

“Basics About The Blessed Book”

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“Basics About The Blessed Book”

I. The Foundation of Scripture

Just as every structure has a foundation so does God’s Word. Even though we cannot see this foundation with our eyes, it exists nevertheless. We must never forget that the Bible has stood the test of time because of its unique foundation. Those who ridicule the Bible are in reality ridiculing its foundation. In Matt.24:35 Jesus said, **“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”**. Although in the previous sentence Jesus was specifically teaching about the longevity and complete fulfillment of His words, we may, rest assured that He was also reflecting upon the Word’s foundation. All right already, what is this foundation? The Bible’s inspiration is its foundation. We will briefly look at the majesty, the mysteriousness, the mode, the method, the mastery, and the message of this most important doctrine.

I. The Majesty of Inspiration

The Old Testament’s claims about itself are amazing to say the least! Such expressions as **“God said”**, **“The Lord spake, saying”**, **“The Word of the Lord”**, and **“The Lord commanded”** are found time after time throughout the Old Testament narrative. The Old Testament declares its inspiration 680 times in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), 1,307 times in the prophetic books, 418 times in the books of history, and 195 claims in the poetical books. This gives us a grand total of 2,600 times that the Old Testament claims its divine genesis. In addition, almost half of the book of Exodus consists of direct quotations from the words of God and almost 90% of the Book of Leviticus.¹ Dr. Geisler reminds us that just in the book of Leviticus alone we read of phrases or occurrences like **“the Lord spoke unto Moses”** some sixty-six times. He goes on to add, *“Countless times Ezekiel records phrases such as ‘I saw visions’ or ‘the word of the Lord came unto me.’ In one short section (chapter 12) there are eleven such examples (vv.8,10,17,19,21,25-26,28 twice), and sometimes there are two in the same verse (Ezek 20:3). The same is true of Jeremiah (cf.1;2,4,11,2:1,3,5 etc.), Isaiah (cf.1.1,11,18,24;2:1,etc.) and the other prophets.”*²

¹ Morris, Henry M.. Many Infallible Proofs. Creation Life Publishers: San Diego, California, 1977, p.157

² Geisler, Norman. Systematic Theology. Bethany House Publishers: 11400 Hampshire Avenue South Bloomington, Minnesota 55438. 2002, volume 1. pp.234-235

Believers fully understand that the Bible's theme is that of redemption. God finalized this redemption in the person of, and through the accomplishments of, the embodiment of God in the Son of God. John says it best, **"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (Jn. 1:14)"**. Thus, the "Word" (logos - Λόγος) is the expression of God – *"whether it be in Living or Written form."*³ Jesus also expressed this significance as He long ago travelled with the two fellows on the Emmaus road. For the Bible says, **"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lu. 24:27)"**

The writer (not author) of most of our New Testament (Paul) told the congregation at Corinth, **"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. (1Cor. 14:37)"**. Paul would later express to the young pastor Timothy, **"All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (1Tim.3:16)"**.

A study of the New Testament phrase **"It is written"** would provide an abundance of blessing to any courageous student. One of my computer programs recently calculated that this phrase occurs more than 200 times throughout the New Testament.

Any honest open-minded soul must conclude that the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, leave no doubt as to their source. Mark it down, the grandeur, power, authority and dignity of our Scriptures rest in its source – the great **"I Am" (Ex.3:14)**.

Critics might well take heed to the words of a wise man of yesterday by the name of Manley – *"A man who refuses to believe anything that he does not understand will have a very short creed"* and those of even a much wiser man named Jesus when He said, **"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matt. 24:35)"**

II. The Mysteriousness of Inspiration

Let us examine a few quotes in regards to the theological definition of Inspiration.

Mr. Webster says of inspiration, *"a divine influence upon human beings resulting in writing, as of the Scriptures, or in the utterance of the inspired word."*⁴ Secondly, *"The Theological use of the term inspiration is a reference to that controlling influence which God exerted over the human authors by whom the Old and New Testament were written. It has to do with the reception of the divine message and the accuracy with which it is transcribed"*⁵ - Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary). Thirdly, is the lengthy definition of the theologian and former president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina – Dr. Norman L. Geisler, *"Inspiration is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, who through the different personalities and literary styles of the chosen human authors invested the very words of the original books of the Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very Word of God without error in all that they teach or imply (including history and science), and the Bible is thereby the infallible rule and final authority for faith and practice of all believers."*⁶

We find that the word **"inspiration"** is used only twice in Scripture. The first place is in Job 32:8, **"But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."** The word for *"inspiration"* is נִשְׁמָה (pronounced - nesh-aw-maw') i.e. a wind or vital breath. When we focus back on the time of Adam we read that, **"...the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed**

³ Chafer, Lewis, Sperry. Systematic Theology. Kregel Publications: P.O. Box 2607, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49501, volume 1. 1976, p.72

⁴ Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary. unabridged second edition William Collins & World Publishing Co. Inc.: 1977. p.950

⁵ Chafer. Op. Cit. p.61

⁶ Geisler. Op. Cit. p.241

into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Gen. 2:7) Thus, we discover that God not only gave the first of our kind life but he gave us our intelligence. According to our Bible, our entire species started with one dead man and one puff from God! The second use of inspiration in the Scripture is in II Timothy 3:16-17 - "All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Here the word for “inspiration” is θεόπνευστος (pronounced-theh-op'-nyoo-stos). The word simply means divinely breathed in. How fascinating when one considers that, not only did God’s breath give man the spark of life but He also breathed into existence His written will and testimony for man’s deepest needs and for His glory! Because of man’s fall in Genesis chapter three, we are once again in need of a breath from God. Jesus taught just as man needed a physical birth, he needs a spiritual birth – “...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (Jn.3:5). As a matter of fact, this “Spirit” (πνεῦμα - pneuma, pronounced pnyoo'-mah = “a breath”) is absolutely essential for redemption and entrance into God’s Kingdom (Jn.3:7). When one is “born of the Spirit” (Jn.3:8) he is in reality born anew with the very breath of God! This Holy Breath, or Holy Spirit, of God constitutes the salvation of a redeemed soul.

When compared to the works of great painters, sculptures, writers, or any other accomplishment of mankind, regardless of earthly value, the inspiration of our Bible was, without any doubt, communicated in a far superior fashion and will always remain in a category of inspiration all of its own!

III. The Mode of Inspiration

If one is perplexed as to the mode in which Scripture came from God through man to pen he need only to grab an assortment of theology books for vast sections of these volumes have been devoted to this very thing. Secondly, if the same aggressive researcher attempts to assimilate his findings he may very well discover the need to recover from the worst-case worst case of dizziness thus far in his life. Let us see if we can simplify and substantiate a few fundamentals.

We begin with a quote from the late Dr. Henry M. Morris, “*The only proper and true view of the inspiration of the Bible is that it is completely and literally inspired, altogether free of all error and conveying exactly what God wished to say to man. This is the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration. That there are problems connected with this high view of inspiration goes without saying, but this is nevertheless the teaching of Scripture itself. The problems can be resolved; but even if we cannot now answer all of them, we still insist this is the only doctrine of inspiration which has any real substance....Any lesser theory leaves man to his own devices and in effect he becomes his own god.*”⁷

Plenary means – “...that it extends to every part of the words and all they teach or imply.”⁸ This is often over looked yet it is of the highest importance! Were God's penmen mere puppets that had no will of their own? Does this imply direct dictation? – Of course not! We will address this a little later but for now let us direct our attention to the following verses. The Bible says, “Every word of God [is] pure: he [is] a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. (Pro 30:5,6)” Just prior to His crucifixion we read of Jesus teaching his disciples about the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching “all things”, not just general ideas, about Himself - “But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you...Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (Jn.14:26;

⁷ Morris. Op. Cit. pp. 164-167

⁸ Geisler. Op. Cit. p.236

16:13)” Shortly after the crucifixion the Bible records that Jesus appearing to two puzzled fellows on the road to Emmaus. Please note what Jesus taught and the detail with which He taught it. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lu.24:27)” Years later, Paul conveyed the following to the young Timothy, “All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (II Tim. 3:16)” When we read the preceding verses, it is imperative that we consider several conclusions. First, “every word” and “all” means just what it says. If only the thoughts of Scripture are inspired, who then determines what thoughts? As earlier mentioned, the main theme of Scripture is redemption but the Bible also addresses many other subjects such as astronomy, geology, weather, history, etc. Thus, we have arrived at the second proposition. One must accept the inclusiveness of God’s Word. Since every word has the same origin and carries the same priority, common sense demands that every word, verse, or text, dealing with any form of science or history must be included.

In addition, we need to remember that the word *verbal*, also, teaches that inspiration is synonymous with the words. Secondly, this concept also blends in the personality of the writers. Thus, God allowed His penmen to express His precise Words and teachings in a way most natural to them. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost. II Pet. 1:20-21)”

Even though verbal inspiration applies more to the result rather than the method, we still need to address the question, “*Did God use direct dictation?*” The answer, without a doubt, is still no! Just as God chose to use earthly writers and earthly languages through which to communicate His divine written will, could He not also use the spoken language, observations, feelings, expressions, convictions, and style of each writer, respectfully? In the following quotation, we once again cross paths with Dr. Morris’s unique skill of being able to summarize, simplify, and express a most profound truth. “*They were so prepared by God, in terms of their family training, their own studies, their experiences in childhood and youth, and the circumstances under which they were living when they wrote, that finally the words they composed – entirely of their own volition and understanding – were those words desired by the Holy Spirit. They were words fully guarded against error and perfectly fitting and complete, even though the men who recorded them may have been much lacking in perfection themselves and even though their normal manner and content of writing may have been much less than perfect under natural circumstances.*”⁹

IV. The Method of Inspiration

The method through which Scripture came to us is that of *revelation*. The word is used ten times (eight by Paul, and once by both Peter and John) in the New Testament and in all cases the translators translated “**revelation**” from the same Greek word - ἀποκάλυψις (transliterated – apokalupsis and pronounced *ap-ok-al'-oop-sis*) . Expositors define the word as being a disclosure, appearing, coming, lighten, and unveiling (much like the effect of a curtain when pulled on a stage). Note that Paul used this word to tell the Galatians of the method whereby he received the Gospel – “**For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal.1:12)**” One needs to consider that for *revelation* to exist their first must be a being capable of transmitting *revelation*; secondly, one to receive the *revelation* and, thirdly, there must be a medium through which *revelation* comes.

