

# Bible Literacy

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How well do we know even the basics of the Bible? According to a number of surveys, not very well. Some sobering results: only 40% of Americans know that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, less than half can name the four Gospels, 16% think that one of the books in the New Testament is the Book of Thomas, and 12% think that Noah's wife was Joan of Arc (seriously). We are not even going to get into the people who think that Sodom and Gomorrah were a husband and wife.

The purpose of this section is to provide a basic knowledge of key teachings of the Bible and of Christianity. Each topic is about one page long. None are meant to be comprehensive but, rather, are meant to build a good, broad foundation.

What is available right now is just a start. I plan on continually adding to it so please keep checking back.

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## **What is the Bible?**

The Bible is a collection of books that together form the one book called "The Bible." It is God's message to all people. It reveals the thoughts, desires, and actions of God (hence it is called "revelation" which comes from a word meaning "disclosure of facts").

Though we can see many of God's attributes through His creation such as creativity, love, compassion, beauty, power, etc. there are a great many more aspects of God and His supernatural ("above nature, belonging to a higher realm") Kingdom that we could never know about unless He revealed them to us. Some of these are His means of salvation, the Trinity, the Devil and his demons, angels, Heaven and Hell, and many others.

The Bible is inspired. The central passage for this is 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." The word "inspired" means "God-breathed." The traditional teaching of how this occurred is that God directed the words and sentences but allowed the human author's personality, vocabulary, and style to be expressed.

The Bible is fully inspired (referred to as plenary) in that all (every word, thought, sentence, and story) of the original manuscripts were completely inspired.

Though we do not have any of the original manuscripts, great effort has been made by traditional scholars to ensure the accuracy of the translation that they complete based on the earliest and most reliable manuscripts.

## **The Layout of the Bible**

The Christian Bible is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament (OT) which are the writings before Jesus and the New Testament (NT) which are the writing after Jesus came. Testament means "covenant, an agreement between two parties" or, in the Bible's case, "covenant with God."

The OT has 39 books and the NT has 27 books for a total of 66 books. Each of these 66 are called "books" because each one was written distinctly from all of the others with all of them together forming the Bible. There are a total of 1189 chapters.

The OT is divided into four sections:

### **Books of the Law**

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

### **Books of History**

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

### **Books of Poetry**

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

### **Books of Prophecy**

#### **Major Prophets:**

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

#### **Minor Prophets:**

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The NT is divided into four sections:

The Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Books of History

Acts

The Letters

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

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Each book in the Bible is divided into chapters. This is the number that immediately follows the book's name. Therefore, John 3 is referring to the third chapter in the book of John. Each chapter is further divided into verses. The number of verses in a chapter can range from 2 (Psalm 117—the shortest chapter in the Bible) to 176 verses (Psalm 119—the longest chapter in the Bible). The verse follows the chapter number separated by a colon. Therefore, John 3:16 is the sixteen verse in the third chapter of John. Several verses together (sometimes referred to as a passage) are separated by a hyphen or a comma. Thus, John 3:16-18 is referring to verses 16 through 18 in the third chapter of John.

## The Purpose of the Bible

Though the Bible informs us about a great many aspects of life and reality it really has three primary purposes: 1) To tell us about God, 2) To tell us about our ourselves, and 3) To tell us how we and God can have a relationship.

The Bible tells us that God is holy (He cannot sin), sovereign (He rules over everything), just (He cannot allow wrong to go unpunished), loving (He desires the best for everyone), eternal (He has no beginning or end), omniscient (He knows all things), omnipotent (He is all powerful), and many other characteristics or attributes. The Bible's supreme subject is Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead. Much of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, or foreshadows (images, events, people that indicate something or someone that is to come).

The Bible tells us about the history and nature of people. On the sixth day of Creation God created the first two people: Adam and Eve. They disobeyed God and since then everyone has disobeyed God in some way. This is called sin. However, each and every person is created in the image of God. This does not mean that we look like God but that we have many of God's basic characteristics such as personality, intelligence, creativity, love, compassion, communication, and many others.

Because God is holy He cannot allow sin into His presence. However, all people sin. Therefore, the Bible tells us how God planned a way to bring us into His presence while since being just. From the first sin in

Genesis 3 to the return of Jesus Christ in Revelation 22 the Bible lays out God's plan of salvation. God's greatest desire is to have a personal relationship with each one of us. The Bible tells us how this can happen. We could never know this without God's revelation in the Bible.

The Bible also serves many other purposes:

- How to live righteously and good
- How to treat other people
- It gives us the hope of eternal life in Heaven
- It warns us about the possibility of an eternity of suffering in Hell
- It shows us the results of doing good versus doing bad
- It tells us how to comfort and counsel other people
- It encourages us and teaches us to pray
- It gives us great reasons to rejoice
- It tells us that we have great value
- It gives us meaning and purpose

To mention but a few.

## **Overview of the Old Testament**

God created the Earth and the universe in five days

On the sixth day God created the first man and woman: Adam and Eve and put them into a perfect environment called The Garden of Eden

God gave Adam and Eve only one command which they then disobeyed and were separated from God and cast out of the Garden of Eden

People married, had children, and build cities

The people became corrupt so God called Noah to build an ark and brought two of every animal onto the ark

The Earth was flooded with the only survivors being those on Noah's ark

People again marry, have children, and build cities

They decide to build a great tower that would reach up to Heaven and make them powerful so God gave them all different languages; the tower was called Babel

Abraham is born and has a son Isaac who has a son Jacob whose name is changed to Israel

Israel (Jacob) has twelve sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel

One of Israel's sons is Joseph who is betrayed by his brothers and sold as a slave in Egypt where he successfully interprets Pharaoh's dreams and becomes the second most powerful person in Egypt

While in Egypt, the Israelites grow in number and Moses is born

The oppression of the Israelites increases and God delivers Israel out of Egypt using Moses and the ten plagues including the Passover

God gives Moses the Ten Commandments

Israel disobeys God by creating idols and also by disobeying God's promises and is forced to wander in the desert for 40 years

Israel enters The Promised Land which is divided into sections according to the twelve tribes

Israel is initially ruled by prophets and a series of judges

The people want a king instead and so God gives them Saul

David then becomes king after Saul

After David dies his son Solomon becomes king

After Solomon's death his son Rehoboam becomes king and the people rebel against him and the kingdom is divided into northern kingdom Israel and the southern kingdom Judah

Two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, try to warn the people about God's judgment

The kingdom of Israel falls captive to Assyria around 722 BC

The kingdom of Judah falls captive to Babylon at around 586 BC

The people return from captivity and rebuild the temple that was destroyed

The people eventually go their own way apart God who sends many prophets to warn them and bring them back

Then at around 400 BC God stopped speaking to His people and there is nothing recorded until the New Testament times

## **Overview of the New Testament**

An angel appeared to Zacharias and told him that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son named John and that John will be a prophet and a forerunner of the Messiah.

The angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and told her that she would give birth to son named Jesus who will be the Son of the Most High.

John the Baptist is born.

Jesus is born in a manger.

When Jesus is 30 years old He is baptized by John the Baptist.

Jesus calls twelve men to be His followers and disciples.

Jesus performs miracles such as healings, raising people from the dead, calming storms, and feeding thousands on a few loaves and fish. He also teaches great truths and gains a following.

The Pharisees grow jealous of Jesus and seek to have Him killed.

Jesus is betrayed by Judas Iscariot who is one of His twelve disciples and is arrested by the Romans.

Jesus is beaten, mocked, and put on trial. The people scream that He should be crucified.

Jesus is crucified on Passover between two thieves and is buried in a rich man's tomb.

Three days later Jesus is raised from the dead.

Mary Magdalene and another Mary see the empty tomb.

Jesus appears to many people after His resurrection.

After forty days, Jesus is taken up into Heaven and promises to return.

The remaining followers of Jesus went out and peached the Good News (Gospel) that Jesus is the risen Messiah and that forgiveness of sins and salvation comes only through Him.

At one instance 3,000 people heard the Gospel and believed.

The church and the disciples spread out and share the Gospel; many people become followers and many churches are started.

Saul and other religious leaders persecute the Christians.

Jesus appears to Saul. Saul becomes a Christian and changes his name to Paul and becomes a great defender of Christianity.

Paul is falsely accused and is taken to Rome to appeal to Caesar.

While in prison and in other times Paul writes many of the New Testament letters (books).

All of the disciples except for John are martyred.

John is exiled to the island of Patmos where he sees a vision of Jesus Christ and of the end times. He writes this down in the Book of Revelation (the last book of the Bible). Here he tells of when Jesus Christ will return to the Earth at what is called "The Second Coming" and how the Earth and the heavens will

be destroyed and a new Earth and heavens will be created and God will reign with His people forever in Heaven.

## Feasts in the Old Testament

There are seven major feasts in the Old Testament. They are with the month and day of celebration:

### The Spring Feasts

- Passover – Nisan 14 - 15
- Unleavened Bread – Nisan 15 - 22
- First Fruits – Nisan 16 - 17
- Pentecost – Sivan 6 - 7

### The Fall Feasts

- Trumpets – Tishri 1
- Atonement – Tishri 10
- Tabernacles – Tishri 15 - 22

Not surprisingly, each one can represent a different aspect of Jesus Christ.

## Passover

Passover is the first feast mentioned in the Bible and is described in Exodus 12. It was the last of the ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt in order to get Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go and sacrifice to God. God said that He would kill the firstborn of every household except for those who sacrificed a lamb and applied the blood to the sides and top of their door using a branch of hyssop. When the angel came to one of these houses then it would “pass over” it without killing anyone. The Israelites were then commanded to quickly leave and to bring with them unleavened bread (bread without yeast). This is a feast of redemption, salvation, and deliverance.

This is the most important feast as related to Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:7 directly connects Jesus to the Passover, “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.” In Revelation 5:12 Jesus is referred to as “the Lamb that was slain.”

The Lord’s Supper was the last meal that Jesus had with His disciples before He was crucified and was where He instituted the church’s own Communion (the bread and the cup). This was a Passover meal (Matthew 26:17). Whenever the church celebrates the Lord’s Supper we are looking back onto the original Passover and how Jesus fulfilled this in giving up His body and blood.

Jesus was crucified on the Passover (Matthew 26:17, 31).

In Exodus 12:46 one of the instructions was not to break the bones of the Passover lamb, “It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to

break any bone of it.” Psalm 34:20 links this to the Messiah, “He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken.” Then John 19:33 tells us of Jesus on the cross, “but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.”

The Israelites were commanded not to take or eat anything leavened at the Passover (Exodus 12:19, “Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* an alien or a native of the land.”). Leaven is a symbol of sin. In Mark 8:15 Jesus says, “And He was giving orders to them, saying, ‘Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.’” Jesus offered up His sinless body as a sacrifice.

When someone is born-again he/she is cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7), sprinkled with His blood (1 Peter 1:2), and sanctified by His blood (Hebrews 13:12). Therefore, the wrath of God against sin passes over him or her.

## Unleavened Bread

This feast occurs on the night right after the Passover feast (Leviticus 23:6). Whereas the Passover feast was observed for one day, the feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for seven days. Deuteronomy 16:3 describes it as the “bread of affliction”: “You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.” This is a feast of sanctification—of a setting apart from sin to holiness and service to God.

In John 6:48 Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life.” Interestingly, Jesus was born in Bethlehem which, in Hebrew, means “House of Bread.” At the institution of the Lord’s Supper in Mark 14:22 we read, “While they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, ‘Take *it*; this is My body.’” At Communion we symbolically eat the Lord’s unleavened, sinless body.

1 Corinthians 5:8, “Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” When the Israelites were delivered from the oppression of Egypt they left behind their leaven. Likewise, when someone is delivered from the oppression and penalty of sin through eternal salvation he and she should leave behind their sinful habits, thoughts, and deeds and embrace the holy life as modeled by Jesus Christ.

## First Fruits

Leviticus 23:9-14 discusses the feast of First Fruits. It was celebrated on the first day after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. At the Spring barley harvest the first fruits (first grain harvest of the season) would be gathered. The Israelites would then wave a sheaf from it. A lamb and a grain offering would be made as a sacrifice.

The purpose of this offering was to give thanks to God for the fertility and produce of the land. It is a feast of new growth.

In the New Testament the term of “first fruit” has two general references.

The first is referring to those who have been born-again. James 1:18 refers to all believers as first fruits , “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.” Just like the barley harvest was the result of the Israelites work so believers are the fruit of God’s work of salvation.

The second reference is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming...” Jesus had to rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven before anyone else could. Before Jesus’ Resurrection all believers were in a holding area (see Luke 16:19-31). Only after Jesus’ ascension into Heaven as the first fruits then could they also ascend.

For the church, this feast is a foreshadow of our gratitude to God for His harvest of the new birth of believers and of the power of Jesus’ Resurrection.

## Pentecost

This was called the Feast of Weeks. It is fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits. In Greek “Pentecost” means the 50<sup>th</sup> day. Whereas the Feast of First Fruits celebrated the barley harvest, this feast celebrated the wheat harvest. Along with some animal sacrifices, two loaves of bread baked with leaven were offered. No work was allowed during this feast day. This was a feast of gratitude, joy, and celebration.

In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church for the first time. This occurred on the day of Pentecost which was 50 days after Jesus had been raised from the dead. Acts 2:17-21 ties this event to a passage in Joel 2:28-31. The situation in Joel is that the land of Israel had been devastated by a locust plague compounded by drought. All of the crops had been destroyed and even the cattle had no pasture to graze. We see how horrible it was from Joel 1:1 to Joel 2:11. Then in Joel 2:12-13 God says, “Yet even now... return to Me with all your heart... for He is gracious and compassionate...” Then in verses 18 – 27 God promises healing and blessing and restoration. Finally in verse 28 God promises that He will pour out His Spirit on all people.

At the time of Jesus’ birth there had been a 400 year period of silence where there is no recorded instance of God speaking to His people through prophets. The nation of Israel was under the oppression of Rome. Then into this bleak situation stepped Jesus. Then as a result of His death and Resurrection God was able to heal once again. But this time instead of a healing of the land there would be a healing of the soul. This time the blessing would not be grain, oil, and wine but the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was once again a time of gratitude, joy, and celebration.

## Trumpets

Leviticus 23:23-25 is where God introduces the Feast of Trumpets, “Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing *of trumpets*, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD.’”” The trumpet that was blown was a ram’s horn

(the shofar). This harkens back to when Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac but at the last moment God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac.

Then throughout Scripture, the trumpet is used by God to announce to His people the coming of a great event. In Zephaniah 1:14-16 “the great day of the Lord” was coming and it would be “a day of trumpet and battle cry.” In Exodus 19:16, 19 God announced His descending upon Mount Sinai with trumpets. In Jeremiah 4 Judah is threatened with invasion. This is declared in verse 5 with the blowing of a trumpet. Oftentimes the great event was judgment. Even when the walls of Jericho came down it was preceded by a trumpet blast.

The trumpet blast plays a big part in the New Testament. Matthew 24:31 tells us, “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” 1 Corinthians 15:52, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” The great event in these cases is the coming of Jesus Christ. Some associate this with the Rapture whereas others with the Second Coming. Either way, it is an event that will change everything.

### **Atonement (Yom Kippur)**

Leviticus 23:26-32 introduces the Day of Atonement, “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath.’” This was the highest of holy days also known as Yom Kippur. It was a feast of confessing and washing away of sins.

Through the rituals of the ceremony we can see many fulfilled symbolisms in Jesus. The High Priest was the one who would conduct the ceremony. Hebrews 3:1 tells us that Jesus is our High Priest, “[*Jesus Our High Priest*] Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.” Also see Hebrews 4:14 and Hebrews 6:20.

The High Priest would bath as a symbol of being uncontaminated by the filth of sin. Jesus was always and already sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”).

The High Priest then put on white undergarments and a white tunic. This was in contrast to his usual elaborate priestly garment. By this he identified with the common people as one who had no special rank or distinction. Likewise, Jesus, who was and is God, identified with us by being born a human baby in an animal manger.

Also, Jesus' appearance was not magnificent and awe inspiring. Rather, He was just like one of us. Isaiah 53:2, "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him."

Two goats were presented. One goat was slaughtered and its blood was sprinkled on the mercy. Jesus sacrificed Himself as the Lamb of God for our sins. Hebrews 13:11-12, "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate." This goat was the propitiation as was Jesus. The other goat, the scapegoat, was taken outside the camp and released. This was a symbol of how our sins are taken far away from us. Psalm 103:12 illustrates this, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

The Day of Atonement, however, could not permanently remove the sins of the people. Hebrews 10:11 tells us, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." But then contrast that to verses 12 to 14 about Jesus, "but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." Jesus is our final atonement. His sacrifice was sufficient for all people for all time.

## The Feast of Tabernacles

This is also called the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Shelters. This feast lasted seven days with an additional eighth day of rest and occurred after the harvest. Leviticus 23:39-44 describes this feast, "On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It *shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God." So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD."

For the first seven days the Israelites would live in booths or huts outside of their homes. These would usually be made of palm fronds and leafy tree branches. They would present offerings to the Lord. The purpose of this feast was to remember how God took care of them after they came out of Egypt during the Exodus. This was a feast of celebration.

John 7:2-10 tells us about when Jesus visited Jerusalem during the Feast of Booths. On the last day He told how He would give to them who came to Him streams of living water.

In the New Testament we see several references to the booth/tent/tabernacle. John 1:14 tells us that God ("the flesh") dwelt (tabernacle) among us.

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 refers to us dwelling in earthly tents now but, in the future, we have an eternal building with God.

Revelation 21:3 tells us, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.’” At the new Heaven and Earth God will dwell (tabernacle) with us.

Just as the booths in the Old Testament feast remembered the Israelites of God’s provision and care so we see in the New Testament and future that God is still dwelling with us and always will. This is indeed a time of celebration.

## The Trinity

The word “Trinity” means Tri-unity or three-in-oneness.

The Trinity is three persons as one God. It is not three gods. Each person is equal, has the same attributes (characteristics), and equally worthy of worship and adoration. Christianity is absolutely a monotheistic (mono = one, theistic = God) religion.

It is not three separate persons like you would think of the apostles Peter, James, and John.

Nor is it the same person merely expressing Himself in three different modes of existence. A bad analogy is that water can express itself as liquid, steam, and ice. This is called modalism.

Each of the three separate persons has a distinct name: 1) The Father, 2) The Son, and 3) The Holy Spirit.

It is a concept that is hard, if not impossible, to grasp but here are two analogies.

A book has height, width, and thickness. All three are different and yet all three are connected and are necessary to form one book. If you take away one of these then you no longer have a book, but all three together form only one book.

Another analogy is ourselves, in a way. We each have a body, soul, and spirit. Each is separate and yet the three together form one and only one person.

The word “Trinity” is never used in the Bible, but it is clearly illustrated.

One of the classic verses is Matthew 28:19.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”

“Name” is singular. However, there are three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but only one name.

## The Names of God

In the Bible a name was not merely something to call someone so that they know that you are talking to them. A name oftentimes revealed a key characteristic of someone. For example, when a particular set of twins were born the first one “came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.” Esau means “red.” The second twin “came forth with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob.” Jacob means “heel-grabber.” Abram (which means “exalted father”) was changed by God to Abraham (which means “father of a multitude”). In Matthew 16:18 Jesus changed Simon Barjona’s name to Peter which means “stone” because he was to be the rock upon which Jesus would build His church. So when we examine the names of God it tells us something important about who God is.

A name was intimately connected to the person. Thus in Exodus 20:7 we are told not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

In the Old Testament God is mostly called by three names: Jehovah or Yahweh, Elohim, and Adonai.

Jehovah or Yahweh means Lord. It comes from a word that means “to exist or to be.” It denotes that God is self-existent and wholly independent of all else. It is the most common name of God occurring 6,823 times. It is often used in the context of God’s relationship with His people. This is actually spelled in the Bible without any vowels as YHWH (the tetragrammaton). Therefore, Jehovah and Yahweh are somewhat made-up spellings and pronunciations.

Elohim means God, judge, strong one, or Creator. It is the first name that God is called in the Bible since it appears in the Bible’s first verse: Genesis 1:1. It is often used in conjunction with God’s sovereignty (kingship), creative work, or power and places God as the One who is transcendent (above and beyond all). It is used 2,570 times in the Bible.

Adonai means Lord or Master. It is used 434 in the Old Testament. The word is plural. Many see this plurality as a hint of the Trinity.

Oftentimes Jehovah and Elohim are used together and are usually translated as “LORD God.” Genesis 2:4-9 and Exodus 34:22-24 are examples. This can denote that the powerful, transcendent One is also the One who blesses, creates, and strengthens.

God is also called by other names. Here are a few.

Name	Occurrences	Some references	Meaning
El Shaddai	7	Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14	All Sufficient One, Lord God Almighty- it has the sense of nourishing, supplying, and satisfying
El Elyon	28	Genesis 14:18-20, 22; Psalm 57:2; 78:35	The Most High God - Stresses God’s sovereignty, supremacy, and power

Jehovah-Raah		Genesis 48:15, 49:24; Psalm 23:1, 80:1	The Lord is my Shepherd – emphasized God’s care and guidance of His people
El Olam		Genesis 21:33; Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 26:4	The God of Eternity, The Everlasting God – Stresses that God does change and is limitless
Jehovah Sabaoth	285	Psalm 24:10, 80:4, 84:3; Isaiah 1:24, 3:15; Jeremiah 9:15, 48:1	The Lord of Hosts, The Lord of Armies
Jehovah Shalom		Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 27:6; Daniel 5:26; 1 Kings 9:25; Judges 6:24	The Lord Our Peace – God can make us whole and fulfilled
Jehovah Rophe		Exodus 15:26	The Lord who Heals – God can heal all aspects of our lives: physical, emotional, spiritual, social
Jehovah Jireh		Genesis 22:14	The Lord will Provide

## What is God? (The Attributes of God)

What are the attributes or characteristics of God? Each and all of these apply equally and fully to each person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Aseity (or Self-existent):** God has always existed and did not originate from or have any creator. He is not limited by anything external to Himself. He is the limit of everything else so that nothing can transcend Him.

**Comfort (or Compassion):** God knows and understands everything that hurts us and is desiring and able to heal, soothe, console, and support us in that pain.

**Eternal:** God has always existed and always will. He is outside of time and exists simultaneously in all of time.

**Faithful:** God will never leave us nor forsake us. He is consistent in that He is always true to His character and will always be true to His promises.

**Forgiving:** Because Jesus Christ became our sin and paid its full penalty and then rose from the dead God is able to completely and forever remove the condemnation, guilt, and certificate of death associated with that sin from any person.

**Freedom:** God is completely independent of everything else.

**Good:** God is kind and benevolent. Everything that He does emanates from a loving heart.

**Gracious:** God gives us numerous blessings beyond measure not because we deserve it but because He is kind and loving.

**Holy:** God is completely without sin and has a deep hatred for sin.

**Immanent:** God is actively near to and interacts with all of His creation.

**Immutable:** God does not change in regard to His nature or His purpose.

**Incomprehensible:** Though we can know many things about God, we can never fully understand Him. There are aspects of His being and ways that are completely beyond our comprehension.

**Infinite:** God has no boundaries within time and space. He cannot be contained. All of God's attributes are also without boundary. Therefore, His love, mercy, grace, etc. are without limit.

**Jealous:** God does not want us to substitute anything for Himself.

**Just:** All sin carries with it a penalty that God must enforce. His mercy may postpone that penalty or eliminate its earthly consequences and His forgiveness may completely remove that penalty from an individual by transferring it to Jesus Christ's payment for sin, but ultimately all sin must be paid for.

**Love:** God desires to give a full abundance of blessings to each and every person. It is both a heart-felt desire and an action. It is sacrificial and constant.

**Merciful:** God withholds justice and negative consequences from those who deserve them. He overflows with compassion towards those who are needy and afflicted.

**Omniperfection:** God is completely without any flaw or imperfection. In every way He is as perfect as is possible.

**Omnipotence:** God is all-powerful. He can accomplish anything. Nothing is beyond His ability.

**Omnipresence:** All of God is simultaneously and personally everywhere at all times.

**Omniscience:** God knows everything. Since He exists simultaneously in all of time He knows everything in what we would call the past, present, and future. He knows the actual, the possible, and the impossible.

**Patient:** God suffers long with those who are sinful and rebellious.

**Personal:** God is a thinking, feeling being. He is alive and animate.

**Righteous:** God always does what is right and good.

**Seeking:** God reaches out to people so that we can know Him.

**Self-sufficient:** God is sufficient and complete within Himself. He does not need anyone or anything else.

**Sovereign:** God is the king over everything. He is control of all things although that does not mean that He necessarily causes all things. Nothing occurs that He does not at least allow.

**Transcendent:** God is separate from His creation. He is in everything and holds all things together but He and His creation are not the same.

**Truth:** God cannot lie. He never contradicts Himself.

**Unique:** There is only one God who is infinitely greater than all else.

**Unity:** All of God is consistent within Himself and He is indivisible.

**Wisdom:** God always knows the best means and best ends to every situation. He never makes mistakes.

**Wrathful:** God is offended by our sin and our idolatry and will not allow it to pass without judgment. This is tempered by His mercy, patience, and grace.

## The Eternity of God

The eternity of God means that God has no beginning or end. Nothing came before God and nothing will outlast Him; He is the alpha and omega—the first and the last. God is not limited by time but exists outside of time’s constraints. He simultaneously exists in all of time.

God knows the future because He is already there.

The first five words in the Bible sets the tone for the rest of Scripture, “In the beginning God created...” God created what?—everything including time. This moment was the beginning of everything else besides God.

Isaiah 57:15 is an interesting verse, “For thus says the high and exalted One who dwells in eternity, whose name is Holy, ‘I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’” The key phrase for this topic is, “dwells in eternity.” The word “dwells” in the Hebrew has the sense of “to lay oneself down,” “to abide,” “to pitch one’s tent.” You can say that God pitches His tent in eternity or, to put it in a more pedestrian manner, God lives in eternity. It is not just that God remembers the past and knows the future but that He dwells and exists in all of time simultaneously. Thus He witnesses every moment in all of history all at once.

An analogy is that time is like a long parade. We can only see the part of the parade that is passing immediately in front of us. We can remember the part of the parade that has already passed by but which is now out of sight and we can only guess at what the rest of the parade will be like. God, on the other hand, is in a blimp hovering high over the parade. He is able to see the entire parade at one time.

An example of how time does not affect God is the book of Revelation. John was on the island of Patmos when he was taken in the Spirit to see future events that spanned over a thousand years. God did not give John a movie presentation of what the future would be like; He actually took him there. John’s book

is unique in that he did not write as a prophet (as one who was told about the future) but rather as a witness. He was told to record not just what he heard but also what he saw. His witness spanned not only time but also space as he saw events both in Heaven and on the Earth. And then God brought him back to the present time.

God's eternity proves His self-sufficiency. Before God created anything there was no space, no matter, no time. It was just God.

When God determines something, it is forever. Psalm 119:89 reassures us, "Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." The principles that God states in the Bible will last forever. There is nothing unforeseen in the future that will cause God to need to change them.

The possibility of people who were born after Jesus' crucifixion to be saved requires an eternal God. If God were not eternal then Jesus could not have paid for sins that were committed after the crucifixion because of the simple reason that He would not have known anything about those sins. But because God exists all throughout time, He was able to take all of those real sins that He absolutely knew about and concentrate them onto one Person in one very brief moment in time.

Isaiah 40:28 tells us very well, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable."

## **The Immutability of God**

To say that God is immutable means that He cannot vary, He cannot change, He cannot decrease, He cannot increase, and that He is all that He will ever be, all that He ever was.

Psalm 102:25-27 tells us a sobering fact, "Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. but You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end." The universe is enormous. It is estimated that there are 300,000,000,000,000,000,000 or 300 sextillion stars in the universe. Yet God says that even the universe is like an old sweater that is fraying at the elbows and with buttons falling off. Even if God does not come back for a very long time and after tens of billions of years the universe shuts to an end, God will still be there unchanged. He will not be even the slightest different than when the universe began.

God cannot be influenced to change either from without or from within. God cannot be influenced from without because it is not merely that He stands far and above everyone else in power and might but that He alone has power and might. We have only what He has given to us. There is no great cosmic battle between good and evil, between God and the Devil. The Devil only has being because God allows him to. Should God so choose, in an instant the Devil would completely cease to exist. God cannot change from within because there is no facet of His being that is in anyway in conflict with another part of His being. As infinite and complex as God is everything within Him functions perfectly together.

Malachi 3:6, "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." Since God is perfect in all ways, if He changed in any way it would have to be for the worse. So how would He

change? Would He become less patient? Less forgiving? Less merciful? Choose any one of those and it could easily mean our destruction. We survive not because we are good or desire to, but only because God is good. Since all that God is, is involved in the matter of people, then any change in God would have to be to our detriment.

Hebrews 6:17-18 assures us that because God does not change then neither do His eternal purposes: "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us." We will not die and find ourselves annihilated or find, as Christians, that we are in Hell. Every future promise of God is secure and every current promise of God is secure.

God's truth is forever. Matthew 24:35 tells us, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." Truth is never dependent on our understanding or acceptance of it. It is as true if we believe it and as true if we doubt it. If I do something truly terrible and think that God can never forgive me that does not make it suddenly true that I, indeed, cannot be forgiven. God's promise remains true and if I come to my senses someday then I can still claim God's promise of complete forgiveness. His promise of cleansing me from all unrighteousness remained available through all of my doubts. It was always right there for the taking even if I closed my eyes. Truth does not have to be experienced to be true. I am saved even if I do not feel like I am.

God's immutability is like driving towards a mountain. It is steady and certain. We will not blink and open our eyes and it is gone or different.

What God was before creation is the same God in the Bible. And the God of the Bible is the same God today and forevermore.

## **The Omnipotence of God**

Omnipotent means having all power, having infinite power, and having all authority. God is not as powerful as He needs to be; He is as powerful as anyone can ever be.

The first name for God used in the Bible is in Genesis 1:1 and is Elohim. It is used over 2,570 times in the Old Testament and it comes from a Hebrew word meaning "strength" or "power."

Names of God relating to His omnipotence are Almighty, Lord of Hosts, Lord God Almighty, Consuming Fire, Arm of the Lord, and Creator.

The third person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. Spirit is not the term used because a spirit is wispy and invisible. But, rather, spirit denotes power. It is in contrast to the flesh which is weak and vulnerable. Isaiah 31:3 demonstrates this contrast, "Now the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit"

Yet as great as God's power is it is fully controlled by all that He is. It is governed by His love, mercy, and patience. Job 36:5 reassures us, "Behold, God is mighty but does not despise any."

Job 26 ends with an amazing declaration. In verses 5-10 talk about God's creation of the universe. Verses 12 and 13 describe God's crushing of Satan and of His destroying and then recreating the universe as something beautiful: "He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. by His breath the heavens are cleared [literally "made beautiful"]; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent."

Yet as great and powerful as these events are, verse 14 tells us that these are just the fringes of His ways: "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?"

When the Israelites were trapped at the Red Sea and the Egyptians were coming to destroy them the Bible says in Psalm 106:8, "Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, that He might make His power known." Why did God want to make His power known? So that we might worship and glorify Him. So that we might know the power that is available to us. So that we might look to Him in trust and obedience.

Our salvation is protected by the power of God. 1 Peter 1:3-5 tells us, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." That word "protected" has the same meaning as guarded. To guard something has two meanings: 1) You guard someone from escaping. So in this case, we cannot, even if we wanted to, escape from our eternal salvation. 2) You guard someone from harm and danger. What is the danger here?—of something or someone else taking away our salvation.

Psalm 21:13 gives us our ultimate response to God's omnipotence, "Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength; we will sing and praise Your power."

## **The Omniscience of God**

The omniscience of God means that God knows all, He knows all of the actual, He knows all of the possible, He does not learn, He does not forget, He commits no errors, He makes no mistakes, He knows all thoughts, intentions, and desires, and He knows all mysteries and secrets.

God does not operate on the basis of chance. There is no question to which He has not eternally known the answer.

God knows the implications and consequences of every action, of every thought, of every desire. He tells what the best is. When we sin we are saying that we know better than God, that our understanding of what makes us happy is superior to God's understanding. That we know our needs better than God does. It mocks the truth that His commandments are not burdensome. Insanity is where a person is

unable to correctly perceive reality. Sin is temporary spiritual insanity because we are not, at that moment, correctly perceiving spiritual reality; we are denying God's revealed truth.

Psalm 139:1-6 is one of the great passages on God's omniscience, "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it." That God sees everything that we do and knows our every thought, desire, and motivation should strike fear into our hearts. He knows us better than we know ourselves. No darkness is thick enough for Him not to see through. We can sometimes trick people, but we can never trick God.

God's omniscience should be a great motivator to resist temptation. Oftentimes we sin because we think that we can get away with it; that there is nothing to be ashamed of or to be guilty about because no one will ever know. But God knows. Our eyes may be blind to God, but God's eyes are never blind to us. Two Scriptures that confirm this are Proverbs 5:21, "For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths" and Job 34:21-22, "For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. There is no darkness or deep shadow where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

Again in Psalm 139 this time in verses 13-15 we read more about God's omniscience, "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth..." "Wonderful are Your works." We are God's works. We are, to the minutest detail, the marvelous handiwork of a loving God. God created each one of us specially and in such a way that we can give Him the most glory. So maybe we don't like how we look or the sound of our voice or some other aspect. Yet that is how God created each one of us to serve and love Him best.

Because God is omniscient we can be confident that His guidance will always be the very best. His love can give the best because He knows the best. We know that His plan of salvation is the most perfect and loving. We know that none of our bad thoughts or deeds will go unseen but also that our good thoughts and deeds, if we are born-again, will follow us into Heaven as rewards.

## **The Omnipresence of God**

"Omni" means all. Omnipresent means "all present" or, more correctly present everywhere at the same time. God is present in every part of the Universe down to even beyond the atomic level. There is no place where God is not.

1 Kings 8:27 tells us, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!" God does not fill the universe like a hand would fill a glove; rather, God fills the universe like the ocean fills a bottle on its bottom.

Omnipresence is not to be confused with pantheism. Omnipresence states that God is present everywhere. Pantheism states that everything is god and that god is everything. Omnipresence is truth; pantheism is blasphemy. God may exist in that tree in front of us but we worship God and not the tree. God holds the tree together, but God is not the tree. God is spirit. Spirit and matter do not compete for space. They can coexist.

Colossians 1:17, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." Each atom only exists or stays together because God holds it together. So should there be a place where God does not exist then, in fact, that place could not exist either. It would not even be empty space; it would be nonexistent.

Because God is omnipresent it means that all of God exists in every place. I.e., all of God's character, attributes, and personality exist wherever God does. There is no place in the Universe where God is more loving or more holy. We do not have to go to a church or a temple to get more of God. When the Bible speaks of God sitting on a throne in Heaven that does not mean that the person of God is in Heaven and everywhere else is some kind of non-personal spirit. Nothing could be God that is not all of God.

God's omnipresence and His presence should not be confused. One is the positional being of God; the other is an immediate relationship with that being.

Psalm 16:11, "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

Though God is everywhere it is obvious that there is not fullness of joy everywhere.

The presence of God is not just an awareness that He is present; the unrighteous can believe that and still be joyless. The presence of the Lord is experiencing what He is, not merely that He is. It is drawing near to God that He might draw near to us. The presence of God is direct intimate communion. It is not merely thinking of God as Creator but as Father and friend. You can be surrounded by people and everyone is ignoring everyone else. Presence does not necessitate intimacy. Or there can only be two people but be in a relationship.

We can never escape God's presence. Jonah 1:3-4 tells an interesting part of a story, "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up." Verse 3 twice states that Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Then the very next verse tells us what the Lord did to Jonah. Jonah was never further from God on the ship than when he was being directly spoken to by God on the land.

Jeremiah 23:24 tells us, "Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" declares the LORD. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?' declares the LORD."

