter 3:15 notes that believers are to “...Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the

hope that you have.” The 1 Peter 3:15 directive is for ALL believers (not just clergy). Believers must study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), have it embedded in their heart (Psalm. 119:11), and be ready to share it (1 Peter 3:15). It is generally true that the more spiritual answers we can provide, the more compelling our witness will be. Commit to being a lifelong learner. This will honor God, support you in your spiritual walk, and strengthen your witness. Noted below are a few links to video teachings and articles designed to help you know how to lead someone to Christ, and respond to common spiritual questions:

- o **A document on Salvation:** <https://iamawatchman.com/how-to-become-a-christian/>
 - o **A video teaching on God’s gift of salvation:** <https://vimeo.com/260646426>
 - o **A three-part video teaching entitled, Reasons to Believe:**
 1. <https://vimeo.com/260668664> (part 1)
 2. <https://vimeo.com/260668764> (part 2)
 3. <https://vimeo.com/260668947> (part 3)
- Consider if news headlines present an opportunity. More and more frequently, current events are tying into the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Read the free PROPHECY BOOK (downloadable through the IAmAWatchman.com website) and review the prophecy videos posted at www.vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman to become aware of how current events lay a foundation for or are the fulfillment of, Bible prophecy. We live in an age of skepticism—the vast majority doubt the integrity and reliability of the Bible. We are also living in an age when Bible prophecies are being fulfilled at a pace not seen in over 2000 years. Be aware of current events, and become comfortable sharing how the fulfillment of prophecy proves the Bible is true. It will provide an open door for spiritual discussions and strengthen your witness.
 - Use social media to share God’s message. Prayerfully consider how you might utilize social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to spread the Gospel. Be wise and positive—do not use truth as a club.

Look for opportunities to post, comment, correct, inform, exhort, inspire, and encourage, all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31-33).

- Support a ministry that is outreach-focused and doing a good work sharing the Gospel and preparing individuals for the return of the King. Pray about how God is leading you to provide special support to an outreach-focused local church or a para-church ministry. Then, contact that ministry and ask what their needs are. See if there is a way for you to volunteer your time and skill in support of the good work the ministry is doing. Let ministry leadership know that you will undergird the ministry in prayer. Provide financial aid as possible. Encourage others to join you in creatively partnering in important Kingdom-building work.
- Invite an unchurched person to share in a book or Bible study with you. Free resources are available at www.IAmAWatchman.com. This is a bold move and requires courage, but remember, God will help you to do what He calls you to do. You do NOT need to have all the answers to lead good spiritual discussions and embark on a journey that leads to spiritual discovery.
- Expect opposition. Satan knows his time is short, and he is in a rage (Rev. 12:12). His minions spy to see who is serving and sharing. They will attempt to stop the work. Doubt and discouragement are two of Satan's favorite weapons. Do not let him steal your joy, slow you down, or hold you back from doing what God wants you to do. Consider this: If you were selected to be on a championship football team, suited up, walked on the field to play, and then came into possession of the ball, you would think it normal that members of the opposing team would chase you, try to tackle you or somehow stop you from completing your objective. And if in the game you were blocked, hit, pushed, or tackled and thrown to the ground, you would not cry foul, pout, run off the field, or tell the coach things were not fair and you wanted to quit. No, you would understand that this was all part of the game. Football players expect to be chased and hit by the opposing team. Believers should

expect opposition too. Believers are not promised comfort or ease but are promised victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

- Expect God to move. James 1:6-7 notes that believers should pray expecting that God will move. Yes, Satan will attack, but God will prevail. God has, and will continue to move on behalf of, and through, His people. We may not always be able to see His working, but we can know He has a plan (Jeremiah 29:11) and He is at work (John 5:17b). Here is a link to a brief video teaching on Nehemiah and the importance of having faith and believing God for a miracle: <https://vimeo.com/272877904>
- Persevere. Believe that Galatians 6:9 is true: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE



Some believe the Bible presents a prejudiced view against women and does not hold them in high esteem. This is not correct. It is clear that women have been used of God in great and mighty ways in the Old and New Testaments. Women are loved by God, equipped for service by God, called to serve and are a critical component in the church being able to fulfill its calling.

Noted below are several Scripture references noting how throughout history, God has called, equipped, blessed, and utilized women in prominent ways. Again, Scripture does not disrespect but rather, esteems women.