God has communicated to humankind in a number of ways. One such form of general *revelation* is that of nature. Listen to the Psalmist as he declared, “**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. (Psa. 19:1)** The heavens declare his righteousness, and all

⁹ Morris. Op. Cit. pp.168-169

the people see his glory. (Psa. 97:6) If one were to do an in depth Biblical study of the star pictures in the sky by using such books as The Gospel In The Stars by J.A. Seiss or The Witness Of The Stars by E.W. Bullinger as guidelines, he would easily conclude that God has placed a general witness to man's condition, God's solution, and the devil's determination, just above his head. God has also repeated this simple message in all four quadrants of His vast celestial formations! This is one reason that the Bible states, **"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Rom. 1:20)"** Thus, from the fourth day onward God has graciously revealed Himself as creator and sustainer of life. Yet, God's Word and history records that man, in his natural sin-tainted condition, for the most part, still shuns God's witness. **"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (Rom 1:21-23)**

Whereas God's general *revelation* reveals general information, God also took the imitative to reveal Himself by utilizing a *specific revelation*. Often people have said that the Bible is full of dry history when, in reality, the Bible is truly *His-story* revealing Himself, humankind, and the opposing forces of the devil.

*"In Its Theological usage, the term revelation is restricted to the divine act of communicating to man what otherwise man would not know."*¹⁰ Thus, whereas inspiration is the influence that secures the accuracy of truth into language, revelation is the influence of God that communicated this truth to begin with.

V. The Mastery of Inspiration

The word *infallible* is a word that quickly limits its usage. The word simply means *"not fallible; not capable of error; never wrong."*¹¹ Although the word is used only once in Scripture (Acts 1:3), it is not used in speaking of itself but rather it addresses the works of the Lord Jesus Christ during His post-resurrection time, just prior to His ascension back into Heaven. Even here, the definition is practically the same as Webster's definition. [τεκμήριον (transliterated - tekmerion; pronounced - tek-may'-ree-on) – the definition is - tekmar (a goal or fixed limit); a token (as defining a fact), that is, *criterion* of certainty: infallible proof.]

According to Roman Catholic belief, the decrees of the Roman church are *infallible*. Although current catholic doctrine does not consider the decrees of the archbishops, bishops, cardinals, and priests as being *infallible*, those of the church's leader, the pope, are.¹² Hypothetically, the pope can, at his discretion, address a new issue or perhaps review an existing practice or belief; make a declaration for what he believes to be in the best interests of the church. The church would see his declarations on the matters as being infallible. Thus, this man, regardless of his compassion, concern, commitment, or convictions, would be placing his will on the same level as that of God's.

The *infallibility* of scripture is like a mirror that reflects holiness. The first reflection is the profound fact that God alone is holy. His holiness is associated with his jealousy (Josh.24:19), His exaltation (Psa.99:9), His righteousness (Isa.5:16), His almightiness (Rev.4:8), His absolute uniqueness (Ex.15:11), His moral purity, (II Cor.7:11), His being vexed by evil (Psa.78:41), and that

¹⁰ Chafer. Op. Cit. p.48

¹¹ Webster's. Op. Cit. p.937

¹² The Catholic Encyclopedia. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Imprimatur November 14, 1975. pp. 292-293

which should inspire a deep sense of awe (Isa.29:23) and perpetual worship in His creatures (IChr.16:29; Rev.4:8).¹³ A second reflection is detected when we realize that holiness is used of God's Word just as it used of God i.e. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (II.Tim. 3:15)" The word "holy" is found numerous times through both the Old and New Testaments. The first usage of the word in the Old Testament is in Exodus 3:5 and the first place used in the New Testament is Matthew 1:18. In both places the word simply means sacred, set apart, and to be exalted above other things.

One would think that critics should hush when they learn that the persons of the trinity support scripture's accuracy. It is said of the Father - "That by two immutable things, in which [it was] impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (Heb 6:18)" Since the Bible is God's Word and He cannot lie, we must conclude, therefore, that the Bible is without error. Secondly, one does not have to study the Life of Christ very long to discover that Jesus always knew the value and power of the Scriptures. We find His saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (Jn. 17:17) Always remember – if Jesus is the Son of God than the Bible is the Word of God! To deny one is to deny the other. Lastly, we read that David declared, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word [was] in my tongue. (II.Sam. 23:2)" In addition, we read of Jesus, in speaking of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (Jn.16:13)"

The inspired infallible Word of God is complete. God's final Scriptures were completed in approximately A.D. 95 with the Book of The Revelation of The Lord Jesus Christ. Since then no new Scripture has nor will come from God. "...if one appears with the claim that he has received a new revelation, he can be classified as an imposter."¹⁴

"For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)" "[Is] not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer [that] breaketh the rock in pieces? (Jer. 23:29)" "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (IPet.1:23)" "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it. (Isa. 55:11)" The above verses quickly remind us that God's Word cannot be destroyed or defeated by any man, machine, or might! Its inspiration is truly a divine masterpiece!

VI. The Message of Inspiration

We live in a time that many theologians are calling the post-Christian era. According to this philosophy, people see Christianity, the church, and the Bible as being boring and having little particle value for everyday living. Many churches have dramatically modified doctrines or practices in an effort to deal with apathy or to become attractive to unbelievers. Thus, you (God forbid) or one of your friends may be asking, what is the big deal behind inspiration?

Either God is real and the Bible is His written will and testimony, or He does not exist and we are merely another species of animal. If we fail to agree with God and choose His way the other will automatically become our path and testimony to others. One way is living and the other way is, simply, existing. Inside of every human is a desire for love, a sense of purpose, direction, and

¹³ Geisler. Op. Cit. p.244

¹⁴ Lockyer, Lockyer. All The Doctrines Of The Bible. Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, Mi. 49506, 1975. p.10.

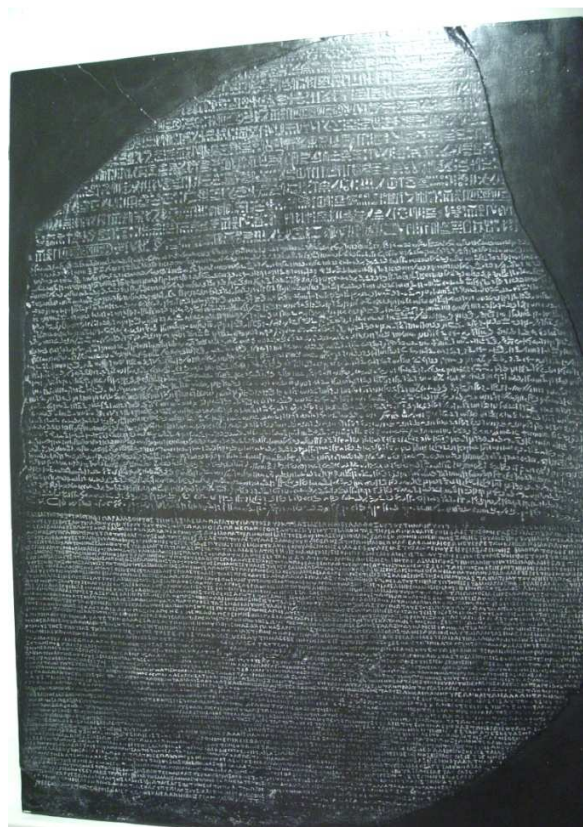
security. History testifies that throughout every era of man's existence he has eventually sought this fulfillment through some form of worship. Thus, regardless if one admits it or not, humankind is born with an inward proneness to worship. Only the Bible explains why we have this desire. This amazing book explains where we came from, what has happened to us, what we are to do while we are here, what happens when life is over, and how we go about preparing for the eventual departure. I firmly believe that without having these fundamental issues resolved, individuals, societies, and nations will continue to live in some form of confusion and inevitability have to deal with the consequences!

On the other hand, there is a solution for man's deepest needs. Not only does God graciously have provision for this need but also, he has the whole story, in all its details, recorded in His inspired Word – the Bible! Drs. L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles capture part of the value of this thought when they quote from a statement made by the Baptist Preacher, Dan Taylor, in 1785, *“That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are given by inspiration of God, as a full and sufficient revelation of his will to mortals: and, that we may learn from thence, whatever, is needful to be known in order to enjoy present and lasting felicity. That there is no other book in existence that can lay a just claim to divine inspiration besides the Scriptures. And that nothing is to be added to them by the invention or tradition of men, or from opinion or authority whatever; and, that nothing can with impunity be substituted in the stead of any part of them. That we have no authority to expect nor can we with safety depend upon, any other revelation or suggestion whatever besides the scriptures: they are our only rule in every branch of practice and faith; and are sufficiently plain to every one who reads them with attention and is willing to follow them: so that all others are without excuse.”*¹⁵

I know of no other declaration that brings together the total value of Scripture more than that of the revision summaries of The Southern Baptist Convention that were adopted on June 14, of 2000. We more commonly refer to these summaries as The Baptist Faith and Message. *“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”*

On a recent trip to Canada, we were travelling up a stream when suddenly the early morning sunlight drew my attention to a spider's web. The Sun had illuminated the heavy dew on the threads in a most unusual fashion. As I later reflected on the spider's web, it became apparent that behind the web one would find a designer, a design, a resource, and a unique ability. One thing that was not so obvious, though, was the fact that this web had a foundation from which all else developed. When we think upon our Bible we must always remember that not only does it have God as its master- mind, resource and strength but, but its reality and beauty is found between its covers and its foundation is, without any question, its divine inspiration!