Hebrews 4:13 is another passage that tells us that God sees and knows everything, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

As with God’s omniscience, when we are tempted to sin we should remember that God is right there. It is as if He is standing right behind us watching and hearing everything. Where can we go to avoid the One who fills all in all? The solution to rebellion and temptation is not escape but obedience.

Psalm 73:23-24 tells us well, “Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory.”

## The Holiness of God

Holiness has two aspects to it. One is an abstinence from sin and a hatred of sin. Habbakuk 1:13a, gives us this sense, “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor.” Psalm 5:3-7 also conveys this, “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, at Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.”

The second aspect of holiness means to be separate, to be above. It has a sense of supreme excellence. Exodus 15:11, “Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?” and also 1 Samuel 2:2, “There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God.”

“Holy” is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times in any one place. Isaiah 6:3 reads, “And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.’” Revelation 4:8 proclaims, “And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, ‘HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.’”

God is called:

- The Holy One (Acts 2:27)
- The Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 49:7)
- Blessed and Holy Ruler (1 Timothy 6:15)
- Holy Spirit

Sin is an outrage to the holiness of God. It slanders all that God is and all that God says. In 2 Peter 3:10 God says, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” God hates sin so much that at the final time the best way that He will purge all of sin from everywhere will be by completely destroying everything and then recreating it.

Sin is a crime against God. Any crime on this Earth demands punishment. If I murder someone, when I stand before the judge I am not going to say, "Well, look at all of the people that I didn't kill!" Likewise, when a non-Christian stands before God and God reveals that person's sin, they are not going to say, "But look at all of the good things that I did!" It will be clear to them how terrible even one sin is when compared to God. No one will bargain with God at the Judgment Seat.

There is no greater distance, no greater separation between any two things in the Universe than between human sin and God's holiness. Isaiah 59:2, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." No amount of good works can ever bridge an infinite gap.

Psalms 10:11 records the thoughts of the wicked: "He says to himself, 'God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.'" The wicked think that God will dismiss their sin. They think that their sin does not matter to God and by thinking that they mock His holiness. Because they may not have received any immediate punishment for their sin they think that they have gotten away with it. But they do not realize that their sentence has already been determined; all that remains is its execution. They are already condemned. The noose may be just out of their sight but it is nearby nonetheless. The longsuffering and patience of God is perverted to the leniency of God. This is the warning of Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."

Because God cannot sin, His promises are sure and our salvation is secure. It is not that God would not sin but that He could not sin. Sin is a choice for us; it is not a choice for God. Numbers 23:19 reassures us, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" God's holiness, His inability to lie or to sin guarantees that He will keep His promises. 2 Corinthians 1:20 also tells us, "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." God's omnipotence guarantees that no one will ever be able to tear us out of God's hands, but it is God's holiness that guarantees that God Himself will never cast us out.

God expects us to be holy also. He wants us:

- 1) To recognize sin
- 2) To not sin
- 3) To hate sin
- 4) When possible, to act against sin

Our response is to praise God for His Magnificent Holiness. Psalm 30:4, "Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name." Psalm 99:5, "Exalt the LORD our God and worship at His footstool; holy is He."

## **The Sovereignty of God**

The sovereignty of God carries with it several connotations.

- God is the most important
- God has all authority

- God sustains all things
- God has the right to command, establish laws and standards, exact obedience, and be final judge
- God can freely delegate authority as He so pleases

It is not that God will reign but that He does reign. It is not that God will be King but that He is King.

Romans 13:1b tells us, "For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." Not only is God the greatest authority, but no other authority can exist apart from God allowing it.

This attribute dispels any notion of God being a distant observer of this world's events and people. He did not create the universe and then put it on autopilot.

Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." This statement has no conditions, no limitations, no qualifying statements. Through prayer we may move God to do something that would not otherwise happen, but if God determines something then nothing can or will ever change its completion.

The first verse in the Bible establishes the primary truth: "In the beginning God..." Here, all priority is defined. Nothing preceded God and nothing shall usurp Him. The reign of God will go unchallenged. Isaiah 40:15 echoes this, "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust."

Because God is completely and absolutely sovereign, we can be assured that what He tells us in the Bible about what happens in the future is assured. Daniel 4:34-35, "For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. 'All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"'"

Satan rejected God's sovereignty. In Isaiah 14 we see Satan's attitude when he fell. There are the five I will's. "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" All five attitudes show Satan wanting to usurp the authority of God. This was the first sin.

Then in the Garden of Eden, Satan convinced Eve and then Adam to have this same attitude of usurping God's authority. Genesis 3:5, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." In both instances it was a case of wanting to pull away from God's authority and setting themselves up as their own independent authority. They wanted to make their own rules. Romans 1:25 states this clearly, "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

Many of God's names in the Bible are related to His sovereignty.

- Adonai (Master or Lord)
- The Lord of Hosts
- King
- King Eternal
- King of Kings
- King of the Ages
- Lord
- Lord God Almighty
- Lord Jesus Christ
- Lord of All
- Lord of Glory
- Lord of Lords
- Lord of our Righteousness
- Highest
- The Most High God
- Shepherd
- Chief Shepherd
- Great Shepherd
- Shepherd of our Souls
- Commander
- God over All
- Head of the Body
- Head of the Church
- Leader
- Lion of the Tribe of Judah
- Ruler of God's Creation
- Ruler over Kings of the Earth
- Ruler over Israel

Satan is called:

- "the ruler of this world" (John 16:11)
- "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)

But is it God who is the "great King over all the earth" (Psalm 47:2)

Psalm 97:1, "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice."

## **The Love of God**

First of all, it must be realized that there has never been a point in time when God first began to love us. He has always loved us and He always will. Because God is all knowing (omniscient) He has known everything about for all time. Therefore, there is nothing that we can say or do that will surprise Him and either cause Him to love us more or to stop loving us.

We can see how much God has always loved us from a passage in Job 38 where God tells us about the time when He created the earth. At first there was nothing. Then the earth was created but it was formless and dark. Myriads and myriads of angels (the “morning stars”) were watching and when God laid the cornerstone of this new creation all of them burst into song and shouted for joy. The angels knew how much God would love us and how much we would mean to Him and they could not help but be ecstatic.

Perhaps the clearest proof of God’s love towards us is in our salvation. God does not save us because He is obligated to; He saves us because He wants to have an eternal, intimate relationship with us. This is made clear in John 17:3 where, in the Great Priestly Prayer, Jesus gives us the definition of eternal life. He tells us that the definition of eternal life is not living forever, nor is it going to Heaven. Here is what He says, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” So we see that God’s definition of eternal life is us being with and, even more so, knowing Him forever. This is God’s love towards us.

Our sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2, “For your sins have made a separation between you and your God.”). God brought us back to Himself by paying the highest price possible—the crucifixion and death of His own Son. We are not contemptible creatures whom God is disgusted with. Rather, we are the primary objects of God’s illimitable love.

God knows every one of our needs and desires and Romans 8:32 assures us that “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” If God gave us His precious Son at such a great cost then what distrust causes us to think that He would withhold less? He gave His best, demanding nothing in return; what makes us think that we need to earn the rest?

What God gives us, though, is not merely more of what the world offers, but that which is wholly new and different. He has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” as Ephesians 1:3 tells us. The issue is not whether or not God will give to us but will we put ourselves into a position to receive it? We put so much effort into grabbing the world’s morsels and do not turn around and see God’s great banquet feast. Jeremiah 5:25 tells us what the problem is, “And your sins have withheld good from you.” What are some of these spiritual blessings? Many can be seen in the section here on “The Transformations of Salvation.” We are given the absolute assurance of Heaven when we die (the “blessed hope” of Titus 2:13), we are forgiven, redeemed, justified, sanctified, and glorified. We are given true meaning and value to our lives; we are now able to make an eternal difference.

God did not give so that He might be able to love; He give because He already does love. This is the sublime declaration of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” The love of God is completely unconditional. This means that it is dependent only upon its source and not at all upon its recipient. We shall be loved for as long as God is love. It is not dependent upon what we may become. He loves us now, regardless of what we may be, regardless of what we are, regardless of what we were.

It is vital to realize that God's love and acceptance is never based on our performance. We perform to please God because we love Him, but never to win Him. We must understand that we cannot win God's love, and even more importantly, that we do not need to. If God so loved us unconditionally when He saved us, why do we often think that we must prove ourselves now that we are Christians? We do not enter into the presence of the King to be evaluated by Him, but to enjoy Him.

One of Satan's greatest deceptions is for us to believe that God does not really love us. Satan tells us that God's commandments are burdensome. He tells us that God does withhold good from the upright. He tells us that the more we give up for God, the less we will have. Satan is a liar and the father of lies, but how easily we believe him. When circumstances do not go our way we can too easily jump to the conclusion that God does not love us. Yet no matter how badly things are going for us there is always one solid proof that God's love is eternal and unconditional and that is the Cross.

The love of God is fully consistent with all that He is. Because God is holy, His love is pure; because He is just, His love disciplines; because He is eternal, His love is endless; because He is infinite, His love is limitless; because He is omnipresent, His love is always available; because He is omnipotent, His love is inseparable; because He is awesome, His love is immense. To experience the love of the Almighty is to experience all that He is.

## **The Faithfulness of God**

That God is faithful should give us much peace and confidence. We can be assured that He will never desert us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Life may hammer us, friends or family may betray us, our health or finances may crumble, but God will always be there to comfort us and give us hope.

There is many a believer who forsakes God, but there is never a believer whom God forsakes. As senseless and ignorant as we may become, as much as we may feel that we have been abandoned by God, and regardless of the self-indulgence of our condition, we can always say with Asaph in Psalm 73:23, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee." We are constantly in the concern of the Lord God Most High. No matter how vehemently we may deny this or how circumstances may make this seem to be untrue, the truth of its reality forever stands firm.

It is not the case that we are holding onto God for our security, but that God is holding onto us. Psalm 37:24 assures us of this, "When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand." Our security lies not in our strength but in God's. It stands to reason that God would abandon us because of our constant sin, but if there ever was a reason for Him to leave us, then there never was a reason for Him to have been drawn to us. If He accepted us as unforgiven sinners then what would possible cause Him to abandon us as forgiven sinners? And yet the undeniable truth is that God gave everything to draw us to Himself (John 6:44). Though unworthy, we are not worthless. God's faithfulness is not merely an added blessing; it is a necessity. Even under the care of the divine Shepherd, our hearts are far too prone to wander. Seeing how we cannot be trusted to hold onto this tremendous relationship, God has charged Himself with this great responsibility. It is in His faithfulness and not in our own obedience and loyalty that we can be confidence.

God's faithfulness does not merely mean that He will stay with us forever. It also means that He will never cease from His work of sanctifying and glorifying us. Philippians 1:6 assures us, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*" What we shall eternally become has been predetermined by God, and He shall never waver from that to which He has started. He has counted the cost; He shall finish the task.

Loyalty and commitment are usually the first things that we think of when considering faithfulness. However, faithfulness also implies consistency. This means that God will always do that which is consistent with His character. Therefore, we can be confident that God will never rethink His intentions. He will always respond and act towards us with love, patience, goodness, kindness, and all of His other attributes. This is why we can read in 2 Corinthians 1:20a, "*For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes...*"

An often overlooked and sometimes less desired aspect of God's faithfulness is His discipline. Psalm 119:75 tells us, "*I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.*" God is always faithful in refining our lives and bringing us closer to the image of His beloved Son. All of the promises of a trouble-free life without hurt are reserved for Heaven when we shall be without sin. It is then that we shall forever rest from our labors, from persecution, and from pain. Until then, God uses continually works in us to remove the junk so we might have room for His blessings and to glorify Him. We are prone to wander; affliction brings us back to the kindness of God.

God's faithfulness also keeps us holy. There is temptation everywhere—in the people and culture around us and even in our own hearts. It only takes a moment of unbelief for us to succumb to sin. Thus 1 Corinthians 10:13 gives us hope, "*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.*" In every temptation, God gives us a way to escape it. We can always confidently assert as the apostle Paul did in 2 Timothy 4:18, "*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*"

Our confidence rests in the faithfulness of the Lord. He has declared Himself to be completely and eternally committed to His people. All we have needed, God has provided. Lamentations 3:22-23, "*The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*"

## **The Mercy of God**

What is the difference between some of God's most common attributes? Mercy is God holding back justice and punishment from a person who deserves them because of wrong that he or she has done. Patience is long suffering towards a person of sin and rebellion. Love is the motivation to give the very best for the utmost longest and underlies all of His actions. Grace is the action taken by which He bestows all that His love motivates Him to do.

Psalm 103:10 tells us that, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” What we deserve and what we receive from God when we do wrong are usually two entirely different things. The very first time that any person sins he deserves to be cast into Hell to pay for that crime against God. But that almost never, if ever, happens. God gives us all ample time to turn to Him.

Mercy, however, does not remove the judgment of sin. It merely puts it off. If, when a person dies, he has not been born-again and so has not received the free gift of Jesus’ payment for all of his sins then all of the judgment that God mercifully withheld will then be required. What mercy does is give us time to receive God’s free gift of salvation. Mercy can never remove the divine penalty for our sin. If this were possible in even one instance then it would be possible for all instances and, if that were the case, then Jesus would not have been required to die.

God’s mercy is key in bringing us to salvation. Ephesians 2:4-5 tells us, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...” and in Titus 3:5-6, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior...” Mercy is like a criminal who has been rightly sentenced to death and is on his way to his execution and is standing before the noose. Days earlier an appeal was sent to the president asking him to give a full pardon, but there has been no word yet. So the judge orders everyone to stop and wait until they hear from the president even if it takes days or weeks. That waiting time is the judge showing mercy. It is giving the criminal a chance to be set free.

By what means are the doomed preserved from perishing? 1 Peter 1:3 proclaims, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The damned, instead of getting what they deserve, is given the opportunity to stand forever in the presence of the High and Holy God. Condemnation is replaced with justification. Shame is replaced with glory. Hell is replaced with heaven. This is pure mercy.

Mercy can never be earned. Its very necessity is because we are unworthy, not because we are worthy, or else there would not be any need for it. It is because we have sinned that we need mercy, not because we have obeyed. God is rich in mercy because we are rich in sin. God is not cold and calculating but is a caring being who realized what we are. Psalm 103:14 confirms this, “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.”

God’s mercy is also directed towards those who are afflicted. Not all affliction is the result of sin. Indeed, some suffering may be the result of doing exactly what God wants us to do. 2 Timothy 3:12 promises, “And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Here too, it is God’s mercy that seeks us out and gives rest to a troubled soul. The Lord is a fortress, a refuge, and a shield. The mercy of God is the salvation of His people from the storms of adversity. This was the cry of the blind and afflicted in the Gospels (see Matthew 9:27, Matthew 15:22, and Matthew 20:30 among others)—

“Have mercy on me.” What we are in need we should approach God so that we might get mercy: “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” – Hebrews 4:16. And in our greatest struggles, it is God’s mercy that lifts us up and carries us. “In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.” – Isaiah 63:9.

## The Grace of God

Grace is the blessings of God upon someone who is totally undeserving of them. Grace motivates, strengthens, and guides the believer in obedience and then eternally rewards him for doing it. Without grace no person could ever be saved and no saved person could do what God wants him to do. It is unlimited in its resources and free in its giving. It asks only for a humble person who is willing to receive it.

God was never compelled to love us; however, He gladly chose to do so. His love does not depend on the merit of the recipient but upon the magnificence of the Giver. It is His infinite pleasure to give us all good things for all time. Psalm 84:11 tells us, “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” God has given His only begotten Son to pay for our sins and bring us to Himself. What greater demonstration of love can anyone show than the supreme sacrifice of all that he had so that He can give all the more? “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”—Romans 8:32. Because of grace, the love of God may be poured out unhindered, unrestricted, infinitely, free to give. Grace transforms the desire of God into the blessing of man. Grace takes all that God is and has and bestows it freely and eternally upon sinful people.

Grace takes broken vessels, heals them, and then transforms them into vessels of honor. It takes people who are stuck in mud and mire and lifts them up to glory. Ephesians 2:6-7 states, God “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Though now that He is unconditionally able to give, the only issue remaining is the willingness on our part to receive. God gives grace only because He want to, not because He has to. “I will be gracious to whom will be gracious.”—Exodus 33:19. He is under no obligation or debt to give. That He does is always His choice and determination. But we can be confident that to us grace will super abound in every deed and situation. Does He not say “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it”—Psalm 81:10? Second Corinthians 9:8 reads, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

Grace takes “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” and makes them “vessels of mercy” prepared for glory. Grace takes the prospect of “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” and changes it into one of, “And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they

shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.” Grace delivers us from the domain of darkness and transfers us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Grace takes those who are alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds and reconciles us that we might be presented before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach. Grace takes the ugly and worthless and makes it beautiful and precious; from a life of shame to a life of glory; from “lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness” to “being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

Humility does not earn grace; instead it is accepting the free gift God has given. We earn death; we receive grace. Humility is an attitude of dependence on God. It is a proper recognition of our total impotence and insufficiency apart from Him. Pride would rather eat bread and water gained by its own devises than feast at the table of the king by way of unmerited invitation. Pride merely survives; humility lives abundantly.

One of the most dangerous opponents to grace is law (an attitude of having to work and follow rules to gain God’s acceptance). Romans 11:6 warns us, “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.” Under law we do good things in order to become acceptable. Under grace we are already acceptable so our motivation is to then do good. The law says, “Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the Lord your God.”—Deuteronomy 28:1-2 Grace says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Therefore... walk in a manner worth of the calling with which you have been called.”—Ephesians 1:3.

Grace allows us to always do the right thing. 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” Temptations rush us from every side all of the time. People insult us, overeating beckons to us, and lust, gossip, and greed call us over to their side. We make excuses for not helping the oppressed, not reading the Bible, and not going to or serving at church. But God’s grace not only removes the excuses but gives us the power. Notice all of the emphatic words of completeness in this verse.

“**all** grace”

“**abound**”

“**always** having”

“**all** sufficiency”

“in **everything**”

“an **abundance**”

“**every** good deed”

And, of course, this verse starts with the ultimate word for completeness—“**God.**”

The Bible clearly declares the glorious excellence of God's grace. It is necessary for salvation. It is required to walk according to His will. It is given to a completely undeserving people. Indeed, so great is this theme that the throne upon which the Almighty is seated is called "the throne of grace." It opens wide the tremendous storehouse of God's riches and lavishes them upon an unworthy people.

## Who is Jesus?

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity. He always was and always will be fully God. When He was born a baby at the Incarnation, He also became fully man while continuing to be fully God.

Because Jesus is fully God, He also has all of the same attributes (characteristics, nature) of God. Here is a short list: Jesus is omnipresent (Ephesians 4:10), omnipotent (Colossians 1:16-17), Omniscient (Colossians 2:3), Sovereign (Colossians 2:10), Eternal (Micah 5:2), and Immutable (Hebrews 13:8).

While He walked on the Earth some 2,000 years ago He also exhibited all of the characteristics of being a human being. Some of these are that He slept (Matthew 8:24), He was thirsty (John 19:28), He suffered physical wounds (John 20:27), He got tired (John 4:6), and He worked at a job (Mark 6:3).

For all eternity past the Trinity was all that existed. Then, out of nothing, God created the entire Universe. On the sixth day of Creation God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Because they disobeyed God (sinned) they were driven from the presence of God and destined for an eternity in Hell to pay the penalty for their sin. All people who descended from Adam and Eve (which are all people) inherited this same nature to disobey God. Therefore, everyone, likewise, becomes separated from God and destined for Hell. But God's desire was to bring everyone back to Himself to spend an eternity in Heaven. However, the penalty from sin needed to be paid for. So God (Jesus) became a man (the Incarnation) and then died on a cross (the Crucifixion) to pay for all of every person's sins. Then three days later Jesus rose again from the dead.

Therefore, Jesus is the Savior because He saves us from our sins. He is also the Messiah. "Messiah" means anointed or chosen one and in the New Testament is translated as "Christ." Jesus is the Messiah because He is the only one who can deliver us from the penalty of our sins.

It is only through Jesus that anyone can be saved (Acts 4:12, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.")

At some time in the future Jesus will return to the Earth, cast Satan and all evil forces into Hell, and create a new Heavens and a new Earth (2 Peter 3:10-13).

## The Names of Jesus

An unknown author said, "Words have meaning and names have power."

The Bible has over 200 names that Jesus Christ is called. Since Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament, many of them of there. The following is a partial list of these names and why they are significant.

Jesus Matthew 1:1 (Means "God is Savior")  
 Christ Matthew 23:8 (Jesus is the chosen and anointed One)  
 Wonderful Counselor Isaiah 9:6 (Jesus has the best words to comfort and counsel)  
 Mighty God Isaiah 9:6 (Jesus is God and He is omnipotent)  
 Eternal Father Isaiah 9:6 (Jesus, being God, exists forever)  
 Prince of Peace Isaiah 9:6 (Jesus is our only true peace)  
 Lamb of God John 1:29 (Jesus was the sacrificial lamb who gave Himself to die for our sins)  
 The Way John 14:6 (Jesus is the only way to a relationship with God)  
 The Truth John 14:6 (All truth is found in Jesus)  
 The Life John 14:6 (The only way to get eternal life is through Jesus)  
 The Resurrection John 11:25 (Jesus rose from the dead and is alive forevermore)  
 Lord of Lords 1 Timothy 6:15 (Jesus reigns sovereign and is the lord of all)  
 Immanuel Matthew 1:23 (This means "God with us")  
 The prophet of the Most High Luke 1:76 (A prophet is someone who brings God's message to us)  
 Jehovah Isaiah 40:3 (Jehovah is one of the primary names of God in the Old Testament)  
 I Am John 8:24 (This is the name that God used in Exodus 3:14)  
 The Alpha and the Omega Revelation 1:8 (The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet showing that Jesus is everything)  
 The Word John 1:1 (Jesus is THE message of God)  
 The Son of Man Mark 10:33 (Jesus was fully human)  
 The Son of God John 1:34 (Jesus was fully God)  
 Apostle Hebrews 3:1 (Jesus was The messenger, the One sent out from the Godhead)  
 High Priest Hebrews 3:1 (Jesus is The High Priest who makes intercession between God and people)  
 A Man of Sorrows Isaiah 53:3 (Jesus suffered to pay for all of the sins of the world)  
 The Savior of the World 1 John 4:14 (Jesus and only Jesus paid for the sins of everyone who has ever lived)  
 Messiah John 4:25 (The chosen and anointed One)  
 The Lamb of God John 1:29 (Jesus is the One who would sacrifice Himself to pay for our sins)  
 The Bridegroom Matthew 9:15 (Jesus love for the people of church is so great that one day we will be in a relationship as intimate as marriage)  
 The Good Shepherd John 10:11 (Jesus watches over, protects, and guides us)  
 The Door John 10:7 (Jesus is the one who leads to the true way)  
 The True Vine John 15:1 (In contrast to Israel which was God's original vine but which became corrupt, Jesus is the vine that will never become corrupt)  
 The Bread of Life John 6:35 (Jesus truly nourishes)  
 The Light John 12:35 (Jesus shows us the truth that is hidden)  
 My Strong Rock Psalm 31:2 (Jesus is a solid foundation upon which we can stand with confidence)  
 Chief Corner-Stone 1 Peter 2:6 (Jesus is the key support of our lives and of the church)  
 Redeemer Isaiah 59:20 (Jesus is the only One who can redeem (buy us) from our sins)  
 The Last Adam 1 Corinthians 15:45 (The first Adam brought sin into the world; the last Adam saved us from sin)  
 The Resurrection John 11:2 (Jesus will raise us from the dead to eternal life in Heaven)  
 The Head of the Body Colossians 1:18 (Jesus is the head of the church)  
 The Lion of the Tribe of Judah Revelation 5:5 (As prophesized in the Old Testament, Jesus must be descended from the tribe of Judah and He is King)  
 Lord of Lords Revelation 17:14 (Jesus is the lord of all)

King of Kings    Revelation 17:14        (Jesus is the King of all)  
The Lord Jesus Christ    Colossians 1:2    (God, God with us, Savior)

Jesus, indeed, has names that are power.

## Jesus is God

There are many, many Scriptures that support the deity (Godhead) of Jesus Christ. The following are a selection.

### Scriptures that explicitly refer to the deity of Jesus

Colossians 2:9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." The word "fullness" (*pleroma*) means "that which is brought to fullness or completion, sum total, fullness." This verse can read, "For in Jesus all of the sum total of deity dwells in bodily form."

Titus 2:13, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Here we read Paul referring to Jesus as both God and Savior.

Hebrews 1:8, "But of the Son *He says*, 'YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.'" Here, God the Father, in verse 1, who is speaking calls Jesus "God."

### Jesus claimed to be God

John 5:16-18, "For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.' For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

In Luke 12:8-9 and Luke 15:10 Jesus refers to "the angels of God." Then in Matthew 13:41a, "The Son of Man will send forth His angels." Jesus refers to them as "His angels." The angels of God are the same as Jesus' angels.

Hebrews 1:3a, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature..." "Exact representation" means "the exact expression ... of any person or thing, marked likeness, precise reproduction in every respect." So Jesus reflects and is God in every possible way.

Philippians 2:6-8, "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." "Form" in the Greek means "the essential attributes as shown in the form." Before He became a man, Jesus was the very essence of God and then He became the very essence of a bond-servant. Before the incarnation He was fully God and then after the incarnation He was fully God and man (bond-servant). But Jesus did not feel that being God and only God was

something that He had to hold onto (grasp). Therefore, He was able to humble Himself and allow the Creator to become the created.

Isaiah 44:6, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'" Then in Revelation 1:17 Jesus said, "'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,'" The Old Testament God and Jesus both claim to be the "first and the last"? There can only be one "first and last" and in both cases it is the same God.

In John 14:1 Jesus says, "believe in God, believe also in Me." Notice how Jesus juxtaposed believing in God with believing in Himself.

In John 10:30 Jesus states, "I and the Father are one."

John 1:1, 14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The key statement here is that "the Word was God." Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." "And the Word became flesh." The Word was God and then became flesh.

## **Jesus has the attributes of God**

### ***Jesus is omnipresent***

Omnipresence means that someone is everywhere at the same time. Only God is omnipresent.

Ephesians 4:10, "He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things." Jesus fills all things.

### ***Jesus is omnipotent***

Omnipotence means that someone is all-powerful. He can do anything and everything.

Colossians 1:16-17, "For by Him [Jesus] 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." Jesus created all things and every atom in the Universe holds together because of Jesus.

### ***Jesus is omniscient***

To be omniscient means to know everything from all time and all places. It also means knowing all that could have been potential.

Colossians 2:3, "in whom [Jesus] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Notice "all" of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

### ***Jesus is sovereign***

Sovereignty means that someone is the head and ruler over all.

Colossians 2:10, "and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority." Jesus is the head over all.

### *Jesus is eternal*

To be eternal means that someone has no beginning or end. They existed into the past forever and will exist into the future forever.

Micah 5:2 in referring to the Messiah states, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." The Messiah's days were from eternity past.

### *Jesus is immutable*

To be immutable means unchanging.

Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever." Jesus is the same always. You might say, "Well, Jesus went from being God to being God/man. That certainly was a big change." But this is referring to character. Whether as God or as God/man, Jesus always had the same sinless, holy character. His lovingkindness, faithfulness, compassion, love, peace, joy, etc. never changed.

## **Why did the Savior have to be God?**

Why could not Jesus just have been a prophet, an angel, or even just a really good, maybe even the best, person?

### **For one, the Savior needed to have Infinite Value**

The punishment of a crime or sin is primarily determined by two factors: 1) The horror of the sin itself and 2) The value of object that it is committed against.

If you smash an ordinary rock you will not suffer any punishment for that act because an ordinary rock has no value. There would be no debt to pay.

But suppose that you kill a man. Because a man has value you would be sent to prison to pay the penalty for your crime. But once you paid off that debt then you would be free to leave the prison and you would have no more obligations to pay. In this case the punishment is greater because the object of your violence is of more value.

But when you commit a sin against God because God is of infinite value so your punishment would likewise be infinite. But the only thing that we have that is infinite is our time and so it would take us an eternity in Hell to pay off even one sin.

The only way to pay off an infinite debt with something less than an eternity of time would be by someone with infinite value. He could offer His infinite value as payment for an infinite debt. But people, prophets, and even angels do not have infinite value. Only God has infinite value. And so only God could pay off an infinite debt in less time than eternity and the only way that He could do that would be to offer Himself. Therefore, in order for Jesus to be able to pay off our sins on the cross and then resurrect

three days later He would have to be God. If He was not, then He would still be in the ground paying for our sins and would be doing so for eternity.

### **Secondly, the Savior needed to have Infinite Ability**

No one other than God would be able to carry the sins of the world.

Isaiah 53:5 states, “But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.

Keil and Delitzsch in their “Commentary on the Old Testament” say for the word “pierced”: “There were no stronger expressions to be found in the language, to denote a violent and painful death.” They further state, “the meaning is not that it was our sins and iniquities that had pierced Him through like swords, and crushed Him like heavy burdens, but that He was pierced and crushed on account of our sins and iniquities.” That word “crushed” means to break into small pieces and designates the most severe inward and outward suffering. All of the weight, justice, punishment, and wrath of God the Father fell brutally upon Jesus. Jesus bore the sins of billions of people all at once and without even a sliver of God’s mercy. No person or angel could have borne that and survived. Only God could have carried all of our sins on the cross.

### **Third, the Savior needed to have Perfect Holiness**

The person who paid the penalty for our sins had to be perfectly sinless and holy because if He had any sin, even one, then He would have had to pay for his own debts and would not have been able to pay off anyone else’s. Only God is perfectly sinless and holy.

So we see that no one other than God could have taken on the sins of the world, fully bore them, paid the full debt for each and every sin for all of the billions of people who will ever live and still have been able to live again. The only One who could have done that is Jesus Christ.

## **Jesus in Old Testament Prophecy**

The Old Testament, which was completed around 440 B.C., has in its 39 books around 315 prophecies that foretell, or predict, the coming of the Messiah. Throughout history, there have been thousands of people who have claimed to be the Messiah. So how can we know which one is the real one? God established verifiable criteria that we can use to make this determination. He gave us around 315 events and characteristics of the coming Messiah. Then God said that this person **MUST** exactly fulfill every single one of these prophecies. If even one is missed then that person cannot be the Messiah.

Some of these prophecies are:

- 1) Descended from Jacob (Numbers 24:17)
- 2) Descended from David (Jeremiah 23:5)
- 3) Place of birth-Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

- 4) Herod would kill many children (Jeremiah 31:15)
- 5) He would be preceded by a messenger-John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3)
- 6) He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12)
- 7) Crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12)
- 8) His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20)
- 9) Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9)
- 10) The time of birth (Daniel 9:25)
- 11) How He was betrayed (Zechariah 11:11-13)
- 12) The manner of His Death-crucifixion (Psalm 22:16)
- 13) The piercing of His hands, feet and side (Psalm 22, Zechariah 12:10)
- 14) The fact that people mocked Him (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22)

Professor Peter Stoner in the book Science Speaks calculated the odds of one Person fulfilling just eight of these prophecies. He found the odds to be 1 in  $10^{17}$ . To put this in perspective, this many silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Mark only one of these silver dollars and then mix them all up with bulldozers. Now blindfold someone fly them over this huge pile in a helicopter. Then at some point when he tells you to stop let him parachute down, run his hands through the pile and pick only one coin. That this would be the one and only marked coin is the same odds as 1 in  $10^{17}$ .

George Heron, a French mathematician, calculated that the odds of one man fulfilling only 40 of those prophecies to be 1 in  $10^{157}$ . The estimated number of electrons in the entire universe is only around  $10^{79}$ .

No one in history has probably fulfilled even as many as ten of these. Jesus Christ absolutely and exactly fulfilled all 315. This is God's way of telling us that we can be confident that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah who came into the world to save us. It is not a blind leap of faith.

## The Incarnation

The Incarnation is when God was born as a human baby by means of a woman. Incarnation means "becoming in flesh."

The story is primarily told in Matthew 1:18 – 2:12 and Luke 26:1-38 and 2:1-20. Mary, who was a virgin, was engaged to Joseph. Before they were married, the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would conceive a son by way of the Holy Spirit. Being pregnant and unmarried was a disgrace and so Joseph wanted to send her away secretly. But an angel told him to marry Mary. Mary remained a virgin until Jesus' birth. Just before Jesus' birth a decree was made that everyone had to register for a census and so Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to register. But there was no room for them at the inn so they had to stay in a manger. Jesus was born. An angel appeared to some shepherds in the fields and proclaimed with great joy that the Savior was born. So they went to the manger, saw the Child, and went away glorifying God. Some time after, magi (wise men) from the east followed a star and came looking for Jesus to present gifts and honor Him. When Herod the king heard of this he was afraid that

the child would grow up and usurp his kingship. So Herod killed all of the children in Bethlehem and the vicinity but Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaped to Nazareth.

Ultimately we can look at John 1:1, 14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." This Word was God. Then we discover that this Word became flesh. God did not merely look like a person. It was not an illusion. He actually became a person. The word "dwelt" means "tabernacle" or to say that "he pitched his tent among us." So in this magnificent passage, we see that the eternal God became one of us. Why? The answer harkens back to verses 12 and 13: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." How can I know that someone really exists? I can see his name in a telephone book, but maybe that is just someone else with the same name. I can interview someone who claims to have spoken to him, but perhaps she is lying. However, if I actually meet and talk to this person then I will be convinced.

God is unseen. How do we know that He really exists and cares about us? The first time when God dwelt (tabernacled) with His people was in Exodus 13:21. He led Israel in pillars of cloud and fire at the Red Sea. This was evidence to many of the invisible. Then in Exodus 40:34 God took up residence in the temple as the Shekinah glory. But because Israel turned from God, the Shekinah glory left the temple in 586 BC (Ezekiel 11:23) and for hundreds of years God was again invisible.

Then in God's perfect timing He chose once again to dwell among us. But this time instead of appearing as a "consuming fire" He came in "grace and truth." Instead of appearing at a distance, He walked among us. Because God became human we can read His actual words, weep at His brutal crucifixion, and rejoice at His resurrection. Does God exist and does He care? He became flesh and we saw His glory. What greater proof do we need?

It all comes together. Jesus became flesh so that we might become children of God, i.e. so that God and we might have a close and intimate relationship. Not just so that we might go to Heaven, but more so, that we might become the temple of God and then one day spend an eternity gazing at His glorious face.

The Incarnation was not merely something interesting. It was not a mere setup for the Crucifixion. It shook history. It changed everything. It was God becoming human, becoming a baby, and walking among us, living amidst sin while remaining perfectly sinless Himself.

Isaiah 9:6a reads, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." Yet perhaps the most glorious and also confounding pair of words in this passage are "to us." We slander God and rebel against Him. We are sinners who deserve the full and eternal wrath of God; a people who do no good and whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness (Romans 3). And yet, the One who is the most magnificent was given "to us"--those who are most undeserving—so that He might

redeem, regenerate, and glorify. This He did not grudgingly but with great zeal and with great love. The Incarnation is God given “to us.”

## Jesus' Baptism

Matthew 3:13-17 records Jesus' baptism, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

Jesus was thirty years old when He was baptized (“When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age” —Luke 3:23). Thirty years old is a significant age in the Bible. David became king at thirty years old (2 Samuel 5:4) and Joseph was elevated to second in command to Pharaoh at this age. So we see that significant and righteous men ascended to positions of kingship and authority at this age. Jesus was and is a king (John 18:37). Also, priests in the Old Testament were consecrated at 30 years old (Numbers 4:3). A priest is one who brings the people to God. One of Jesus' primary functions was to be a priest, to reconcile people to God. Thus, He started His ministry as a priest at age thirty.

Exodus 29 describes the consecration of priests. Though there are many interesting points in this passage that can be related to Jesus' baptism we will look at two of them. In verse 4 the priests were washed. Similarly, Jesus was dipped into water. Also, in verse 7 they are anointed on their heads with oil. At Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and alighted upon Him. Acts 10:38a tells us, “*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit.*” And in 1 John 2:20, “*But you have an anointing from the Holy One.*” Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. Thus we see how Jesus was similarly consecrated as an Old Testament priest with water and with oil.