WOMEN LED IN WORSHIP: Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, led the people in worship and praising the Lord in the Days of Moses. "Miriam told the people, 'Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted...'" (Exod. 15:20-21a)

WOMEN SERVED IN THE TEMPLE: "Moreover, he made the laver of bronze with its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the *serving women*..." (Exod. 38:8)

WOMEN SANG IN THE TEMPLE CHOIR: "Besides their male and female *servants* who numbered 7,337; there were 200 singing men and *women* singing at the Temple celebration." (Ezr. 2:65)

WOMEN SERVED PROMINENTLY IN BATTLE AND GOVERNMENT:

- ➔ Deborah served as Judge, civil leader, and military leader. She was married, and there were qualified men in her region in her day—yet God called her to this position. (Judges 4-5).
- ➔ Women defended the city (Judges 9:53).

WOMEN SERVED AS PROPHETESSES

- ➔ Miriam (Exod. 15:20-21)
- ➔ Deborah (Jdg. 4:4-5)
- ➔ Huldah (2Kings 22:14-20; 2Chr. 34:22-28)
- ➔ Anna (Luke 2:36-38)
- ➔ Philip's daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:9)

WOMEN WERE RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING GENEROSITY

- ➔ The widow at Zarephath: (1 Kin. 17:8-24)
- ➔ The Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-38)
- ➔ The widow: (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:2-4)
- ➔ The woman who anointed Jesus: (Matt. 26)

WOMEN SERVED AS LEADERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

- ➔ Dorcas: Acts 9:36 (led in extending kindness and charity)
- ➔ Lydia: Acts 16:14 (opened her home to Paul)
- ➔ Priscilla: Acts 18:26 (an anointed teacher)
- ➔ Phebe: Rom. 16:1-2 (a leader in helping and serving)
- ➔ Led Prayer Meetings: (Acts 12:12)

WOMEN DEMONSTRATED COURAGE AND FAITH

- ➔ Women were the last to leave the cross: (Matt. 27:55-56)
- ➔ Women were first at the tomb: (Mark 15:46-47; 16:1-6; Luke 23:27-28; Luke 23:49; Luke 23:55-56; 24:1-10)
- ➔ Women were the first to see risen Lord: (Mark 16:9; John 20:14-18)

DIFFICULT PASSAGES AND QUESTIONS:

Q: Should women wear pants or 'men's clothing'?

“A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.” (Deut. 22:5)

A: The admonition is not about pants, shoes or shirts. The call is to be what God made you to be. Ancient pagan rituals involved transgender dress and genital mutilation. The admonition is to abhor these practices and appreciate the wonderful creation God made you to be.

Q: Should women not wear jewelry, or cover their head when worshiping?

“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments.” (1 Timothy 2:9)

“But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is...the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or...let her cover her head.” (1 Corinthians 11:5-6)

A: The admonition is not about head coverings or jewelry—it is about one’s witness. In the ancient world, particular jewelry, dress and head coverings served as a kind of advertisement for prostitution (which was legal in Greek and Roman cultures). Here Paul is writing to a Greek audience who needed specific guidance regarding what they say, do, and wear.

Q: Should women remain silent in the church?

“Women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.” (1 Corinthians 14:34)

A: The admonition is not to be silent, but to pursue order. In the ancient church, men and women were seated on opposite sides of the meeting area. Asking questions of their husbands in the middle of the service was disruptive. Here Paul is advocating respectful listening (silence) during times of preaching. Remember the same author gave instructions to women regarding praying or prophesying in the church. (1 Cor. 11). Again, the focus here is not silence but order.

Women are part of God's prized creation. They have been instrumental in supporting the spiritual and civil affairs of Israel, the earthly ministry of Jesus (2000 years ago), and the 'Great Commission' work of the New Testament Church. It is God's design that men lead in the home (in accordance with Ephesians 5), and in some aspects of the ministry of the church, but women can be and should be, leaders in ministry.

There is a need for Watchwomen on the wall. There is a need for women to be strong witnesses, servants, teachers, exhorters, encouragers, and prayer warriors. Women are anointed and gifted of God for a purpose—that purpose is to serve the Lord with boldness. I encourage women to know the Word, identify their spiritual gift(s), be strong disciples, serve as God leads, and be the bold Watchwomen God desires strong Christians to be.

This writing, and the *I Am A Watchman* ministry materials have been developed to encourage and support you in your spiritual walk.

Please visit the I Am A Watchman ministry website (www.IAmAWatchman.com) to view or download a library of free discipleship resources.

Prophecy notes that it will become increasingly difficult to be a Christian in the last days. There is a need for strong disciples and courageous Watchmen—*individuals who know the Word, love the Lord, and will exhort and encourage in truth and love*. Will you accept that call?

The Lord is coming. Let every believer heed the challenge to prepare the world for the return of the King.