¹⁵ Bush, Russ, L. & Nettles, Tom, J, Baptists and the Bible. Published by Broadman & Holman Publishers. Nashville, Tennessee. 1999. p.103



II. “Our Canon of Scripture”

If you were to visit the classrooms of any given Bible School, Bible College, or seminary, you would undoubtedly hear words and phrases that lips rarely utter elsewhere. When we hear these same things within our local assemblies, blank expressions are usually common place. Could it be that these verbiages are no longer important, aren't being taught, or, on the other hand, perhaps speakers stash them as an ace in the hole when deep impressions seem to be required more than words of edification? One selection from this category may very well be the little word - *canon*. Our definition of this word comes from the English word for “cane” - “reed”. This definition is most unusual, to say the least because regardless of form we use, be it Old French (*canone*), Latin (*canon*), Hebrew (*ganeh*), Greek (*kanon*), and of course English, this little word still carries the same meaning. In the past, officials commonly used the word to denote a law or rule. Eventually the word grew to mean a “rule”, “a measuring line”, “a standard”, or “a model”. Today this word is used by Christians to refer to our accepted collection of Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. Therefore, every book honored with a place in Scripture is canonical i.e. it has met the standard, or rule, as the inspired Word of God.

The reader must always remember that the church did not create the canon but rather it recognized and accepted one already inspired by God.

Just as the Rosetta Stone became the canon of understanding Egyptian hieroglyphics, The Bible is our canon, from God, to a fuller revealing of God and a complete understanding of His plan of redemption and plans for the future.

The objective of the following pages will be to set forth a brief historical development of our canon of Scripture.

I. The Old Testament Canon

Early Days

To what degree Godly ancients recorded Bible History is uncertain but one thing we do know is that some degree of record keeping existed be the fashion - verbal, written, or a combination of both. Scriptures in Genesis give us a clue to this by the use of the phrase **“this is the book of the generations”** or **“generations of”**. A good rule of thumb in studying words and phrases in Scripture is to investigate their first usage. Utilizing this tool, let us briefly glance at **Genesis 2:4** - **“These [are] the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens...”** The use of the word, **“generations”** [hd*l=OT towledah (to-led-aw'); or toledah (to-led-aw'); descent, i.e. family; (figuratively) history] in this passage the word carries the same significance as today when we use the phrase *birth records*. Please note the word connected with **“generations”** when we arrive at **Genesis 5:1** - **“This [is] the book of the generations of Adam...”** [p#s@ cepher (say'-fer); properly, writing (the art or a document); by implication, a book] Someone recorded something, by some fashion, on to something! It is certainly not out of the question that Adam could have been the first to record the early events of **“Genesis”**.¹⁶ The same is very probable with Noah in **Genesis 6:9**. (**Gen.6:9**) **“These [are] the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man [and] perfect in his generations, [and] Noah walked with God.”**

Just for fun, let us take peek at other places in Genesis where the very same word is translated over as **“generations”** used:

(**Gen.10:1**) **“Now these [are] the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.”**

(**Gen.10:32**) **“These [are] the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.”**

(**Gen.11:10**) **“These [are] the generations of Shem: Shem [was] an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood:”**

(**Gen.11:27**) **“Now these [are] the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.”**

(**Gen.25:12**) **“Now these [are] the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:”**

(**Gen.25:13**) **“And these [are] the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations...”**

(**Gen.25:19**) **“And these [are] the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:”**

¹⁶ For an eye popping analogy, read what the New Testament has to say about the **“last Adam”** (**ICor.15:45**) in (**Matt.1:1**) **“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”** The Greek word for **“generation”** - γένεσις – genesis- (pronounced - ghen'-es-is) simply means nativity.

(Gen.36: 1) “Now these *[are]* the generations of Esau, who *[is]* Edom.”

(Gen.36:9) “And these *[are]* the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir:”

(Gen.37:2) “These *[are]* the generations of Jacob. Joseph,…”

All other places in Genesis where “generations” is used it denotes a generation or a certain period of time.

One cannot deny that some form of preserving God’s records has been around as long as humanity.

The earliest writings that stimulated the assimilation of what grew to become the Old Testament canon of our Scriptures were, without a doubt, the Ten Commandments.

“And the tables *[were]* the work of God, and the writing *[was]* the writing of God, graven upon the table. (Ex.32:16)” “And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *[even]* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. (Deu.4:13)” “And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. (Deu.10:4)”

Not only did Moses oversee the preservation the Ten Commandments but also for the rest of his life, he continued to write and record the works and words of God along with the only accepted and authoritative record of his people.

(Ex.17:14) “ And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *[for]* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *[it]* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.”

(Ex.24:4) “And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.”

(Ex.34:27) “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.”

(Num.33:2) “And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the LORD: and these *[are]* their journeys according to their goings out.”

As God’s History marched on, He also continued to utilize others, such as Samuel, a few kings, and many prophets to record and declare His word.

Early Tests of Scripture

Although God had pre-ordained that the true test of the canon is its connection to prophecy, the people of God had to discover this reality for themselves. This conclusion was formulated immediately rather than centuries later. [(Deu. 31:25-26) “That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.” (Jos. 24:25) “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.” (1Sam.10:25) “Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote *[it]* in a book, and laid *[it]* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.”] , just to name a few.

The Old Testament writers were either prophets¹⁷, or they were accepted as temporarily possessing the role of a prophet. In addition, immediate contemporaries had several ways of testing the prophetic aspect. They used supernatural confirmations such as those found in nature but the most common was that of fulfilled prophecy. Sages quickly weeded out false prophets. (Deu.18:22) “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *[is]* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *[but]* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

¹⁷ A prophet was one who spoke for God—not only *fore-telling* but also speaking as God inspired him. They were the mouthpiece of God. The word *prophet* means one who speaks in place of another. Thus, the Old Testament was written by those men of God who declared and wrote the truths of God, both predictive and non-predictive. Some were called *prophets* while others occasionally possessed the *prophetic gift*.

Jewish leaders also rejected alleged revelations that contradicted previously accepted works from God. (Deu.13:1-3) **“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, 2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”**

Scholars have noted that a popular decisive test was when alleged prophetic messages from God not only referred to but also quoted from previous books that were already accepted.

Acceptance

For a long time the entire Jewish and Protestant Old Testament was viewed as consisting of two fundamental parts – *“The Law”* and *“The Prophets”*. In The New Testament we learn of Jesus referring to these divisions in **Matthew 5:17** and in **Luke 24:27**. Later Jewish scholars divided *“The Prophets”* forming *“The Prophets”* and *“The Writings”*. Taking into consideration the role of prophecy and a prophet in the canon, Dr. Geisler elaborates as to the possible logic behind this division, *“The reasons are not clear, but some believe this division was based on whether the author was a prophet by office or only by gift, while others claim it was for topical use at Jewish festivals.”*¹⁸

In his works *“Against Apion”* (1:8), the recognized Jewish historian Josephus (30-100 A.D.), elaborated on the closing of the Old Testaments canon. Listen carefully to what he says, *“For, we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them. For it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws and the records that contain them; whereas there are none at all among the Greeks, who would undergo the least harm on that account, no, nor in case all the writings that are among them were to be destroyed;...”*¹⁹ A couple of comments are needful at this point - First, Josephus’ twenty-two Old Testament Books are identical with our modern day thirty-nine.

¹⁸ Geisler, Norman. Systematic Theology. Bethany House Publishers: 11400 Hampshire Avenue South Bloomington, Minnesota 55438. 2002, volume 1. p.523

¹⁹ Whiston, William. Works Of Josephus. Volume IV. *“Against Apoion”* (1:8). Baker Book House: 2768 East Paris Avenue, SE. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1977. pp.158-159

5 BOOKS OF MOSES	13 PROPHETICAL BOOKS	4 HYMNS TO GOD
(1) Genesis	(1) Joshua	(1) Psalms
(2) Exodus	(2) Judges & Ruth	(2) Proverbs
(3) Leviticus	(3) Two Books of Samuel	(3) Ecclesiastes
(4) Numbers	(4) Two Books of Kings	(4) Song of Solomon
(5) Deuteronomy	(5) Two Books of Chronicles	
	(6) Ezra & Nehemiah	
	(7) Esther	
	(8) Isaiah	
	(9) Jeremiah & Lamentations	
	(10) Ezekiel	
	(11) Daniel	
	(12) Books of 12 Minor Prophets	
	(13) Job	

The early church had no problem accepting the Old Testament. In fact, the earliest Christian list of Old Testament books is the one by Melito, bishop of Sardis, written about 170 A.D. The only account of Melito's list in existence is the one buried deep within the writings of Eusebius. Scholars believe that Eusebius recorded Melito's list sometime in the year of our Lord 325 A.D.

Please note, once again, the two divisions of “*The Law*” and “*The Prophets*”. “*Melito to his brother Onesimus, greeting: Since thou hast often, in thy zeal for the word, expressed a wish to have extracts made from the Law and the Prophets concerning the Saviour, and concerning our entire faith, and hast also desired to have an accurate statement of the ancient book, as regards their number and their order, I have endeavored to perform the task, knowing thy zeal for the faith, and thy desire to gain information in regard to the word, and knowing that thou, in thy yearning after God, esteemest these things above all else, struggling to attain eternal salvation. Accordingly when I went East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, and send them to thee as written below. Their names are as follows: Of Moses, five books: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Jesus Nave²⁰, Judges, Ruth; of the Kings, four books; of Chronicles, two; the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, Wisdom also²¹, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah; of the twelve prophets, one book; Daniel, Ezekiel, Estras²². From which I have made extracts, dividing them into six books.*”²³ From Melito’s note, one may also grasp the hunger of early Christians to secure and study the Old Testament utilizing a Christological perspective. Oh, how we need these hunger pains to return!

Long after Josephus and Melito, scholars divided a number of books, such as Kings, Chronicles, Samuel, and others, into what we recognize today as our Old Testament Books. Secondly, by inserting the King of Persia’s name, we may conclude that Jewish teachers not only recognized but also accepted the fact that their people accepted no more writing after B.C. 435. This era aligns beautifully with the time of writing of the last Old Testament book - Malachi.