Jesus' baptism was a watershed moment in Jesus' life. He went from being a near anonymous carpenter to One whose remaining years were spent proving that He was the Messiah as prophesized in the Old Testament who would come to die for the sins of the world and then rise again.

In Matthew 3:15 in giving John an explanation for His being baptized said, ““*Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*” The coming Messiah was expected to be righteous and to bring in righteousness. Jesus fulfilled both of these requirements. Also, by being baptized along with the sinners that John was baptizing at the moment, Jesus was identifying with those sinners and, of course, with all of us. Jesus was not baptized with special, consecrated water in a special restricted ceremony. He was baptized in the same dirty river water that many others were likewise being baptized in.

Jesus' baptism also foreshadowed His eventual death and burial and then resurrection. In the river, Jesus was dipped under the water (death and burial) and then lifted out (resurrection).

It was important that it was John the Baptist who baptized Jesus. The last book written in the Old Testament is Malachi and its last declaration is that Elijah will precede the Messiah. Malachi 4:5 reads, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD." See also Isaiah 40:3 ("A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God'") and Malachi 3:1 ("Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me"). Then in Matthew 11:14 Jesus tells us, "And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come."

We also see the Trinity coming together in one place on the Earth. Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke from Heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove. This proved just how crucial this event was. The Father confirmed Jesus' identity "My beloved Son" and His sinless perfection ("with him I am well pleased"). Jesus' baptism was more than an example to us, though it was that. It was a defining moment in world history.

## Miracles of Jesus

The miracles of Jesus can be divided into two main categories: Nature Miracles and Healing Miracles. There are nine of the first and 28 of the second. The Healing Miracles can be further subdivided into General Healings, Resurrections, and Casting out Demons.

<b>Nature Miracles</b>	<b>Matt</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
1. Stilling the Storm	8:23	4:35	8:22	
2. Feeding the 5000	14:13	6:30	9:10	6:1
3. Walking on the Water	14:25	6:48		6:19
4. Feeding the 4000	15:32	8:1		
5. Temple Tax in the Fish's Mouth	17:24			
6. Withering the Fig Tree	21:18	11:12		
7. First Miraculous Catch of Fish			5:1	
8. Turning Water into Wine				2:1-11
9. Second Miraculous Catch of Fish				21:1-11
<b>Healing Miracles</b>	<b>Matt</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>General Healings</b>				
10. Cleansing of a Leper	8:2	1:40	5:12	
11. Healing a Centurion's Servant	8:5		7:1	
12. Healing Peter's Mother-in-law	8:14	1:30	4:38	
13. Healing the Sick at evening	8:16	1:32	4:40	
14. Healing a paralytic	9:2	2:3	5:18	
15. Healing the Hemorrhaging woman	9:20	5:25	8:43	
16. Healing Two Blind Men	9:27			
17. Healing a Man's Withered Hand	12:9	3:1	6:6	
18. Healing the Gentile Woman's Daughter	15:21	7:24		
19. Healing the Epileptic Boy	17:14	9:17	9:38	
20. Healing Blind Bartimaeus	20:30	10:46	18:35	
21. Healing a Deaf Mute		7:31		

22. Healing a Blind Man at Bethsaida		8:22		
23. Healing the Infirm, Bent Woman			13:11	
24. Healing the Man with Dropsy on the Sabbath			14:1	
25. Cleansing the Ten Lepers			17:11	
26. Restoring a Servant's Ear			22:51	
27. Healing an official's son				4:43-54
28. Healing an Infirm Man at Bethesda				5:1
29. Healing the Man born blind				9:1
30. Heals Many Sick in Gennesaret	14:34-35	6:53-56		
<b>Resurrections</b>				
31. Raising the Ruler's Daughter	9:18,23	5:22,35	8:40,49	
32. Raising of a Widow's Son at Nain			7:11	
33. Raising of Lazarus				11:43
<b>Casting out Demons</b>				
34. Demons entering a herd of swine	8:28	5:1	8:26	
35. Curing a Demon-possessed Mute	9:32			
36. Casting Out an Unclean Spirit		1:21-27	4:31-36	
37. Curing a Demon-possessed, Blind and Mute man	12:22		11:14	

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

- 1) They pointed to Him as Messiah

John 10:37-38, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." Here Jesus is setting up His miracles as a litmus test. He is essentially saying, "If I don't do miracles then don't believe what I say. But if I do miracles then believe who I say I am."

- 2) They attest to His deity

In Matthew 14 right after feeding the 5,000 Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and then a great storm arose. Jesus came out to them walking on the waves. Then Peter came to Jesus walking on the water himself. Finally we read in verses 32 and 33, "When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'"

- 3) They manifested God's glory

John 9:1-3, "As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'"

- 4) They emphasized faith

In Luke 18:42 after Bartimaeus, a blind beggar on the side of the road, received his sight we read, "And Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.'"

5) They emphasized God’s care and compassion for each one of us as individuals

If you look at Jesus’ miracles you see one common thread: they are all centered on helping other people. He was not into the big show.

Mark 10:51, “And answering him, Jesus said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ And the blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, *I want to regain my sight!*’” Jesus did not stand on a box and wave His arms and shout, “Gather round and see the miraculous. Someone first confirm that this man is really blind and dirty. Now watch and be amazed!” Instead, He approached a filthy, rejected blind beggar and quietly asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Jesus’ miracles were not drama simply to wow the crowd; rather, they were always focused on helping someone. His miracles impress us not so much because of their power but rather because they reveal His heart. That He multiplied fish and bread is quite amazing. But that He noticed that people were tired and hungry and needed to be taken care of and then did something about it is what really draws us to Him. Jesus did miracles because He cared. He cared about people then and He still has that same heart towards us today.

6) The foreshadow the power given to believers in the Church Age

John 14:12, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”

The miracles of Jesus demonstrated many things: that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is God, that God is glorious, that our faith is important, and that we, by the Holy Spirit, will even now be able to accomplish much. Jesus’ miracles should not make us stand in awe from afar, but, rather, should draw us closer to Jesus as we see who He really is. Just as He walked up to people who were afraid and hurting, so He wants to walk up to us today and do a miracle in our lives.

## The Prayers of Jesus

There are 26 recorded prayers of Jesus.

1	prior to Bethlehem	Hebrews 10:5,7
2	at His baptism	Luke 3:21,22
3	before His first preaching tour of Galilee	Mark 1:35-39
4	after the healing of a leper	Luke 5:12-16
5	before choosing the twelve disciples	Luke 6:12,13
6	after being rejected by certain cities in Galilee	Matthew 11:25-26
7	prior to the feeding of 5000 people	John 6:11
8	after feeding 5000 people	Matthew 14:22,23
9	as He healed a deaf man	Mark 7:32-37
10	prior to feeding 4000 people	Mark 8:6
11	before Peter's great confession	Luke 9:18; Matthew 16:14-17
12	during His transfiguration	Luke 9:28-35
13	after hearing the report of the seventy	Luke 10:17-21

14	before teaching the Lord's Prayer	Luke 11:1; Matthew 6:9-13
15	at the grave site of Lazarus	John 11:41, 42
16	over little children	Mark 10:13-16
17	in the temple on Palm Sunday	John 12:20-28
18	over Jerusalem	Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44
19	in the upper room prior to His death	Matthew 26:26-28
20	for Peter	Luke 22:31-34
21	His great High Priestly Prayer	John 17
22	in Gethsemane prior to His death	Mark 14:32-42; Matthew 26:39-46
23	on the cross	Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:46; John 19:30; Luke 23:46
24	at His resurrection	Hebrews 2:12,13; John 20:17
25	at Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35
26	at the Ascension	Luke 24:50-53

Note: This table was adapted from <http://www.askapastor.org/prayers.html>

There are also verses that talk about Jesus still praying for us today: Romans 8:34; I John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24.

Why did Jesus pray? After all, He was God so was He just praying to Himself? Jesus prayed as an example for us. And yet, it was not a hollow exercise. Yes, Jesus was, and is, God, but He was also human. The human side of Him was vulnerable and in need of guidance. The divine side of Jesus knew that the best way to gain wisdom and understanding was to seek it from His Heavenly Father.

By studying Jesus' prayers we can learn many lessons.

- Jesus prayed often and that oftentimes He prayed for a long time. Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:34-35, Luke 5:15-16
- Jesus prayed a lot alone and a lot with others. John 6:11
- He prayed before big events and stages in His life and also before making big decisions. Luke 3:21-22, Luke 6:12-13, Mark 1:35-39
- The praise and glory of the Father was preeminent. John 12:27-28
- Jesus often prayed for others but He also prayed for Himself. Luke 22:31-34
- Jesus was strongly emotional but controlled. Hebrews 5:7
- Jesus entrusted Himself to His Heavenly Father. Luke 23:46
- His prayers were communion and relationship. John 17:1-5
- His prayers were hopeful. John 17:22-24

Jesus' prayers were not technical. They were not meant to impress anyone, either those listening or even God. They came from His heart; they were filled with emotion. At times they were loud and at times He cried. "Piety" means to respect or reverence God. Jesus' prayers were answered because He was pious. When we approach God in prayer, our focus should not be on our prayer but on God. In the former, we are more concerned about our words, what we are saying. In the latter, we are more concerned about our hearts and who it is to whom we are speaking. Our prayers are not directed to

some clerk nor to someone that we just want to speak at. They are communion with the living God Almighty. We should approach with piety and not with glibness or mere obligation.

## Why did Jesus have to Die?

We need to first understand who and what God is. God is the One who created everyone and everything. He is the king, ruler, and sovereign over everything. As such, He deserves and commands that we obey Him. This is both so that He might be honored but also so that we might live lives full of blessings.

God is also holy. Everything that He does is right and good. He cannot do anything that is wrong or unloving. He can never accept or overlook anything that is wrong.

Anytime that we disobey God, do what is wrong, or do not do what we should then that is called sin. Just as disobeying a government's laws is a crime that comes with a punishment, you can call sin a crime against God that likewise comes with a punishment.

The degree of punishment of any crime is based on 1) the severity of the crime (stealing a \$1,000,000 painting carries a worse punishment than stealing a \$1 orange) and 2) the value of the object that the crime is committed against (killing a man demands a greater punishment than killing a cat). Because God is of infinite value each sin committed against Him requires an infinite punishment.

The only thing that we have that is infinite is our time and so to pay for each and every sin that we commit requires an infinity (eternity) in Hell. Jesus is the only one who was a human that had infinite value. Therefore, He is the only one who could pay for a sin, or every sin, not by infinite time but by the infinite value of Himself. And the only way that He could give all of Himself was to die.

Jesus died by means of crucifixion to pay for every sin that every person every committed. By doing so He fulfilled the required infinite punishment that God demanded from each person.

2 Corinthians 5:21 sums this up, "He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus became and paid for our sins so that we might be considered as righteous (and not as sinful) in the eyes of God.

But though Jesus fully paid each person's penalty we must personally receive His offer of forgiveness (salvation). Romans 10:9-10 affirms this, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." And also John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name..." It is as though God is holding out to us the gift of salvation, but if we ignore that gift then it never becomes ours.

## The Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is that Jesus, who truly and actually died, was raised from the dead on the third day by the power of God the Father and that His resurrected body was real flesh and blood. His resurrection was not an illusion.

In many places in the Gospels Jesus predicts both His death and resurrection. Some of these are: Matthew 16:21, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." Mark 9:31, "For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.'" Luke 18: 31-33, "Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.'"

Then after Jesus rose from the dead there are at least 17 instances where He appears to one or more people.

The primary significance of the Resurrection is that it proved that God the Father was satisfied with the sacrifice that God the Son made for our sins. The reason that Jesus died on the cross was to pay the infinite penalty that each one of us owed God because of our sins. Because Jesus was perfectly holy and perfectly God He was able to fully pay the entire debt of each and every person who has and who will ever live. Because these debts were completely paid it was no longer necessary for Jesus to remain dead. Therefore, His resurrection was, in a sense, the Father stamping our debt as "fully paid." When I go to the store and buy something I get a receipt stating that I paid the full price of the item. If it is a particularly expensive item then they might write "Paid in Full" at the bottom. That receipt proves that I satisfied the price that the store was asking. The Resurrection is our receipt that the Father was satisfied with the payment that His Son paid for everyone's sins.

Jesus conquered sin and death; therefore, each one of us can be completely forgiven and given the gift of eternal life. Because Jesus rose from the dead we can be assured of Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

## The Holy Spirit is God

The Holy is fully a member of the Godhead (the Trinity). He is not a separate God nor is He merely a force.

### **The Holy Spirit has the attributes (characteristics) of God.**

He is called the "Holy" Spirit. Holiness is a key attribute of God. In fact, it is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times in succession: Isaiah 6:3, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts" and Revelation 4:8, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." Also Romans 1:4, "who was declared the Son of God

with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord...”

He is all powerful (omnipotent). Paul writes in Romans 15:18-19a, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit...” All that Jesus did was in the power of the Holy Spirit.

He knows all things (omniscient). 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” Can anyone except for God plumb His very depths?

He is eternal. In John 14:16 Jesus tells us, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever...” The Spirit will be with us forever. In Hebrews 9:14 He is called “the eternal Spirit.”

He is truth: John 14:17, “the Spirit of truth.” In Psalm 31:5 and Isaiah 65:16 God is called the “God of truth.” In John 14:6 Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...”

### **The Holy Spirit is called God**

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul references each member of the Trinity in succession, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”

Again in 1 Peter 1:2 we see the same, “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood...”

Matthew 28:19 reads, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...” There is only one name (the Trinity) but three members of which the Spirit is one of them.

Acts 5:3-4 says, “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? While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’” Notice that at first Peter says that they lied “to the Holy Spirit” but then in the next verse he says “You have not lied to men but to God.” Thus Peter equates the Holy Spirit with God.

Acts 28:25 tells us, “And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers...” And then some passages from the book of Isaiah are quoted. Notice that it says that it was the Holy Spirit who spoke these passages. Then in Isaiah 6:8a which is the start of these same passages Isaiah says, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying...” Here it is the Lord who spoke. So the Holy Spirit and the Lord are one in the same.

So we see that the Bible speaks clearly about the deity of the Holy Spirit. He deserves our full trust, reverence, and worship.

## The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit actively interacts with us in an intimate relationship. He is not just a force that pushes us along, but knows everything about us and works diligently to make our lives as abundantly full of grace as possible.

Some of the ministries of the Holy Spirit are:

He teaches	John 14:26	But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.
He speaks	Galatians 4:6	Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
He convicts	John 16:8	And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;
He leads	Galatians 5:18	But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.
He intercedes	Romans 8:26	In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;
He appoints	Acts 13:2	While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
He regenerates	John 3:6	That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
He baptizes	1 Corinthians 12:13	For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
He fills	Ephesians 5:18	And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,
He guides in righteousness	Romans 8:4	so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
He Empowers	Acts 1:8	But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.
He sends	Acts 13:4	So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.
He warns	Acts 20:23	Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
He loves	Romans 5:5	And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
He gives peace and joy	Romans 14:17	For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
He sanctifies	Romans 15:16	to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a

		priest the gospel of God, so that <i>my</i> offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
He renews	Titus 3:5	He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit
He gives spiritual gifts	Hebrews 2:4	God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.
He inspires	2 Peter 1:21	For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
He provides fellowship	2 Corinthians 13:14	The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
He comforts	John 14:16	I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper [comforter], that He may be with you forever

We can see from the above passages in the Bible that the Holy Spirit is a living, intelligent (omniscient (all knowing), actually), personal being. And He is one who lovingly interacts with us in a multitude of ways. We must not think of God the Father as someone giant and mysterious who sits on a throne in Heaven, God the Son (Jesus Christ) as someone who walked among us as a man, and the Holy Spirit as something that moves around the world like an invisible force. All three are equally members (persons) of the Trinity. All three interact with us personally and intimately. Each member of the Trinity may have different functions but all are equal in being and character.

## Angels

The word “angel” means messenger. A messenger is someone who acts and speaks on behalf or in the place of the one who sent him. In the Old Testament angels are also called “holy ones,” “strong ones,” “sons of God,” “heavenly host,” and “heavenly beings.” Angels are referenced in the Bible around 300 times.

Long before Genesis 1 and before God created the Universe, He created a vast host of angels. Revelation 5:11 tells us, “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands...” Myriad means a countless or extremely great number.

Angels have intelligence, free will, and moral understanding. It is unclear what kind of bodies they have; however, they are able to take on the bodies of people and are able to enter our world and can be seen and heard.

There is also a hierarchy of angels or at least a number of distinct roles.

The Archangel is the head angel. It is not said how many archangels there are but only one is named and is called Michael.

There are cherubim who have characteristics of both men and animals. Genesis 3:24 reads, “So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” Ezekiel 1 described “living beings” Verses 6-10 tells us, “Each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf’s hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides *were* human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle.” Ezekiel 10:20 identifies these living beings as cherubim. It is images of cherubim that adorn the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:17-22).

The seraphim have six wings. In Isaiah 6:2-3 they proclaim the holiness and glory of God.

Jesus’ ministry on the Earth was accompanied by angels. In Matthew 1:20 an angel reassures Joseph. In Luke 2:9 angels proclaim the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds. In Matthew 2:13 an angel guides Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to safety in Egypt. In Mark 1:13 angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness when He was tempted by Satan. In Luke 22:43 an angel comforted Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 28:2-5 tells us that angels were at the Resurrection. In Matthew 24:31 angels will return with Jesus at His Second Coming.

Acts 5:19 tells of an angel that opened the gates of the prison and freed the disciples.

The Bible tells us of many other instances of roles and ministries of angels.

There are two categories of angels: the holy angels and the fallen angels. The holy angels are those who have never sinned or rebelled against God. The fallen angels are those who, during a massive rebellion against God that was led by Satan, sinned against God and were cast down. They are now generally referred to as demons.

These both will be examined in the topics “Holy Angels” and “Fallen Angels” below.

## Holy Angels

Holy Angels are those angels who remained obedient to God and did not follow Satan and rebel. In the Bible when we read about an angel it is generally referring to a Holy Angel.

Among the holy angels, two stand out and are the only ones named in the Bible. The first is Michael the archangel who is the head of all of the holy angels. His name means “who is like unto God.” “Arch” in the Greek means “ruling or chief.” He is mentioned at several key events in the Bible. In Daniel 10:18-21 he is the only one who stands with another angel, possibly Gabriel, who stands against the forces of evil that are coming. In the end times, it is Michael who stands guard over God’s people (Daniel 12:1) and who will return with Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The second angel who stands out is Gabriel. His name means “hero of God.” A major ministry of his was to deliver crucial messages from God to key people. In Daniel chapters 8 and 9 he delivers messages to

Daniel. In Luke 1 he brings a message to Zacharias that he would give birth to John the Baptist and later in the same chapter he appears to Mary and tells her about the coming of King Jesus.

It is interesting that the only two angelic names that we know of both end with “el” which means God and so shows their intimate relationship to Him.

The Holy Angels have many ministries and are significantly integrated into God’s plans.

They were present at:	Reference	Scripture
Creation	Job 38:4-7	“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell <i>Me</i> , if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
The giving of the Law	Acts 7:53	You who received the law as ordained by angels, and <i>yet</i> did not keep it.
The Incarnation	Luke 2:8-13	In the same region there were <i>some</i> shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This <i>will be</i> a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
Jesus’ Temptation	Matthew 4:11	Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and <i>began</i> to minister to Him.
The Resurrection	Matthew 28:2	And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.
Jesus’ Ascension	Acts 1:9-11	And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”
The Second Coming	Matthew 24:30-31	And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

In Luke 16 is the story of Lazarus and the rich man. When Lazarus dies, verse 22 tells us “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom.” This implies that when those who are born-again die, they are carried to Heaven by angels.

Angels are sent by God to minister to His children. Hebrews 1:14 tells us about angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” In Matthew 18:10 Jesus says, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” This implies that people have angels that are, in a sense, “theirs.” Psalm 91:11 states, “For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.” Though no Scripture explicitly tells us that each one of us has a Guardian Angel, there are definite implications that angels do guard and guide us.

In summary, the Holy or Unfallen Angels proclaim the glory and holiness of God. They are messengers who bring God’s proclamations to people. And they minister to us in many different ways.

## Fallen Angels

At one point in time there was an innumerable host of angels in Heaven who were all holy and who served and praised God. But then one of them, Satan or Lucifer (also called the dragon), rebelled against God and he convinced a number of the angels to come over to his side. There was a war in Heaven. Michael, the archangel, fought against Satan and won. The result was that Satan and his rebellious angels were thrown down to the earth. Revelation 12:7-10 describes this. “And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” Revelation 12:3-4 tells us that the likely number of angels who joined Satan was one third of the total: “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 threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.” Angels are sometimes referred to as stars in Scripture.

It appears that these Fallen Angels are currently in one of two states. They are either bound: “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day” – Jude 6. Or they are free and are referred to as demons or devils.

These demons are organized to battle against God and against all of mankind. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Their primary purpose, driven by their hatred against God, is to thwart God’s plans and to destroy His people and try to get them to disobey God. They do this through lies and deception, by tormenting us and

trying to get us to blame God (see the book of Job), with temptations, and many other means. If they can get us to deny or disobey God then they are successful.

Their ultimate fate is to be cast into Hell forever. Matthew 25:41, ““Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’” They are on the losing side and, since they also can read the Bible, they know it.

It is only by the grace of God and by learning to recognize evil and wrong that we are able to win against these Fallen Angels.

## Who is Satan?

Ezekiel 28:12-19 is one of the most important Bible passages that tells us of Satan’s origin.

Verse 15 (“From the day you were created”) tells us that Satan was created by God. He is not an equal foe to God. He has not been around forever. Verse 12 tells us that Lucifer (as was his name at that time) “had the seal of perfection” and was “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” Verse 14 and 16 says that he was the “anointed cherub who covers [guards].” Lucifer was originally created as one of God’s most beautiful and perfect angels. He was a cherub (the plural is cherubim) which one of the types of angels that had the closest access to God and probably guarded God’s holiness. He had intimate access to God.

But then verse 17 God tells Lucifer that “your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.” Because Lucifer thought so highly of himself it corrupted his wisdom and his understanding of true reality. He thought of himself as being much greater than he really was. The result was that he proclaimed that he will rise above everyone else and sit where God sits and assume a place of great power and control (Isaiah 14:13-14).

Revelation 12 (quoted in the section “Fallen Angels”) indicates that Lucifer convinced a third of the angels to likewise rebel against God.

The result was in verse 17 was God telling Lucifer, “I cast you to the ground.” So Lucifer was cast down from his position of God’s covering cherub to God’s enemy.

Satan appears in the Garden of Eden to the very first man and women (Adam and Eve) in the form of a snake. He then lies by telling them that God lied and that if they disobey God then they will gain great wisdom and power—“ you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). This entices them to commit the first sin which resulted in them being separated from God and thrown out of the Garden. And from then on Satan has been doing everything that he can to get people to doubt God and to disobey Him.

Ultimately, Satan will be utterly defeated by God. In the End Times, Satan will ramp up his efforts and make a last ditch effort to overthrow God. But Revelation 20:1-3 says, “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup>And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup>and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations

any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time." So Satan will be bound in a special prison for 1,000 years. Then he will be released and will immediately resume his plan of destruction. But Revelation 20:10 tells us, "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." Satan's final end will be eternal torment.

Another passage that is often used in understanding Satan's past is Isaiah 14:4-21.

Satan goes by several names in the Bible. Here are some of them.

Name	Scripture	Note
Satan	Mark 1:13, "And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him."	Satan means "the adversary" in Hebrew. Because of his hatred of God, he opposes everything that God is and tries to do.
The Devil	1 John 3:8, "the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."	"The Devil" in Greek (diabolos) means "false accuser." He likes to accuse God's children of things that are not true in order to pull them away from God.
Lucifer	Isaiah 14:12, "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn!"	His original name before he fell is the "Morning Star" or "star of the morning" which can be translated as Lucifer.
Beelzebul	Matthew 12:24, "But when the Pharisees heard <i>this</i> , they said, 'This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.'"	Beelzebul means "ruler of demons."
The Great Dragon	Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."	The Great Dragon tells of his intimidation and fury.
The Evil One	John 17:15, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the <i>evil one</i> ."	Satan is not just another evil being; he is <i>the</i> evil one.
The Tempter	Matthew 4:3, "And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"	One of Satan's greatest weapons is to tempt people into not believing God and then disobeying Him.
Ruler of this world	John 12:31, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."	Right now, this world is ruled and being led by Satan.

## Satan's Mission

Satan started out as one of God's highest angels. He then he thought that he was much more beautiful and great than he really was so he tried to seize some of God's authority and glory. He persuaded one-third of the angels to rebel against God. They fought against Michael and the rest of the angels and lost and were cast out of Heaven. Ultimately, Satan will be cast into an abyss or prison where he will be tormented forever.

In between those two events Satan's primary mission is to deceive, accuse, and lie to all of mankind in order to get everyone to think that God lies, to think that God does not want our best, and so then to disobey God. Since he could not overthrow God and take God's place in Heaven, Satan is trying to get everyone on Earth to worship him now.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us how much hatred Satan has and what that hatred has driven him to—"Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

There are many tricks that Satan uses to pull people from God and to himself.

- 1) Satan tries to create a false religion that seems more appealing than Christianity.

1 Timothy 4:1-3, "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, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, *men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds."

In these two Scriptures we see that Satan's false religions set up rules that appeal to people. They appear to be good and righteous, but upon close examination they are found out to be deceivers.

He even has his own counterfeit church. "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." – Revelation 2:9

Satan does not try to create a religion completely opposite to Christianity since that would be so obvious. So he creates something that is very close but differs in some key area or areas such as claiming that Jesus is not God or that to be saved you must contribute something on your own rather than rely entirely on the sacrificial payment of Jesus on the cross for our sins.

- 2) Satan uses deception

2 Corinthians 11:3 tells us, “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of *devotion* to Christ.”

God gave one command to Adam and Eve. Satan twisted and exaggerated what God said to make it seem that instead of God preventing harm He was preventing good. Satan made Adam and Eve believe that God truly did not have their best interests in mind. And so Satan convinced them to go for power and pleasure rather than obedience. Deception usually takes something true and then gives it a slight but significant twist that in actuality changes it completely. He still successfully uses the same tactics today.

Satan will tell us that we are unfulfilled; that life is not satisfying and that only he has the means to making our lives happier. But Satan’s pleasures are like giving a hungry man cotton candy. At first his eyes may sparkle but in the end he just feels sick.

### 3) Satan lies

“You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because 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

There are many lies that Satan may use. He may tell us:

- That we have sinned so badly that God will never forgive us
- That because we are dumb or ugly or unpopular or poor that God does not want us
- That because we have suffered a great loss that proves that God does not love us
- That because we have failed one or more times therefore God cannot bless us or use us
- That revenge is better than forgiveness
- That the best way to feel better about ourselves is to put others down
- That churches are full of intolerant, self-righteous hypocrites and so it is better to stay away
- That being just a little religious is better than being very religious because then you will not look like a nut
- That the Bible is too a) boring, b) difficult, c) full of contradictions and so we should not read it

This list can go on for thousands of examples but these are just a few.

There are other methods that Satan uses to turn us away from God:

- Fear
- Physical pleasures
- Addictions
- Busyness
- Bitterness

And many more.

Ephesians 6:10-17 tells us how to avoid the schemes of the Devil.

## The Creation and Nature of Humanity

On the sixth day of Creation in Genesis 1:26-27, God created the first man and woman—“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Man was created first from the dust of the earth. His name was Adam which means “man” and is the masculine form of the word “earth.” It also is similar to the words for “blood” and “red.”

Then because man was lonely, God put a deep sleep upon Adam and took one of his ribs and fashioned it into a woman whose name was Eve. Eve is derived from a word that means “breath” or “to live” since she was the mother of all humanity.

In Genesis 1:21-25 God talks about creating all the different types of animals and seven times He mentions that He created them “after their kind.” But in verse 26 God tells us that He created “man in Our image.” We see in nature how animals communicate with their own kind. Lions are in prides, ants form colonies, fish are in schools, and birds flock. But people are the only ones who can communicate with two different beings. We communicate with each other in families and communities and we also communicate with God.

Unlike any other creature, humans are created in the image or likeness of God. This means that we have many of the same attributes of God although, obviously, not to the same infinite degree. These include creativity, morality and ethics, holiness, complex language, the ability to reason and to understand and respond to the supernatural, and graciousness.

God created us with three different parts: physical, soul, and spirit. We see this in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We also see in Hebrews 4:12 that the soul and spirit are separate, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” These three separate parts that comprise one person is a shadow of the Trinity.

The body is our physical body which is comprised of the five senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing, and seeing.

The soul includes our personality, emotions, creativity, intelligence, and mind. It is often used in the Bible to refer to the entire person.

The spirit is that part of us that perceives and understands the supernatural or spiritual. Just like our five senses allow us to experience the material world around us, our spirit allows us to experience the unseen spiritual world that is also around us.

The fact is that everyone has been created in the image of God. This gives a great intrinsic value and dignity to everyone. So no matter a person's social or economic status, no matter their intellectual capacity, no matter how they look, no matter their race or native country, everyone should be treated with a level of respect.

We are not just the highest level of evolution, a more developed glob of chemicals. We are something special. We are created by the sovereign King of the universe to communicate with Him and to know Him.

## The Fall of Humanity

When God created the first man and women, Adam and Eve, they were both without sin which means that did no wrong and they always did the right thing. They lived in a perfect environment—the Garden of Eden—and they walked with God. God allowed them to do anything that they wanted, but He gave them one restriction: they could not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Genesis 2:16-17 tells us, “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”

God gave Adam and Eve only one command. But then Satan came and used that one command to force a wedge between God and His people. We read in Genesis 3:1-6, “Now the serpent [Satan] was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden”?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.”’ The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

The death that God promised came in two ways. 1) People would now experience physical death. They did not die right away, but they eventually would die. 2) People would experience spiritual death which is a separation from God. This death occurred immediately. One consequence and symbolism of this separation occurred right away when God drove them out of the Garden of Eden and away from His presence.

This, the first disobedience to God, was the first sin.

From this point on, every person born, except for Jesus Christ, would inherit this same unavoidable desire to sin (sin nature) and so every person is separated from God. The only remedy is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## The Destiny of all People

When first created, humanity had only one destiny and that was to live forever with God in perfect harmony in a perfect environment (the Garden of Eden). But then Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one command and that destiny was changed. They were driven out of that perfect environment and were separated from God. Because they had disobeyed God and essentially committed a crime against God by breaking His law, they now owed God a debt or penalty. And until that penalty was paid in full, they would not be allowed back into the presence of a holy God. But since that penalty is more than they could pay, it would require an eternity of punishment in Hell to attempt to pay it off. So, at this point, humanity still had only one destiny, but that destiny was to die forever apart from God in Hell.

But God wanted to bring humanity back into a relationship with Himself. 2 Samuel 14:14 tells us, "Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him." God's solution was to be born as a human being and then to take all of the punishment of every person upon Himself through His dying on a cross. Then He offers this atonement (satisfaction or reparation for a wrong) as a free gift to everyone. Thus, anyone who receives this gift is brought back into fellowship with God and, once again, has the destiny of living forever with God in a perfect environment but this time it will be Heaven. Those who refuse or do not receive this gift are still condemned to an eternity in Hell.

Matthew 25:26 distinguishes these two fates, "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

We can see the contrast in the book of Revelation. In chapter 20 verse 15 we read the fate of those who did not receive God's free gift of salvation, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Then in chapter 22 verses 3-5 we read the fate of those who did receive God's free gift of salvation, "There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads. And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever."

There are no other choices. Hebrews 9:27 tells us, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment." There is no temporary place of cleansing. We are either completely cleansed and washed free of our sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ or we have unpaid sins that we will require an eternity to pay for.

## Sin

In order to understand what sin is, we must first understand who God is. Primarily, we must understand that God is holy. In fact, the only attribute of God that is repeated three times in succession is God's holiness. Isaiah 6:3 says, "And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.'" And Revelation 4:8 reads, "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.'"

To be holy means never doing or thinking anything wrong. But even more than that, it also carries the sense of hating all that is wrong. Habakkuk 1:13a, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor."

Secondly, we must understand that God is the King of all. He has established laws. Some of these laws are prohibitions (things that we must not do) such as do not lie, do not steal, and do not murder. And some of these laws are positive commands (things that we must do) such as forgive, help the oppressed, and attend church.

To disobey either of these sets of laws (to do what we should not or to not do what we should) is a crime against the King who established these laws and is called sin. Except for Jesus Christ, every person who has ever lived has sinned. Romans 3:23 tells us, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

The result of sin is that we are now permanently separated from God, "But your iniquities [sins] have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear."—Isaiah 59:2. It also makes us spiritually dead, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins..."—Ephesians 2:1.

Just as a crime committed against the state demands a penalty so does our crime/sin against God. However, since God is of infinite value and holiness, our punishment is eternal death, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Romans 6:23. And Revelation 20:15, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life (i.e. born-again), he was thrown into the lake of fire."

All of this is the result of only one sin, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all."—James 2:10. No amount of good works or deeds can ever balance out the punishment required for even one sin. If someone murders another person the judge will not let the murderer go free because of all of the people that he did not murder. He will be judged based on that one crime.

So sin is any disobedience against God's laws. Everyone sins. Our very first sin separates us from God and condemns us to an eternity in Hell in order to pay the penalty that we owe for our crime. No amount of goodness will ever be able to pay for this penalty. It sounds quite dire and hopeless. That is where Jesus Christ and salvation comes in.

## Salvation

God created the first people sinless and in perfect intimacy with Him. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one command. The result was spiritual death and separation from God. It also meant that every human born since then would have a sin nature, i.e. a desire and propensity to do wrong.

Since God is perfectly holy and is the creator and king of the universe anything that we do that is wrong (lying, stealing, gossiping, jealousy, anger) and anything that we fail to do that we should do (forgiving, reading our Bible, helping others) is sin and crime against God. This sin/crime deserves punishment and since God is of infinite value and is absolutely holy, even one sin no matter how small demands eternal punishment. And since the only thing that we have to offer that is eternal is our time, our punishment is an eternity in Hell.

God seeing this dilemma and not wanting anyone to suffer like this came up with a plan. Someone who is worthy and able to pay for all of the sins of each person would suffer in each person's place. But there is no human being who could fit this description. So God Himself was born as a person called Jesus Christ. He led a sinless life. Then when He was 33 years old He was condemned to die on a cross. While being crucified on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself all of the sins of every person in all of history and suffered the full wrath of God the Father. Then three days later, Jesus was raised from the dead, thereby proving that He indeed fully paid the penalty of everyone's sin.

So now God is freely offering to every person the gift of salvation. All that we must do is believe these truths and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Romans 10:9 promises, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Salvation does not require any deeds or works from us. Ephesians 2:8-9 emphatically tells us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." God is offering us a free gift; all that we have to do is take it.

Once we do this, we have are saved or born-again. We are born once physically. Then we sin and we are dead spiritually. When we are saved we are born spiritually and so are said to be born-again. In John 3:3 we read, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" So unless we are born-again we cannot go to Heaven.

Once we are saved we have God's many promises of eternal life. Eternal life means that we have been forgiven of all of sins and that we are now guaranteed of going to Heaven. This is in contrast to eternal death which is what we all deserve but which Jesus Christ has rescued us from. Some of God's promises are John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To go to Heaven does not require penance, money, good deeds or works, becoming a priest or the equivalent, or anything similar. It only requires believing on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The poorest person, the most illiterate person, the lowest social outcast, the world's greatest sinner are all welcome to receive this free gift of salvation.

## The Transformations of Salvation

Lewis Sperry Chafer in his work "Systematic Theology" lists 33 transformations that occur the second that a person is saved (born-again).

He lists seven characteristics of all of them.

1. They are not necessarily experienced

We may not feel these or be able to point to something concrete but they are indeed real.