LINKS TO COMPLIMENTING VIDEO TEACHINGS

Teachings on Bible Prophecy:

- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 1:** This video teaching provides a general overview of the wonder and structure of Bible Prophecy.
<https://vimeo.com/260646545>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 2:** This video teaching profiles the precision of Bible Prophecy, and gives special consideration to an amazing set of prophecies found in Ezekiel 4. <https://vimeo.com/260647409>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 3:** This video teaching profiles the prophecies that have been fulfilled in the last 70 years, and notes what the recent concentration of fulfilled prophecies could indicate.
<https://vimeo.com/260647409>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 4:** This video teaching profiles the Rapture and provides Scriptural support for the view that a Rapture will take place prior to the rise of the Antichrist and Tribulation period.
<https://vimeo.com/260649216>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 5:** This video teaching profiles the Antichrist and notes his nature, his goals, and the characteristics that will define his reign. <https://vimeo.com/260667541>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 6:** This video teaching profiles the Millennium and the Millennial Reign of Christ. This teaching presents an overview of the Who, What, Where, When and Why of this important upcoming event. <https://vimeo.com/260667687>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 7:** This video teaching profiles the Psalm 83 War and what are likely to be among the next prophecies to be fulfilled in the prophetic time-line. <https://vimeo.com/260668415>

LINKS TO COMPLIMENTING VIDEO TEACHINGS

A teaching on what it means to be a Watchman:

- ➔ **What it means to be a watchman:** This video teaching presents the biblical foundation for the term Watchman and the calling to be a Watchman. Drawing primarily from Ezekiel's 33, this teaching notes the particular heart, focus, and work of a watchman. The I Am A Watchman ministry team believes that at this a crucial time in history, God is calling both men and women to serve as spiritual watchmen. <https://vimeo.com/259965426>

A teaching on the gift of salvation:

- ➔ **How to be saved / The gift of salvation** This teaching video profiles the need to be saved, what God through Christ has done to make salvation possible, and what individuals must do to receive God's precious gift. God's greatest desire is that His people know Him and enter into relationship with Him. The link to this teaching is noted below: <https://vimeo.com/260646426>

Teachings on Apologetics (Reasons to believe):

- ➔ **Reasons to believe (Part 1):** [This https://vimeo.com/260668664](https://vimeo.com/260668664)
- ➔ **Reasons to believe (Part 2):** <https://vimeo.com/260668764>
- ➔ **Reasons to believe (Part 3):** <https://vimeo.com/260668947>

ABOUT THE I AM A WATCHMAN MINISTRY

The I Am A Watchman ministry has been established to help individuals know the love of Jesus, enter into relationship with Jesus, live for Jesus, tell others about Jesus, and to prepare for the imminent return of Jesus. In informal language, the Watchman ministry strives to help individuals finish well (which is to live a life of meaning and purpose, and at the coming judgment hear the Lord say, “Well done my good and faithful servant”).

In more theological terms, the I Am A Watchman ministry’s focus is to help prepare the bride of Christ to meet the coming Bridegroom. This language comes from Matt. 25:1-46, Rev. 19:7-9, Rev. 21:2, John 14:1-3, and Rev. 21:9-11. The phrase is a word picture that imagines believers in Christ as the bride, who stand in readiness and purity, waiting for the Groom, who has promised to return, reward, and take his bride away.

The wise will strive to live well so they can finish well. The astute will strive to be aware of what God has done and what prophecy notes He will do in the days to come. In support of these goals, the I Am A Watchman ministry is happy to make available at no cost a wealth of discipleship, prophecy, and spiritual growth resources for those who desire to learn, and those who are called to lead. Please visit the www.IAmAWatchman.com website to access these resources.



About this author: Gary Ray is a student of the Word. He has served in pastoral ministry with his wife Tina for 30 years. He currently serves as President of the *I Am A Watchman* ministry.

Gary is a lifelong learner. He has received and shares the grace of God, and enjoys speaking and writing about what God has done and what He is going to do.

About this booklet: This resource is designed to help individuals understand the key doctrines of Christianity. The Study of theology can seem overwhelming. In this book the author presents carefully researched information in an easy-to-read format. The goal is to facilitate an understanding of the historic teachings of Christianity so to embolden faith and heighten confidence and effectiveness in witnessing. This book provides information on 50 important topics and includes links to complimenting teaching videos

Learn what the Bible says about *angels, baptism, demons, the church, the disciples, heaven, the Holy Spirit, witnessing, finances, service, forgiveness, the inspiration of Scripture, salvation, Satan, communion, the last days, women's roles, the Millennial Reign, the rapture, prayer, the Trinity, what it means to be a Watchman, and more.*