²⁰ Joshua the son of Nun

²¹ also the book of proverbs

²² This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Ezra and this would include both the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

²³ Schaff, Philip. and Wace, Henry. (editors) Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers. Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine The Great, And Oration In Praise of Constantine. Melito of Sardis. XXVI.13. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. P.O. Box 3473, Peabody, Massachusetts. 01961-3473. p.206

The Old Testament For Today

For the Old Testament, today, we are limited to several texts. Scholars translated The Syriac Version from Hebrew about 200 A.D. This translated consisted only of the books of Moses that passed from generation to generation from the time of Nehemiah, approximately B.C. 400. Secondly, is the Septuagint - the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Seventy scribes in about B.C. 280 supposedly made it. Its objective was to minister to the dispersed Greek speaking Jews. Many Scholars believe that this was the translation use by the Apostles and other early believers. Thirdly, we have the Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome in about 400 A.D.. This became the official Old Testament of the Roman Catholic Church. Lastly, we have what is called the Masoretic text. The Masoretes were a group of Jewish scribes who, around 500 A.D., developed an almost flawless way of copying and checking Old Testament Scriptures. Due to the lack of vowels in Hebrew, they added "vowel points" to help clarify the text. The first Hebrew Bible text translated from this text was in 1526 A.D. Today, we have about 1000 Masoretic manuscripts in existence, with scholars dating the oldest at 916 A.D. The modern day discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls gives even additionally validity to the Masoretic text. The Masoretic text is the one that both Jews and Protestant believers, alike, have endorsed for a bunch of centuries. Conservative scholars assure us that our Old Testament has always been as it is today, as far as any evidence can take us.²⁴

Just for fun let us take a quick overview of Old Testament Collection.

The Law

1. *GENESIS* - The Book of Beginnings - Christ is the Seed of woman and in Genesis 3:15 we are told He will one day crush Satan.
2. *EXODUS* - The Book of Redemption - the story of the Passover Lamb, and Christ is the sacrificial Lamb given for us.
3. *LEVITICUS* - The Book of Holiness - we read of the high priests making sacrifices for the people, and Christ has become our High Priest, making the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins.
4. *NUMBERS* - Wilderness Wanderings – We must never complain against God. God could get them out of Egypt but it was difficult to get Egypt out of them.
5. *DEUTERONOMY*-Reiteration and Reviewing - Moses prophesied of a prophet who would come that would be greater than Himself. Jesus is that Great Prophet.

The Historical Books

6. *JOSHUA* - Possession and Conquest - Joshua met the Captain of the Lord's host. That man is Jesus Christ.
7. *JUDGES* -Seven Cycles of Apostasy, Judgment, and Deliverance - the leaders were judges who delivered God's people, each of them typifying the Lord Jesus.
8. *RUTH* - An Addendum to Judges. - Boaz, the kinsman who redeemed Ruth's inheritance, is a picture of Christ.
9. *FIRST SAMUEL* - Transition From Judges to Kingship - David, the anointed one, pictures Jesus and Jesus is described as being the Son of David.
10. *SECOND SAMUEL* - David's Reign; Expansion of the Nation - when the king is being enthroned, the entire scene is descriptive of the Lord Jesus.

²⁴ Morris, Henry M.. Many Infallible Proofs. Creation Life Publishers: San Diego, California, 1977, pp.38-41

11. **FIRST KINGS** - David's Death; Disruption of the Kingdom - The books of Kings speak of the glory of God filling the temple and the Chronicles describe the glorious coming king, both referring to Jesus, the King of Kings.

12. **SECOND KINGS** -Dispersion—Willful Sin Has a Woeful End – The Lord demands true repentance – The final result of continued sin as always total collapse. His love is so persistent that He will never give up on His people.

13. **FIRST CHRONICLES** - Preparation of the Temple - focuses primarily on the southern kingdom - obedience brings blessings, disobedience brings loss of blessing

14. **SECOND CHRONICLES** - Destruction of the Temple – teaches that the path back to God begins with genuine repentance and a desire to restore God's original pattern

15. **EZRA** - Reconstruction of the Temple and Restoration of the People - Ezra depicts Jesus as the Lord of our fathers.

16. **NEHEMIAH** - Reconstruction of the City – When it comes to accomplishing God's will, if man follows God He will provide ways where none exists.

17. **ESTHER** - Protection of God's People - Esther offers a picture of Christ interceding for His people.

Poetical Books

18. **JOB** - Blessing Through Suffering - Job says clearly that the Redeemer is coming!

19. **PSALMS** - Praise Through Prayer - Christ appears time after time in the Psalms, including when David describes Him as "the Shepherd."

20. **PROVERBS** - Wisdom Through Precept – is the words of wise men concerning the way to conduct one's life in terms of what is right and what is prudent – focuses on everyday life

21. **ECCLESIASTES** - A Search For Purpose – Shows critics that happiness is found only when we revere God as the center of our lives.

22. **SONG OF SOLOMON** - A Royal Wedding - Used to be called "The Song of Songs" – love poetry – to the Jews: was God dealing with His bride - Israel; early Christians saw it as representing the relationship between Christ and His bride – the Church

The Major Prophets

23. **ISAIAH** - The Salvation of Yahweh – is best known for his prophecies detailing the coming Messiah and eras far off in time.

24. **JEREMIAH** - Warnings Against Sin and Judgment - Jeremiah reveals that He will be acquainted with sorrows.

25. **LAMENTATIONS** - A River of Tears – Is the work of one with a broken heart.

26. **EZEKIEL** - They Shall Know That I Am Yahweh – God punishes because of His hatred of Idolatry – Most of His chapters are either quote or alluded to in all but one chapter of Revelation.

27. **DANIEL** - Israel's Ultimate Destiny – refers to the son of man (7:13) – is the Old Testament Book of Revelation – Material from every chapter of Daniel is either quoted or alluded to in Revelation. Only two chapters in Revelation do not refer to something in Daniel

The Minor Prophets

28. **HOSEA** - Persevering Love –The story of a loving husband who desires to have a loving wife

29. **JOEL** - The Coming of the Day of Yahweh - describes Him as the Hope of His people.

30. **AMOS** - Judgment for Abused Privilege - tells us that Jesus is the judge of all nations.

31. OBADIAH - Poetic Justice • warns of the coming eternal kingdom.
32. JONAH - Fleeing From God's Will - offers a picture of Jesus being dead for three days, then coming back to life to preach repentance.
33. MICAH - Who Is Like God? - says that He will be the king over Israel.
- 34 - NAHUM - The Doom of Nineveh – Those who arrogantly resist God's warning will taste His wrath, but those who trust Him will be saved by His love
35. HABAKKUK - Solution to Perplexity – By Paul quoting his verse (2:4) in Rom.1:17 Helps us to see that sometime prior to B.C 605 God had already introduces his principles of justification by faith rather than by works
36. ZEPHANIAH - Blessing Through Judgment - says that He will be the king over Israel.
37. HAGGAI - Encouragement – When God leads in a rebuilding project it will be completed.
38. ZECHARIAH - the Jealousy of Yahweh - is the prophet who speaks of Jesus riding on a colt.
39. MALACHI - Repent and Return - The one who calls Him the Sun of Righteousness.²⁵

*“The wise man who doesn't know God is ignorant.
The strong man who doesn't know God is weak.
The rich man who doesn't know God is poor”*

Adrian Rogers

II. The New Testament Canon

The Role Of New Testament Historicity (historical actuality)

In a brief overview, it is not possible for me to plunge into this division, as perhaps some would like but it essential that we attempt to establish the importance that New Testament Christianity was founded upon historical events rather than merely on ethical teachings. This same proposition holds true with the early church and the spread of Christianity as recorded in the book of Acts and the epistles. For years, critics have attempted to persuade others that others penned much of the New Testament long after the period of the Apostles. Unfortunately, years of this false teaching has taken root and produced so-called scholars of higher criticism within liberal seminaries that teach this very thing.²⁶

Today we have 643 manuscripts from the ancient work of Homer's Iliad. The New Testament has about 5,700 Greek manuscripts in existence. *“This makes it the best textually supported book from antiquity.”*²⁷ The earliest manuscript is that of John. Although this manuscript was discovered in Egypt between 117-138 A.D., it was originally written in Asia Minor and scholars believe that it was penned in 95A.D.

As soon as the early church receive portions of the New Testament, not only did they find themselves proclaiming its riches but they soon discovered that it was absolutely essential to

²⁵ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/27262615/Concise-Old-Testament-Survey-Keathley>
<http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/love-worth-finding/read/articles/a-portrait-of-christ-10200.html>

²⁶ Morris, Op. Cit. p.21

²⁷ Geisler, Op. Cit. p.462

stand in defending its credibility. One easily accessible and extensive testimony of this is easily discernable in the writings of Irenaeus.²⁸ In Book III Against Heresies, he firmly states that the Apostles did not preach or write anything until God endowed them with gifts and power.²⁹ Listen to his words in chapter XI of the same work, “*So firm is the ground upon which these Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and, starting from these [documents], each one of them endeavours to establish his own peculiar doctrine.*”³⁰

Whole New Testament books were available after 200 A.D. and most of the New Testament, including all the Gospels, was available approximately 150 years after the New Testament was finished. This amazing collection is part of the manuscript called the “*Chester Beatty Papyri*” - dated 250 A.D. The period between the earliest New Testament writing to its earliest preserved copy is the best testimony of any ancient writing in the world! It is no wonder that, “*...all of the books of the New Testament have been preserved; no significant portion of any New Testament book is missing.*”³¹

A believer should never view the historicity of Scripture as a challenge to Scripture’s inspiration. The history of Scripture testifies to its inspiration!

For the critics who reject God’s special revelation and His inspiration of Scripture, they may do well to consider the fact that the work and person of Christ can be established through the historical reliability of the New Testament writings, apart from any preconceived personal opinions one may have as to how they arrived to begin with! If this were not enough, opponents of Scripture should plan a trip to their local library and investigate secular sources i.e. Josephus, Roman historians such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny The Younger, just to name a few. These writers, along with many others, record the lives, beliefs, and tortures of nameless believers who were willing to give their all because of a personal life changing experience that occurred the moment they placed their trust in Christ as revealed to them through the written word.

The earliest list of the New Testament Books is that found in the Thirty-ninth letter of Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria) in 367 A.D.

“ In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the Evangelist, saying on my own account: ‘Forasmuch as some have taken in hand to reduce into order for themselves the books termed apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as Divine; to the end that any one who has fallen into error may condemn those who have led him astray; and that he who has continued steadfast in purity may again rejoice, having these things brought to his remembrance.