2. They are not progressive

Once we receive these we have them completely and perfectly. We do grow into them. They do not develop over time. We have all of them fully at the instant of our salvation.

3. They are not related to human merit

We do not and cannot earn any of them. They are all given to us by God's free and undeserved grace.

4. They are eternal in their character

They can never be taken away either by us, by God, or by the Devil. Every one of them are ours forever.

5. They are known only by God's revelation

We could never figure out or imagine these transformations on our own. Only by God telling us of them in the Bible can we know what God has done in our lives.

6. They are wrought by God alone

100% of every one of these transformation is initiated and completed by God alone.

7. They are not wrought by us

Not one of us can offer even the slightest assistance in accomplishing any one of these transformations.

Here is a list of these transformations including many from Lewis Sperry Chafer's lists plus a few extra.

	Transformation	Scripture	Description
1	In the eternal plan of God	Ephesians 2:10	We are now God's workmanship created for good works
2	Redeemed	Romans 3:24	God purchased us out of the slave market of sin
3	Reconciled	2 Corinthians 5:20	To be at peace with God with no enmity
4	Related to God through propitiation	1 John 2:2	Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's wrath against sin has been satisfied
5	Forgiven	Colossians 2:13	God will never condemn us for our sins or hold them to our account
6	Walk in newness of life	Romans 6:1-10	Delivered from the reigning power of sin to walk in a new way of righteousness and life
7	Free from the Law	Romans 6:14	We are free from having to live in a merit system that we are doomed to fail at
8	Children of God	1 John 3:2	We are now in an intimate relationship with God as our Father and are heirs
9	Adopted	Ephesians 1:4-5	We, as outsiders, are brought into the family of God
10	Acceptable to God	Ephesians 1:6	Whereas forgiven removes all condemnation this takes us farther and makes us acceptable and pleasing to God
11	Justified	Romans 4:5	This is God's declaration that we are now righteous
12	Brought near	Ephesians 2:13	We, who were separated from God because of our sins, are now brought into His presence forever
13	Delivered from the domain of darkness	Colossians 1:13	We are rescued from the darkness of a culture of sin and easily influenced by evil
14	Transferred to the Kingdom of His beloved Son	Colossians 1:13	We are brought into a place where we can see the grace and beauty of God
15	Build on a solid foundation	1 Corinthians 3:10-11	The underpinning of our life is no longer built on shaky things such as money, health, fame, or power but is now on the unshakeable foundation of Jesus Christ
16	A gift from God the Father to Christ	John 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24	We are presented to Jesus as a precious treasure
17	Circumcised in Christ	Colossians 2:11	The absolute power of the sinful nature (flesh) is removed so now we are able to choose to do what is right
18	Made a holy and royal priesthood	1 Peter 2:5	We are now all priests before Jesus who is the great High Priest
19	A chosen generation, a holy nation, a people of God's possession	1 Peter 2:9	God has gathered us together out of the world to be His special people and possession
20	Citizens of Heaven	Philippians 3:20	Heaven is now our true home and we have all of the privileges and rights of our

			new home
21	In the family and household of God	Ephesians 2:19	Regardless of race, social and economic status, or gender we are all together equal in the one household of God; no one is on the outside looking in
22	Made one with each other	John 17:21	Having now one Father, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, placed in one Body, and united in the church
23	Christ is in us	Colossians 1:27	Jesus and the new life is now in us
24	Raised with Christ	Colossians 3:1	We now see life from a Heavenly perspective
25	Called into fellowship with Jesus	1 Corinthians 1:9	We are now co-partners with Jesus having His perspective, strengthening, and comfort
26	Given access to God	Ephesians 2:18	We can now confidently enter into God's presence at any time
27	Made heirs	1 Peter 1:4	Heirs to salvation from the world, heir to Heaven, and will obtain the full presence of God
28	Made light	Ephesians 5:8	We are made light in that God's character and attributes will flow from us into others both saved and not
29	Made a temple of the Holy Spirit	1 Corinthians 3:16	The Spirit of God now dwells in us
30	Born of the Spirit (Born-again)	John 3:6	We are made spiritually alive
31	Baptized by the Spirit	1 Corinthians 12:13	We are joined to Christ's Body and made to partake of all that Christ is
32	Sealed by the Spirit	2 Corinthians 1:21	All that we become through salvation is sealed (protected) by a force no less than the God of the universe
33	Glorified	Romans 8:30	We are no longer slaves to corruption but are now risen up and glorified
34	Complete in Him	Colossians 2:9-10	Spiritually, we have been made perfect by God; now we need to live that out in our worldly life
35	Possessing every spiritual blessing	Ephesians 1:3	All of the riches of Heaven and grace are ours within reach; we just need to put aside our present sins and fleshly desires and grasp them
36	Regenerated	Titus 3:5	We are cleansed and made new
37	Sanctified	Romans 6:22	We are set apart for God's use thereby giving eternal meaning to our lives
38	A new creation	2 Corinthians 5:17	Because of salvation we are more than people who have been given a ticket to Heaven; we are incredibly changed as proven by this list

So we can see that when someone is saved (born-again) there is truly an incredible transformation that occurs totally and completely within that one instant. It is indeed a great work of God.

## Assurance of Salvation

Assurance of salvation means that when a person is saved (born-again) he can know for absolute certainty that he will, without a doubt, go to Heaven when he dies. Is it pure arrogance to make this claim or is it something that God tells us? There are several reasons as to why a person can know for certain that they have eternal life.

Once we understand that salvation is purely a gift from God it enables us to know that we have this gift for sure. Salvation is 100%, completely God's work and effort and requires absolutely nothing from us. Therefore, once we trust God for His work and promises then we are assured. But if we were required to add something to our salvation, no matter how small this contribution would be, we would always be in doubt because we would never know if what we did was adequate enough. We are a weak, sinful people and any reliance on ourselves is doomed to uncertainty. But God is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), holy, faithful, and loving. So relying on God gives confidence.

One of the most emphatic passages in the Bible regarding assurance of salvation is 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." Notice that John does not say "that you may hope that you have eternal life" but, rather, "that you may know that you have eternal life."

Notice that all of God's promises are not speaking of the future but of the present regarding when we have eternal life. John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." In this passage we read "have eternal life" and not "will have eternal life" and "is not judged" and not "will not be judged." And Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Once again we see "is eternal life" and not "will be eternal life."

God wants to bring joy and security into our lives and not fear and trepidation. Look at the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith is assurance and conviction. God does not want us to do good deeds in the hope and fear that we will not fall short. Rather, He wants us to do good deeds because we know that He has completed us in Christ Jesus and in joy want to serve and glorify Him. The Christian life is not about appeasing God in fear but is about serving God in joy. Therefore, God gives us assurance of salvation.

## Security of Salvation

This is the question of whether someone who has been saved can become unsaved or lose his salvation.

Let us look at a few of the many Scriptural passages that discuss God's security of salvation.

John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand." Jesus' sheep are those who have eternal life (saved, born-again). Jesus promised that they will never perish (notice that there are no conditions on this) and that no one (not even that person himself) can take them from Jesus' hand. Jesus has that person forever. Twice God repeats that no one can snatch those who are saved from His hand in order to drive home that point and He bases that assurance on nothing less than His own omnipotent power (He is "greater than all").

Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If once we are saved and then can lose our salvation then there is potentially condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and, therefore, God lied in making this promise. But since God cannot lie, we can rest assured that once we are saved there is, indeed, no condemnation for us ever again for all eternity.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 is about what we build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Christians who obey God and do good works will build upon that foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones. Then when God's testing fire comes at the end of that person's life these will endure and follow that person into Heaven as eternal rewards. But Christians whose deeds are shallow and self-centered will build with wood, hay, and straw. These will be burnt up. Verse 15 states, "If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." This tells us that even if everything that a Christian's did was so worthless that not even one good deed survived the fire even still, that person will still be saved and enter into Heaven.

Ephesians 1:13-14, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory." A seal during those times was generally wax that was melted onto a costly or special object such as a royal envelope or jars of wine or oil. The signet ring of the king or other powerful, important would be pressed into the wax. This seal served two primary functions: 1) Ownership and 2) Protection. The moment that we are saved, we are sealed not with wax but with the Holy Spirit. This shows that we are now the property of God and belong to Him. It also shows that this salvation is protected by none other than the almighty God and Creator of the universe. No one can break that seal. Our inheritance is guaranteed.

Consider the number of transformations that occur the moment a person is saved (see "The Transformations of Salvation"). Is it realistic to believe that God would reverse all of them? Did God lie if eternal life is only temporary? Did God lie when He said in Colossians 2:13, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having

forgiven us **all** our transgressions..." Did He really forgive us all of the transgressions only up until that one sin that caused us to lose our salvation or did He, as the Scripture says, forgive us "all our transgressions"?

The Bible is clear that once a person is saved (born-again) and has eternal life that person is secure, sealed, and kept by God until the day that we will receive our eternal inheritance in Heaven.

## **The Invisible Church's Members**

When speaking of the Christian church, there are two types. One is the physical, visible gathering of people at innumerable places around the world. This can be from cathedrals to underground churches to temporary tents to the living rooms of houses. This is the church that people gather at to pray, fellowship, praise, worship, and learn. Most often these churches have names and set times to meet and are attended by basically the same local people. Though these congregations may last for many years with many lasting for centuries, they will usually eventually end and be replaced by another local congregation or congregations.

Then there is the invisible church. This church has only one congregation and it consists of every born-again Christian in the entire world. Christians of every age, race, ethnicity, social strata, culture, previous religion, personality, denomination, and background belong to this church. We are in one special family and that is the family of God who is our Father. Therefore, we are all brothers and sisters of each other. There is no hierarchy among the members. Thus Galatians 3:28 can say, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Since no one can lose their salvation, no one can be expelled from this congregation. We are all guaranteed to see every other member of this invisible church in Heaven.

This church began with the very first believers in Christ and will continue without abatement until Jesus Christ comes back at the Second Coming. These now dead early Christians are still members of this church. There has only been one continuous instance of this church.

It does not have a name although it is referred to as the "Body of Christ." One of the main Scriptures that mention the church as the "Body of Christ" is Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Jesus is the head of the church and the church itself is His body.

1 Corinthians 12:11-27 compares the church to a body. Our bodies have several distinguishing features:

- 1) It is a complex organism that could only be created by someone far greater than us
- 2) It consists of many different parts, all of which work together
- 3) No part of our body can decide to take off for a while on its own without suffering dire consequences (those consequences usually being a rapid withering and death)
- 4) Each part has a special task or function that adds to the maximum efficiency of the body
- 5) Some parts of the body are visible and some are unseen, but all are very necessary
- 6) The whole body is controlled by the head

And God draws the analogy of the human body to the church.

- 1) In the same way the church is a complex, living organism created by Jesus Christ. Understand that the church is not merely an organization. It is not simply a bunch of people who all share the same religious tenets getting together and having meetings like the Elks Lodge or the Chess Club. The church is a living organism. That is why it is referred to as the body of Christ and is called a mystery.
- 2) The body of Christ consists of many different people
- 3) No Christian will survive spiritually on his own
- 4) Each person in the body of Christ has a special task or function that adds to the maximum efficiency of the church
- 5) Some people in the church are more visible than others but all are very necessary
- 6) The entire worldwide church is controlled by the head who is Jesus Christ

Whereas the visible or local churches can have very many ways of governing themselves, the invisible church has only one authority and that is Jesus Christ who is the head.

This is also referred to as the “Bride of Christ.” Revelation 19:7 discusses the “Marriage Feast of the Lamb.” The Lamb is Jesus Christ and the bride is the church. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” This shows just how intimate Jesus is with the members of His church. He is not merely a symbolic figurehead. Nor is He just the founder of the church to whom we all look back to with reverence. Jesus is actively and currently the One who moves throughout the church, watches over the church, and guides the church.

To become a member of the invisible church does not require any money or vote. This is no waiting period. All a person has to do is to “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31). The instant a person is saved (born-again) he or she becomes a permanent member of this church.

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says that He will build His church (“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”). Then in 1 Peter 2:5 Peter tells us that “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Each Christian is a living stone that is being used to build God’s living and growing church.

## The Local Church’s Function

The local church is any designated place where Christians gather in Jesus’ name. It can be a building designed as a church that has stood for ages or it can be a field that changes each time to avoid persecution. It can consist of only two people or tens of thousands.

Hebrews 10:24-15 tells us why the local church is so important, “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” Here God commands us to assemble together. Radio, TV, internet churches are not sufficient. These are good to supplement our local church’s teaching but in themselves they are not churches. God wants us to attend

a local church so that we can stimulate each other to love and good deeds. This takes interaction. Colossians 2:2 says “having been knit together in love.” A thread in cloth goes under other threads and over other threads. Each member of a church should go under other members in supporting them through prayer, comfort, teaching, and encouragement. And we go over other members by allowing them to support us.

The function of the local church is declared in Acts 2:42, 47, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” We can read here a six-fold mission:

- Listening to good Bible teaching by godly men and women.
- Fellowshiping with each other which includes encouragement, support, comfort, rebuke, and developing close friendships and relationships.
- Worship and intimacy with God and with each other through communion (“breaking of bread”).
- Prayer as a group and encouragement to do so individually.
- Praise to God for His blessings and grace.
- Evangelism (“the Lord was adding to their number”) by going out and preaching the Gospel of the Salvation of Jesus Christ so that others may become believers in Christ.

The church is also the place where we can exercise many of our spiritual gifts such as encouraging, giving, serving, mercy, and teaching.

There are many places in the New Testament where the writers tell us to serve “one another” within the church.

Romans 12:10	Be devoted to one another
Romans 12:10	Give preference to one another
Romans 12:16	Be of the same mind toward one another
Romans 13:8	Love one another
Romans 14:13	Not judge one another
Romans 14:19	Building up of one another
Romans 15:7	Accept one another
Romans 15:14	Admonish one another
1 Corinthians 12:25	Have the same care for one another
Galatians 5:13	Serve one another
Galatians 5:26	Let us not challenge one another
Galatians 5:26	Let us not envy one another
Galatians 6:2	Bear one another’s burdens
Ephesians 4:2	Showing tolerance for one another
Ephesians 4:32	Be kind to one another
Ephesians 5:21	Be subject to one another
Philippians 2:3	Regard one another as more important than yourselves
Colossians 3:9	Do not lie to one another
Colossians 3:13	Bearing with one another and forgiving each other

1 Thessalonians 4:18	Comfort one another
1 Thessalonians 5:11	Encourage one another
1 Thessalonians 5:13	Live in peace with one another
1 Thessalonians 5:15	Seek after that which is good for one another
Hebrews 10:24	Stimulate one another to love and good deeds
James 4:11	Do not speak against one another
James 5:9	Do no complain against one another
James 5:16	Confess your sins to one another
James 5:16	Pray for one another
1 Peter 4:9	Be hospitable to one another
1 Peter 4:10	Serving one another
1 Peter 5:5	Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another

The local church is crucial to our growth and perseverance as Christians. We should all be committed to and involved in one that preaches from Bible and glorifies Jesus Christ.

## Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1 tells us, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.” Some translations read, “I do not want you to be ignorant.” A Spiritual Gift is an ability, a talent, or a skill that is given to a person for the first time ever by the Holy Spirit so that the person might be a vital, useful, and necessary member of the Body of Christ. This means that only Christians can have these spiritual gifts. The word most often translated “spiritual gifts” is the Greek word “charismata,” which comes from a root word meaning “grace.”

1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Everyone has at least one gift and the reason for these gifts is to serve others.

I believe that the moment that a person gets saved he receives the Holy Spirit and that he will receive at least one spiritual gift at that time. Therefore, from the very first second that you become a Christian you have something to add to the body of Christ. There are no levels in the body of Christ. We don’t all start out as toes and work our way up to the head. We don’t go from lay person to elder to staff member to pastor to bishop. We don’t work our way up to black belt Christians. We all have something that makes us crucial to the body of Christ right from the beginning.

Romans 11:29 tells us, “for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” which indicates that we cannot lose the Spiritual Gift(s) that God gives to us. Because of disobedience our gifts may become stagnant, but they will always be there.

There is a difference between a natural talent and a Spiritual Gift. It says in Psalm 139:14, “I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” God gives to everyone natural talents and abilities. These are skills that are apart from being a Christian. But when someone becomes a Christian they receive the Holy Spirit of God who gives them an ability or talent that they didn’t have before. So a

natural talent is something that God gives to us from our natural birth. A spiritual gift is something that God gives to us only after our spiritual birth.

There are four passages in Scripture that list spiritual gifts.

### **Romans 12:6-8**

6 And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

In this passage we see 7 gifts listed:

- 1) Prophecy - The ability to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely anointed utterance.
- 2) Serving - The ability to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work, and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired goals.
- 3) Teaching - The special ability that God gives to communicate information, relevant to the health and ministry of the Body of Christ and its members in such a way that others will learn and be edified.
- 4) Exhortation - A gift that enables someone to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement, counsel, and reproof to other people in such a way that they are helped, healed, or convicted to turn from sin.
- 5) Giving - The ability of someone to be willing to cheerfully contribute their material resources to the work of God with liberality and without any desire for self-benefit.
- 6) Leadership - The ability to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate those goals to others in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish those goals.
- 7) Mercy - The ability to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals, both Christian and non-Christian, who suffer distressing physical, mental or emotional problems and then to apply that compassion into deeds that will alleviate and comfort their suffering.

### **1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30**

8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

In this passage we see 13 more spiritual gifts; two of which are repeats:

- 1) Word of wisdom - The ability to apply Biblical knowledge in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision making and daily life situations.
- 2) Word of knowledge - The ability to discover, accumulate, analyze, and clarify information and ideas that are pertinent to the growth and well-being of the Body of Christ.
- 3) Faith - The ability of being firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in God and His word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction. This person has a deeper insight into God's will and plans.
- 4) Healing - The ability to heal people of their sicknesses and deformities and to restore health apart from natural means.
- 5) Effecting of miracles - The ability to demonstrate supernatural powers, acts, and deeds that are unexplainable except by the divine intervention of God. These acts are observable, immediate, and beyond the realm of human experimentation or explanation.
- 6) (Prophecy)
- 7) Distinguishing of spirits - The ability that enables one to accurately assess and judge inner motives, hidden errors, or corrupting doctrines. This person can distinguish between teaching and behavior that is from God, from the flesh or from the devil.
- 8) Tongues - It is the ability to speak in a language not previously learned so 1) unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language, 2) believers can be edified and encouraged and 3) God can be praised beyond our understanding.
- 9) Interpretation of tongues - The ability to make known in the common language the message of one who speaks in tongues. Realize that it is an interpretation and not a translation.
- 10) Apostles - The special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ that enables them to assume and exercise helpful leadership over a number of churches in spiritual matters.
- 11) (Teaching)
- 12) Helps - The Greek word for helps means, "to take a burden upon oneself." It is to invest the talents that a person has into the life and ministry of other members of the Body of Christ, thus enabling that person helped to increase the effectiveness of his own ministry.
- 13) Administration - It is the ability to clearly understand the immediate and long-range goals of a particular project and to plan, organize, and supervise others to reach that goal.

#### **Ephesians 4:11**

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers

Here we see 5 more gifts; three of which are repeats:

- 1) (Apostles)
- 2) (Prophecy)
- 3) Evangelism - This enables someone to present the Gospel with simplicity, clarity, and effectiveness. This person has a deep concern about those who are lost and is comfortable and able to share the Gospel in any situation and at any time.
- 4) Pastor - It is the ability to spiritually care for, protect, guide, and feed a group of believers entrusted to one's care.
- 5) (Teaching)

### **1 Peter 3:9-11**

9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Here are three more gifts, two of which were mentioned before:

- 1) Hospitality - The Greek word means "love of strangers." It is a great desire to warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one's home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging.
- 2) (Speaking or Prophecy)
- 3) (Serving)

That gives a total of 21 gifts.

Other people sometimes add a few gifts that are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible but not in any of these lists. I hesitate to include these in as Spiritual Gifts.

- 1) Celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7-8)
- 2) Martyrdom (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
- 3) Missionary (Ephesians 3:6-8)
- 4) Voluntary poverty (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)
- 5) Exorcism (Mark 3:14-15)
- 6) Intercession (1 Thessalonians 3:10-13)
- 7) Craftsmanship (Exodus 28:3-4)

We should seek to know and understand our Spiritual Gift(s).

God has given you these gifts.

- Use them
- Focus on them
- Expand them
- Challenge yourself with them
- Find your place in the body of Christ with them
- Serve others with them
- Glorify God with them

To read a more complete discussion including how to discern your Spiritual Gifts see my series under the tab “Bible Study Series.”

## The Great Commission

Matthew 28

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

This is “The *Great* Commission” because unlike every other commission ever given this one is for the eternal souls of all people. No other commission has the greatest scope for the greatest time given by the greatest Person. Notice that the word “all” appears three times: all authority, all the nations, and all that Jesus commanded. This Commission is all encompassing.

All of the remaining eleven disciples (Judas was dead) were present. When Jesus is speaking, He is not speaking to individuals; He is addressing the entire group which is representative of the church. In verse 18, “them” is 3rd Person Plural. Likewise in verse 20, “I am with you,” “you” is 2nd Person Plural. Jesus expects the church to carry out the Great Commission, not each individual although for the church to fulfill this mission each individual must carry out their part. The church is to go into all of the nations, not each person.

First, what is a commission? According to the dictionary it is “an authoritative order, charge, or direction. Authority granted for a particular action or function.” For “The Great Commission” who is the authority who granted it? What is the order? And what is the direction?

A commission requires authority. This commission gets its authority—its power—from the Creator of the universe, from the One who knows all and is present everywhere. It is an authority, a power, infinite in supply and infinite in affect. In Matthew 4:8-10 Satan offered Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world which Jesus turned down. Now we see Jesus as having authority over everything in heaven and on earth. No one seeking to fulfill the Great Commission will ever have lack. 2 Timothy 1:7 validates this, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”

Because of this authority we, as a church, are to go. This word “go” is not a command. Rather, it means that as we are going about our life we should make it a priority and always be alert to be making disciples. Some will be called to go to other nations as missionaries to share the Gospel. But we all need to “go” in the sense of making an effort. People rarely will come to us and ask “What must I do to be saved.” We need to take the initiative. God pursued us with salvation; we need to pursue others with this same gift of salvation.

In the original Greek, the only command in Matthew 28:19-20 is to “make disciples.” The Great Commission instructs us to make disciples while we are going throughout the world and while we are going about our daily activities. We are commanded not just to preach and share the Gospel and leave behind converts. We are commanded to make them into followers of Jesus Christ, ones who will fight the good fight, finish the course, and win the race (2 Timothy 4:7). A disciple is someone who is conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). That means that their speech, thoughts, actions, and deeds are shaped by Biblical commands and examples. It means “to become a follower, a pupil, an apprentice” of Jesus. Everything else mentioned in this passage is how to fulfill that command. Becoming a disciple in that time especially meant to become attached to one’s teacher and to become his follower in doctrine and in life.

In Matthew 10:6 Jesus told the disciples to only “go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Now He commands us to go to “all the nations.” The church can preach the Gospel to all the world because the Father continually pursues us and initiated the process of salvation, the Holy Spirit gives us power, and the message is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again. The entire Trinity is deeply involved in The Great Commission.

One of the first acts in this transformation to believer and disciple starts with baptism. This is when a new Christian is submerged in water and brought back up symbolizing that they have been placed into Christ and have been resurrected to a new life in Him (Ephesians 2:6).

“The name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” “Name” is a singular noun. Therefore this is not referring to three separate people but to one singular person. This is one of the most explicit passages in the Bible with all three persons of the Trinity named. Some others are:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. – 2 Corinthians 13:14

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. – 1 Peter 1:2

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My [Jesus] name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. – John 14:26

“When the Helper comes, whom I [Jesus] will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, - John 15:26

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. – Jude 20-21

We are to teach them “all” that God commanded us to do. Not just teach the happy stuff. Not just that God loves us. But teach also about Hell, about suffering, and persecution. In order to teach we must not only know the Scriptures but also practice them. People will know when we are phony. We must live the life. “A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.—Proverbs 29:29. Teaching requires a lifetime.

The Great Commission starts with a promise of Jesus’ grace and empowerment in His authority. In the middle we are told what we are to do. Then it ends with Jesus’ promise of faithfulness and commitment. We can do this; we can fulfill The Great Commission because Jesus Christ is faithful. He will be with us forever. Of every book that was ever written, the only one where the author is always by our side is the Bible. God Himself is with us always. “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” – Isaiah 41:10

It was not just the 11 going out. It was twelve: eleven + Jesus.

It is not just the church going out now. It is the church + Jesus.

This with Acts 1:6-9 are the last recorded instructions given by Jesus to His disciples. And in both of these passages Jesus gives a commission: go into the world and preach the Gospel, and He gives a promise: we shall have power. This is not a call for a meeting or for a strategy. It is a call to people and for people. The Great Commission, the very last words of Matthew’s Gospel, launches our call and response to Jesus’ life and mission. It is the call from eternity.

## Church Discipline

Two of the primary Scriptures regarding church discipline are:

Matthew 18:15-17

15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. 11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

What is church discipline?

It is a careful and humble four step process by which a member of a church who is willfully and defiantly sinning is confronted and if is without repentance then is finally removed/expelled from the church.

What is the criteria for administering church discipline?

- 1) The person must be a member of or associate with a specific church

You cannot apply church discipline to someone in another church. In Matthew 18:17 you are to “tell it to the church” implying the church that both you and the offender attend. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 references “among you” and “your midst” implying someone local and present in your church and 1 Corinthians 5:12 refers to those “within the church.”

I do not believe that the person must be a born-again Christian (professing believer or however you want to define this). If he or she is attending the church then the destruction that they can cause to themselves, to other church members, and to the church’s witness is the same whether they are truly a Christian or not.

However, if someone is not attending the same church as you then you can and should still confront them about sin. Luke 17:3 states, “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” However, you cannot take the steps in church discipline. You can, though, approach the person’s pastor if he or she refuses to listen to your original reproof.

- 2) The person must be willfully and defiantly disobeying Scripture

We must be careful to discern between those who are struggling with doubts or a besetting sin or are unruly with those who are willfully and defiantly continuing in sin with no desire to change. If we place on church discipline everyone who is a sinner then every church will be empty.

Jude 1:22 says, "And have mercy on some, who are doubting."

1 Thessalonians 5:14 tells us, "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

We would not put on church discipline someone who is struggling with addiction and keeps falling back into it despite their best efforts. But we would do so with someone who shamelessly commits adultery and does not care.

Also, the magnitude of the sin and its effect on the church must be considered. For example, someone who keeps throwing their fast food wrappers on the floor of their car should not be put on church discipline. But someone who is causing divisions in the church should be (Romans 16:17-18).

The sin must be a clear violation of Scripture. However, the Bible does not provide a clear list of sins that are worthy of excommunication. We must use our own judgment. But if getting rid of the person is more of the focus than getting rid of the sin then we know that our motives are wrong and this process must stop.

What is purpose of church discipline?

- 1) Restoration of the sinner

When someone is in obedience to God then their lives will be blessed. When they are in sin then that can destroy their health, relationships, attitudes, career, and so much more.

John Calvin wrote in "Institutes of the Christian Religion," "Although excommunication also punishes the man, it does so in such a way that, by forewarning him of his future condemnation, it may call him back to salvation" (Book 4, Chapter 12, Section 10).

Sin can wrap itself tightly around us and not let go (Proverbs 5:22, "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin."). It can ensnare us (Proverbs 29:6, "By transgression an evil man is ensnared, but the righteous sings and rejoices."). It can deceive us (Hebrews 3:13, "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."). Sin is always crouching at our door ready to strike (Genesis 4:7, "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.").

Sin will master us. It is for our good to have someone care enough about us to make an effort to rid our lives of sin.

- 2) Protection of the church

1 Corinthians 5:6 in this context of discipline says this, "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?" One factious person can cause great divisions within a church and, by doing so, corrupt the spiritual lives of many people.

Proverbs 13:20 amplifies this, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm."

As does 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"

The unrepentant sinner should be put under church discipline so that others in the church may fear sin. In Acts 4 Ananias and Sapphira lied before the church and were struck dead. The result in verse 11 was, "And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things."

### 3) Purity and witness of the church

1 Timothy 5:20 tells us, "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning."

The church is the bride of Christ and should be presented to Him spotless and pure.

If the church is just as corrupt and blighted as the world then why would anyone want to come to it? The church would have nothing unique to offer to people. Rather, the church is a light on a hill. If the light has been smeared with sin then no one will see it in the darkness.

### 4) Glory of God

This is the ultimate and primary goal of all Christians and of the church: to glory God in all things. It shows that we take God and His commandments seriously and by doing this we honor God.

Habakkuk 1:13 tells us, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor." We are to hate sin as much as God. We should never overlook it, ignore it, and certainly not approve of it. Sin must be confronted.

Our true reason for practicing church discipline is not to punish the sinner, not to justify the reprover, but to glorify God.

Process of church discipline.

#### 1) First go in private with only yourself and the person who you are confronting.

"Private" means a place where no one else can accidentally or otherwise overhear. That means not the church foyer.

If you must counsel with someone else prior to this meeting then be as discrete as possible in not mentioning the sinner's name or even subtly dropping hints that will lead to an easy guess. You must not fall into the sin of gossip.

Be aware of Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” Note the key points here.

- a) Be spiritual. This does not mean that you must be a pastor or tremendously mature but that you should have an attitude of humility and not superiority. You should be going because you sincerely care about that person and not because you want to put them down.
- b) Restore. Your goal is to bring that person to holiness and obedience. Your goal is not to humiliate them or break their spirit or use this as an “I told you so.” You also do not want to use it to get back at a person. You are going to that person for their good and not for your own.
- c) A spirit of gentleness. You do not want to club the person and beat them down. This is not about who can shout the loudest. This is about a willingness to thoroughly explain the sin and its consequences. It should, if possible, include a reasonable plan as to how to overcome or repent of the sin so that the person is not left with something like “Well, you figure it out.”
- d) Looking to yourself to avoid temptation. What temptation? It could be many. Feeling superior. A desire to put that person down. A temptation to fall into that same sin yourself or even an excuse to fall into a different sin (“If he can do that sin then I can do this sin.”). Gossip such as wanting to tell someone afterwards how it went.

Make sure that you have as much information as is essential. If necessary, first talk to the person in a non-condemning manner before making an accusation. For example, you saw a church member go into a strip club. The next day you instantly jump on him and reprove him for his sin only to find out that he went into that club in an attempt to rescue his nephew from drugs and pornography. Now it is you who needs to repent.

If the person repents here or in step 2 then the sin must be put aside. Forgiveness means never holding that sin against that person ever again.

- 2) Bring two or three witnesses in private if the person does not repent

These are not necessarily witnesses to the sin, although they could be, as much as witnesses to the meeting. They are there to hear both sides and then to strengthen one side or the other.

Deuteronomy 19:18, “The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely.”

- 3) Bring it to the church

Bring the situation before the entire church. Explain the sin but without unnecessary details. When church members see this person either in church or outside then they should humbly and gently confront him or her about their sin. At this point the person is still allowed to attend church and its functions.

- 4) Public excommunication (expulsion) from the church if he further refuses to repent

Matthew 18:17, “and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

1 Corinthians 5:13, "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."

The person is expelled from the church meaning that he or she is not allowed to attend any church meetings or functions. Furthermore, they are to be treated as a Gentile which means that they are to be treated as someone who is under God's wrath. They are not to be shunned or to be abused or mistreated, but all is not well and they need to be aware of that.

A "Gentile" in this specific context was a non-Jewish person who practiced pagan rituals and who was, therefore, not a part of the Jewish community. This person is no longer part of your church community.

A "tax-gatherer" was a traitor to the community because he had sided with Rome rather than with his local community. And so, he was an outcast. In a sense, this person is also a traitor because he or she has publically brought shame to your church and to God.

If the person on church discipline repents then there must be restoration. They should be gladly welcomed back into the church. This does not mean that they should be trusted unconditionally. If someone's sin was stealing then when they are restored they should not be put in charge of the church's finances until they are able to prove that they have indeed fully and permanently repented.

## Apostles

Jesus called 12 chosen men "apostles." The word "apostle" means "a messenger" or "one who is sent out."

Here is a synopsis of the Apostles.

Name	A.K.A. (Also Known As)	Trade	Significance in the NT
Simon	Peter.  Cephas (meaning "Rock").	Fisherman	Walked on water (Matt 14:28-33).  At Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-13).  Denied Jesus (Luke 22:54-62).  Early church leader (Acts 2, 10).
Andrew (Peter's brother)	Protokletos (by the Orthodox church with means "first-called.")	Fisherman	Finds the boy with the bread and fish in the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-15).
James son of Zebedee	James the Greater.  Bornerges, Son of Thunder (with John) (Mark 3:17).	Fisherman	Wanted to call down fire on an inhospitable village (Luke 9:54).  Asked Jesus if he and John could sit on

			either side of Jesus' throne in heaven (Mark 10:35-40).
John son of Zebedee	Bornerges, Son of Thunder (with James) (Mark 3:17).  Beloved disciple.  The elder (2 John 1:1)	Fisherman	Wanted to call down fire on an inhospitable village (Luke 9:54).  Asked Jesus if he and John could sit on either side of Jesus' throne in heaven (Mark 10:35-40).  Asked by Jesus to take care of His mother, Mary (John 19:26-27).  Sits next to Jesus at the Passover meal (John 21:20).
Philip	Philip the Apostle to distinguish from Philip the Evangelist (Acts 6:2-6).		Brought Nathanael (Bartholomew) to Jesus ("come and see") (John 1:45-46).
Bartholomew	Nathanael.		Jesus called him by seeing him under the fig tree (John 1:45-51).
Matthew	Levi son of Alphaeus.	Tax collector	Jesus and sinners ate at his house (Matt 9:10-13).
Thomas	Doubting Thomas  Didymus (which means twin).  The Twin.		Doubted Jesus' resurrection (John 20:25-29).
James son of Alphaeus	James the Lesser		
Simon the Zealot		Maybe fisherman	
Judas of James	Jude.  Jude of James.  Thaddeus.  Judas Thaddeus.	Maybe fisherman	

	Lebbaeus.		
Judas Iscariot			<p>Complained about Mary wasting perfume by anointing Jesus (John 12:1-8).</p> <p>Agrees to betray Jesus (Matt 26:14-16).</p> <p>Kisses Jesus to indicate who He was (Matt 26:47-49).</p> <p>Returns the betrayal money (Matt 27:3-4).</p> <p>Committed suicide (Acts 1:18-19).</p>

Name	Death	Wrote	Noted	Symbol
Simon	Crucified by Nero around 64. The "Acts of Peter" claim that he was crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die as Jesus did.	1 Peter 2 Peter	Andrew's brother.	Upside down cross with keys
Andrew (Peter's brother)	Crucified on an "X" shaped cross (known as St. Andrew's Cross) in Patras in Greece at around 60 AD.		Simon Peter's brother.  First disciple called.  First disciple to recognize Jesus as Messiah (John 1:41-42).  Was a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-40).	Two crossed fish
James son of Zebedee	Killed by the sword (beheaded?) by Herod (Acts 12:2). Only martyrdom recorded in the Bible.		Brother of John.	Three shells
John son of Zebedee	Old age (only one not martyred)	Gospel of John	Brother of James.	Chalice with a

	possibly living until 100 AD.	1 John 2 John 3 John Revelation	Disciples include: Polycarp of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch	snake in it
Philip	Probably martyred around 80 AD in Hierapolis, Phrygia but texts vary as to the means (stoning, beheaded, crucified).			Basket
Bartholomew	Martyred but year and how is debated. Most common is that his skin was stripped off while alive (flayed) and then beheaded. Ouch.			Three parallel knives
Matthew	Probably martyred although the year and means are debated. Some say that Hircanus the king had him killed with a spear.	Gospel of Matthew	A tax collector was among the most reviled jobs and so considered to be a traitor.	Three money bags
Thomas	On July 3, 72 AD he was pierced with a lance in India.			Group of spears, stones, & arrows
James son of Alphaeus	Probably martyred. He may have been crucified in Egypt or stoned in Jerusalem or sawed in pieces.		Some think he may have been Matthew's brother.	Saw
Simon the Zealot	Probably martyred but year and how is debated. Some say he was crucified in England in 74 AD.			Fish on a Bible
Judas of James	May have been clubbed to death or killed with arrows at Ararat.			Ship
Judas Iscariot	Suicide by hanging.			Hangman noose

What distinguished the Apostles from the rest of Jesus' disciples?