[Previously he had listed the afore mentioned the Old Testament Scriptures just as we have preciously observed.- Added by me] *Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.*

²⁸ Not only was Irenaeus the Bishop of Lions in 180A.D., but he was a student of Polycarp who had been a student of the Apostle John.

²⁹ Schaff, Philip. and Wace, Henry. (editors) Antet-Nicene Fathers. The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr. Irenaeus. Volume 1. Irenaeus Against Heresies Book III. Chapter 1. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. P.O. Box 3473, Peabody, Massachusetts. 01961-3473. p.414

³⁰ Ibid. Chapter XI. Paragraph 7. p.428

³¹ Geisler Op. Cit.p.463

These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. ³²

The list is exactly the same as we have today. Thirty years later (397 A.D.) the Council of Carthage, which represented the churches in the western part of the Mediterranean world, agreed with the eastern churches upon the canon.

The Reliability Of Our New Testament

The crucial test of any New Testament Book was the writer's relationship to the Lord Jesus. Those best qualified to write the New Testament were the apostles. Jesus must have been prophesying of this event when He declared, **"But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (Jn. 14:26) Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you."** (Jn.16:13-15) One may be asking, "what about Mark, Luke, Acts, Jude, and Hebrews?."

"The details of the historical process by which these books came to be counted as part of Scripture by the early church are scarce, but Mark, Luke, and Acts were commonly acknowledged very early, probably because of the close association of Mark with the apostle Peter, and of Luke (the author of Luke Acts) with the apostle Paul. Similarly, Jude apparently was accepted by virtue of the author's connection with James (see Jude 1) and the fact that he was the brother of Jesus. The acceptance of Hebrews as canonical was urged by many in the church on the basis of an assumed Pauline authorship. But from very early times there were others who rejected Pauline authorship in favor of one or another of several different suggestions. Origen, who died about A.D. 254, mentions various theories of authorship and concludes, 'But who actually wrote the epistle, only God knows.' Thus, the acceptance of Hebrews as canonical was not entirely due to a belief in Pauline authorship. Rather, the intrinsic qualities of the book itself must have finally convinced early readers, as they continue to convince believers today, that whoever its human author may have been, its ultimate author can only have been God himself. The majestic glory of Christ shines forth from the pages of the epistle to the Hebrews so brightly that no believer who reads it seriously should ever want to question its place in the canon." ³³

Ultimately, our assurance in having the correct and complete New Testament canon rests upon our confidence in God's faithfulness. Countless verses throughout both the Old and New Testaments attest to God's endless love for man, His desire to redeem, and then to communicate, educate and equip man for worship, ministry, and eternity. God's primary tools are His Spirit and His Word. Since God is the only real God, and He alone controls history to accomplish His purpose but He will never leave, forsake, nor confuse His people, especially when it comes to having a personal understanding of His will!

To reaffirm the value God places upon His people having His complete Word, one should review the severity of punishments in **Revelation 22:18-19** for anyone adding or taking away from God's Word.

In addition, we must never underestimate the churches' acceptance of our complete New Testament canon. From the church's conception through the end of the first century, the indwelling presence God's Holy Spirit within His family members not only testified to the source and reliability of these same New Testament books but they were whole heartedly embraced by this new ever-growing God-empowered organism! From those early days to our day, those same precious inspired Words of God, scribed in the language of the commoner, is

³² www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.xxv.iii.iii.xxv.html

³³ Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology. jointly published by Inter-Varsity Press, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, Great Britain, and Zondervan Publishing House, 5300 Patterson Avenue S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. 2000. p.62

still believed by Christians, loved, taught, reproduced, constantly changes lives, stands when all else is abandoned, and it is still defended, even to the point of death!

You and I may be assured that no book, or books, of our New, or Old, Testament needs to be removed nor are we missing any!



II. THE BIBLE'S UNIQUENESS

One April morning, several years ago, we awoke to discover that an unexpected ice storm had left its presence a few hours earlier. I grabbed the camera, pried open the door, walked a few yards, and then made a quick trip down a few steps. When I finally managed to stand up, I discovered this most unusual sight just inches from my nose. Since running was out of the question, my next urge was to scream. Suddenly I realized that I was inches from possibly the most unique cluster of lilac buds I would ever witness in my life! In a couple of hours, the ice was gone and everything was back to normal.

Unlike the incased and captured lilac buds, the uniqueness of our Bible has never melted away with time. In this article my desire is to set forth some of the major unique traits of our Bible. My objective is to gather and glean from what I consider to be some of the best material available on the subject, assemble it in some systematic fashion, and trust God for the rest. We will examine the Bible's uniqueness in that it reflects continuity, begins with special creation, defends only one God, explains the origin and cure for evil, contains miraculous supernatural prophecy, sets forth the highest of ethical standards, contains scientific insights, supernatural confirmations, has influenced the literary world, is abundant in its translations and circulation, and carries a special ability to produces the same testimony with each changed life

I. The Bible Is Unique In The Way Its Structure Reflects Continuity.

In the midst of an ever-changing world of craziness, only when one examines the structure of the Bible's canon can he see continuity on a scale unknown to the mind of man! There is no doubt but that our Bible was in a continuous state of development, completely orchestrated by God, from beginning to end.

The Book of God was written over a period of about sixteen hundred years (B.C.1500 - 100A.D), covering many generations and it all was accomplished on three different continents - Asia, Africa, and Europe. God used approximately forty different writers from every conceivable lifestyle. In this assembly we find Moses (a political leader trained in the universities of Egypt), Peter (a fisherman), Amos (a herdsman), Joshua (a military general), Nehemiah (a cupbearer to the king of Persia), Daniel (prime minister in the courts of Babylon), Luke (a physician), Solomon (a king), Matthew (a tax collector), and Paul (rabbi and tentmaker). In addition, we must never overlook the prophets, peasants, philosophers, scholars, poets, musicians, farmers, and many others, some of whom are very obscure.

Not only was the Bible written by many over a vast span of time separated by continents but also it was written in different places and at different times on these continents. We find Moses writing in a wilderness, Jeremiah in a dungeon, Daniel on a hillside and in a palace, Paul inside prison walls, Luke while traveling, John in exile on the isle of Patmos, David in the time of war, Solomon during the times of peace, and Ezekiel while in exile.

God had the writers at work during times when they were in the heights of joy while others wrote from in the midst of sorrow, discouragement, and what appeared to be hopeless situations.

God used three different languages to accomplish His plan of recording. The first was Hebrew - the common language of the Old Testament and is referred to as “the Jews Language” (II Ki.26-28) and, secondly, we find that part of the Book of Daniel was written in Aramaic. This ancient

language was the common tongue of the Near East (6th to the 4th century B.C.) until the time of Alexander the Great. Many scholars believe that the Aramaic language came into existence during the time of Daniel. Thirdly, due to the success of Alexander the Great, Greek became the universal language at the time of Christ and throughout the New Testament world.

In spite of all the different factors woven into the Canon of our Bible, we still see harmony and continuity. For example – In Genesis we note a paradise lost yet in Revelation, we have a paradise regained. In addition, whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation. If one were to compare the continuity of the Bible with any other writings of men it is impossible to imagine what we would see. Just think if we were able to invite ten authors from one style of life, from one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language, and ask them to speak on just one controversial subject! Nevertheless, God accomplished a feat much greater than this in His Word!³⁴

The Bible “is just what it is designed to be, namely, a homogeneous, uninterrupted, harmonious, and orderly account of the whole history of God’s dealing with man.”³⁵

II. The Bible Is Unique In That It Is The Only Book That Starts With Special Creation.

All ancients have put forth an effort to come up with one form or another of a creation story, As Dr. Henry Morris, from the Institute for Creation Research, so wonderfully points out, they all had one common thread of failure, *Thus, the famous Babylonian cosmogony, Enuma Elish, began with a primeval chaotic mixture of three kinds of waters. The early Greek myths likewise began with an initial state of indiscriminate fusion of all things. Roman writers such as Lucretius assumed that in the beginning was a universal blind interplay of atoms, the Orphic myths suppose that the universe developed out of a primeval world-egg, and so on. Modern theories of evolution supposedly are more sophisticated, but they likewise begin with eternal matter in one form or another. Thus, no extra-Biblical cosmogony, ancient or modern, is able to go beyond the present order of things to a real first cause. In effect, therefore, they all end by confessing that they really do not know how the universe began.*³⁶ In the Koran, we still note a strange twist on things. “We first created man from an essence of clay: then placed him, a living germ, in a safe enclosure. The germ We made a clot of blood, and the clot a lump of flesh. This We fashioned into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, thus bringing forth another creation. Blessed be God, the noblest of creators.”³⁷ Although much may be made of the previous quote, please permit me to draw attention to only two perplexing things. Since Muslims believe only in one god, who, pray tell, are the “We” and where did they come from? Secondly, since a footnote in my copy of the Koran denotes “in a safe enclosure” as being “The womb”, whose womb is this and where did she come from? On and on we could go! It might do us all well to remember that the

³⁴ Much of the above information was gleaned from: McDowell, Josh. Evidence That Demands A Verdict. Here’s Life Publishers, Inc. San Bernardino, California. 92402. Vol. I. p.15 or from www.executableoutlines.com/top/unique.htm

³⁵ Chafer, Lewis, Sperry. Systematic Theology. Kregel Publications: P.O. Box 2607, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49501, volume 1. 1976. p.29

³⁶ Morris, Henry M.. Many Infallible Proofs. Creation Life Publishers: San Diego, California, 1977. p.11

³⁷ The Koran. Translated with notes by N.J. Dawood. Published by Penguin Books USA, Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014. p.241. Sura 23:14

Jewish Old Testament Canon³⁸ of Scriptures was completed a long time before the birth of the orphaned mystic - Mohammed.

Only the Bible starts with special creation. **“In the beginning God... (Gen 1:1) ”**

In the early verses of Genesis, we find a number of phrases beginning with the word **“Let”**. **“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. (Psa. 33:6)**

Whenever the beginning was, God was there and He easily spoke everything into existence!