For one, they spent more time with Jesus being taught and trained by Him.

“And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.” – Luke 9:1

Whereas the disciples followed Jesus, the Apostles were sent out by Jesus. Matthew 28:16-20 known as “The Great Commission,”

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

After Jesus’ ascension the Apostles were given power from the Holy Spirit to be witness to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:1-5,

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

## **Glossary of End Times Terms**

When we speak of the “End Times” we are describing the period of many years where the Bible addresses the return of Jesus Christ, the end of the world, and the creation of a new heavens and a new earth. There are several different theories on how this is actually going to happen.

### **666**

Revelation 13:15-18 talks about the Beast who requires that everyone who wants to buy or sell must have a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. The Beast also has a mark and it is 666.

### **70 Weeks**

In Daniel 9:24-27 there is a prophecy that many believe refer to the coming of the Messiah and the period of the End Times. It is divided into three time periods: seven weeks, 62 weeks, and one week. Each day represents one year. The first seven weeks is 49 years from the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild

the temple until it was completed. The 62 weeks (434 years) is from that point until Jesus started His ministry. Then there is an undetermined gap with the final week (seven years) being the Tribulation. It splits the final week in half at which point the Abomination of Desolation occurs.

## **7 Years**

This is the total time of the Tribulation. The pretribulation/premillennial viewpoint says that the Tribulation starts with the Rapture of the church. In all major views the Tribulation ends with Jesus' Second Coming.

## **Abomination of Desolation**

In the exact middle of the seven year Tribulation, the Antichrist (the Beast) will desecrate the Jewish temple.

## **Antichrist**

The Antichrist will become the most powerful ruler on the Earth during the seven-year Tribulation. At first he will sign a peace treaty with Israel and attempt to forge a one-world government but then at the three and a half year mark he will commit the "Abomination of Desolation" and turn against Israel. He will try to assume the position of a god. His other name is the "man of sin."

## **Apocalypse**

This word means "Revealing" or "the lifting of a veil." "The Apocalypse" is synonymous with the title "Book of Revelation" because both refer to revealing of end time events by Jesus Christ.

## **Armageddon**

Revelation 16:13-6. This is the great and climatic battle. The Antichrist gathers the armies of the nations to war against Jesus Christ. This will take place around the "hill of Megiddo" which is what Armageddon means. Jesus Christ wins.

## **Babylon**

This is the symbolic name of false religious systems. Also called "The Great Harlot."

## **Beast**

This is another name for the antichrist.

## **Dragon**

This is another name for Satan.

## **Great Tribulation**

This is the last three and a half years of the Tribulation when the Antichrist teams with the Dragon and the Beast and brings great violence and wrath to the Earth.

### **Great White Throne Judgment**

Revelation 20:11-15. This is great and final judgment of God upon all of the peoples who ever lived. Those who are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life (not born-again or saved) are cast into Hell (Lake of Fire).

### **Lake of Fire**

This is another name for Hell. Revelation 20:15 tells us, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." At end of the world, anyone who is not saved will be thrown into Hell.

### **Millennium**

In certain End Times viewpoints, this is the thousand year reign of Christ upon the Earth. Meanwhile, Satan is bound up in an abyss.

### **Rapture**

This event is when Jesus Christ will leave Heaven and come as far as the clouds and will remove all Christians from the Earth and bring them back to Heaven with Him.

### **Satanic Trinity or Unholy Trinity**

Satan, who always wanted to be like God, sets up for himself his own trinity during the Tribulation. The Dragon is Satan who plays the role of the Father. The Beast is the antichrist and the False Prophet plays the part of the Holy Spirit. But whereas the true Trinity is holy and righteous; this trinity is evil and self-serving.

Satan tries to imitate God in other ways. Jesus has His church; Satan has his "synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9). Jesus' church is His bride, Satan has his "great harlot" (Revelation 17:1). Jesus has the cup of communion; Satan has the "cup of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21).

### **Second Coming**

The First Coming was when God was born as a man (Jesus Christ) in an event known as the Incarnation. The Second Coming is when Jesus comes back to the earth with everyone who was ever saved (born-again) and defeats all of the wicked and creates a new heaven and earth.

### **Tribulation**

In certain End Times viewpoints, this is the seven-year period of God's judgments upon the Earth.

## Different End Time Theories

### Amillennial View

This view does not take a literal view of End Time prophecy but, rather, takes it figuratively. There is no actual millennium but that the millennium is that time between Jesus' first and second comings. Immediately after Jesus' Second Coming, which ends the Church Age, the eternal state will be ushered in. Some amillennians believe that the End Times events are being fulfilled presently on the Earth whereas others believe that they are being fulfilled in Heaven. There is no real Rapture.

### Postmillennial View

The viewpoint holds that this present age will end with the entire world essentially becoming Christian accompanied by a great many spiritual blessings. This golden age will be the millennium and at the end of it will be the Second Coming of Jesus. There is no Rapture. Hence Jesus comes back after or post the millennium.

### Premillennial View

There will be a seven-year Tribulation period during which, at some point, the Rapture will occur. At the end of the Tribulation Jesus will return at the Second coming. Then will follow the 1,000-year Millennium. Since the Second Coming is before the Millennium this view is called Premillennial.

### Rapture

The Rapture is when Jesus Christ comes down from Heaven, but does not step foot on the Earth, and brings all Christians (the Church) back with Him to Heaven. A discussion of the Rapture is really only pertinent to Premillennial view since neither the Amillennial nor the Postmillennial views have a Rapture.

There are five Rapture views.

**Pre-tribulation Rapture:** The Rapture will take place before the seven-year period of the Tribulation begins. Therefore, the Church will not go through the Tribulation.

**Pre-wrath Rapture:** This view divides the Tribulation into three sections: 1) The beginning of sorrows which is the first  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, 2) The Great Tribulation which is about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  years of the second half of the Tribulation (halfway through the second half), and 3) The Day of the Lord which is the last half (or  $1\frac{3}{4}$  years) of the second half of the Tribulation. The Church goes through most of the Tribulation, but at around the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mark of the Tribulation (the start of The Day of the Lord) the wrath of God is poured out upon the Earth. Just prior to this wrath, the Church is Raptured.

**Mid-tribulation Rapture:** The rapture will occur in the middle of the Tribulation at around the three-and-a-half year mark.

**Post-tribulation Rapture:** There are several variations on this view. The Church will experience the entire seven-year Tribulation. Then at the end of the Tribulation, the Rapture and the Second Coming will take place either very close to each other or as one event.

Some believe that there will be two phases: one secret which will be Jesus coming for the church only and then one visible to all the world. In between, the church will briefly return to Heaven before coming back with Jesus.

**Partial Rapture:** Only those Christians who have been faithful will be raptured before the wrath of God is poured out on the Earth. The rest of the Christians will remain on the earth to throughout the Tribulation.

## Overview of PreTribulation/PreMillennial

Here is the traditional overview of the pretribulation/premillennial perspective.

Currently we are in the Church Age. This means that it is through the Church that God is conveying to the rest of the world His message as proclaimed in the Bible.

At some unknown and unpredictable time (Jesus said in Matthew 24:36, ““But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”) Jesus will leave heaven with a shout and the sound of a trumpet and come to the Earth to the level of the clouds. He will then instantly take up (“catch up”) to Himself everyone who died a born-again Christian and everyone who is still alive and a born-again Christian. All of these people will then go to Heaven with Jesus. This is The Rapture and starts the seven-year Tribulation.

God will put two witnesses on the Earth at the beginning of the Tribulation to proclaim God’s message or judgment and salvation. Many will get saved (born-again) as a result of their testimony. They will preach for 3 1/2 years.

During this same initial 3 ½ years the angels in Heaven will break the six seals which will bring much death and misery. The first seal will reveal the antichrist who will essentially be the ruler over all the Earth. During this time the antichrist will be more-or-less benign and will not reveal his true self. When an angel breaks the seventh seal, this will cause seven angels to blow seven trumpets. At sound of each trumpet is more death and destruction.

At the end of this initial 3 1/2 years the antichrist will kill the two witnesses and commit the “Abomination of Desecration” (spoken of in Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11, Matthew 24:15, and Mark 13:14). This latter act will be a sacrifice in the Jewish temple that will be against Jewish law and so will desecrate the altar. Many presume that the antichrist will sacrifice a pig on the altar. This act is the turning point in the Tribulation. The antichrist will thus reveal himself as not just a benign ruler but as someone who opposes God and His people and who under the control of Satan. This ushers in the second 3 ½ years which, because of the ferocity of God’s wrath is called “The Great Tribulation.”

During this time the Church will be up in Heaven as the bride of Christ at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb (Jesus).

The seventh trumpet is sounded and out of it comes the seven bowls of wrath. The death and destruction of these is even more widespread.

The antichrist will join up with the false prophet and the dragon (Satan) and lead a war on all those who became Christians during the Tribulation. He will gather all of the armies of the world and lead a final assault on all Christians. This war will climax at the Battle of Armageddon.

The heavens will open and Jesus will come back to the Earth with all of the Church behind Him. This is the Second Coming. Jesus will easily defeat the antichrist and the false prophet and cast them into Hell. All of the armies of the Earth will be killed. An angel will bind up Satan (the dragon) and lock him up for 1,000 years.

During these 1,000 years Jesus will reign as King on the Earth. It will be a time of great peace. It will start out being populated by those who did not follow the antichrist. However, as more and more people are born throughout this 1,000 year time many of them will refuse to follow Jesus.

At the end of this 1,000 years, Satan will be released from his prison. He will promptly gather together all of those who did not follow Jesus and lead them to war against Jesus and His believers. Jesus will easily defeat them. Satan will be cast into Hell forever.

Then there will be what is generally called "The Great White Throne Judgment" in which all peoples from all of history who did not become born-again will stand before God. Since none of their names will appear in the Book of Life they will be cast into the lake of fire (Hell).

God will destroy the Earth and the heavens and create a new heavens and a new earth.

The heavenly city of Jerusalem will descend to the Earth out of Heaven and all those who were ever saved will spend an eternity in the joyful presence of God.

## **The Rapture**

The word "Rapture" means "to be caught up" or "to carry off." The most common view is that those who are saved (also known as born-again Christians or the Church) will suddenly and in total be removed from the Earth by Jesus Christ leaving behind those who are not saved. This group of Christians, which will surely number in the hundreds of millions, will all disappear suddenly and without warning leaving behind chaos.

The idea is that Jesus Christ will leave Heaven and return nearly to the Earth but not actually stepping onto it. He will return as far as the sky or clouds and then instantly remove all born-again Christians from the Earth by lifting them up and taking them back with Him to Heaven where the Church, which is also known as the "Bride of Christ" will celebrate with Jesus the marriage feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:17-18).

The general reason for the Rapture is so that Christians will not experience the wrath of God that is going to come upon the Earth during the Tribulation. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 promises, “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

The key Bible Scripture that discusses the Rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

Here we see the scenario played out. First the Lord (Jesus Christ) descends from Heaven with three sounds: His own shout, the voice of the archangel (this could be Michael since he is the only archangel who is ever named), and with a trumpet blast. Then the “dead in Christ” (Christians who had already died) will be lifted out of the ground (or wherever they are) and taken up into the sky where Jesus is. Then all of the Christians who are still alive will be “caught up” (Raptured) and meet Jesus and the first group who was already raptured in the clouds.

The Bible implies that Jesus Christ can return at any time to Rapture the church. There are several Scriptures that tell us to be on the alert for the Lord’s return. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.... For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...”

Notice that Paul is telling the Church that Jesus will come as a thief in the night, i.e. that His return will be totally unexpected. Then destruction will come upon those who are left. And again we see the motive for the Rapture, to save us from God’s wrath during the Tribulation.

Titus 2:13 calls the Rapture our “blessed hope”: “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...”

## Overview of the “Book of Revelation”

### Revelation 1

Jesus, in magnificent splendor, appears to John who was exiled to the Island of Patmos and tells John that he will see “the things which must soon take place.”

Jesus first tells John about seven churches.

### Revelation 2

For each church Jesus generally has six issues that He wants to address to each one: 1) Description of Jesus, 2) Something good about it, 3) Something that it is doing wrong, 4) A theme of the church, 5) What they should be more like, and 6) The reward of overcoming.

Church	Jesus	Good	Bad	Theme	Goal	Reward
<b>Ephesus</b>	Holds the seven stars in His right hand, walks among the seven golden lampstands	Good deeds, toil, and perseverance	Left their first love (Jesus)	No love	Perfect their love	Eat of the tree of life
<b>Smyrna</b>	The first and the last, who was dead and has come to life	Endured tribulation	(Nothing mentioned)	Endured under persecution	Continue to be faithful in tribulation	Will not be hurt by the second death
<b>Pergamum</b>	The One who has the sharp two-edged sword	Held steady in tribulation and did not deny Jesus' name	Mixed bad doctrine in with their good doctrine	They compromised too easily	Purity in doctrine	Get hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name
<b>Thyatira</b>	Eyes like a flame of fire, feet like burnished bronze	Deeds, love, faith, service, and increasing in greatness of deeds	They tolerated immorality (Jezebel)	Immorality	Become zealous for purity	Authority over the nations and will get the morning star

### Revelation 3

Church	Jesus	Good	Bad	Theme	Goal	Reward
<b>Sardis</b>	Has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars	Had a good reputation	Spiritually dead	Spiritually alive vs. spiritually dead	Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain	Clothed in white garments, not blotted out from Book of Life, and confessed before the

						Father
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Holy, true, and has the key of David	Good deeds, kept Jesus' word and did not deny Jesus	(Nothing mentioned)	Faithful	Hold fast	Pillar in the temple of God
<b>Laodicea</b>	The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God	(Nothing mentioned)	Lukewarm, arrogant	Lukewarm	Be zealous and repent	Sit down with Jesus on His throne

#### Revelation 4

John is taken up into Heaven and sees God on His throne surrounded by glory, majesty, and praise.

He sees the four living creatures: 1)lion, 2)calf, 3) man, 4) eagle who cry out continually "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

The 24 elders who were around the throne cast their crowns before God.

#### Revelation 5

God holds a book with seven seals that only Jesus ("the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David") can open.

All of the elders, angels, and every created thing sang praise to God:

Verses 9-10, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Verse 12, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Verse 13, ""To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

#### Revelation 6

The first six seals are opened.

The first four are commonly called the "four horsemen of the apocalypse."

First Seal: (white horse) Introduction of the antichrist

Second Seal: (red horse) War

Third Seal: (black horse) Famine

Fourth Seal: (ashen horse) Death, one-fourth of all the earth is killed by war, famine, pestilence, and by beasts

Fifth Seal: Martyrs crying out for justice

Sixth Seal: Terror, great earthquake, darkness, and astronomical terror

### **Revelation 7**

This is an interlude.

The 144,000 from the tribes of Israel are mentioned.

A great multitude identified as those who came out of the Tribulation stand before God's throne and proclaim:

“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”

And all of the angels, elders, and four living creatures also proclaimed:

“Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

### **Revelation 8**

Jesus breaks open the seventh seal. For about 30 minutes there is silence. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

First Trumpet: Hail and fire, one-third of the earth is burned up

Second Trumpet: A great fiery mountain is thrown into the sea and one-third of sea life dies

Third Trumpet: A fiery star fell from heaven into the rivers and one-third of the rivers become poisonous and many people die from the waters

Fourth Trumpet: Great darkness covers the earth for one-third of the daytime

### **Revelation 9**

Fifth Trumpet (also called the first woe): Locusts come out of a bottomless pit and torment people for five months

Sixth Trumpet: A 200 million man army comes from the east and kills one-third of mankind.

The rest of mankind who were not killed so far did not repent of their evil deeds, greed, thief, sorcery, or worship of demons.

### **Revelation 10**

An angel came down out of heaven carrying a little book. When the angel cried out, seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. Then the angel proclaimed that there will no longer be a delay.

Then John was told to eat the book.

### **Revelation 11**

John is told to measure the temple and that the nations will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

God will send two witnesses who will prophesy for 1260 days. If anyone wishes to harm them then fire will flow out of their mouths. Rain will not fall during their time of prophesy.

The beast will rise out of the abyss and make war with the two witnesses and kill them. Their dead bodies will lie in the street for 3 ½ days and everyone will look upon their bodies and celebrate.

At the end of the 3 ½ days God will breathe life into them and they will stand up. Then God will take them up into heaven while everyone watched. There will be an earthquake and 7,000 people will die.

The second woe is completed.

Seventh Trumpet: Praise was given to God

### **Revelation 12**

A sign appeared in heaven of a woman giving birth to a child. This child is usually associated with Jesus Christ.

Another sign appeared of a great red dragon, identified as Satan, which sweeps away 1/3 of the stars. This is usually thought to be when 1/3 of the angels chose to follow Satan and were cast down. Satan seeks to devour the child.

The child is caught up to God and the woman flees into the wilderness for 1260 days.

Michael and his angels wage war with the dragon and Michael wins casting Satan down to the earth.

The dragon, also called the serpent, persecutes the woman but the woman is rescued. Satan is enraged and goes off to make war with the rest of her children.

### **Revelation 13**

The dragon (Satan) appears as does a beast from the sea. The beast gets a fatal wound but it is healed and the whole world was amazed and worships the beast and the dragon. For 42 months the beast blasphemies God. He goes to war against Christians and wins. This beast is the antichrist.

Another beast comes up out of the earth and makes all of the earth worship the first beast. This beast is the false prophet. He performs great signs. He commands them to make an image of the first beast. Then he causes the image to speak and to kill those who do not worship it.

This second beast forces everyone to put a mark on their right hand or forehead if they want to buy or sell. The number of the beast is 666.

#### **Revelation 14**

Jesus (the Lamb) appears on Mount Zion with the 144,000 from chapter 7.

An angel flies in mid-heaven and proclaims to all people the eternal gospel. A second angel predicts the fall of Babylon.

A third angel declares that anyone who has the mark and who worships the beast will feel the wrath of God.

Then one like a son of man appeared on the clouds having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

An angel came out of the temple in heaven who also had a sickle. Yet another angel came and told the previous angel to reap the earth for the wrath of God.

#### **Revelation 15**

There are seven angels with seven plagues who are given seven golden bowls of God's wrath.

A great multitude sings praise to God.

#### **Revelation 16**

The angels pour out, one at a time, the seven bowls of wrath.

First Bowl: Loathsome and malignant sores on those who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

Second Bowl: The sea became blood and everything in it died.

Third Bowl: The rivers became blood.

Fourth Bowl: The sun scorched people with fierce heat.

Fifth Bowl: The kingdom of the beast was darkened and there was great pain.

Sixth Bowl: The Euphrates River was dried up to make way for the kings from the east.

Out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet came three demons which go out into the whole world and gather all of the kings to make war against God. They gathered in a place called Har-Magedon or what is more commonly known as Armageddon.

Seventh Bowl: There was a great earthquake and many cities fell. There was 100-pound hail but people continued to blaspheme God.

### **Revelation 17**

There is a lengthy description of Babylon who symbolizes a false religious system.

Babylon wages war against Jesus (“the Lamb”) and His people, but Jesus overcomes them.

### **Revelation 18**

An angel comes down from heaven and announces the fall of Babylon.

We are told not to participate in the wicked deeds of Babylon.

All of the kings and merchants of the earth wept and lamented over the fall of Babylon because that meant that no one will buy their goods anymore.

An angel threw a great millstone into the sea and proclaimed that in the same manner Babylon will be thrown down.

### **Revelation 19**

This chapter starts out with praises to God.

This is followed by the marriage feast of the Lamb. The Lamb, who is Jesus, marries His bride, who is the Church, up in heaven.

Then heaven opens up and Jesus Christ comes out riding on a white horse. His eyes are a flame of fire and on His head are many crowns. He is followed by all of the Christians (probably hundreds of millions) from all of history who are also riding on white horses. This is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It will be a spectacular event to say the least.

An angel appeared proclaiming that the wrath of God is coming.

The beast and all of the kings of the earth assembled to wage war against Jesus and His army.

Of course, the beast and the false prophet are effortlessly defeated and cast into the lake of fire (Hell). The rest of the armies are killed.

### **Revelation 20**

An angel came down from heaven and bound up the dragon (Satan) and cast him into the abyss for 1,000 years (the Millennium).

Those believers (people who got saved during the Tribulation) who had been martyred during the Tribulation were brought back to life and reigned with Jesus for 1,000 years. This is the first resurrection. The rest of the dead (people who got saved during the Tribulation) but who were not martyred were raised to life at the end of the 1,000 years.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is released from his prison. He gathers those who were born during the 1,000 year Millennium but who did not follow Jesus and , once again, wages war against Jesus and His followers. Satan loses again and this time he is cast into the lake of fire (Hell) where he and the beast and the false prophet will be tormented forever and ever.

There is a great white throne and before it stands everyone who did not get saved (born-again). The book of life is opened and anyone whose name was not found in the book (which is all of them) are thrown into the lake of fire.

### **Revelation 21**

Because the first heaven and earth was corrupted by sin, God destroys them and He creates a new heaven and earth. God declares that He is making all things new.

Then an angel tells John that he will show John the bride, the wife of the Lamb. John is taken to a great and high mountain where he sees the city of Jerusalem coming down from heaven. Its length, height, and width are each 1,500 miles. The city is pure gold.

There is no temple in the city because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. There will also not be a sun or moon because God will illuminate the city with His glory.

### **Revelation 22**

Coming from the throne of God will be a river of the water of life.

An angel tells John that what he has seen is faithful and true and that Jesus is coming quickly.

God reminds us that those who are born-again will have great joy and reward but those who refuse will suffer. He then asks everyone to “come” to Him.

This book, and the Bible, ends God's desire for everyone, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

## **The Second Coming**

The First Coming was when God, as Jesus Christ, was born in Bethlehem to a virgin named Mary. This event is known as the Incarnation.

Then Jesus ministered on the earth, was crucified, buried, and rose again from the dead (The Resurrection). Then 40 days later He ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

The Second Coming is when Jesus Christ returns to the earth from Heaven with all of His church. He then judges the unsaved and casts them into the lake of fire and creates a new heaven and earth.

God created people to have fellowship with Him. But every person rebelled in one way or another by sinning and thus breaking that fellowship with God. In an effort to bring people back to Himself God sent prophets and priests, He came Himself and walked among us, He sent out Apostles and teachers, and He gave us the Bible. But most refused to believe. So after an unknown period of time but which has been thousands of years already, He will physically return to the Earth. The Second Coming will occur at the end of the ages. It will not, however, be the end of history, but, rather, it will be a great climax that will usher in a new history. God will remove all sin in two ways: 1) By casting those who refused to accept His free gift of salvation into Hell and 2) By destroying the sin corrupted Earth and heavens and creating new ones. Then all who were saved will spend an eternity in the holy and magnificent presence of God forever and ever. The Second Coming is the transition event between a sinful world and people and the new one where God shines gloriously on a holy people in heaven.

Whereas the Rapture is never prophesized in the Old Testament, there are many references to the Second Coming in the Old Testament. Here are a few.

#### **Zechariah 14:1-5, 9**

Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. <sup>4</sup>In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one.

#### **Isaiah 6:15-16**

For behold, the LORD will come in fire  
And His chariots like the whirlwind,  
To render His anger with fury,  
And His rebuke with flames of fire.  
For the LORD will execute judgment by fire  
And by His sword on all flesh,  
And those slain by the LORD will be many.

#### **Daniel 7:13-14**

"I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven

One like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.  
And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,  
That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language  
Might serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
Which will not pass away;  
And His kingdom is one  
Which will not be destroyed.

The New Testament also speaks much about The Second Coming. Here are a few Bible passages excluding those in the Book of Revelation (which you can read about in the "Overview of the 'Book of Revelation'").

Matthew 16:27, "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS."

Matthew 24:27, "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Matthew 24:42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

Matthew 26:64, "Jesus said to him, 'You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.'"

Mark 13:26-27, "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven."

Luke 21:25-28, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Acts 3:19-21, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time."

1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

1 Thessalonians 5:23, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"

2 Thessalonians 2:8, "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;"

Hebrews 9:28, "so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him."

James 5:7-9, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."

2 Peter 3:3-4, "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'"

Jude 1:14-15, "*It was* also about these men *that* Enoch, *in* the seventh *generation* from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'"

## Propitiation

This word has the meaning of appeasing the anger or wrath of someone by offering an appropriate sacrifice.

There are some non-religious examples of propitiation in history.

In 991 A.D. King Aethelred ("The Unready") paid 10,000 Roman pounds of silver to the Vikings to keep them from continuing their invasion.

In 1007 King Aethelred paid the Danes 36,000 troy pounds of silver to keep the Danes from invading.

In September 1938, the Munich Agreement was signed which allowed Nazi Germany to annex the borders of Czechoslovakia inhabited by German speaking citizens. This new territory was called Sudetenland. It was thought that giving Hitler this land would appease him and prevent further invasions. It did not.

There are many examples of child sacrifice to propitiate the gods.

The Aztec, Inca, and Moche cultures all sacrificed children to appease their gods.

Pre-Islamic Arabs sacrificed children to idols.

Ancient near East cultures also are recorded as having offered up children as sacrifices.

In Uganda today, the bodies of ritually mutilated bodies of children are still being found.

But there is one sacrifice that forever appeased the infinite wrath of a holy God and that is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Three truths must be understood in order to grasp propitiation.

First, God is holy. This means that God cannot sin and that He hates sin. Habakkuk 1:13 tells us that God's "eyes are too pure to approve evil" and that He "can not look on wickedness with favor."

Second, all people are sinful. Romans 3:10-12 proclaims, "as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.'"

Third, putting the two of these together is like putting the oil of people's sin on the fire of God's holiness. God's justice demands that our sin be punished quickly and with terrible wrath. John 3:36 states this, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

When Jesus Christ died on the cross He became every sin that every person ever committed and He fully paid the penalty that God's justice demanded for every one of those sins. This satisfied two objections regarding propitiation. First, Jesus covered our sins and by doing so removed the source of God's holy wrath. Second, He offered up Himself as the sacrifice to pay for our sins and by doing so He fully satisfied God's justice and anger.

1 John 2:2, "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.*"

God does not ignore our sin nor does He pretend that it does not bother Him. Rather, He deals with it head on and completely. Unlike many of the appeasements of the wrath of a foe (some examples are given at the beginning of this topic), this is not a bribe nor does the appeasement last for only a short period of time, if at all. Instead it addresses the problem directly. Sin is the problem. Jesus' death directly pays the penalty of sin. Jesus did not offer up a present or act as a third party; He offered up Himself. The sacrifice was an equally holy God. "He Himself is the propitiation..." Therefore, God's holy wrath was appeased and for all time.

Hebrews 9:24-26 states well Jesus' propitiation, "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

The need for propitiation is not because God is cranky and looking to pick a fight. Instead 1 John 4:10 tells us the real motivation behind Jesus giving Himself for us: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." Propitiation happened because God loves us. This was the motivation. He did everything needed to remove any barriers that might keep us from an intimate relationship with Him.

Propitiation along with forgiveness, atonement, redemption, reconciliation, justification, and many other themes brings broken vessels destined for eternal wrath into confident communion with a perfectly holy God. What can be better?

## Forgiveness

To forgive is to not hold someone's offenses against them. Forgiveness means that you do not require them to pay for their offense before you will accept them. It means that you will not keep this offense in your back pocket and use it against them in the future.

Forgiveness does not mean ignoring the offense or making believe that it never happened. Forgiveness acknowledges the offense and deals with it in a proper and gracious manner.

Countries establish laws and when those laws are broken then justice demands that a price (penalty) be paid for this crime. This could be a fine, jail time, probation, or some other punishment. So too God, the true King of all, has spiritual laws. These could be His commandments or even more broadly His character. So if we break one of His commandments ("You shall not steal," "You shall love your neighbor as yourself") or violate His character (God is patient; we are not. God is perfect love; we do not always love) then we have committed a crime against God. Because of these crimes, God's justice, likewise, demands that a penalty be paid. However, because God is of infinite value the penalty that we are required to pay is also infinite. But the only thing that we have that is infinite is our time and so we are all destined and deserving of an eternal Hell. There is nothing that we can do to remove the infinite penalty of our sins.

But 2 Samuel 14:14 tells us that God had a plan, "For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him." We are all the ones banished from God because of our sins.

God's plan was to be born a man as Jesus Christ and then 33 years later die on a cross to pay for our sins. On the cross, Jesus took upon Himself every sin from every person who ever lived past, present, and future. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." On the cross Jesus completely paid the full price (penalty) of every one of our sins. This is basis of forgiveness. It is applied to our lives when we are born-again by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Colossians 2:13-15 is an excellent definition of forgiveness and its basis, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees

against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Think of it this way. When we are born we are a clean and spotless whiteboard. But each time that we sin it is written on that board. Each sin adds to the debt that we owe to God. By the end of our lives that board is covered with tens of thousands of sins (if not more). In ourselves we have no hope. We are a mess. But when we are born-again it is as though God takes a giant eraser in the shape of a cross and permanently wipes every one of those sins off of the board. It is once again clean and spotless. But this is not God simply making believe that we never sinned. Rather it is because the sins were totally paid for by Jesus. Justice was completely satisfied. God can require no more. If God then wrote even one of the sins back up on the board then He would not be just.

God will never hold our sins against us again when we have been born-again. Romans 8:1 gives us the great assurance: “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Acts 13:38-39, “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.” It is only through Jesus that we can be forgiven and this forgiveness completely frees us from the entire debt and penalty that we owed.

Ephesians 1:7, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” We have forgiveness because God is rich in grace.

Hebrews 10:11-18 says, “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,’ *He then says, ‘AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.’* Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.” Notice several key points that this passage makes about forgiveness.

- 1) The Old Testament sacrifices could never remove the penalty of our sin.
- 2) Jesus’ one sacrifice was sufficient for all sins for all time.
- 3) Once we are forgiven God will no longer remember our sins. This does not mean that God completely forgets our sins but that He will never bring them up or recall them again.
- 4) When we are forgiven we no longer have to do anything to add to Jesus’ sacrifice. We do not have to do any penance.

## Atonement

Atonement is the doctrine of bringing God and people together. It has the idea of harmony and being in one accord. This doctrine reverberates throughout the Bible. We see in Genesis 3 that the first consequence of Adam and Eve disobeying God’s one command was not physical or spiritual punishment

but estrangement from God. Genesis tells us, “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” They hid themselves from God and then God drove them out of the Garden of Eden.

We see this estrangement everywhere. Isaiah 59:2 states, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.”

The Old Testament is filled with atoning acts and rituals. The type most frequently mentioned is that of the blood sacrifice. Leviticus 16 describes this ritual in great detail. The reason for it is given in verse 16, “He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins.” Sin offends a holy God and forces Him to push us away. But since His goal is to bring us into a relationship with Himself this sin must be dealt with. This harmony is so important to God that He gives detailed instructions as to how the priests shall perform the ritual even down to the clothes that they must wear. This harmony must be effected not by sloppiness or as an afterthought.

In this ritual two goats are integral to this atonement. The first goat is slaughtered thereby demonstrating that cost of sin is death. We see this in Ezekiel 18:4b, “The soul who sins will die.” This sacrificed goat is then burned so as to show that sin must be completely destroyed. The second goat is sent out into the wilderness to “a solitary land.” This shows us that sin must also be removed from us. Psalms 103:12 proclaims this, “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions [sins] from us.”

Because sin is so prevalent, even the priest during the ritual was impure and so had to offer a sacrifice for himself.

The Day of Atonement is also called Yom Kippur. It is the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. Jews will fast from all eating and drinking, attend synagogue, and refrain from work on this day. It is a day to “afflict the soul” to atone for the sins between God and man from the past year. Many wear white to symbolize that our sins are as “white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

The problem is that these sacrifices were never enough. There was always more sin. However, all of these sacrifices prefigured (foreshadowed) the one sacrifice that would atone for all sin for all time. This was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Mark 10:45 states, “For even the Son of Man [Jesus Christ] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” This “ransom” was the one great and final atonement. Because Jesus was the only perfectly holy and pure person who ever lived, He did not have to offer a sacrifice for Himself. Instead, when He offered up Himself on the cross it was for everyone else. Jesus’ blood sacrifice harkens back to Leviticus 16 but this time, instead of merely atoning for one sin for one person, Jesus’ blood atoned for everyone’s sins throughout all of history.

The universal and final “Day of Atonement” was the day that Jesus died on the cross. There does not need to be anymore atonements. When we sin today, we do not look for an animal to bring to the priest, rather, we look back to the cross and know that it was already atoned for.

Though all of Isaiah 53 is a great picture of atonement, verses 6,7, and 11 encapsulate it well. “All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.” We see here our sin, Jesus’ sacrifice, the Father’s satisfaction with that sacrifice, and our justification.

The Communion Bread and Cup are a remembrance of Jesus’ atonement. Mark 14:22-24, “While they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, ‘Take *it*; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’” We should remember that His blood was “poured out.” This is atonement. We also remember that it was for us, “for many.”

## Redemption

The meaning of redemption has several connotations. One is to buy back something that is lost. Another is freeing someone from slavery or captivity. These two concepts together carry with them that the payment is a ransom.

So for there to be redemption several things must be true. 1) Someone had to be in a good place. 2) Something bad happened and that person became a slave. 3) Someone cared enough to pay the required price to buy back that person. 4) That person has been restored back into a good place.

1) Someone had to be in a good place and 2) Something bad happened and that person became a slave. We can view this two different but true ways. One is collectively. Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden. But then they sinned and were driven out. Since then, no one all of mankind has lost that perfect relationship with God. A second way is individually. When we are born we have a sin nature (a disposition or propensity to sin) but we have not sinned yet. But eventually we all sin (Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”) and that very first sin separates us from God (James 2:10, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.”).

Whether collectively or individually, this sin makes us a slave to that sin. Our master is no longer God; it is sin. John 8:34 emphatically tells us this, “Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” Psalm 102:20 tells us that we are prisoners, “To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to set free those who were doomed to death.” Proverbs 5:22 tells us that sin binds us

like a prisoner wrapped in cords or chains, “His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin.”

We are helpless. We are in prison and there is nothing that we can do to get ourselves out.

3) Someone cared enough to pay the required price to buy back that person. The entire Bible is about how God planned to buy us back. Matthew 20:28 tells us, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The Greek word “ransom” means “the price for redeeming, the ransom paid for slaves.” And the word “for” as in “ransom for many” means “instead of” as in the sense of substitution. Jesus paid a price that we could never pay. That price was Himself. 1 Peter 1:18-19, “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.” Our redemption was not cheap. God did not buy us out of slavery with money. He bought us out of slavery with His own blood, with His death on a cross.

Revelation 5:9 is one of many verses in the Bible that reminds us that Jesus’ death purchased us, “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

4) That person has been restored back into a good place. Colossians 1:13, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” We were prisoners in chains in darkness. But Jesus gave Himself as the ransom to buy us out of that slavery and now we are back in the “kingdom of His beloved Son.” John 8:36, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

Because of our sin and disobedience we were enslaved as prisoners to sin. But Jesus paid the full price to buy us out of slavery and restore us to Himself. The chains have been cast off. We are now free indeed.

## Reconciliation

The word “reconcile” comes from a word meaning “to make good again, repair, make friendly.” It also has the sense of “change.” Reconciliation is necessary because a relationship has gone bad. Where there once was harmony there is now disharmony. Where once there was peace there is now strife. This is case between God and people. Before sin entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s one command in the Garden of Eden they walked with God. But after their sin they were driven away from God. Likewise, in our own individual lives, once we commit our first sin we are now separated from God (Isaiah 59:2, “But your iniquities [sins] have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.”).