All man-made religions and philosophies reflect man's ignorance and feeble attempts of solving some of life's deepest questions. We are programmed to believe that all things, as we know them, must have a beginning but because man cannot reach a mutual agreement as to how things came to be what are we to do and believe? For us to believe the Bible it is needful to acknowledge the existence the God we cannot define or explain apart from accepting the Bible for what it is. The theologian Louis Berkhof, explained the value of building upon the foundation of sound Biblical creation when he stated, *“It stresses the fact that God is the origin of all things, and that all things belong to Him and are subject to Him.”*³⁹ If man finds himself accepting the early chapters of Genesis, he must deal with the rest of the story about man's fall, his condition, and God's solution. If, on the other hand, one accepts creation as set forth in the Scriptures, he will then face exposure to the devil's plans and man's sinful condition. Thus, it is no small wonder that this adversary has and will continue to utilize every possible theory and new discovery in an attempt to exalt the ideas of man above the inspired, inerrant, and preserved facts of God! After all, he has always wanted another in God's seat – if not him permanently, than anyone or any theory temporally! Thus, there are only two ways – those of man or those of God. Even today, man is still digging, theorizing, and publishing works of ignorance and personal theory. Whereas God, on the other hand, says, **“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. (Heb.11:3)”** - end of story.

III. The Bible Is Unique In Its Defense Of One God.

Sometimes the general reader often overlooks the importance of the above statement yet; the Bible is quick to introduce its reader to this most profound axiom. **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen.1:1)”** The word **“God”** (אלהים - el-o-heem') used here describes God as being the supreme triune Godhead.⁴⁰

In the garden of Eden Adam and Eve worshipped the one true God but eventually mankind choose to disobey God and paid dearly. Although they sincerely repented and served God the rest of their lives, consequently, the sinful nature had sprouted within and would thereafter be inherited by every soul born on the face of the earth. One aspect of this sinful nature is that it is prone to many types of worship. This is not necessarily worship in the Sunday morning go to church stuff but, rather, it is worship in the sense that things, habits, etc. control our lives to the point where one rarely, if ever, finds themselves desiring to chase after the true God. Although this may be fun and exciting, a materialistic and sensual life style, driven by the sinful nature, will never discover lasting satisfaction or fulfillment in life, let alone being pleasing to the great

³⁸ Please refer to the author's work - **“II. Our canon Of Scripture”**

³⁹ Berkhof, L. **Systematic Theology**. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506 fourteenth printing, March 1976. P.126

⁴⁰ For a greater study of our triune God, please refer to the author's previous work – **“A Glimpse Of Old Testament Theology”**. This fifteen page work may be found on www.rogerluther.com

“I Am” (Ex.3:14) of the Bible. Not only is this depraved and rebellious condition quickly discernable in one form or another within the lives of every soul who walked across the pages of approximately four thousand one hundred years of Biblical narrative, it is still very much alive in our lives! When God gave His ten commandments to His chosen people, listen to the very first thing He addressed, **“I [am] the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness [of any thing] that [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God,...; (Ex.20:2-5)”** Years later God would declare through the old prophet Isaiah, **“I, [even] I, [am] the LORD; and beside me [there is] no saviour. (Isa.43:11).”**

To experience victory over this condition man needs to be rescued by someone, or something, greater than himself or another man, since they, too, are in the same condition. What is the solution? The answer is simple – God has the solution and it is His redemption offered through having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, folks were redeemed by trusting in what God had revealed to them about the coming Messiah (Christ). The New Testament records His coming, accomplishments for us, His ascension, and His coming again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The Messiah Jesus told Thomas, **“...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.(Jn.14:6)”** and Paul wrote to Timothy, **“[there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (ITi.2:5)”**

At one time King Solomon was the wealthiest man in the ancient world. Even greater than peace, a might army, and immense treasuries of gold, his greatest wealth that caused his enemies to shutter, God’s name to be praised, and His will to be accomplished was his commitment to the one God, God’s wisdom, and God’s blessings from obedience. Later in life, Solomon watched everything little by little crumble around him. The Bible makes it clear what happened. **“And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, [that] his wives turned away his heart after other gods: (I Ki. 11:3-4)”** Note that **“other gods”** enter the picture. The translators used a little **“g”** to denote that this did not include the true God. Even though he may have believed in the one God, his depraved sinful and liberal nature, now in complete control, saw nothing wrong with accepting and practicing other forms of lifestyle and worship. **“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (Jas. 2:19)”** At this point in time Solomon was accustomed to treating God as one of the group and God wanted nothing to do with it. Sometime in his life, though, Solomon wrote his profound summary of life - **“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man. (Ecc. 12:13)”**

We must always remember that the Bible does was not written to prove the existence of God but rather it was compiled with the assumption that a reader already knows of God’s existence. For the one who professes atheism God has preserved a few selected Words. Although any common preschooler understands that in order to war against something one must first acknowledge its existence, the Bible decrees: **The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, [there is] none that doeth good. (Psa. 14:1) Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (Jas 2:19)”** Therefore, for the professing atheist, regardless if he believes it or not, the Bible summarizes his condition before all of Heaven and earth - not only is this poor soul immersed in a sinful God-hating lifestyle, but also his foolish statements reflect a degree of ignorance that exceeds demons. Even demons would not attempt to exalt themselves above God to deny His existence! The Bible is God’s special unique divine revelation revealing Himself and His will for His earth and this includes us.

Note carefully what the bible of a current cult states in John 1:1: “*In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.*”⁴¹ In fact, their entire customized translation reflects their rejection of The Lord Jesus Christ as being God in the flesh as revealed in the New Testament! Thank God our Bible says, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** (Jn. 1:1)”

Our Bible most assuredly defends the existence of one God, one earth, one species of man in need of one redemption plan, and one perfect supplier of this perfect redemption – Himself. Not only did God finalize His complete redemptive plan but also His perfect love and grace extended it in our direction! “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** (Jn.3:16)”

The following is a parallel between the structures of the New Testament, as we know it, and a approximate chronological arrangement as the early Church may have received and read them.

<u>Today</u>	<u>Probably New testament Chronological Arrangement</u>
1. Matthew - 63-64 A.D.	1. James –48-49 A.D.
2. Mark – 60-65 A.D.	2. I Thessalonians - 52 A.D.
3. Luke - 58-65 A.D.	3. II. Thessalonians - 53 A.D.
4. John - 85-95 A.D.	4. I Corinthians –55 A.D.
5. Acts - 58-65 A.D.	5. II. Corinthians –56 A.D.
6. Romans - 85-95 A.D.	6. Romans –57 A.D.
7. I. Corinthians - 55 A.D.	7. Galatians –58 A.D.
8. II. Corinthians –56 A.D.	8. Philemon – 61-62 A.D.
9. Galatians –58 A.D.	9. Philippians – 62 –A.D.
10. Ephesians - 61-62 A.D.	10. Ephesians - 61-62 A.D.
11. Philippians – 62 –A.D.	11. Colossians – 61-62 A.D.
12. Colossians – 61-62 A.D.	12. Hebrews – 63-64 A.D.
13. I Thessalonians - 52 A.D.	13. I. Peter – 64 A.D.
14. II Thessalonians - 53 A.D.	14. Luke – 58-65 A.D.
15. I. Timothy – 64-66 A.D.	15. Acts – 58-65 A.D.
16. II. Timothy – 64 or 67 A.D.	16. Matthew – 60-65 A.D.
17. Titus – 64-66 A.D.	17. Mark – 60-65 A.D.
18. Philemon – 61-62 A.D.	18. I Timothy – 64-66 A.D.
19. Hebrews – 63-64 A.D.	19. Titus – 64-66 A.D.
20. James –48-49 A.D.	20. II. Timothy – 64 or 67 A.D.
21. I. Peter – 64 A.D.	21. II. Peter – 66-67 A.D.
22. II. Peter – 66-67 A.D.	22. Jude – 66-67 A.D.
23. I. John – 85-90 A.D.	23. I John. – 85-90 A.D.
24. II John – 85-90 A.D.	24. II. John – 85-90 A.D.
25. III. John – 85-90 A.D.	25. III. John – 85-90 A.D.
26. Jude – 66-67 A.D.	26. John – 85-95 A.D.

⁴¹ The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. Watchtower Bible And tract Society of New York, Inc. p.1151
(This is the Bible of The Jehovah’s Witnesses)

27. Revelation – 96-98 A.D.

27. Revelation – 96-98 A.D.

<u>Book</u>	<u>Writer</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Those Addressed</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Key Thought</u>
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The Synoptic Gospels

Matthew	- Matthew	\ Judea	\ Jewish Christians	\ 60-65 A.D.	\ Jesus as King
Mark	- Mark	\ Rome	\ Roman Christians	\ 60-65 A.D.	\ Jesus as Servant
Luke	- Luke	\ Caesarea	\ Greek Christians	\ 58-65 A.D.	\ The Great Physician

Fourth Gospel

John	- John	\ Ephesus	\ Christian Church	\ 90-100 A.D	\ God in the flesh
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<u>Acts</u>	- Luke	\ Rome	\ Gentile World	\ 58-65 A.D.	\ apostolic churches
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The Pauline Epistles***Earliest Epistles***

I. Thessalonians	\ Corinth	\ Thessalonian Christians	\ 52 A.D.	\ second advent
II. Thessalonians	\ ..	\ ..	\ 53 A.D.	\ correction of 2 nd advent details

Mid-Ministry Epistles

Galatians	\ Corinth or Ephesus	\ churches in Galatia	\ 58 A.D.	\ salvation by faith
I. Corinthians	\ Macedonia	\ church in Corinth	\ 55 A.D.	\ resurrection of Jesus
II. Corinthians	\ ..	\ ..	\ 56 A.D.	\ defense of apostleship
Romans	\ Corinth	\ Christians in Rome	\ 57 A.D.	\ power of sin and grace

Prison Epistles

Philemon	\ Rome	\ Onesimus's master	\ 61-62 A.D.	\ slavery or freedom
Philippians	\ Caesarea or Rome	\ Church at Philippi	\ 62 A.D.	\ spiritual encouragement
Ephesians	\ Rome	\ church at Ephesus	\ 61-62 A.D.	\ unity of Christians
Colossians	\ Rome	\ church at Colosse	\ 61-62 A.D.	\ heretical views

Pastoral Epistles

I. Timothy	\ Macedonia	\ Timothy	\ 64-66 A.D.	\ church officers & duties
II. Timothy	\ Rome	\ Timothy	\ 64 or 67 A.D.	\ Paul's coming death
Titus	\ Macedonia or Greece	\ Titus of Crete	\ 64-66 A.D.	\ persons for church offices

The General Epistles

Hebrews	- Paul	\ Palestine	\ Jewish Christians	\ 63-64 A.D.	\ high priesthood of Jesus
James	- James	\ Jerusalem	\ the twelve scattered tribes	\ 48-49 A.D.	\ duties: prayer, faith, works
I. Peter	- Peter	\ Babylon (sometimes a code word for Rome)	\ dispersed Jews	\ 64 A.D.	\ encouragement
II. Peter	- ..	\ unknown	\ the church at large	\ 66-67 A.D.	\ new heavens and new earth
I. John	- John	\ in Judea	\ the general church	\ 85-90 A.D.	\ Love of Jesus and the Brethren
II. John	..	\ Ephesus	\ elect lady and children	\ 85-90 A.D.	\ loyal obedience to Jesus
III. John	- ..	\ Ephesus	\ beloved Gaius	\ 85-90 A.D.	\ the state of the church
Jude	- Jude	\ unknown	\ believers in general	\ 66-67 A.D.	\ defense of the faith

The Apocalypse

Revelation	- John	\ Patmos	\ seven churches of Asia	\ 96-98 A.D.	\ consummation of all things ⁴²
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⁴² Modified from The Unger's Bible Dictionary. Moody Press: 829 North La Salle Drive Chicago, Illinois 60610. 1985. Pp. 232-233

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *[in whom]* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. 5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *[and]* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. 8 I *[am]* the LORD: that *[is]* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. 10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, *[and]* his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *[their voice]*, the villages *[that]* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands. 13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, *[and]* refrained myself: *[now]* will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16 And I will bring the blind by a way *[that]* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *[that]* they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye *[are]* our gods. 18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

“Every word of God *[is]* pure: he *[is]* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” (Pr. 30:5-6)

“All scripture *[is]* given by inspiration of God, and *[is]* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Tim.3:16-17)

IV. The Bible Is Unique in It's Explanation Of The Origin of And The Cure For Evil.

Believers cannot imagine what our little world would be like, apart from an understanding in this area yet, people all around us live as if there is no concrete answer. The Bible is the only book that records in detail the origin, consequences, and finalization of evil. Apart from this understanding, life remains a helpless and hopeless conglomeration of unexplainable chaos.

A. It all started with one rebellious cherub.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *[how]* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isa.14:2-15)

B. Ezekiel continues to reflect his presence, character, and work on earth..

“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *[was]* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou *[art]* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *[so]*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. (Eze.28:11-14)”

C. King David's chief musician knew the danger of his influence in music

“<To the chief Musician, Altaschith, A Psalm *[or]* Song of Asaph.> Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, *[unto thee]* do we give thanks: for *[that]* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare. When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high: speak *[not with]* a stiff neck. For promotion *[cometh]* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God *[is]* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. (Psa.75:1-7)”

D. A bit on the true description of a cherub by focusing on the face

“Also out of the midst thereof *[came]* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *[was]* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet *[were]* straight feet; and the sole of their feet *[was]* like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And *[they had]* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings *[were]* joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. (Eze.1:5-10)



Strangely, Ezekiel later records – “And every one had four faces: the first face *[was]* the face of a cherub, and the second face *[was]* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. (Eze.10:14).”

Thus, the primary face of a cherub to Ezekiel was that of a ox.

E. Since the time of expulsion from The Garden of Eden, humankind (especially the Jews) has known what a cherub looks like. God's people throughout the period of temple worship were continually using the cherub's total resemblance in one way or another.

F. Although this evil cherub will be bound for one thousand years (Rev.20:2), his final destination will be that of eternity in the lake of fire with all who reject Christ (Rev.20:10,15).

A friend recently e- mailed one of the cleverest bits of mail that I have received in a while. Although I do not know the original author, I would like to thank Bill.

RECALL NOTICE:

The Maker of all human beings (**GOD**) is recalling all units manufactured, regardless of make or year, due to a serious defect in the primary and central component of the heart.

This is due to a malfunction in the original prototype units code named Adam and Eve, resulting in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units. This defect has been technically termed "Sub-sequential Internal Non-Morality," or more commonly known as **S.I.N.**, as it is primarily expressed.

Some of the symptoms include:

1. Loss of direction
2. Foul vocal emissions
3. Amnesia of origin
4. Lack of peace and joy
5. Selfish or violent behavior
6. Depression or confusion in the mental component
7. Fearfulness
8. Idolatry
9. Rebellion

The Manufacturer, who is neither liable nor at fault for this defect, is providing factory-authorized repair and service free of charge to correct this defect.

The Repair Technician, JESUS, has most generously offered to bear the entire burden of the staggering cost of these repairs. There is no additional fee required

The number to call for repair in all areas is: P-R-A-Y-E-R.

Once connected, please upload your burden of SIN through the *REPENTANCE* procedure. Next, download **ATONEMENT** from the Repair Technician, **Jesus**, into the heart component.

No matter how big or small the **SIN** defect is, **Jesus** will replace it with:

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self control

Please see the operating manual, the B.I.B.L.E. (**B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth) for further details on the use of these fixes.

WARNING: Continuing to operate the human being unit without correction voids any manufacturer warranties, exposing the unit to dangers and problems too numerous to list and will

result in the human unit being permanently impounded. For free emergency service, call on **Jesus**.

DANGER: The human being units not responding to this recall action will have to be scrapped in the furnace. The SIN defect will not be permitted to enter Heaven so as to prevent contamination of that facility. Thank you for your attention!

“GOD”

P.S. Please assist where possible by notifying others of this important recall notice, and you may contact the Father any time by 'Knee mail'!

Because He Lives!

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (II.2Chr7:14)”

Once one accepts what the Bible teaches about the personal sinful nature and its eternal consequences, then not only is the individual ready for God's redemptive solution but, he, thereafter understands how everything fits in place and makes sense. *“It is conceivable that man might dream of a utopia, but what human could devise a plan of salvation and cause it to be successful in every instance without exception?”*⁴³

V. The Bible Is Unique In Its Scope Of Miraculous Supernatural Prophecy

From the earliest stargazers in Babylon to the modern day charlatans (psychics) man has always desired to know the present and the future. Not only are man's prognosticators always in some way connected with money and power, their accuracies are slim, and their sources, if they have any, of credibility to begin with, are not God approved. The prophecies of God, on the other hand, cover the whole scope of existence from beginning to a new beginning and everything in between. Jesus has already purchased sin's price and the Bible's eternal truths are available for all who are courageous to read and willing enough to believe and trust in what they read.

It has been estimated that approximately 2/3 of our Bible is prophecy. Within its leaves, we find history revealed through several different periods (dispensations) of time. Although scholars have debated about their numbers, they appear to be as follows: **innocence** (from creation to Adam), **conscience** (from Adam to the flood), **human government** (from the flood to Abraham), **promise** (from the call of Abraham to the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai), **law** (from Mt. Sinai through the life of Christ), **grace** (this period extends from Christ's death till He returns for His bride.), **the tribulation period** (a brief time of seven years), **the kingdom rule** (starts with the second advent of Christ to the Mt. of Olives and runs for one thousand years), and, finally, we conclude with **a new heaven and earth**. Secondly, the Bible deals with only three physical groups (Jews, gentiles, and the church of God [ICor.10:32]) and two spiritual groups - the redeemed [congregation of the living] and, obviously, the un-redeemed (congregation of the dead -Prov.21:16]

In the midst of all this we find, God, man, God's complete revelation of prophecies (or forth telling of future events.etc.) and the devil.

⁴³ Chafer. Ibid. pp. 26-27

The core figure of prophecy is Christ. The Bible contains nearly three hundred predictions that focus in detail upon the many aspects of our wonderful Savior. Past-fulfilled predictions happened with perfect accuracy. The odds of just one being 100 % accurate is overwhelming! For Instance, take one little verse in Micah written in approximately B.C. 713 – “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *[though]* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *[yet]* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *[that is]* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *[have been]* from of old, from everlasting. Mic. 5:2” Hundreds of years later we find this prophecy filled to the letter in - “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, (Mat 2:1); And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) Luk. 2:5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. Luk 2:6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. Luk 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Lu.2:4-7)”

Years ago, I remember reading of a mathematician who attempted to put the above prophecy and its fulfillment in perspective for us. He said the odds of this prophecy happening in every detail would be equivalent to covering the state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars, bury a gold dollar somewhere in the state, let any given person travel to their place of choice within the state, push his hand into the coin-covered land, and pull out the gold dollar with only one chance to do so.

When focusing on Bible prophecy, two fundamental factors are needful to remember. First, the fact that all fulfilled prophecies were 100% accurate guarantees the same for all the rest. After all, they were inspired by God! Secondly, the central figure and subject in prophecy is the Lord Jesus Christ!

VI. The Bible Is Unique In Its Ethical Teaching

Since we may consider an ethic as a distinct discipline dealing with good, evil, and moral duty, we may safely assume that ethics is simply a multiplication of the same ability.

Ancient pagan religions had little concern with morals. If anything, many times they promoted acts of immorality as acts of worship. Even though modern day false religions may appear to promote morality and civilized treatment to our fellow man, at best, it is only surface, legalistic, and for show. Listen to what God told Noah, “... I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *[is]* evil from his youth... (Gen 8:21) Scripture is full of negative things about man's natural nature. For instance – “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *[and]* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *[all]* together become filthy: *[there is]* none that doeth good, no, not one. ; ; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Rom.3:10-11,23) Even though man may be born with a drive to worship something or someone, as hard as he may try, his imperfections prohibit him from designing a flawless code of conduct. In one way or another man will always seek to advance and protect self before another. If a society is full of folks like this – well, we see the obvious. At best, what we may consider a sincere and civilized man, may in reality simply be a man who has developed a disciplined level of tolerance for another, nothing more, nothing less.