We need to be reconciled. But who is going to take the lead? Who is going to initiate the reconciliation? Romans 3:11 tells us that “There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.” So we are not the ones who seek after God. We tend to only care about the here and now. So we generally do not worry about what our relationship with God means. That means that if any reconciliation is to occur

then God must care enough about us to initiate it. Fortunately, He does. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 proclaims, “Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” We read here that God, through the death of Jesus Christ, brought us to Himself. He is the One who repaired the relationship. He is the One who makes us friends again. “Not counting their trespasses against them” has the idea of debt, of something that is owed but which debt is now removed.

Romans 5:10-11 is another interesting passage, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” Notice that God is not reconciled to us but rather, we are the ones who are reconciled to God. We are the ones who are changed. God is perfect; He does not have to change. We are the ones who strayed and so we are the ones who must be brought back. Notice also how we are referred to before we are reconciled. We are “enemies.” Our sin puts us at war with God.

Colossians 1:20-21 sums up the doctrine of reconciliation, “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.” We first see what we became which caused us to be separated from God: “alienated,” “hostile,” “engaged in evil deeds.” Then we see that God reconciled us—He changed us—because of the death of Jesus on the cross. Finally we see what we have become: “holy,” “blameless,” and “beyond reproach.”

Reconciliation indeed takes enemies and turns them into brothers and sisters. It takes the alienated and turns them into the beloved. It takes the guilty and turns them into the holy. Through the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ we are now, once again, able to approach the throne of God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16).

## Justification

Justification is the legal act by God that a sinner is now declared righteous, just, and innocent before Him.

Throughout the Bible there are several clear themes: God is holy, people are sinful, God must judge sin, people are unable to get rid of the problem of sin, God must intervene with a perfect solution, people must believe and receive this solution.

In the Bible, God is often portrayed as a judge. Psalm 7:11 tells us that “God is righteous judge.” What does God judge? He judges anything that disobeys His laws and commandments. He also judges anything that is not in accordance with His character which includes anything that is not perfectly loving, patience, kind, compassionate, merciful, and any of His other attributes. All of these are called sin. Sin earns judgment and Matthew 25:46a tells us what this judgment is: “These will go away into eternal punishment...”

God cannot ignore justice and so He cannot ignore the penalty (judgment) of sin. Job 8:3 informs us that there are only two choices when it comes to justice, “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right?” Either justice is perverted (corrupted, gone astray from) or it is applied (doing what is right). God always does what is right.

Several more verses emphasize how important justice is to God. Psalm 37:28, “For the Lord loves justice” and Isaiah 30:18, “For the Lord is a God of justice.”

Sin stains us; it makes us unholy and impure. And because of sin we cannot come before a perfectly holy God.

But no matter what we do, we cannot remove the stain of our sin ourselves. Job 4:17 informs us, “Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?” No, we cannot. Galatians 3:11 emphasizes this, “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’” This verse in Galatians tells us that nothing that we can do, no matter how good it is and no matter how much in accordance with the Law that it is, can justify us. Keeping the Law perfectly at times means that we have not added additional sins to our lives, but it does not remove the sin that is already there.

So God had to create, initiate, and complete the perfect and only solution. That solution was to become one of us by being born a baby who was called Jesus Christ. He led a perfectly holy and sinless life. Then He was crucified on a cross and in doing so He fully paid the judgment that was due to each and every one of us because of our sin. Then three days later He rose from the dead. 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;” We are the unjust. Jesus is the just. He was the perfect solution.

Romans 10:9-10 tells us how to believe and receive that solution: “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” This is justification, declaring that we are righteous.

And once God has justified us, we are justified forever and no one, not even the Devil, can make us impure again in God’s eyes. Romans 8:33, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies...” It is God’s work, not ours, and so it is secure with the infinite power and character of God.

### **What justification is not**

Justification is not God declaring us to be sinless. God sees that we are still sinners. The difference is that our sin is now covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ and so that is what God sees.

Justification is not a pardon. It is not God easily and cheaply declaring that we are now righteous. This declaration came at the price of the blood and life of God Himself dying on a cross in a dusty, harsh land.

Justification is not faith plus works. James 2:24-26 states, “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” The point is that James clearly states that justification includes works. The common rebuttal is that James is referring to someone who claims to be a Christian but does not show anything to indicate this. I.e. their life gives no indication that the holy Spirit of God dwells within them. James is saying that if you are born-again (saved) then something should show externally. It would be analogous to a man with long, stringy hair and clearly out of shape saying, “I’ve been a U.S. Marine for over a year now.” The outward appearance does not match the declaration.

## Regeneration

The Biblical word “regeneration” in the Greek is “palingenesia.” “Palin” means again and “genesis” means birth. So regeneration is being born-again or a new birth or creation.

There are a number of Scriptures that discuss this theme without actually using the word.

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” It is not that when someone gets saved that he or she becomes unrecognizable like taking a clay vase on a potter’s wheel, squeezing it into a ball, and then making it into something completely different. This newness is a new set of values, attitudes, and understanding. A partial list of what is new follows.

Old	New
Does not generally care about sin	Desires to put away sin and do what is right
Focuses on the here and now	Can focus on things that matter for eternity
Self-worth and value based on money, power, popularity, celebrity, beauty, and other temporal things	Self-worth and value based on how God views him or her
All treasures are what are here and will eventually perish	Treasure can be stored up in Heaven for eternity
The Bible is generally a mystery	The Holy Spirit opens up the believer’s eyes to see what the Bible says
Not interested in spiritual matters or only interested for what he or she can get out of it	Interested in spiritual matters because there is a desire to know and obey God
Does things that only count for now	Can do things that will count for eternity (evangelism, worship, ministry, etc.)
Rarely thinks about God	Has a growing deeper sense about the presence of God
Conscience is dull and often twisted as to right and wrong	Conscience is awakened to right and wrong
Can only trust in own abilities and cleverness	Can trust in God’s care and provision
Guilt	Forgiveness
Fear of after death	Confidence in eternal life in Heaven
We live by what we see	We can also live by faith

The theme of being born-again is related to regeneration.

John 3:1-21 is the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. In verse 3 Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus thinks that Jesus is taking about a second physical birth: “He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”—verse 4. Jesus answers that the second birth is a spiritual birth. In verse 5 Jesus again answers him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Regeneration is when someone who is spiritually dead becomes spiritually alive. Colossians 2:13 tells us this perfectly, “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.” We were spiritually dead; God makes us spiritually alive.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 is a good picture of regeneration: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

The only Scripture that explicitly uses the word “regeneration” when applied to an individual is Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...” This tells us that regeneration is the work of God. Regeneration is not effected by anything that we do. We cannot raise ourselves up from a spiritual grave; only God can do that. God regenerates us not because we do something to earn or deserve it but because He is merciful. Just as water cleans the outer body, the Holy Spirit cleans the inner person.

Regeneration is when God takes people who are spiritually dead and by being born-again makes us into a new creation with a new worldview, new values, new attitudes, new desires, and a new focus.

## Adoption

The Biblical word for adoption in the Greek is *huiothesia*. *Huios* means “a son” and *thesis* is “to place.” So together the word means “to place as a son.” Adoption in the Bible is to place a son or daughter into a family other than its natural family and thereby giving the child the full privileges of the new family.

Because of our sin we are outside of God’s family. Here are some of the Bible’s descriptions of what we are children of.

Wrath: Ephesians 2:3, “by nature children of wrath.”

Illegitimate: Hebrews 12:8, “But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

Flesh: Romans 9:8, "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants."

Devil: 1 John 3:10, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."

It is common in the name of universalism (all religions are the same) to say that we are all "children of God." Yes, it is true that by way of God having created us all that we are children of God, but in a familial sense, we are outside the family of God until He adopts us back into His family.

John 1:12 gives us this transition, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name." When we receive Jesus (i.e. are born-again, saved), God then gives us the right to be adopted into his family. It is only then that we are true sons and daughters of God.

Notice how God uses terms within a family relationship when referring to those who are born-again.

### **He is our Father.**

Matthew 6:9, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"

Romans 8:15, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" "Abba" essentially means "my father" or "the father." Notice how this Scripture makes it clear that only those who have been adopted can call God "Father." It is not a term that should easily be thrown around. It is a sign of intimacy and that intimacy can only come through salvation in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:6, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Again, we are sons (and daughters) only through "His Son" Jesus Christ.

### **Jesus is our brother.**

Hebrews 2:11-12, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren saying, 'I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.'" The "He" in this verse is Jesus. Jesus calls us His brethren, His sisters and brothers.

In Matthew 28:10 and John 20:17 Jesus refers to us as "My brethren."

### **Everyone who belongs to the true church all across the world are our brethren (brothers and sisters)**

Around 188 times in the New Testament, the people in the church are referred to as brethren.

Romans 12:1 is one example, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship."

### **Being in the family gives us many blessings**

Matthew 17:24-26, "When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma *tax* came to Peter and said, 'Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma *tax*?' He said, 'Yes.' And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?' When Peter said, 'From strangers,' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are exempt.'" God is the King. Those who are strangers must pay what they owe to God, which is the punishment for their sins. However, those who are the true children of God have had our sins have been paid for by Jesus. We are exempt.

1 Corinthians 2:9 tells us that God has prepared a great many blessings for those who are His: "but just as it is written, 'THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.'"

As a result of adoption, we are now called "children of God." 1 John 3:1, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."

Adoption delivers us from a place that is slavery and fear and brings us into the perfectly loving and secure family of God with its many blessings.

## Sanctification

Sanctification is when something or someone is set apart to be used for the purpose of God. The Greek word for sanctify means "to make holy." A related word is "saint" which literally means "a sanctified person."

God the Father sanctifies us (1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His [the Father] doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...") through or by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.")

In the beginning, God created people to be sanctified for Him. We were the only creatures made in His image or likeness (Genesis 1:26a, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."). But we ruined that relationship by sinning in the Garden of Eden. The result is not that God discarded us and started all over again. Rather, God sought to bring us back to Himself and to sanctify us once again to Himself. 1 Thessalonians 4:3a emphasizes this, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..."

When we are saved (born-again) because we have been forgiven, justified, regenerated, and redeemed we are; therefore, able to set apart (sanctified) again by God.

This sanctification means that we are able to understand better the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."). Therefore, we can understand the Bible better. We also have a desire to do what is right, to obey God,

and to glorify Him. We are able to do that which is eternal—Matthew 6:20, “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal...”

It also means that God has given us the power to do all of this. 2 Timothy 1:7 assures us, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”

Yet, even though we eternally sanctified by God, we must practice this sanctification and act and think like one who is truly holy. This is the gist of Philippians 2:12b, “work out your salvation with fear and trembling...” We are saved, we are sanctified; now act like it.

How do we live sanctified lives? Here are some Scriptures.

Hebrews 12:14, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” By bringing peace and reconciliation rather than anger, revenge, or strife.

Romans 15:16, “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” By bringing the Gospel of salvation and peace to non-Christians.

Romans 6:19, “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.” By living a holy life in purity and righteousness.

1 Thessalonians 4:3, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality...” By avoiding immorality, pornography, and adultery.

Romans 6:22, “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” By repenting from sin and obeying God.

1 Thessalonians 4:1, “[Sanctification and Love ] Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.” By walking according to God’s commands, example, and principles with a desire to please Him.

2 Timothy 2:1, “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” By doing good works to the glory of God.

1 Peter 1:2, “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.” By obeying Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:15, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and

reverence...” By understanding our faith well enough and being confident enough to be able to explain to others why we believe that Jesus is the Christ and that salvation is through Him alone.

Sanctification is where God sets us apart to do His will and live a life that counts for eternity. There is both a complete and instantaneous sanctification where we are set apart for God for all eternity and a growing into sanctification where we live, think, and act a life that is totally given over to God.

## Glorification

The Christian’s glorification will essentially be the last personal transformation that we know of. It will be when we are finally and completely conformed to the image of God. It is when we will finally put off all that is sinful and exhibit in all ways the character of God.

Philippians 3:20-21 gives us a great definition of glorification—“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” We see here several points. First, as with all of our transformations (justified, reconciled, sanctified, redeemed, etc.), this one is not brought about by anything that we do. Rather, it is initiated and completed by God (Jesus Christ). Second, He will take us from a humble state to one of glory. Third, this transformation will not be trivial. It will happen by the power of God that has established Him as the sovereign king of all things.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 tells us that the ultimate reason why God called us through the Gospel is to glorify us—“It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our glorification will occur just before we enter into Heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:42-49 contrasts the difference.

Now	Glorified
Perishable	Imperishable
Dishonor	Glory
Weakness	Power
Natural	Spiritual
Earthly	Heavenly

Verses 51b-52 tells us that “we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...”

Our ultimate glorification is one of the great incentives for us being able to suffer hardship, persecution, and suffering now. We know that one day all of this will be gone. Our health problems, financial difficulties, social isolation, and everything else will be forever left behind as we stand before God in our glorified body and nature. 2 Timothy 2:10 tells us as much, “For this reason I endure all things for the

sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and* with *it* eternal glory.”

Though, for born-again Christians, our ultimate conformity to the image of Jesus Christ is a certainty, we should make every effort to strive towards that goal throughout our lives. 1 John 3:2-3 tells us of our incentive, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Our motivation to lead a holy life is not so that God will accept us or so that we will go to Heaven. Our motivation is that because God has already given us this great promise and hope of glorification so we should want to please Him in all ways.

Glorification is a necessary transformation. How could we stand before a perfectly holy God in Heaven in our corrupt bodies and minds. In Exodus 33 Moses asks God to show him His glory. But God’s response in verse 20 is “But He said, ‘You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!’” In our current state of sin we cannot stand before God. God must change us.

Right now we view everything through eyes that are self-focused, lustful, and corrupt. The spiritual is seen as through gauze. It is like seeing the Sistine Chapel using a single candle. But when we are glorified it will be as though a great light is turned on. The spiritual will burst open before us. 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

All that is frail and sickly will be changed into power. All that is falling apart will become imperishable. All that is dim will become perfectly clear. Glorification is indeed a great hope. And it is also a sure thing because it will be wrought by the power of God. Let us in worship and thanksgiving strive to lead lives of greater and greater holiness now.

## Imputation

Imputation means to attribute or reckon something to someone or of setting something to someone’s account. Here is one example of how it works. I have a job, but one day I get sick and cannot come into work. I do not want to use a sick day and so my cousin goes to my job and puts in a full day’s worth of work. When I get my next paycheck it will include the money for the day that my cousin worked. My cousin’s work was imputed to me. He did the work, I stayed home and did nothing, but I got the money.

We are not righteous, in fact, we are sinners. Jesus Christ was and is perfectly righteous. Through the cross, Jesus’ righteousness is imputed to us.

It is the doctrine of imputation that allows us to still be sinners and yet be righteous in God’s sight. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is about a double imputation—“He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Our sin was imputed to Jesus. He was then able to pay the judicial punishment of that sin. And then Jesus’ righteousness was imputed to us. Each side has two layers. Think of statue that is covered with paint. On the one side, Jesus was the perfectly

pure and holy statue that was coated with the paint of our sin. God saw the sin and His wrath fell upon the entire painted statue. Because Jesus Himself remained God and holy, He was able to endure the full wrath of the Father and yet satisfy the penalty and guilt of sin. On the other side, we are a corrupt, impure statue but are coated with the paint of Jesus' righteousness. Until our glorification, we will remain a corrupt statue but God sees us covered in the perfect righteousness of His Son.

This sense of covering is seen in Psalm 32:1, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!"

Imputation does not change the object; it simply places something into that object's account.

We see in several Scriptures how Jesus was imputed our sins. Isaiah 53:11 tells us that He bore our sins, "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities." And 1 Peter 2:24 emphasizes the same, "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness ; for by His wounds you were healed." Galatians 3:13 says it in a different way by stating that Jesus became a curse for us--"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'" Jesus had no sins of His own. So the only sins that He could pay for were our sins. Therefore our sins had to be placed on Him.

Hebrews 10:19 gives us a great assurance, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus..." But how is that we who are such great sinners can enter with confidence—not merely hopefully or with cowering but with confidence—can stand before a holy God who wrath against sin is great? Isaiah 64:6 tells us that "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment..." It is because we have been imputed the righteousness of Christ. This is what God sees.

We can never attain to this righteousness ourselves. Psalm 143:2 gives us the undeniable fact, "And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous." It must be given to us by God. This is why Jeremiah 33:16 confirms, "the LORD is our righteousness."

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 is a great summation and response, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.'" It is only because of Jesus Christ that we have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Our only response is to boast in the Lord.

## Noah and the Ark

Noah was the firstborn son of Lamech. Noah was the eleventh generation of people since Adam. There were 1056 years between the birth of Adam and the birth of Noah. It is thought that Noah lived from 3,103 B.C. to 2,153 B.C. which would make him 950 years old when he died. Other calculations are that he was born in 3,078 B.C.

The name “Noah” means “relief” or “comfort.” Genesis 5:29 tells us about Noah, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.” In this genealogy, Noah is the only one whose name is interrupted by providing commentary. The curse that is referenced is in Genesis 3:17-19 which states, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 6:10).

Noah lived in a world of extreme evil, corruption, and violence (Genesis 6:11). Genesis 6:5 states, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Of everyone on the Earth the only person who pleased God was Noah. When Noah was 480 years old God told him that because of the wickedness of man on the earth He was going to “blot out man” (Genesis 6:5-7). However, we are told in verse 8 that “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” In verse 9 we are given three other descriptions of Noah: he was a righteous man, he was blameless in his time, and he walked with God.

A key verse is Genesis 6:22. Despite the evil around him and the difficulty of the task in front of him we read, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.” Noah had a great deal of opposition. The evil and mocking of the people around him. The laborious task of building a huge sea-worthy boat with which he no experience. Perhaps doubts about building a boat when was likely that he had never seen heavy rain let alone a flood before. But Noah did all that God told him to do. Noah did not have endless committees to discuss the task; he did it. And if he had compromised in any way the boat would have sunk; he did all, not just most.

God gave Noah 120 years to build the ark and to allow people to repent. We know this because in Genesis 9:28-29 it says that Noah was 600 when the flood ended. We deduce this because Noah lived for 350 years after the flood ended and he died at 950. So  $950 - 350 = 600$ .

The ark was 300 cubits long (500 feet), 50 cubits wide (83 feet), and 30 cubits high (50 feet). The length of a cubit was the distance from the elbow to the fingertips and so differed among the ancient groups of people. A good estimate would be 18 inches. This would make the ark 450 feet long by 75 feet wide by 45 feet high. However, some claim that for large projects such as the ark the longer cubit length of 20 inches would be used. That would make the ark 500 feet by 83 feet by 50 feet.

Did Noah travel around the world to gather the animals? No, God brought the animals to Noah. Noah was commanded to build the ark and then populate it with two of every animal (seven if clean animals). He was not commanded to gather the animals himself. See Genesis 6:20, “Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.” Notice that they “will come to you.” If God can create the universe including every living creature then He can certainly bring two of those creatures to Noah.

Was the ark big enough to hold all of the animals on the Earth? Yes. It obviously would not have been necessary for Noah to bring animals that live in water. That leaves land animals. Did the Ark need to hold every breed of dog, cat, mouse, etc.? No. There only needed to be one pair of dogs with a lot of genetic variation. Then the different breeds of dogs could have developed from this one original pair. Even evolutionists claim that dogs were just wolves until around 15,000 years ago when our ancestors domesticated and bred them into the more than 400 breeds that we have today. Even recently new breeds of dogs have been created. For example, the Shiloh Shepherd was created in 1974 and the Silken Windhound in 1987.

John Woodmorappe in his book "Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study" claims that the Ark would have needed to hold less than 16,000 individual animals since it would have only needed to have one pair from each of 8,000 genera which would also include currently extinct genera. Just as with the dog, variations could easily have developed from each genus.

Additionally, most animals are small being along the size of a cat or rabbit. For large animals such as elephants or dinosaurs the young and thus small members would have been brought onto the Ark. There would have been no need to bring large, mature adults.

The Ark is estimated to have had the capacity of over 500 railroad cars or 1.54 million cubic feet which would have been enough to carry over 120,000 sheep. Therefore, there was plenty of room for 16,000 smaller animals.

Though there is discussion about the exact length of the flood it is generally estimated to have been between 365 and 371 days. The difference is because we do not know which calendar was being used at the time. Here is how the days added up.

The beginning of the flood, based on Noah's age, was year 600 month 2 day 17.

- It rained for 40 days.
- At the end of 150 days the water how gone down and the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, so 150 minus the initial 40 leaves 110 days.
- The waters continued to recede for another 74 days.
- Noah waited another 40 days at which point he sent out a raven to see if the waters were abated but the raven "flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth."
- Noah waited 7 days and then he sent out a dove and it came back with nothing in its mouth.
- Noah waited another 7 days and he sent out the dove again. This time it returned with an olive leaf in its mouth.
- Noah waited another waited 7 days. Then he sent out a dove for the third time and it did not return.
- Then Noah removed the covering from the ark which was 29 days later.

- Finally they came out of the ark 57 days later.

Adding up the days:  $40 + 110 + 74 + 40 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 29 + 57 = 371$ . But some of those days might be fewer depending on the calendar used.

The end of the flood, based on Noah's age, was year 601 month 2 day 17.

Only eight people survived the flood: Noah, his three sons, and their four wives.

The Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4).

God gave the rainbow as a sign that He would never again flood the Earth (Genesis 9:11-15) although some say that rainbows always existed but that God now appropriated it as a symbol of His promise.

In Genesis 9:20-27 we read about Noah's drunkenness and Canaan's sin. Some try to excuse Noah's drunkenness by claiming that this was the first time in history that wine had been produced and so Noah was unfamiliar with it or that alcohol had been around but Noah was unacquainted with it. But it is unlikely that after at least 1,500 years no one had discovered fermented grapes nor that Noah in over 600 years had experienced it. More than likely Noah drank too much when he should have known better and got drunk. After all, he did plant a vineyard so he was well familiar with grapes. This is yet another instance where the Bible is willing to show both the good and bad sides of its people, even the heroes.

The result of Noah's drunkenness was that he was naked in his tent in a drunken stupor. Then Ham went into the tent and saw his father's nakedness and told his brothers. "But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness." – Genesis 9:23. When Noah awoke "he knew what his youngest son had done to him." – verse 24b.

Then we read the only words of Noah recorded in the Bible in Genesis 9:25-27.

25 So he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;

A servant of servants

He shall be to his brothers."

26 He also said,

"Blessed be the Lord,

The God of Shem;

And let Canaan be his servant.

27 "May God enlarge Japheth,

And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;

And let Canaan be his servant.”

Much debated questions are:

“What did Ham do that was so terrible?”

“Why was Ham’s son Canaan cursed instead of Ham?”

That has been much speculation about what Ham actually did some of which conjecture a possible sexual sin. But the Bible never says this. Ham seeing his father’s nakedness was an accident so that was not likely the problem. Most likely it was because Ham was not discrete about his father’s sin. Instead of covering him up and leaving it quietly at that, he went and told others. At this point Ham was not a child and so he would have known that he should not have left his father naked and went gossiping about it. There could even have been an attitude of mockery on Ham’s part, but that is not stated. The fact that Noah eventually found out what Ham had done may imply that Ham went and told others besides his brothers. Noah the spiritual head of the family who, through his righteousness, had saved a remnant of the human race. Then Noah makes a mistake and Ham runs and tells everyone. Ham had no respect.

Perhaps a more difficult question is why Ham’s son Canaan was cursed rather than Ham. Some say that this was not so much a curse that caused the negative result as much as a prophecy that predicted the negative results. But the language in this section seems to fit the same pattern as other blessings and curses. See Genesis 49 and especially verses 5-7 for an example of a curse. Since the Bible is not clear as to what role Canaan played in this situation there has been much speculation. One thought is that Canaan was somehow also involved perhaps by spreading the gossip of his grandfather’s sin. Another thought is that God had already blessed Noah’s three son’s including Ham in Genesis 9:1 and therefore Noah could not override God and curse Ham. We do not know. But we do know that the ancestors of Canaan were the Canaanites, Amorites, Jebusites, Sidonians, and Phoenicians. All of these peoples waged war against Israel and were subdued by Israel. So the curse came true.

We see the Ark as a shadow of Jesus Christ. In Noah’s time the world was corrupt with sin. God’s judgment upon them was assured. However, God also promised salvation from and through the judgment of the flood within the safety of an Ark. Righteous Noah and his family were the only ones saved. Similarly, since Noah, the world has been corrupt with sin. God’s judgment is assured (2 Peter 3:7, 1 John 4:17, Jude 1:15, Revelation 20:11-15). But God has promised salvation from and through this judgment by being placed in Jesus Christ and His forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16). Only those who are born-again will be saved (John 3:3). The Ark is a foreshadow of Jesus Christ.

There are six other passages in the Bible that speak of Noah that are not chronologies.

Isaiah 54:9 “For this is like the days of Noah to Me, When I swore that the waters of Noah Would not flood the earth again; So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you Nor will I rebuke you.” Isaiah believed in Noah and a worldwide flood. God here uses Noah to buttress His claim that He is faithful to His promises.

Ezekiel 14:14, “‘even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves,’ declares the Lord God.” At this time Israel was in great sin. These are three men who maintained righteousness and piety even in the midst of sin and suffering. Noah was saved through the flood but the rest of the world died, Daniel was saved through his captivity but many of the other captives perished, and Job was saved through his suffering though his children and servants died. It is significant that of the three most righteous people in history at that time Noah was one of them and this is despite his sin of drunkenness. That shows that one sin does not need to define a person’s life.

Matthew 24:37-38 (also Luke 17:26-27), “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark...” God will be patient with people’s sin for only so long. The world is heading towards the same extreme evil, corruption, and violence as was in the days of Noah. At that time God judged the world by way of a worldwide flood. This time, God will judge the world with a seven-year worldwide tribulation culminating in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” Noah built the ark not so much to save his own life but to reverence/honor/glorify God. Noah had to take God at His word without any way of validating it. There had never been a worldwide flood or probably anything even remotely similar that Noah could point to in order to prove that it was likely to occur again. It was pure faith based on because God said it then therefore it must be true. And through 120 years of no approaching indication of a flood Noah still labored in faith because he believed God.

Noah “condemned the world” not by shouting judgments at them but through simple obedience. He undoubtedly had those who mocked him and those who tried to use reason to argue against his actions. But in all of that he stood firm on the side of God. Ultimately he and God were both proven to be right. Though we may be surrounded by wickedness and disorder we can be confident that, in the end, God and those on His side will triumph.

1 Peter 3:20, “who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.” God is patient not just with the world but with us as individuals.

2 Peter 2:5, “and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.” There were eight saved in the ark: Noah and then the “seven others:” Noah’s wife, his three sons, and their three wives. We see here that God will not overlook sin. When the entire world turned to godlessness, He condemned it and spare only the eight who followed Him. Likewise, no one should expect that God will make an exception and give them a free pass regarding their sin. We see here that Peter considered Noah and the flood to have been real. Paul, likewise, in Hebrews 11:7.

## Peter

Of the twelve original Apostles, Peter (original name was Simon) is the most well-known. He is thought to have been born around 1 B.C. which would make him about the same age as Jesus. He was born in the village of Bethsaida which is in the region of Galilee, Israel, and was the brother of another Apostle, Andrew. He was a Galilean fisherman. We know that he was married because it mentions his mother-in-law in Matthew 8:14. Peter was a Jew.

Peter was the second disciple that Jesus called (Matthew 4:18 and John 1:40-42); Andrew was the first. They certainly knew, and were possibly partners with, James and John the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 4:18-21).

In Mark 3:16 Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter which, in the Greek word Petros, means rock or stone. This foretold how instrumental Peter would be in building the foundation of the church.

The first major event that we read about after Peter was called was when Jesus visited Peter's house and cured his mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15). So we see right away that Jesus worked personally with Peter. He came to his house; He healed a close family member and then He ate with them. Jesus was not a mere showman; He intimately cared about and interacted with people. Peter was one of Jesus' three closest disciples and by implication, friends.

The next miracle that Peter witnesses from Jesus is when he is fishing. Peter spent all night on the Sea of Galilee and caught no fish. When he did what Jesus told him to do he caught so many fish that his net broke (Luke 5:4-7) and two boats were filled. Once again we see Jesus' intimacy as He helped Peter in his work situation.

In Matthew 9 a ruler came to Jesus asking Him to heal his daughter. In verses 23-26 Jesus took only Peter, James, and John to the ruler's house. Jesus then had all of the mourners leave and with only His three disciples and the girl's parents raised the girl, Talitha, from the dead. We see here that Jesus' miracles were always people focused. If He wanted a big show then He would have invited all of the mourners to come and watch instead of sending them away. This was a private, emotional moment with the parents.

One of the most recognizable events in Peter's life is in Matthew 14:22-32 where Peter walks on the water. There are a lot of lessons to be learned in this story. Here are a few. In verse 22 Jesus "constrained [compelled] the disciples to get into the boat." Being God, He knew that a storm was coming. Sometimes God puts us into situations where we will be hammered. But that is so that we will learn to call upon Him and trust Him more. Jesus came walking on the waves of the storm. Jesus will often come to us walking on the very trials and circumstances that are terrifying us. Jesus did not use their fear to give them a long Bible lesson. Instead His emphasis was on His relationship with them and how they can trust Him and be secure in Him in all circumstances, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." That is His message to us today. Peter got that message and wanted to be near to Jesus. He asked Jesus if he could come to Him. Jesus said, "Come." Peter walked on the water but once he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the circumstances around him he got frightened and sank. He pled to

Jesus was not eloquent. It was only three words but it worked; Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of Peter. Our prayers do not have to be long or stirring to be effective. They only have to be sincere and in faith. We may talk about how Peter wavered and he sank, but at least he tried. The other disciples, who are not even mentioned by name, just sat in the boat as spectators. God blesses effort. Peter did not quite make it all the way over to Jesus but for the rest of his life he could say, "I walked on water!" The disciples who merely sat in the boat could not say even that.

In Matthew 16:16 Peter makes the bold proclamation, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Then in Matthew 16:18 Jesus tells Peter (who name means "rock") that "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." No matter how evil the people, culture, world around us may become, they will never prevail against the church.

In Matthew 16:21-23 Jesus proclaims that He will be killed and raised on the third day. Peter, being always impetuous, rebukes Jesus. Jesus then tells Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!" One point that we see here is that Peter glossed over the victorious part of Jesus being raised and instead focused only on the negative part of being killed. There are too many people who, like Peter, are so focused on the negative that they miss the blessing. Another point is that Peter was so absorbed by how things should go according to his own way of thinking that he missed God's plans and wound up being rebuked by God. Finally we see in the following verses (24-26), Jesus talks about taking up our cross. Peter missed the cost of discipleship. He missed the concept of sacrifice and then blessing, death and then life.

Then comes one of the pinnacles of Peter's direct ministry with Jesus: the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8).

Jesus took His three closest disciples--Peter, James, and John—with Him to a high mountain. But then Jesus started to shine like the sun. The disciples had to shield their eyes at least at first. Then two of the OT's greatest prophets—Moses and Elijah--appeared. Finally God the Father appeared above them in a bright cloud and spoke quite authoritatively, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" The disciples were face down on the ground in terror. And then it is all over. No more lights, no more noises, no more long gone prophets. It is quiet. The disciples gingerly look up, "And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone." When our life is confusion and chaos and our eyes come back into focus, there is Jesus Himself alone. He is our foundation, our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer. When all is said and done, there stands Jesus. Everything else melts away.

Up to now, Peter has been with Jesus and has seen some of the most amazing events that ever occurred in all of history. Now they were with Jesus at what was to be called the last Passover. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, they sang a hymn, and went to the Mount of Olives. Here Jesus once again predicts His death and resurrection. Peter once again being impetuous and not understanding the situation blurts out that he would never fall away from Jesus. Jesus then predicts that that very night Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crows.

Matthew 26:36-46 is the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed to His Father that, if possible, that the cup of His impending suffering pass from Him. Meanwhile Peter, James, and John fell asleep.

When the soldiers came to get Jesus Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's slave (Matthew 26:51).

In Matthew 26:69-75 Peter denies Jesus three times.

After Jesus is crucified and buried, Mary Magdalene tells the apostles that Jesus' tomb is empty. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves (John 20:1-10).

In Luke 24:32-26 the post-Resurrection Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles and those with them.

In John 21:1-11 Peter and six others went fishing but caught nothing. Jesus appeared on the beach and told them to cast their nets on the right side. They did and caught many fish. They then recognized that it was Jesus. Peter then dove into the water and swam to Jesus. After eating a breakfast that Jesus had cooked Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved (agape) Him. Peter replied that he liked (phileo) Him. Jesus then predicts Peter's death by crucifixion.

The final time that Peter sees Jesus is on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-10). Then in Acts 1:1-11 Peter and the others saw Jesus ascend into Heaven.

This ends the events of Peter with Jesus. From this point on Peter is spreading the Gospel and establishing the church.

In Acts 1:15-26 we see that Peter became the leader of the apostles and disciples.

In Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, Peter delivered a message of the Gospel and 3,000 people got saved. We see over and over in the life of Peter where he was impulsive and rash and he often got him in trouble. He acted and spoke without understanding the situation. This was his immaturity. But as the reality of Jesus gripped him and he matured we see that he channeled those same impulses into great leadership. Oftentimes inappropriate behavior is great character that simply needs guidance and maturity.

In Acts 3:1-10 a man who was lame from birth was being carried up to the temple to beg for alms. Peter was with John and Peter, in the name of Jesus, healed the man. The result was that starting in verse 11 the crowd rushed to see the miracle. Peter seized upon this opportunity to preach the Gospel.

In Acts 4 Peter and John were arrested. Peter made their defense. They are told to stop preaching about Jesus. Their response in verses 18 and 19 were, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

At a critical point in the early formation of the church a husband and wife, Ananias and Sapphira, sold property but lied about how much they got for it so that they could give less to the church. Peter confronted them. They both died suddenly. It was crucial that at the beginning of the church that greed and lying not be allowed to spread.

Acts 8:14 reads, "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John." Each time a new people received the Gospel Peter was sent. His presence validated the Message. He was the leading Apostle and so he gave credibility to each new event and movement in the early church.

In Acts 9 starting in verse 32, Peter was traveling throughout several regions. He came across a man who had been paralyzed for eight years man named Aeneas. In the name of Jesus, Peter healed him. Then in Joppa a woman named Tabitha (Dorcas) died. Peter raised her from the dead.

In Acts 10 Peter receives a vision on a rooftop making it acceptable for Gentiles to be allowed into the kingdom of God. In verse 45 we read the first instance where the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 11 Peter is challenged by Jewish believers about bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter defends himself by relating the vision in the previous chapter.

In the beginning of Acts 12 Herod kills James, the brother of John. When Herod saw that this made him popular with the Jews he then had Peter arrested. But an angel of the Lord miraculously freed Peter from prison.

In Galatians 2:11-14 Paul confronts Peter because Peter was being a hypocrite by withdrawing from the saved Gentiles because he feared the Jewish believers. This is the last historical mention of Peter in the Bible.

Tradition tells us that in 64 AD Peter was crucified upside-down because he said that he was unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus did. This was during the Great Fire in Rome. Nero blamed the Christians. This is consistent with Jesus' prophecy in John 21:18-19, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me!'" Here Jesus talks about Peter dying with his arms stretched out.

Additional Notes:

Peter took his wife along with him on his missionary journeys. 1 Corinthians 9:4-5, "Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?"

Papias wrote in around A. D. 125 that Peter's preaching inspired the writing of the first gospel which is "Mark." It is thought that John Mark (the write of the Gospel of Mark) was Peter's interpreter while Peter preached in Rome.

Peter wrote two the New Testament's books: 1 Peter and 2 Peter.

## John the Baptist

John's parents were Zacharias and Elizabeth who were both from the priestly line of Aaron. They were Levites. We see this in Luke 1:5, "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth."

Like so many other women in the Bible (Abraham's wife Sarai, Jacob's wife Rachel, Manoah's wife (unnamed) who gave birth to Samson, Hannah (Samuel's mother), and the Shunammite woman), Elizabeth was barren. Additionally both were old and so there was no expectation of having children (Luke 1:7).

Zacharias was a priest and one day while he was performing his priestly duties in the temple the angel Gabriel appeared and told him that he will have a son and that his name will be John. In verses 14-17 the angel told him, "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. <sup>15</sup> For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zacharias, however, doubted the angel and so was made mute until the child would be born.

John's mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were relatives. In many translations of Luke 1:36 the word used is "cousin" but the actual Greek word more generically means "kin" or "relative." They were pregnant at the same time. The Bible says in Luke 1:41, when the two expectant mothers met, the baby leaped within Elizabeth's womb as she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was born six months after John.

In John's time Israel was looking for a Messiah, but they expected the deliverance to be a political deliverance from Roman rule. John's mission was to preach about repentance, the kingdom of God, and to prepare the people for coming of the Messiah.

Isaiah 40:3-5 is a prophecy about John.

<sup>3</sup> A voice is calling,  
"Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;  
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.  
<sup>4</sup> "Let every valley be lifted up,  
And every mountain and hill be made low;  
And let the rough ground become a plain,  
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;  
<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
And all flesh will see *it* together;  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

This Scripture is repeated in Matthew 3:3 for John. Verse 4 states, "Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey." Sometimes God calls us to "become all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22) but other times He wants us to go against the prevailing culture as John did here.

The final admonition in the entire Old Testament is Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse." Four hundred years passed after this last book of the Old Testament was written with God revealing nothing. He was silent. This prophecy was then fulfilled by John the Baptist. Was John the Baptist actually Elijah in the flesh? Probably not. Elijah was taken up into Heaven without dying (2 Kings 2:11). Therefore, John could not be Elijah reincarnated. Also, Elijah was taken up as a man and the implication is that he stayed a man; John was born as a baby. John denied that he was Elijah (John 1:19-23). If John was truly Elijah then would he not have known it? In Luke 1:17 the angel Gabriel told John's father, Zacharias, that John "will go as a forerunner before Him [Jesus the Messiah] in the spirit and power of Elijah." In several ways John was like Elijah and so John's ministry was in the spirit and power of Elijah. But there is debate about this.

Many people from Jerusalem came out to hear John and were baptized. But even here, John's emphasis was on the Messiah. He said, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matthew 3:11).

When the hypocritical religious leaders of the time (the Pharisees and Sadducees) came to John he rebuked them (John 3:7-10) because they did not think that they needed to repent. They thought that they were better than other people.

Then John engaged in the greatest event of his life. He baptized the Messiah in the Jordan River. Matthew 3:13-17 gives one account. At first John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized because he did not understand God's plan nor did he understand how God wanted to use him. All too often we commit this same mistake (sin) for the same reasons. Fortunately in this case Jesus prevailed and we can read about one of the greatest demonstrations of the Trinity to ever occur on the Earth. This event was the start of Jesus' ministry. Hence John truly paved the way for the Messiah.

Herod the tetrarch (governor of a province) took his brother's wife Herodias as his own wife. John denounced Herod for doing this (Matthew 14:1-12). Herod wanted to put John to death but was afraid of the crowd so he arrested him instead.

While John was in prison he had doubts about who Jesus was. John's ministry was short; maybe less than a year and now he was in prison without having seen the Kingdom of God ushered in. He wondered if maybe he was mistaken about Jesus. We read in Luke 7:18-23:

<sup>18</sup>The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. <sup>19</sup>Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" <sup>20</sup>When

the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’” <sup>21</sup> At that very time He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were* blind. <sup>22</sup> And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the* blind receive sight, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them.

<sup>23</sup> Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

Jesus’ response is interesting in that He referred back to Old Testament prophecies to confirm that He was indeed the expected Messiah. Though Jesus referenced only the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2 it would have been easy for John, or anyone else, to then consider all of the other Old Testament prophecies and see how Jesus was actively fulfilling every one of them. Though the Bible does not record John’s response it is probably clear that it strengthened his faith since he became the first Christian martyr without recanting.

On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias (although not named as such in the Bible, tradition says that the daughter’s name was Salome) danced before him and as a reward Herod offered her any gift that she wanted. Herodias convinced her to ask for John’s head on a platter. Herod obliged. The disciples came and took the body and buried it.

## Probability of Fulfilling Messianic Prophecies

Peter Stoner was chairman of the mathematics and astronomy departments at Pasadena City College and chairman of the science division of Westmont College. In 1958 he wrote a book called *Science Speaks*. In it he picked eight Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and determined the odds of one person fulfilling all eight.

In the following table the “Logic” verbiage is taken directly from *Science Speaks*.

#	Description	OT Verse	NT Fulfillment	Logic	Estimate
1	The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2 700 B.C	Matthew 2:1 4 B.C.	The best estimate which we can make of this comes from the attempt to find out the average population of Bethlehem, from Micah down to the present time, and divide it by the average population of the earth during the same period. Since the probable population of the earth has averaged less than two billion, the population of Bethlehem has averaged less than 7,150. Our answer may be expressed in the form that one man in 7,150/2,000,000,000.	2.8 x 10 <sup>5</sup>

2	A messenger will prepare the way for the Messiah	Malachi 3:1 500 B.C.	John 1:26 27 A.D.	Of the men who have been born in Bethlehem, one man in how many has had a forerunner to prepare his way? John the Baptist, of course, was the forerunner of Christ. But since there appears to be no material difference between the people born in Bethlehem and those born any other place in the world, the question can just as well be general: One man in how many, the world over, has had a forerunner to prepare his way?	$1 \times 10^3$ (1 in 1,000)
3	The Messiah will enter Jerusalem as a king riding on a donkey	Zechariah 9:9 518 B.C.	Matthew 21:7 30 A.D.	One man in how many, who has entered Jerusalem as a ruler, has entered riding on a colt the foal of a donkey?	$1 \times 10^2$
4	The Messiah will be betrayed by a friend and suffer wounds in His hands	Zechariah 13:6 518 B.C.	Matthew 26:20-25 30 A.D.	One man in how many, the world over, has been betrayed by a friend, and that betrayal has resulted in his being wounded in his hands?	$1 \times 10^3$
5	The Messiah will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12 518 B.C.	Matthew 26:15 30 A.D.	Of the people who have been betrayed, one in how many has been betrayed for exactly thirty pieces of silver?	$1 \times 10^3$
6	The betrayal money will be used to purchase a potter's field	Zechariah 11:13 518 B.C.	Matthew 26:15 30 A.D.	All thirty pieces of silver are not to be returned. They are to be cast down in the house of the Lord, and they are to go to the potter. You will recall that Judas in remorse tried to return the thirty pieces of silver, but the chief priest would not accept them. So Judas threw them down on the floor of the temple and went and hanged himself. The chief priest then took the money and bought a field of the potter to bury strangers in. One man in how many, after receiving a bribe for the betrayal of a friend, had returned the money, had it refused, had thrown it on the floor in the house of the Lord, and then had it used to purchase a field from the potter?	$1 \times 10^5$ (1 in 100,000)
7	The Messiah will remain silent while He is afflicted	Isaiah 53:7 700 B.C.	Matthew 27:12 30 A.D.	One man in how many, after fulfilling the above prophecies, when he is oppressed and afflicted and is on trial for his life, though innocent, will make	$1 \times 10^3$

				no defense for himself?	
8	The Messiah will die by having His hands and feet pierced	Psalms 22:16 1000 B.C.	Luke 23:33 30 A.D.	One man in how many, from the time of David on, has been crucified?	$1 \times 10^4$

To get the total probability:  $1$  in  $2.8 \times 10^5 \times 10^3 \times 10^2 \times 10^3 \times 10^5 \times 10^3 \times 10^4$ . This gives  $1$  in  $2.8 \times 10^{28}$  or rounded to  $1$  in  $10^{28}$ .

From *Science Speaks*.

What is the chance that any man might have lived from the day of these prophecies down to the present time and have fulfilled all of the eight prophecies? We can answer this question by dividing our  $10^{28}$  by the total number of people who have lived since the time of these prophecies. The best information available indicates the number to be about 88 billion or  $8.8 \times 10^{10}$ .

To simplify the computation let us call the number  $10^{11}$ . By dividing these two numbers we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is  $1$  in  $10^{17}$ .

Suppose that we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom.

Using the same methodology for 48 prophecies as he did for those eight, Stoner gives the probability as  $1$  in  $10^{157}$ . To put this in perspective, it is estimated that the number of electrons in the entire universe is around  $10^{79}$ .

Though the exact number is debated, the number of Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled is generally thought to be around 315.

## Probability of Fulfilling Biblical Prophecies

There are around 1,817 prophecies in the Bible. The Bible tells us to use prophecy to determine the validity of the Bible itself: Deuteronomy 18:22, "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."

Hugh Norman Ross obtained his Ph.D. in astrophysics from the University of Toronto. He chose 13 Biblical prophecies and determined the odds of them being fulfilled. This is from <http://reasons.org/explore/blogs/todays-new-reason-to-believe/read/tnr/b/2003/08/22/fulfilled-prophecy-evidence-for-the-reliability-of-the-bible>.

**(1)** Some time before 500 BC, the prophet Daniel proclaimed that Israel's long-awaited Messiah would begin his public ministry 483 years after the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25-26). He further predicted that the Messiah would be "cut off," killed, and that this event would take place prior to a second destruction of Jerusalem. Abundant documentation shows that these prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in the life (and crucifixion) of Jesus Christ. The decree regarding the restoration of Jerusalem was issued by Persia's King Artaxerxes to the Hebrew priest Ezra in 458 BC, 483 years later the ministry of Jesus Christ began in Galilee. (Remember that due to calendar changes, the date for the start of Christ's ministry is set by most historians at about AD 26. Also note that from 1 BC to AD 1 is just one year.) Jesus' crucifixion occurred only a few years later, and about four decades later, in AD 70 came the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>5</sup>)**

**(2)** In approximately 700 BC, the prophet Micah named the tiny village of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Israel's Messiah (Micah 5:2). The fulfillment of this prophecy in the birth of Christ is one of the most widely known and widely celebrated facts in history. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>5</sup>)**

**(3)** In the fifth century BC, a prophet named Zechariah declared that the Messiah would be betrayed for the price of a slave—thirty pieces of silver, according to Jewish law—and also that this money would be used to buy a burial ground for Jerusalem's poor foreigners (Zechariah 11:12-13). Bible writers and secular historians both record thirty pieces of silver as the sum paid to Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus, and they indicate that the money went to purchase a "potter's field," used—just as predicted—for the burial of poor aliens (Matthew 27:3-10). **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>11</sup>)**

**(4)** Some 400 years before crucifixion was invented, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, they said that the body would be pierced and that none of the bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion (Psalm 22 and 34:20; Zechariah 12:10). Again, historians and New Testament writers confirm the fulfillment: Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross, and his extraordinarily quick death eliminated the need for the usual breaking of bones. A spear was thrust into his side to verify that he was, indeed, dead. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>13</sup>)**

**(5)** The prophet Isaiah foretold that a conqueror named Cyrus would destroy seemingly impregnable Babylon and subdue Egypt along with most of the rest of the known world. This same man, said Isaiah, would decide to let the Jewish exiles in his territory go free without any payment of ransom (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; and 45:13). Isaiah made this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born, 180 years before Cyrus performed any of these feats (and he did, eventually, perform them all), and 80 years before the Jews were taken into exile. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>15</sup>)**

**(6)** Mighty Babylon, 196 miles square, was enclosed not only by a moat, but also by a double wall 330 feet high, each part 90 feet thick. It was said by unanimous popular opinion to be indestructible, yet two Bible prophets declared its doom. These prophets further claimed that the ruins would be avoided by travelers, that the city would never again be inhabited, and that its stones would not even be moved for

use as building material (Isaiah 13:17-22 and Jeremiah 51:26, 43). Their description is, in fact, the well-documented history of the famous citadel. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>9</sup>)**

**(7)** The exact location and construction sequence of Jerusalem's nine suburbs was predicted by Jeremiah about 2600 years ago. He referred to the time of this building project as "the last days," that is, the time period of Israel's second rebirth as a nation in the land of Palestine (Jeremiah 31:38-40). This rebirth became history in 1948, and the construction of the nine suburbs has gone forward precisely in the locations and in the sequence predicted. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>18</sup>)**

**(8)** The prophet Moses foretold (with some additions by Jeremiah and Jesus) that the ancient Jewish nation would be conquered twice and that the people would be carried off as slaves each time, first by the Babylonians (for a period of 70 years), and then by a fourth world kingdom (which we know as Rome). The second conqueror, Moses said, would take the Jews captive to Egypt in ships, selling them or giving them away as slaves to all parts of the world. Both of these predictions were fulfilled to the letter, the first in 607 BC and the second in AD 70. God's spokesmen said, further, that the Jews would remain scattered throughout the entire world for many generations, but without becoming assimilated by the peoples or of other nations, and that the Jews would one day return to the land of Palestine to re-establish for a second time their nation (Deuteronomy 29; Isaiah 11:11-13; Jeremiah 25:11; Hosea 3:4-5 and Luke 21:23-24). This prophetic statement sweeps across 3,500 years of history to its complete fulfillment—in our lifetime. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>20</sup>)**

**(9)** Jeremiah predicted that despite its fertility and despite the accessibility of its water supply, the land of Edom (today a part of Jordan) would become a barren, uninhabited wasteland (Jeremiah 49:15-20; Ezekiel 25:12-14). His description accurately tells the history of that now bleak region. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>5</sup>)**

**(10)** Joshua prophesied that Jericho would be rebuilt by one man. He also said that the man's eldest son would die when the reconstruction began and that his youngest son would die when the work reached completion (Joshua 6:26). About five centuries later this prophecy found its fulfillment in the life and family of a man named Hiel (1 Kings 16:33-34). **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>7</sup>)**

**(11)** The day of Elijah's supernatural departure from Earth was predicted unanimously—and accurately, according to the eye-witness account—by a group of fifty prophets (2 Kings 2:3-11). **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>9</sup>)**

**(12)** Jahaziel prophesied that King Jehoshaphat and a tiny band of men would defeat an enormous, well-equipped, well-trained army without even having to fight. Just as predicted, the King and his troops stood looking on as their foes were supernaturally destroyed to the last man (2 Chronicles 20). **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>8</sup>)**

**(13)** One prophet of God (unnamed, but probably Shemiah) said that a future king of Judah, named Josiah, would take the bones of all the occultic priests (priests of the "high places") of Israel's King Jeroboam and burn them on Jeroboam's altar (1 Kings 13:2 and 2 Kings 23:15-18). This event occurred approximately 300 years after it was foretold. **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in 10<sup>13</sup>)**

Since these thirteen prophecies cover mostly separate and independent events, the probability of chance occurrence for all thirteen is about 1 in 10<sup>138</sup>

An estimated number of grains of sand in all of the Earth is  $7.5 \times 10^{18}$ .

An estimated number of stars in the universe is  $1 \times 10^{23}$ .

The odds of fulfilling these thirteen prophecies is far greater than either of these numbers.

## Jesus in Non-Biblical Writings

This is mostly taken from this article:

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/#note39>

### Tacitus

Tacitus—or more formally, Caius/Gaius (or Publius) Cornelius Tacitus (55/56–c. 118 C.E.)—was a Roman senator, orator and ethnographer, and arguably the best of Roman historians. Tacitus's last major work, titled *Annals*, written c. 116–117 C.E., includes a biography of Nero. In 64 C.E., during a fire in Rome, Nero was suspected of secretly ordering the burning of a part of town where he wanted to carry out a building project, so he tried to shift the blame to Christians. This was the occasion for Tacitus to mention Christians, whom he despised.

[N]either human effort nor the emperor's generosity nor the placating of the gods ended the scandalous belief that the fire had been ordered [by Nero]. Therefore, to put down the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits and punished in the most unusual ways those hated for their shameful acts ... whom the crowd called "Chrestians." The founder of this name, Christ [Christus in Latin], had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate ... Suppressed for a time, the deadly superstition erupted again not only in Judea, the origin of this evil, but also in the city [Rome], where all things horrible and shameful from everywhere come together and become popular.

Tacitus's terse statement about "Christus" clearly corroborates the New Testament on certain historical details of Jesus' death. Tacitus presents four pieces of accurate knowledge about Jesus: (1) Christus, used by Tacitus to refer to Jesus, was one distinctive way by which some referred to him, even though Tacitus mistakenly took it for a personal name rather than an epithet or title; (2) this Christus was associated with the beginning of the movement of Christians, whose name originated from his; (3) he was executed by the Roman governor of Judea; and (4) the time of his death was during Pontius Pilate's governorship of Judea, during the reign of Tiberius. (Many New Testament scholars date Jesus' death to c. 29 C.E.; Pilate governed Judea in 26–36 C.E., while Tiberius was emperor 14–37 C.E.)

### Josephus (first reference)

Josephus was a Jewish priest who grew up as an aristocrat in first-century Palestine and ended up living in Rome, supported by the patronage of three successive emperors. In his two great works, *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, both written in Greek for educated people, Josephus tried to appeal to aristocrats in the Roman world, presenting Judaism as a religion to be admired for its moral and

philosophical depth. Jewish Antiquities mentions Jesus twice. The shorter of these two references to Jesus (in Book 20) is incidental to identifying Jesus' brother James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem. In the temporary absence of a Roman governor between Festus's death and governor Albinus's arrival in 62 C.E., the high priest Ananus instigated James's execution. Josephus described it:

Being therefore this kind of person [i.e., a heartless Sadducee], Ananus, thinking that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus had died and Albinus was still on his way, called a meeting [literally, "sanhedrin"] of judges and brought into it the brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah ... James by name, and some others. He made the accusation that they had transgressed the law, and he handed them over to be stoned.

The sole reason for referring to James at all was that his death resulted in Ananus losing his position as high priest. James (Jacob) was a common Jewish name at this time. Many men named James are mentioned in Josephus's works, so Josephus needed to specify which one he meant. The common custom of simply giving the father's name (James, son of Joseph) would not work here, because James's father's name was also very common. Therefore Josephus identified this James by reference to his famous brother Jesus. But James's brother Jesus (Yehoshua) also had a very common name. Therefore Josephus specified which Jesus he was referring to by adding the phrase "who is called Messiah," or, since he was writing in Greek, Christos. This phrase was necessary to identify clearly first Jesus and, via Jesus, James, the subject of the discussion. This extraneous reference to Jesus would have made no sense if Jesus had not been a real person.

### Josephus (second reference)

The Testimonium Flavianum reads as follows; the parts that are especially suspicious because they sound like added Christian phrases are in italics:

Around this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed one ought to call him a man.*<sup>21</sup> For he was one who did surprising deeds, and a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. *He was the Messiah.* When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who in the first place came to love him did not give up their affection for him, *for on the third day, he appeared to them restored to life. The prophets of God had prophesied this and countless other marvelous things about him.* And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, have still to this day not died out.

All surviving manuscripts of the Testimonium Flavianum that are in Greek, like the original, contain the same version of this passage, with no significant differences. The main question is: Did Flavius Josephus write this entire report about Jesus and his followers, or did a forger or forgers alter it or possibly insert the whole report? There are three ways to answer this question: 1) The whole passage is authentic, written by Josephus, 2) The whole passage is a forgery, inserted into Jewish Antiquities, 3) It is only partly authentic, containing some material from Josephus, but also some later additions by another hand(s). Today almost no scholar accepts the authenticity of the entire standard Greek Testimonium Flavianum (choice 1) because of phrases such as "He was the Messiah" which Josephus as a passionate

advocate of Judaism would not write. Choice 2 is very unlikely since, despite the italicized phrases that don't seem characteristic of Josephus, the rest generally fit with Josephus's writings style.

That the *Testimonium Flavianum* is based on an original report by Josephus that has been modified by others (choice 3), probably Christian scribes, seems most likely. After extracting what appear to be Christian additions, the remaining text appears to be pure Josephus. As a Romanized Jew, Josephus would not have presented these beliefs as his own. This choice has the support of the overwhelming majority of scholars.

## Pliny the Younger

Pliny the Younger was a friend of Tacitus, and like him the governor of a Roman province (in 110 C.E.). Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (c. 61–113 C.E.), known as Pliny, seems to have been excessively dependent on the Emperor Trajan for directions on how to govern. In his lengthy correspondence with Trajan, titled *Epistles*, X.96, along with his inquiries about how to treat people accused of being Christians, Pliny wrote:

They [the Christians] assured me that the sum total of their error consisted in the fact that that they regularly assembled on a certain day before daybreak. They recited a hymn antiphonally to Christus as to a god and bound themselves with an oath not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, breach of faith, and embezzlement of property entrusted to them. After this, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to partake of a meal, but an ordinary and innocent one (Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," p. 459)

The things that Pliny wrote about Christians can be found in or deduced from the New Testament. He reveals nothing new about Jesus himself, nor can his letters be considered evidence for Jesus' existence, only for Christian belief in his existence. One may note what seems to have been early second century Christian belief in Jesus as deity, as well as the sizable population of Christians worshipping him in Pliny's province, Bithynia, in Asia Minor, despite Roman prohibition and punishments.

This passage provides us with a number of interesting insights into the beliefs and practices of early Christians. First, we see that Christians regularly met on a certain fixed day for worship. Second, their worship was directed to Christ, demonstrating that they firmly believed in His divinity. Furthermore, one scholar interprets Pliny's statement that hymns were sung to Christ, "as to a god", as a reference to the rather distinctive fact that, "unlike other gods who were worshipped, Christ was a person who had lived on earth." If this interpretation is correct, Pliny understood that Christians were worshipping an actual historical person as God! Of course, this agrees perfectly with the New Testament doctrine that Jesus was both God and man.

Not only does Pliny's letter help us understand what early Christians believed about Jesus' person, it also reveals the high esteem to which they held His teachings. For instance, Pliny notes that Christians "bound themselves by a solemn oath" not to violate various moral standards, which find their source in the ethical teachings of Jesus. In addition, Pliny's reference to the Christian custom of sharing a common meal likely alludes to their observance of communion and the "love feast." This interpretation helps explain the Christian claim that the meal was merely "food of an ordinary and innocent kind". They were

attempting to counter the charge, sometimes made by non-Christians, of practicing "ritual cannibalism." The Christians of that day humbly repudiated such slanderous attacks on Jesus' teachings. We must sometimes do the same today.

## Babylonian Talmud

From among the numerous rabbinic traditions, many of which seem puzzling in their potential references to Jesus, a fairly clear example from the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a is as follows:

And it is tradition: On the eve of the Passover they hanged Yeshu ha-Noşri. And the herald went forth before him for forty days, "Yeshu ha-Noşri is to be stoned, because he has practiced magic and enticed and led Israel astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and speak concerning him." And they found nothing in his favor. And they hanged him on the eve of the Passover. Ulla says, "Would it be supposed that Yeshu ha-Noşri was one for whom anything in his favor might be said? Was he not a deceiver? And the Merciful has said, 'Thou shalt not spare, neither shalt thou conceal him' [Deuteronomy 13:8]. But it was different with Yeshu ha-Noşri, for he was near to the kingdom" (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a; compare Sanhedrin 67a).

According to John 18:28 and 19:14, Jesus' execution occurred during Passover. The phrase "near to the kingdom" might refer to the Christian tradition that Jesus was a descendant of King David (Matthew 1:1; Mark 10:47, 48), or it could refer to Jesus' proclamation that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15). Deuteronomy 13:1–11 prescribes death by stoning for leading other Israelites astray to serve other gods, giving a sign or wonder, and Deuteronomy 21:21–22 requires that "when a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, you shall hang him on a tree" (compare the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 6:4, "All who have been stoned must be hanged"). When Judea came under Roman rule, which instituted crucifixion as a legal punishment, apart from the question of whether it was just or unjust, Jews roughly equated it with hanging on a tree. (Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," p. 448). The passage above simultaneously implies the rabbis' view that Jesus really existed and encapsulates the rabbis' uniformly negative view of his miracles as magic and his teachings as deceit (Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside*, p. 120).

## Lucian

Lucian of Samosata (c. 115–200 C.E.) was a Greek satirist who wrote *The Passing of Peregrinus*, about a former Christian who later became a famous Cynic and revolutionary and died in 165 C.E. In two sections of *Peregrinus*—here translated by Craig A. Evans—Lucian, while discussing Peregrinus's career, without naming Jesus, clearly refers to him, albeit with contempt in the midst of satire:

It was then that he learned the marvelous wisdom of the Christians, by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine. And— what else?—in short order he made them look like children, for he was a prophet, cult leader, head of the congregation and everything, all by himself. He interpreted and explained some of their books, and wrote many himself. They revered him as a god, used him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector—to be sure, after

that other whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.

For having convinced themselves that they are going to be immortal and live forever, the poor wretches despise death and most even willingly give themselves up. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshiping that crucified sophist himself and living according to his laws.

Although Lucian was aware of the Christians' "books," his many bits of misinformation make it seem very likely that he did not read them. The compound term "priests and scribes," for example, seems to have been borrowed from Judaism, and indeed, Christianity and Judaism were sometimes confused among classical authors. Lucian seems to have gathered all of his information from sources independent of the New Testament and other Christian writings. For this reason, this writing of his is usually valued as independent evidence for the existence of Jesus. This is true despite his ridicule and contempt for Christians and their "crucified sophist." "Sophist" was a derisive term used for cheats or for teachers who only taught for money. Lucian despised Christians for worshiping someone thought to be a criminal worthy of death and especially despised "the man who was crucified."

## Summary

We can learn quite a bit about Jesus from Tacitus and Josephus, two famous historians who were not Christian. Almost all the following statements about Jesus, which are asserted in the New Testament, are corroborated or confirmed by the relevant passages in Tacitus and Josephus. These independent historical sources—one a non-Christian Roman and the other Jewish—confirm what we are told in the Gospels.

1. He existed as a man. The historian Josephus grew up in a priestly family in first-century Palestine and wrote only decades after Jesus' death. Jesus' known associates, such as Jesus' brother James, were his contemporaries. The historical and cultural context was second nature to Josephus. "If any Jewish writer were ever in a position to know about the non-existence of Jesus, it would have been Josephus. His implicit affirmation of the existence of Jesus has been, and still is, the most significant obstacle for those who argue that the extra-Biblical evidence is not probative on this point," Robert Van Voorst observes. And Tacitus was careful enough not to report real executions of nonexistent people.
2. His personal name was Jesus, as Josephus informs us.
3. He was called Christos in Greek, which is a translation of the Hebrew word Messiah, both of which mean "anointed" or "(the) anointed one," as Josephus states and Tacitus implies, unaware, by reporting, as Romans thought, that his name was Christus.
4. He had a brother named James (Jacob), as Josephus reports.

5. He won over both Jews and “Greeks” (i.e., Gentiles of Hellenistic culture), according to Josephus, although it is anachronistic to say that they were “many” at the end of his life. Large growth in the number of Jesus’ actual followers came only after his death.
6. Jewish leaders of the day expressed unfavorable opinions about him, at least according to some versions of the Testimonium Flavianum.
7. Pilate rendered the decision that he should be executed, as both Tacitus and Josephus state.
8. His execution was specifically by crucifixion, according to Josephus.
9. He was executed during Pontius Pilate’s governorship over Judea (26–36 C.E.), as Josephus implies and Tacitus states, adding that it was during Tiberius’s reign.

## Science in the Bible

### Atoms

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Everything that we see is made up of particles that cannot be seen, i.e. atoms

### The Earth is spherical

Isaiah 40:22a It is He who sits above the circle of the earth...

The Earth is not flat.

### The Earth floats in space

Job 26:7 He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.

The Earth is not on the back of turtles or held up by Atlas or some other giant.

### The Oceans have mountains at the bottom

Jonah 2:5-6 Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep [b]engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.

### The ocean currents

Psalms 8:8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

Matthew Fontaine Maury was nicknamed “Pathfinder of the Seas” and “Father of Modern Oceanography and Naval Meteorology” and “Scientist of the Seas” for his efforts in charting the ocean currents. He lived from January 14, 1806 to February 1, 1873). He knew that the oceans had currents because of Psalm 8:8. His daughter wrote in her book *A Life of Matthew Fontaine Maury*:

"Matthew's father was very exact in the religious training of his family, now numbering five sons and four daughters, viz., John Minor, Mary, Walker, Matilda, Betsy, Richard Launcelot, Matthew Fontaine, Catherine, and Charles. He would assemble them night and morning to read the Psalter for the day, verse and verse about; and in this way, so familiar did this barefooted boy [M. F. Maury] become with the Psalms of David, that in after life he could cite a quotation, and give chapter and verse, as if he had the Bible open before him.

### Jet Stream described

Ecclesiastes 1:6 Blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north, the wind continues [b]swirling along; and on its circular courses the wind returns.

Jet streams were first discovered in the 1920s by a Japanese meteorologist named Wasaburo Ooishi. He used weather balloons to track upper level winds high above Mount Fuji.

### Genesis lists all aspects of creation

The universe consists of four units: time, space, matter, energy, and motion.

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning [time] God created the heavens [space] and the earth [matter]. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving [motion] over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light [energy].

### Stars are innumerable

Jeremiah 33:22 As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.

Only around 5,000 stars are visible to the human eye. It was not until Galileo Galilei (February 15, 1564 to January 8, 1642) invented the telescope in 1609 could we see the innumerable stars beyond that number.

### Something holds all of matter together

Colossians 1:16-17 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**.

Opposites attract, like repels. Two positively charged objects will repel each other. The nucleus of an atom is composed of positive protons and neutral neutrons. So why doesn't the atomic nucleus explode apart? Some claim that the neutrally charged neutrons significantly reduce the repulsion. Others that the strong nuclear force (residual of the forces between quarks in neutrons and protons) hold them together. But we know that it is God who holds all things together.

## First Law of Thermodynamics

Genesis 2:1-2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God **completed** His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that energy can be neither created nor destroyed but can be transformed from one form to another. At the end of the seventh day of Creation it says that God completed His work. There is no more of creation for God to add to or to destroy.

## The hydrologic cycle

Job 36:27-28 For He draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the mist, which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly.

The hydrologic cycle is the continuous circulation of water in the Earth-atmosphere system. Of the many processes involved in the water cycle, the most important are evaporation, transpiration, condensation, precipitation, and runoff.

“The Greeks therefore described the water cycle backwards, arguing that since the level of the seas remained constant despite all the rivers flowing into it, the water must penetrate the earth’s depths and feed the underground springs. Evaporation and Precipitation were ignored.”  
- UNESCO

But in the earliest book in the Bible God tells us about the correct hydrologic cycle.

## Springs in the ocean

Job 38:16 Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?

The first hydrothermal vent was discovered in 1977 near the Galapagos Islands. But God tells Job about “springs of the sea” in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

## Archeology and the Bible

### Quotes

“Archaeological and inscriptional data have established the historicity of innumerable passages and statements of the Old Testament” - William F. Albright, esteemed as the world’s leading archaeologist of his generation.

“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.” -- Sir William Mitchell Ramsey, Scottish archaeologist and New Testament scholar who was considered to be the foremost authority of his day on the history of Asia Minor.

“Finally, it is perfectly true to say that biblical archaeology has done a great deal to correct the impression that was abroad at the close of the last century and in the early part of this century, that Biblical history was of doubtful trustworthiness in many places. If one impression stands out more clearly than another today, it is that on all hands the over-all historicity of the Old Testament tradition is admitted.” – J.A. Thompson, first director of the Australian Institute of Archaeology and an honorary Fellow of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

## Hittites

Near the end the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hittite monuments were discovered at Carchemish on the Euphrates River in Syria. Then in 1906 thousands of Hittite documents were found at Boghazkoy in Turkey (ancient Hattusas which was the capital of the Hittite Empire). These showed that the Hittites once flourished in Asia Minor and Syria from 1700 to 1200 B.C.

## Babylonian Captivity

2 Kings 24-25 describes the captivity of Judah by Babylon early in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Jeremiah 34:7 mentions the city of Lachish during the war, “when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the remaining cities of Judah, that is, Lachish and Azekah, for they alone remained as fortified cities among the cities of Judah.” Between 1935 and 1938, 21 pottery fragments called *Lachish Ostraca* were found written in the ancient Hebrew script at a site thought to be Lachish. Some of them are messages between Lachish’s military commander and an outlying observation post describing the final days of Judah’s resistance against Babylon. Later, other texts record the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

## Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III

This is a black limestone Assyrian sculpture that was discovered in Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) in northern Iraq. It commemorates the deeds of King Shalmaneser III who reigned from 858 to 824 B.C. and was erected in 825 B.C. One of its depictions is of Jehu, King of Israel.

## Pool of Siloam

In June 2004 workers repairing a water pipe at the southern end of the ridge known as the City of David discovered the Pool of Siloam in Old Jerusalem. This structure as described by archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron was 225 feet long and probably used for ritual bathing. It is referenced in John 9:1-7 where Jesus healed the man blind from birth. An article in the August 09, 2005 Los Angeles Times stated, “‘Scholars have said that there wasn’t a Pool of Siloam and that John was using a religious conceit’ to illustrate a point, said New Testament scholar James H. Charlesworth of the Princeton Theological Seminary. ‘Now we have found the Pool of Siloam ... exactly where John said it was.’ A gospel that was thought to be pure theology is now shown to be grounded in history” said Hershel Shanks, editor of the Biblical Archaeology Review.

## Hezekiah’s Siloam Tunnel

2 Kings 20 and 2 Chronicles 32 record a siege by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. King Hezekiah of Judah who ruled from 721 to 686 B.C. preserved Jerusalem’s water supply by cutting a tunnel through 1,750

feet of solid rock from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam which was inside of Jerusalem's walls. This tunnel still exists today.

## **The Cylinder of Cyrus the Great**

Cyrus the Great of Persia had conquered Babylon as recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:23 and Ezra 1. He then allowed the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity to return to their homeland as prophesied in Isaiah 44:28. A nine-inch clay cylinder discovered at Babylon depicts Cyrus' victory and his permitting the Jews to return home and even rebuild their temples.

## **Tel Dan Stele**

This is a broken inscribed stone (stela) that was discovered in 1993-1994 during excavations at Tel Dan in northern Israel. It was written in Old Aramaic at about 870 B.C. and describes a triumphal victory. It contains the phrase "House of David" which is considered the first reference outside of the Bible to King David.

## **Caiaphas' Bones**

In November 1990 an ossuary discovered in the Peace Forest of Jerusalem south of Temple area contained the remains of Joseph Caiaphas who was the high priest who indicted Jesus before Pontius Pilate on the first Good Friday.

## **Nebuchadnezzar was responsible for the splendor of Babylon**

Daniel 4:30 reads, "The king [Nebuchadnezzar] reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'" Following the defeat of Assyria by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar II rebuilt the city of Babylon. It is estimated that 15 million baked bricks were used to construct the official buildings. Each brick was usually stamped with a text many of which refer to Nebuchadnezzar thus proving that Daniel's description of Nebuchadnezzar's influence was historically correct.

## **Pilate Stone**

This block of carved limestone was discovered at Caesarea Maritima in June 1961. It has an inscription mentioning Pontius Pilate who was a prefect of the Roman province of Judaea from 26-36 A.D.

## **Sodom**

The Tall el-Hammam archeological site in Jordan's southern Jordan Valley is considered by some archeologists to be the best candidate for the city of Sodom. Archeologist Steven Collins as reported in *Popular Archaeology* (September 28, 2015) said, "Theorizing, on the basis of the Sodom texts, that Sodom was the largest of the Kikkar (the Jordan 'Disk', or 'well-watered plain' in the biblical text) cities east of the Jordan, I concluded that if one wanted to find Sodom, then one should look for the largest city on the eastern Kikkar that existed during the Middle Bronze Age, the time of Abraham and Lot. When we explored the area, the choice of Tall el-Hammam as the site of Sodom was virtually a no-brainer since it was at least five to ten times larger than all the other Bronze Age sites in the entire region, even beyond the Kikkar of the Jordan." The article also said, "But based on the excavated evidence, the city's Bronze Age heyday seems to have nevertheless come to a sudden, inexplicable end

toward the end of the Middle Bronze Age—and the ancient city became a relative wasteland for 700 years, for the most part void of human habitation.”

### **Hezekiah (727 – 698 B.C.)**

The Ophel excavations at the foot of the southern wall of the Temple Mount discovered a bulla (piece of inscribed clay) with the inscription “Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz king of Judah.”

### **Dual Rudders**

Acts 27:40 reads, “And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach.” In 1969 submerged ancient ship was discovered in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Cyprus. This ship had dual paddle-rudders and not a single rudder as with modern ships. Luke was correct in his pluralizing “rudders.”

## **Supposed Contradictions in the Bible**

### **Why do all four Gospels have different inscriptions on the Cross?**

- 1) Matthew 27:37, “And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, ‘THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”
- 2) Mark 15:26, “The inscription of the charge against Him [a]read, ‘THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”
- 3) Luke 23:38, “Now there was also an inscription above Him, ‘THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”
- 4) John 19:19, “Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, ‘JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”

John 19:20 says, “Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.” So the inscription was written in three different languages.

Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire. John, who states that Pilate (A Roman official) wrote the inscription, likely was quoting the Latin version which would have read “IESUS NAZARENVS REX IVDAEORVM.” This is where we get “INRI” from.

Luke who wrote his Gospel to Theophilus who was a Greek nobleman probably quoted the Greek version: OUTOS ESTIN O BASILEUS TWN IOUDAIWN.

Matthew, who wrote to the Jews, probably quoted the Hebrew version.

Notice that “The King of the Jews” is in all of the inscriptions. Mark, most likely, just quoted the common part from all three.

### **Did the centurion go to Jesus personally or did he send a delegation of elders?**

Luke 7:2-7, “And a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to

him; 5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.” 6 Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; 7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Matthew 8:5, “And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him...”

There are two ways to explain this.

- 1) The centurion did not consider himself worthy to come to Jesus (Luke 7:7) and so sent some Jewish elders. As his representation these spoke for him as though he was the one speaking. This is much like how a spokesman or ambassador speaks for their country or president.
- 2) There were three meetings. The first was the initial one with the Jewish elders. Then as Jesus was getting closer He was met by the centurion’s friends. The third meeting would have been the centurion himself who might have seen Jesus approaching his house and so intercepted Him before He could come in. That would explain Matthew 8:8, “Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof...” It would also explain how in verse 13 they knew that the healing was at that very moment because Jesus was right outside the house when the servant was healed and there was probably a loud cry of joy and astonishment.

### **The time of the crucifixion**

Mark 15:25, “It was the third hour when they crucified Him.”

John 19:14-15, “Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’ 15 So they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”

John wrote his Gospel while he was living in Ephesus which was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. As we saw above regarding the inscription on the cross, John tended to use Roman culture and so here he was using Roman time which started at midnight. Thus the sixth hour was 6:00 A.M. But this was the time when the trial ended. Jesus still had to be flogged and mocked and beaten. This, plus carrying His cross, took three hours. That would bring us to 9:00 A.M. which was the third hour according to the Hebrew system which started at sunrise. This is when Jesus was crucified.

### **Where did Cain get his wife? And why was not this marriage incest and so against God’s law?**

Adam and Eve had many other children besides Cain (their first), Abel, and Seth. Genesis 5:4 states, “Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters.” Since Adam lived 930 years and was told directly by God to “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28) it is reasonable that they had many, many children. So it would not have been difficult for Cain to find a wife among these many siblings. Some claim that Genesis 4:16-17 says that Cain went to Nod and found a wife there: “Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.” But

this does not say that Cain found his wife in Nod but, rather, that his wife had a child there. It is very possible that Cain was married even before he killed Abel.

What about God's prohibition against incest since Cain would have married either his sister, a niece, or someone closely related? First, the law forbidding marriage between close relatives was given to Moses in Leviticus 18-19 which was thousands of years later. Second, the prohibition was genetically based in that marrying a close relative increases the possibility of birth defects because of recessive bad genes. However, it is safe to say that Adam and Eve, being created directly by God had no bad genes to pass onto their children. Therefore, marriage among the first generation of the human race was not prone to producing genetic defects and so was safe.

### **Apostles seeing Jesus coming in His kingdom before they died**

Matthew 16:28, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Jesus told His disciples that some of them would "not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" yet they all died before the Second Coming. The very next verse (Matthew 17:1) starts the account of "The Transfiguration." At that event Jesus became as bright as the sun and the Father spoke to them from Heaven. This was not the Second Coming but was a foretaste of Jesus' true glory. They saw a bit of what Jesus would be like in His kingdom.

### **Different numbers of angels at the Resurrection Tomb**

Luke 24:4, "While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing..."

Matthew 28:2, "And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it."

There were at least two groups of women. Mary Magdalene's group probably left from John Mark's house. Joanna and her group left from Herod's house since Joanna was the wife of Cuza who was the manager of Herod's household (Luke 8:3). They arrived at different times. Mary's group probably arrived first and saw the one angel who had rolled away the stone. Then that angel left and when Joanna's group arrived the other two angels appeared. The Resurrection was a dramatic event. It is safe to say that different things were going on at different times.

### **Atheists and Agnostics who Converted to Christianity**

"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." – G. K. Chesterton

### **Lee Strobel**

Lee Strobel has a Master of Studies in Law degree from Yale Law School and was an investigative reporter for the Chicago Tribune for 14 years. He was an atheist when his wife converted to Christianity. He went on a two-year investigation to discredit the evidence for Jesus. The result was his conversion to

Christianity. He has written *The Case for Christ*, *The Case for Faith*, *The Case for a Creator*, *The Case for Christianity Answer Book* and many others.

### **C.S. Lewis**

Clive Staples Lewis became an atheist at the age of 15. He left Christianity when he viewed religion as a chore and duty. Lewis became interested in the works of George MacDonald which he credited to being part of what turned him from atheism to Christianity. Other influences were his arguments with J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings*) and G.K. Chesterton's book "The Everlasting Man." Lewis vigorously resisted conversion stating that he was, "kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape." He says in his book *Surprised by Joy*, "You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen [College, Oxford], night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." He converted to Christianity in 1931. His books include: *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *The Case for Christianity*, *Surprised by Joy*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and many others.

### **Francis Collins**

Francis Collins is a physician-geneticist who led the Human Genome Project. He is the director of the National Institutes of Health. While in graduate school he considered himself an atheist, but a conversation with a hospital patient led him to question his lack of religious beliefs. C.S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity* was influential in his conversion to Christianity. He wrote *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, *Belief: Readings on the Reason for Faith*, *The Language of Science and Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions*. He stated that "one can be intellectually in a rigorous position and argue that science and faith can be compatible", and that he was prompted to write *The Language of God* because "most people are seeking a possible harmony between these worldviews [science and faith], and it seems rather sad that we hear so little about this possibility."

### **Frank Morison**

His real name is Albert Ross. Some thought that Ross was a lawyer, but was unlikely to be true. Ross was skeptical regarding the resurrection of Jesus, and set out to analyze the sources and to write a short paper entitled *Jesus – the Last Phase* to demonstrate the apparent myth. In compiling his notes, he became convinced of the truth of the resurrection, and set out his reasoning in the book *Who moved the stone?*

### **Josh McDowell**

Joslin "Josh" McDowell was an agnostic at college when he decided to prepare a paper that would examine the historical evidence of the Christian faith in order to disprove it. However, he converted to Christianity, after, as he says, he found evidence for it, not against it. He has written over 150 books including *More Than a Carpenter*, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, and *A Ready Defense*.

## Alister McGrath

Alister McGrath said, "As a child I never had any interest in Christianity. I went through the motions of going to church with my parents but neither my heart nor my head was in it. It was while I was at the Methodist College, probably aged around 15 or 16, that I became an atheist – somebody who deliberately and intentionally does not believe in God and thinks that anyone who does believe in God is mentally deficient or seriously screwed up." While an undergraduate at Wadham he wrote, "I was discovering that Christianity was far more intellectually robust than I had ever imagined. I had some major rethinking to do, and by the end of November [1971], my decision was made: I turned my back on one faith and embraced another." His many books include *The Twilight of Atheism*, *Understanding the Trinity*, *Glimpsing the Face of God: The Search for Meaning in the Universe*, and *Knowing God*. He currently holds the Andreas Idreos Professorship in Science and Religion in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford.

## Hugh Ross

Hugh Ross has a Ph.D. in astrophysics and at age 17 was the youngest person to serve as director of observations for Vancouver's Royal Astronomical Society. He was an atheist who grew up in a non-religious home. As Ross matured, he would discover that Big Bang cosmology proposed a dilemma for his atheism, and over "the next several years my study of the big bang convinced me that the universe had a beginning, and thus a Beginner... because the big bang implies a cosmic beginning, it also implies a Beginner, a Causal Agent outside or beyond the universe." He began a study of the world's sacred texts, testing them for accuracy. He concluded, "One by one each book failed the factuality test, and I gained confidence that my initial skepticism would be affirmed – until I picked up a Bible. From page one, this book proved an exception. Not only did it provide hundreds of statements that could be tested for accuracy, it also anticipated – thousands of years in advance – many facts of socio-political history and of nature that research would one day confirm." He further wrote, "Through nearly two years of study this book's predictive power persuaded me that it must have been inspired by One who knows and guides the past, present, and future. I had essentially proven to myself that the Bible is more reliable than the laws of physics I focused on in my university courses. The only reasonable conclusion I could see was that the Bible must be the inspired Word of God." His books include *The Fingerprint of God*, *The Genesis Question*, and *Creation as Science*.

## Norma McCorvey

Norma McCorvey is better known as "Jane Roe" in the Supreme Court Case "Roe v. Wade" which legalized abortion. She was brought up as a Jehovah Witness but from the age of 11 until she was 47 she was an atheist and also a lesbian. In 1994 she made friends with an anti-abortion leader and converted to Christianity. She has denounced abortion and says that she is no longer a lesbian.

## Ravi Zacharias

Ravi Zacharias was an atheist until the age of 17 when he tried to commit suicide by swallowing poison. While he was in the hospital a local Christian worker brought him a Bible and told his mother to read John 14 to him. Zacharias said that John 14:19 touched him, "Because I live, you also will live." He said that he thought, "This may be my only hope: A new way of living. Life as defined by the Author of Life."

and that he committed his life to Christ praying, "Jesus if You are the one who gives life as it is meant to be, I want it. Please get me out of this hospital bed well, and I promise I will leave no stone unturned in my pursuit of truth." He has written many books including *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism*, *Can Man Live Without God?*, and *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith*.

## Rosalind Picard

Rosalind Picard is Professor of Media Arts and Sciences at MIT and founder and director of the Affective Computing Research Group at the MIT Media Lab. She was raised an atheist but converted to Christianity as a young adult. She sees DNA as too complex to have originated through "purely random processes" and shows that DNA shows "the mark of intervention", and "a much greater mind, a much greater scientist, a much greater engineer behind who we are."

## We can know that the Bible is inspired and true

Psalm 119:160a, "The sum of Your word is truth..."

### The Bible is scientifically accurate

Because God created science, the Bible and science will never be contradictory; they will never be at odds. They will always be on the same side and in agreement.

Job 26:7, "He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing." How did people in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC know that the earth hung in space with no supports?

Isaiah 40:22a, "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth..." The earth is a sphere and not flat as many people thought.

Psalm 8:8b, "Whatever passes through the paths of the seas." And Isaiah 43:16, "This is what the Lord says, He who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters," It was not until 1855 that Matthew Fontaine Maury, the "father of oceanography," discovered that there were, in fact, natural currents and paths in the ocean.

Leviticus 13:1-5; Numbers 19:1-13; Deuteronomy 23:13, 14 describe laws about avoiding and containing disease. It was not until the British surgeon Joseph Lister who lived from 1827 to 1912 that it was discovered how to prevent infection in wounds during and after surgery using antiseptics. Until then, many soldiers died from contamination due to the sloppy spreading of infections.

Jeremiah 33:22, "As the heavenly lights cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of My servant David and the Levites who serve Me." Until telescopes were invented, the number of stars in the sky could be counted. Telescopes have found 30 billion galaxies with billions of stars in each one.

Job 25:5, "If even the moon has no brightness and the stars are not pure in His sight..." The moon does not shine on its own but only reflects the light from the sun. Stars have sunspots.

Amos 9:6, "The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens and has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, The Lord is His name." This describes the water cycle. The first published thinker to assert that rainfall alone was sufficient for the maintenance of rivers was Bernard Palissy (1580 AD), who is often credited as the "discoverer" of the modern theory of the water cycle.

### **The Bible is historically accurate**

Many archaeologists used to think that King David was a legendary figure along the lines of King Arthur. Then a 9<sup>th</sup> century BC basalt stone, the Tel Dan Stela, was found with David's name and identified him as the king of Israel.

The Caiaphas Ossuary verified that the high priest at the time of Jesus was indeed Caiaphas as stated in the Bible.

Ostraca are writings on pottery. The House of God Ostrakon dates back to the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. It references the Jerusalem temple and includes the names of people listed in the Bible.

Many doubted the existence of Pontus Pilate. The Pilate Inscription is a stone tablet found in the theater of Caesarea. An inscription identifies Pontius Pilate as the procurator of Judea, and the Tiberium, which was an edifice built in honor of the Emperor Tiberius by Pilate.

### **The Bible is prophetically accurate**

The Bible has approximately 1,817 prophecies. About 27% of the Bible is prophetic.

Isaiah prophesized from 740 to 700 BC. Isaiah 44:28 reads, "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he will carry out all My desire.' And he says of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" In 605 BC the Babylonians conquered Judah, and Jerusalem, its capital, Jerusalem. In 585 BC the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple of Solomon. In 535 BC, the Medes and the Persians, under King Cyrus of Persia and General Darius the Mede, captured Babylon. Cyrus allowed the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt and the foundation of the Temple to be re-laid. Over 165 years before Cyrus was even born, his rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple was prophesized, even mentioning him by name.

Isaiah 13:19, "And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." This was written between 701 and 681 BC and predicts that Babylon will be permanently defeated. Prior to this prophecy, Babylon had been defeated by the Assyrian Empire but rebuilt and later conquered the Assyrian Empire. Thus, at the time of this prophecy, it was doubtful that Babylon will ever be permanently defeated. But in 539 BC, Cyrus defeated Babylon and it never again rose as an empire as Isaiah prophesized some 150 years earlier.

Nahum 3:15, writing about Nineveh, "There fire will consume you, the sword will cut you down; it will consume you as the creeping locust consumes a crop..." This was written around 614 BC. The Encyclopedia Britannica states "...Nineveh suffered a defeat from which it never recovered. Extensive

traces of ash, representing the sack of the city by Babylonians, Scythians, and Medes in 612 BC, have been found in many parts of the Acropolis.” The ash indicated that the city had been burned.

Ezekiel 26:12 speaking of Tyre (written in 587-586 BC), “Also they will take your riches as spoils and plunder your merchandise, tear down your walls and destroy your delightful houses, and throw your stones, your timbers, and your debris into the water.” In 333-332 BC, Alexander the Great attacked Tyre and build a land bridge from the mainland to the island of Tyre. It is believed he took the rubble from Tyre’s ruins and tossed the stones, timber and debris into the sea to build this bridge.

### **The Bible is logically and reasonably accurate**

Why do humans have such a tremendously developed sense of art and literature and music that other creatures do not have? We have an instinctive sense of good and evil. It is because we are the only creatures who are created in God’s image.

If evolution were true and there is no God, then we should understand that and be content that there is nothing at the end of our lives. That we all just cease to exist like every other creature and plant. So then why do we have such an impression and desire for life after death? It is because “He has also set eternity in their heart.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11) We have a longing for another home because God has put it there.

The Bible tells us that there is ultimate justice. When the bad person gets caught and then quickly dies, he did not get away with it. We have a sense that he will still get his deserving punishment. This is because the Bible gives us an understanding of a just God.

We have a feeling of something more than this natural world. The Bible reveals much of the supernatural and tells us of things that we could never figure out on our own using logic, reason or any other means.

We look at the world and its complex details (cell growth; how the eye functions; the water cycle; our immune system; the balance of plants, insects, animals, etc.) and know that these millions of diverse things could not have formed on their own by random chance. The Bible tells us that there is an intelligent God who planned and created all of this and that makes perfect sense.

We have hope and know that we can be victorious because there is a higher power that wants us to succeed.

### **The Bible is internally accurate**

The Bible is 66 books, 1189 chapters, written by at least 40 different authors, across three continents, in three languages, and written across 1,500 years. Yet, despite many efforts, it has never been shown to contradict itself. New Testament fishermen agree with Old Testament kings written thousands of years apart.

## Prophecies about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament

It is generally agreed on that the OT was completed by 450 BC. This is centuries before Jesus was born.

But if you do not accept that then realize that there was a Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. It was started around 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and completed in 132 BC. Modern scholarship holds that the Septuagint was written during the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. It was initiated by the Greek King of Egypt Ptolemy II Philadelphus to translate the Torah from Biblical Hebrew into Greek, for inclusion in the Library of Alexandria. Ptolemy II lived from 309 BC to 246 BC. It has all 39 books of the OT. So the Septuagint clearly puts the writing of the OT prophecies at over 130 before Jesus' birth.

Also, the Dead Sea Scrolls contain parts of every book in the OT except for Ester. Jewish scholars put the bulk of the manuscripts as to having been written between the third century and first century BC. Based on radiocarbon dating and paleographic dating (analysis of handwriting) the date of origin is estimated to be between 225 B.C. and 33 A.D.

So is it possible that these OT prophecies were written after Jesus was born? The evidence is pretty substantial that they were not.

There is a core of hundreds of prophecies that everyone agrees on, but then there are about 100 or so that are debated as to whether they are messianic or not. Biblical scholar Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) who wrote "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah" claimed that there are 456 passages in the Old Testament that refer to the Messiah. One popular number used by many is 315.

### **1. The Messiah would be the "seed of the woman" that would crush the serpent's head.**

Genesis 3:15 (Written around 1513 BC)

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law

In all of Scripture, only one man, Jesus Christ of course, was "born of the seed of a woman." All of the others are born of the seed of a man. This One will come into the world and crush Satan ("bruise His head").

### **2. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem**

Micah 5:2 (Written around 717 BC)

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

Matthew 2:1

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

### **3. The Messiah will publicly enter Jerusalem**

Zechariah 9:9 (Written around 648 BC)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Matthew 21:1-3

When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.

### **4. The Messiah will heal**

Isaiah 35:2b, 5-6 (Written around 732 BC)

They will see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah.

Matthew 11:2-5

Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.*

### **5. The Messiah will be sold for thirty pieces of silver**

Zechariah 11:12 (Written around 518 BC)

I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give *me* my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty *shekels* of silver as my wages.

Matthew 26:14-15

Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him.

#### **6. The Messiah will be called Immanuel**

Isaiah 7:14 (732 BC) Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel.

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:22, Matthew 1:23

#### **7. Thirty pieces of silver given to the Potter's Field**

Zechariah 11:13 (518 BC) Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:7

#### **8. Pierced through hands and feet**

Psalms 22:16 (460 BC) For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.

Fulfilled: John 19:18

#### **9. After crucifixion His bones will not be broken**

Psalms 22:17 (460 BC) I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me

Fulfilled: John 19:31-33,36

#### **10. The Messiah will be a descendent of Judah**

Genesis 49:10 (1513 BC) The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:2

#### **11. At the crucifixion they will gamble for His clothing**

Psalms 22:18 (460 BC) They divide my garments among them, and they cast lots for my clothing.

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:35

#### **12. At the crucifixion the Messiah will be given vinegar and gall to drink**

Psalms 69:21 (460 BC) They also gave me a bitter herb in my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar

to drink.

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:34

### **13. The Messiah will be buried with the rich**

Isaiah 53:9 (732 BC) And His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:59-60

### **14. The Messiah will be crucified with criminals**

Isaiah 53:12 (732 BC) And was counted with wrongdoers

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:38

### **15. The Messiah will enter Jerusalem riding a donkey**

Zechariah 9:9 (518 BC) Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey

Fulfilled: Matthew 21:1-11

### **16. The Messiah will live for a time in Egypt**

Hosea 11:1 (740 BC) When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:14–15

### **17. The Messiah will be a stone that will cause people to stumble**

Isaiah 8:14 (732 BC) But to both houses of Israel, He will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense

Fulfilled: 1 Peter 2:7–8

### **18. The Messiah will bring all nations, not just Israel, to Himself**

Isaiah 11:10 (732 BC) Then on that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal flag for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.

Fulfilled: John 12:18–21

### **19. A forerunner will come before the Messiah proclaiming His arrival**

Isaiah 40:3 (732 BC) The voice of one calling out, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Fulfilled: John 1:23

## **20. The Messiah will be despised and rejected**

Isaiah 53:3 (732 BC) He was despised and abandoned by men, a man of great pain and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hide their faces, He was despised, and we had no regard for Him.

Fulfilled: Luke 4:28–29

## **21. The Messiah will reign forever**

Daniel 7:13–14 (165 BC) “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a son of man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom, so that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

Fulfilled: Luke 1:31–33

## **22. Part of the Messiah’s suffering will be thirst**

Psalms 22:15 (460 BC) My strength is dried up like a piece of pottery, and my tongue clings to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death.

Fulfilled: John 19:28

## **23. The Messiah will resurrect from the dead; His body will not decay**

Psalms 16:10 (460 BC) For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Fulfilled: Acts 2:31

## **24. The Messiah will send out His Spirit upon the people**

Isaiah 44:3 (732 BC) I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants

Fulfilled: John 16:7

## **25. The Messiah will introduce a new covenant**

Jeremiah 31:31 (300 BC) “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah”

Fulfilled: Matthew 26:28

## **26. The Messiah’s back would be whipped**

Isaiah 50:6 (732 BC) I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pull out My beard; I did not hide My face from insults and spitting.

Fulfilled: John 19:1

### **27. The Messiah would be taunted by the crowd**

Psalms 22:7-8 (460 BC) All who see me deride me; they sneer, they shake their heads, saying, "Turn him over to the Lord; let Him save him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:43

## **Key Biblical Concepts**

### **Divisions of theology**

Angelology: The study of angels both fallen and unfallen.

Anthropology: The study of man's creation, nature, innocence and fall.

Bibliology: The study of the Bible including revelation, inspiration, preservation, canonization and illumination.

Christology: The study of the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiology: The study of the church, universal and local.

Eschatology: The study of prophecy and last things.

Hamartiology: The study of sin's source, nature, and consequences.

Pneumatology: The study of the Holy Spirit.

Soteriology: The study of God's plan and work of salvation for people.

Theology Proper: The study of the essence, being, and Trinity of God.

### **Perspectives on God**

Atheism: Atheism is the absolute denial of the existence of God.

Agnosticism: An agnostic does not deny the existence of God but claims that there are no sufficient grounds to determine that God exists or, if God does exist, that He can be known.

Naturalism: Everything can be explained by physical causes which can be observed and understood. It denies and excludes any spiritual causes. The material universe is all that there is.

Polytheism: A polytheist believes in many gods.

Pantheism: God is in everything and that everything is God. This is the belief of many Eastern religions.

Deism: A deist acknowledges that there is a personal, infinite, and holy God who created all things, but denies that He sustains the universe. The Deist says that God just put things into motion. He is the Creator but not the Sustainer.

Theism: God created and sustains all things. He has revealed Himself to us.

## Attributes of God

A partial list.

**Self-existing and eternal:** God has always existed and always will. Nothing created God. Nothing came before God. God has no beginning or end. He exists outside of time.

**Immutable:** God does not change. Because He is already perfect, He cannot improve.

**Self-sufficient:** God has no needs. He is totally sufficient within Himself.

**Omnipotent:** God is all powerful. There is nothing that He cannot do. He created the universe.

**Omniscient:** God is all knowing. He knows all past, present, and future events. He knows our thoughts and our desires.

**Omnipresent:** God is present everywhere and at all times. No one can hide from God. Because God holds all things together, if He withdrew from any one area, it would cease to exist. God is not bound by time, so He is simultaneously in the past, present, and future.

**Sovereign:** Everything is under God's control. He is the King and Ruler of all.

**Simplicity:** God is not made up of parts. He is one complete whole. We have a spirit, soul, and body. God is one essence.

**Holy:** God can never do wrong. Everything that He does is perfectly righteous. He hates all sin and loves all goodness. God is light and overpowers all darkness, sin, and corruption.

**Loving:** God is love. Love is unselfishly seeking the ultimate best for the other person.

**Faithful:** We can trust God to be consistent to who and what He is. We can trust God to keep His promises and to always be there for us for all eternity.

**Merciful:** God often chooses to withhold wrath, and penalty for those who deserve it because of their sin. This does not mean that justice will not ultimately be applied and that the sin is forgiven, but that judgment is delayed thus allowing the person to repent.

**Gracious:** God gives us the power and desire to do what is right and to become more like Himself.

**Patient:** God is long-suffering. He will give us many opportunities to repent of sin and to become more like Himself.

**Forgiving:** For those who are born-again, God will not apply any wrath, condemnation, or judgment on their sins at any point in eternity.

**Comforting:** God sees and is concerned about our suffering and pain and, more so, He is able to comfort, heal, and restore us.

Immanence: God is personally and intimately involved with every aspect of our lives, with society, and with history. He is not a God who is far off and unconcerned.

## **Bible Themes**

Sin: Sin is any thought, desire, or action that is contrary to the will, commandments, and character of God. There are sins of commission (what we do wrong) such as stealing, drunkenness, and lying. And there are sins of omission (what we should do but do not) such as not going to church, not praying, or not forgiving.

Grace: Bestowing favor and blessings which are unearned and undeserved.

Sanctification: God sets believers apart for His own special use and purpose. God gives us new gifts, purpose, motivation, power, and guidance to accomplish that which will last for an eternity.

Justification: God legally declares us to be just or righteous when we are born-again. It means that we have been acquitted. We will not be held accountable for our sins when we stand before God at our final judgment.

Faith: Hebrews 11: 1, "Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen." Faith is believing, understanding, and trusting in the unseen, the supernatural.

Propitiation: God's righteous wrath and judgment against sin has been turned away and satisfied by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Heaven: This the place where those who are born-again will spend eternity with God and with each other. There will be eternal joy, peace, and love.

Hell: This is where those who have not been born-again will spend eternity. It is a place where people will suffer the wrath and judgment of God for their sins. It is a place of torment.

Born-again: Someone who believes that Jesus Christ is God (one of the three members of the Trinity), Lord (King and Ruler of all), and Savior (the One who died on the cross to pay for our sins and then who rose again from the dead to signify that His sacrifice for our sins was accepted) and who has received Him into their life. John 1:12, John 3:1-7, and Ephesian 2:8-9.

## **Evidence for the Existence of God**

### **The universality of people being religious**

Barrett Baxter wrote in his book "I Believe Because," "This argument for God, finds support in the fact that man is incurably religious, whether he be educated, or uneducated, whether he lived in an ancient time or in a modern period, whether he be rich, or poor. Man is a worshipping creature, and he instinctively looks upward to find God."

Humans have a universal urge to look to something greater than ourselves, greater than our governments, for justice, hope, and guidance. These desires were given to us by a personal, intelligent, caring God.

### **A necessary first cause (The Cosmological Argument)**

This requires three cascading premises and a conclusion.

Premise 1: *There are things that come into existence.*

People are born, molecules are formed, stars are created. A great many things come into existence.

Premise 2: *Everything which comes into existence is caused to exist by something else.*

A thing cannot come into existence from nothing. The things that make up something had to exist prior to that thing that was created. Two hydrogen and one oxygen atom had to exist before water is formed.

Premise 3: *There cannot be an infinite series of past causes.*

If the universe started with the “Big Bang” then where did that source material come from? And if that source material did exist in the infinite past, then what triggered it to explode at that point and not at one of the infinite points in time prior to that event?

The 2nd law of thermodynamics states that “the state of entropy (disorder) of the entire universe, as an isolated system, will always increase over time.” Simply stated, without an outside force, any system will not generally become more complex but will break up into smaller and smaller pieces. Thus, an infinite universe will, by now, be infinitely disordered.

Conclusion: *Therefore, there exists a first cause which did not come into existence. In other words, the first cause always existed.*

This first cause had to be outside of the physical space-time universe in order to create a space-time universe. The most logical first cause is a willful and intelligent God.

### **There is a clear design in the universe (The Teleological Argument)**

The most famous illustration was developed by William Paley in 1802. He said that if you found a watch lying on the ground you would not conclude that it had been created by random chance happening over millions of years. Rather, you would say that there was a watchmaker who created it and that this watchmaker had designed it with a purpose in mind. We would normally draw the same conclusion concerning the universe and all aspects of our Earth.

How could a system as intricate and internally dependent as the circulatory system have evolved? Without any one part (the heart, arteries, veins, blood cells, hemoglobin, the brain’s parasympathetic (automatic) control) the entire system is non-functioning. Each part was designed to have a specific role in the entire system and each part is entirely dependent on all of the other parts. If all of the parts but one successfully evolved, the entire system would still be useless. Michael Behe called this Irreducible Complexity. Remove any one part and the entire system fails.

What about other systems in the body: the immune system, skeletal system, respiratory system, digestive system, nervous system, endocrine system, and reproductive system? Each has numerous, dependent parts. How could each of these complex systems in so many different forms (these systems in mammals, fish, birds, insects, etc. are all different) have developed through random mutations and yet still function together in so many millions of varieties of creatures? It is much more logical and reasonable to believe in a single Designer and Creator.

A second aspect of this argument is how all of earth's systems (animal, plant, climate, water, atmosphere, etc.) all work together in balance.

### **The Moral Argument**

All of humanity, in all cultures, and across all time, have a sense of right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. We have a conscience.

We may choose to not obey a moral obligation. For instance, we may choose to steal. However, our choice to not obey that moral obligation does not free us from it. We are still judged by it. We feel guilty or we fear being caught. This moral obligation does not exist at our whim; it is universal. These exist above and beyond us. It could be argued that because it is collectively agreed that the human race should flourish and reproduce, we could have developed objective moral laws such as "do not murder" without the necessity of a God. However, that we, as a civilization collectively agree on these moral laws which are intrinsic to each one of us and are also above all of us seems much more likely to have been created by a greater Law-Giver such as God.

### **Theism in light of "survival of the fittest"**

In the fifth edition (published in 1869) of "On the Origin of Species," Charles Darwin uses the term "survival of the fittest" which is defined as the natural process by which organisms best adjusted to their environment are the most successful in surviving and reproducing. It would seem obvious that only things in our environment that are real would aid organisms in their survival and reproducing. Something which does not exist would only hinder this survival because the organisms would be wasting their resources and energy on something that could never be of any benefit. And yet the great majority of people believe and even spend time and money on God. For this belief to have evolved runs contrary to the foundation of survival of the fittest. Evolution would never tolerate this expenditure on something that does not exist. The "fittest" would not be the people who worship a non-existent God. Evolution says that these believers--the ones wasting their time on silly pursuits—would be the ones who die out. Evolution would never allow religion to form and certainly not to grow. Therefore, it seems more reasonable that evolution is not true and that God does exist, and that He truly benefits the many billions of people that believe in Him.

### **The Aesthetic Argument**

Art, music, beauty, wonder all have no real practical necessity. They do not put food on the table or win wars. It is unlikely that the first person to have evolved a sense of art would have had greater survival skills than someone who used that time to hunt or garden. And yet we not only can appreciate these things, but we create them as well. These qualities imply a Creator who instilled in us these same

attributes that already exist in Him. Humans, far more than any other creature, have these qualities because we alone were created in God’s image.

## The Consciousness Argument

Consciousness is synonymous with the mind and includes any kind of cognition, experience, feeling or perception. There is a mind-body dualism with the mind being a non-physical or non-mechanical element. Because consciousness cannot be explained by the physical mechanisms of the human body and brain, it must have been designed and created by someone outside of the physical world. This would be God. Richard Swinburne wrote, “It is immensely improbable that science would ever be able to explain why there are souls and why particular brain events are correlated with particular mental events. Theism can explain this in terms of God having good reasons to bring about certain kinds of mental life.”

## Miracles of Jesus

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

- 1) Affirm that He was the Messiah prophesized throughout the Old Testament. (Acts 2:22 and John 2:23)
- 2) To show compassion and mercy and point to His ultimate healing of our sin through His crucifixion.
- 3) To give a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<b>Healings</b>				
Healed the nobleman's son				4:46-47
Healed Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever	8:5-13	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Healed a leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-14	
Healed the centurion’s servant	8:5-13			
Healed the paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
Healed a woman of an issue of blood	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	
Opened the eyes to two blind men	9:27-31			
Loosened the tongue of a mute	9:32-34			
Healed lame man at the pool at Bethesda				5:1-9
Restored a man’s withered hand	12:10-13	3:1-6	6:6-11	

Healed a deaf and mute man		7:31-37		
Healed a blind man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
Opened the eyes of a man born blind				9:1-38
Healed a woman who had been afflicted for 18 years			13:10-17	
Healed a man of edema (dropsy)			14:1-6	
Cleansed ten lepers			17:11-19	
Gave sight to two blind men	20:29-34	10:40-45	18:35-43	
Restored the severed ear of the high priest's servant			22:50-51	
<b>Nature</b>				
Great catch of fish			5:1-11	
Stilled the storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
Fig tree withered	21:18-22	11:12-14		
Second great catch of fish				21:1-14
Turns water into wine				2:1-11
Feeds 5,000 people	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
Feeds 4,000 people	15:32-39	8:1-13		
<b>Exorcism</b>				
Delivered a demon possessed man		1:21-28	4:31-37	
Delivered boy possessed by a demon	17:14-20	9:14-29	9:37-43	
Delivered a demon possessed woman from Canaan	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Delivered blind and mute demon possessed man	12:22			
Delivered demon possessed man and casts	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	

demons into a herd of pigs				
<b>Resurrection</b>				
Raised Jairus' daughter from the dead	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	
Raised Lazarus				11:1-46
Raised widow's son in Nain			7:11-17	

John 20:30-31, "So then, many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name."

## Parables of Jesus

Why did Jesus teach in parables?

- 1) Parables were engaging and, on the top-most, natural level, were easy to understand and remember.
- 2) To teach His disciples. (Matthew 13:11-16)
- 3) To hide the deeper spiritual teachings from those who were not interested and did not desire God's truth. (Matthew 13:14-15)

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
The lamp on a stand	5:14-15	4:21-22	8:16;11:33	
The speck versus the log	7:1-5			
New cloth on an old garment	9:16	2:21		
New wine into old wineskins	9:17	2:22		
The divided kingdom	12:24-30			
The sower	13:1-23	4:1-20	8:4-15	
Weeds among the wheat	13:24-30			
The mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	
Leaven	13:33-34			
Hidden treasure	13:44			

Pearl of great price	13:45-46			
Fishing net	13:47-50			
The lost sheep	18:12-14			
The unforgiving servant	18:23-35			
Laborers in the vineyard	20:1-16			
The two sons	21:28-32			
Tenant farmers	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18	
Wedding banquet	22:1-14			
Fig tree with buds	24:32-35	13:28-29	21:29-31	
The wise and foolish servants	24:45-51		12:42-48	
The ten virgins	25:1-13			
Ten talents	25:14-30			
The divided kingdom		3:23-27		
The growing seed		4:26-29		
The heart of man		7:17-23		
Stay alert		13:33-37		
The good Samaritan			10:29-37	
The friend at midnight			11:5-13	
The rich fool			12:16-21	
The barren fig tree			13:6-9	
The invited guests			14:7-14	
The lost coin			15:8-10	
The prodigal son			15:11-32	
The persistent widow			18:1-8	

The Pharisee and the tax collector			18:9-14	
The shepherd, the sheep, and the gate				10:1-18

John 21:25, "But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written in detail, I expect that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written."