Only the Bible possesses ethical teaching that cross centuries of time, languages, cultures, assorted religions, and generational gaps! Since ethics are the result of and are always based upon doctrine, it is no accident that the Bible's primary doctrine is that of redemption! In redemption, the inward man is regenerated with the Spirit of God and from that time onward possesses a craving for the things of God as revealed in His Word. Therefore, through true

Biblical redemption, sinful man is restored to a position of fellowship and relationship to the one true Holy God with all the rights and privileges thereof. Only through experiencing God's redemption and assuming responsibility for following God as revealed in His Word, can man truly understand and experience how to think, act, and feel about God, himself, evil, and his fellow man.

"Still another feature of this general subject, which, however, is only remotely related to the problem of morals, inquires how Jews were steeped in Judaism could have originated such a Book as the New Testament. There is hardly a feature of Christianity which the Jew does not naturally resist. What could be more repulsive to a Jew than the sentiment, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12)? Was not Judaism from God and was it not practiced for fifteen hundred years under the divine favor? Because of these indisputable facts, the Jew clutched the elements of Judaism to his heart, and still clutches them. The gospel abruptly broke in upon this religious monopoly and its consequence isolation."⁴⁴ Of course, the only answer for this is a changed life through God's divine redemption that brings with it the potential of experiencing His code of conduct!

VII. The Bible Is Unique In Its Scientific Insights

Although our Bible is not a science book, it is a book containing a lot of science.

In my opinion, the late Dr. Henry M. Morris has assembled one of the best lists available anywhere on this subject. Most of the following information is from his list.⁴⁵

<u>Science</u>	<u>Phenomenon or Process</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
<u>Hydrology</u>	<i>(a science dealing with the properties, distribution, and circulation of water)</i>	
	Hydrologic Cycle	Eccl.1: 7; Isa.55:10
	Evaporation	Psa.135:7; Jer.10: 13
	Condensation Nuclei <i>(an announcement of things condensed before they were fully formed)</i>	Pro.8:26
	Condensation	Job 26:8; 37:11,16
	Precipitation	Job 36:27,28
	Run-off	Job 28:10
	Oceanic Reservoir	Psa.33:7
	Snow	Job 38:22; Psa.147:16
	Hydrologic Balance <i>(proper distribution)</i>	Isa.40: 12; Job 28:24-26
<u>Geology</u>	Principle of Isostasy <i>(equilibrium)</i>	Isa.40: 12; Psa.104:5-9
	Shape of Earth	Isa. 40:22; Psa.103:12
	Rotation of Earth	Job 38:12,14
	Gravitation	Job 26:7; 38:6
	Rock Erosion	Job 14:18,19
	Glacial Period	Job 38:29,30
	Uniformitarianism <i>(A continuation as from the beginning)</i>	II Pe. 3:4
<u>Astronomy</u>	Size of Universe	Isa.55:9; Job 22:12; Jer.31:37
	Number of Stars	Jer.33:22; Gen.22: 17
	Variety of Stars	I Cor.15:41
	Stars and Star Clusters	Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8
	Precision of Orbits	Jer. 31:35,36
<u>Meteorology</u>	Circulation of Atmosphere	Eccl.1:6
	Protective Effect of Atmosphere	Isa. 40:22
	Oceanic Origin of Rain	Eccl.1: 7

⁴⁴ Chafer, Lewis, Sperry. Systematic Theology. Kregel Publications: P.O. Box 2607, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49501, volume 1. 1976, pp. 28-29

⁴⁵ Morris, Henry M.. Many Infallible Proofs. Creation Life Publishers: San Diego, California, 1977. pp.241-243 (*italics was added by me*)

Biology

Relation of Electricity to Rain	Jer. 10:13
Blood Circulation	Lev. 17: 11
Psychotherapy (<i>forms of mental treatment</i>)	Prov.16:24; 17:22
Biogenesis and Stability (<i>ongoing biology of various generations</i>)	Gen.1: 11 ,21 ,25
Uniqueness of Man	Gen.1 :26
Chemical Nature of Flesh	Gen. 1:11,24-27; 3:19; I Pet.1:24,25
Mass-Energy Equivalence	Heb.1:3; Col.1: 17
Source of Energy for Earth	Gen.1:14,17; Psa.9:6
(possibly) Atomic Disintegration	II Pet. 3: 10
(possibly) Radio Waves	Job 38:35

Physics

Several years ago, I had the privilege of reviewing the introduction and first chapter of one of the most fascinating books I have ever seen. From both a Christian and secular perspective, it could very well be one of the most authoritative and unique books of its kind! The book is entitled *Stones Of The Bible* and the exploration and consulting geologist from Zion Oil and Gas, Stephen E. Pierce, is its author. Time only permits us to glance briefly at the following chart.

TABLE 1B BIBLICAL(KJV) STONES AND ROCKS			
STONE	TIMES MENTIONED	STONE	TIMES MENTIONED
GOLD	361	CARBUNCLE	4
SILVER	282	ALABASTAR	3
IRON	89	PITCH	5
SALT	34	AMBER	3
BRIMSTONE	14	JACINTH	2
ONYX	11	BDELLIUM*	2
SAPPHIRE	9	LIGURE*	2
BERYL	8	NITRE	2
JASPER	7	PEARL	2
FLINT	5	CORAL (RED)	2
EMERALD	5	SLIME (TAR)	2
TOPAZ	5	SARDONYX	1
CRYSTAL	5	CHALCEDONY	1
DIAMOND	4	CHRYSOPTASUS	1
SARDIUS	4	SARDINE	1
AMETHYST	3	COPPER (ELAT STONE)	1
AGATE	3	CHRYSOLEITE	1
CLAY	30	ANTIMONY (GALENA)**	1
MARBLE	4	CHALKSTONE	1
Note: *Origin is uncertain. ** Not mentioned directly			

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⁴⁶ Pierce,E.,Stephen. *Stones Of The Bible*. True Potential Publishing: PO Box 904 Traverler's Rest, SC.,28690, p.9
<http://tppress.com>

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!..” (Rom.11:33)

VIII. The Bible Is Unique In Its Supernatural Confirmations

Anyone who spends any time within the pages of the Bible will soon discover that it is the original supernatural book! One will never find another book using and setting forth miracles in such an integral manner as does the Bible.

We may safely define a miracle as, “a work wrought by a divine power for a divine purpose by means beyond the reach of man.”⁴⁷

Even though miracles are proofs of divine inspiration, they also form a revelation in themselves – for instance, the very first verse reveals the existence of God and begins with a miracle. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen. 1:1)”

Who Preformed Bible Miracles?

Since the expulsion of the first family from the garden of Eden, the devil and his followers have done everything within their limited power and ability to counterfeit what God does, especially in the area of the miraculous.

Serpents - “(Ex.7:8-13) And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast [it] before Pharaoh, [and] it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.”

Water To Blood - “(Ex.7:19) And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and [that] there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in [vessels of] wood, and in [vessels of] stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that [were] in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that [were] in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that [was] in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said.”

Frogs - “(Ex.8:1-7) And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. And if thou refuse to let [them] go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants. 5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. 6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. 7 And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.”

During the reign of the anti-Christ the miraculous of evil will exceedingly multiply at an astounding rate and degree attempting to deceive the remaining unsaved, both Jews and Gentiles! “(2Th. 2:7-10) For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [Even him], whose coming is after the

⁴⁷ Lockyer, Herbert. All The Miracles of The Bible. Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, 1961. p.13

working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Although evil and its counterfeits seem to abound, our supreme God reigns with myriads of good angels at his disposal. Scriptures repeatedly records their involvement in the realm of the miraculous - and in events surrounding the birth of our Lord!

Later on, God delegated His power through human agents in order to perform the miraculous in obedience to His will and His Word. We find examples in Moses, Aaron, Samson, Elijah, Peter, Paul, and the list goes on.

As soon as we turn from Malachi to Matthew, we discover that that God’s miracles continue on. All things about the Holy Spirit, past, current, and future, involves the miraculous – especially when one considers the work of the new birth (Jn.3:1-18). No greater miracles are recorded than those preformed by The Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greatest Miracle Worker

The Miracles of Our Lord were never for display but rather to relieve the needy and to teach that He possessed the power to forgive sins.

“(Mark 2:3-11) And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *[it]* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this *[man]* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *[Thy]* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”

On the mount of transfiguration – “(Mark 9:7) “And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.”

Peter said on that famous day in Acts, ““Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (Act 2:22).”

Miracles referred to by at least two major religions

The Jewish historian, Josephus (37-100 A.D.), although not a believer himself, records for all posterity, “*Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.*”⁴⁸

Although the Koran in no way presents Jesus as does our New Testament, it does acknowledge his historical miracle working existence as a prophet. “*One day God will gather all the apostles and ask them: 'How were you received?' They will reply: 'We have no knowledge. You alone know what is hidden.' God will say: 'Jesus, son of Mary, remember the favour I have bestowed on you and on your mother: how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so that you preached to men in your cradle and in the prime of manhood; how I instructed you in the Book and in wisdom, in the Torah and in the Gospel; how by My leave you fashioned from clay the likeness of a bird and breathed into it so that, by My leave, it became a living bird; how, by My leave, you healed the blind man and the leper, and by My leave restored the dead to life; how I protected you from the Israelites when you had come*

⁴⁸ Whiston, William. Works Of Josephus. Baker Book House: 2768 East Paris Avenue, SE. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1977. Volume IV of IV Volumes. Antiquities of the Jews. Book XVIII. Chapter 3. Section 3. p.11

to them with clear signs: when those of them who disbelieved declared: "This is but plain sorcery"; how when I enjoined the disciples to believe in Me and in My apostle they replied: 'We believe; bear witness that we submit.'"⁴⁹

In spite of the fact that the Koran claims Mohammad to be God's final messenger, Mohammad refused to do miracles and had the following penned for all who questioned, "They ask: 'Why has no sign come down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'God is well able to send down a sign.' But most of them are ignorant men. All the beasts that roam the earth and all the birds that wing their flight are but communities like your own. We have left out nothing in the Book. They shall all be gathered before their Lord. Deaf and dumb are those that deny Our revelations: they blunder about in darkness. God confounds whom He will, and guides to the right path whom He pleases."⁵⁰

Deity denied by at least two major cults

The great late Biblical apologists Walter B. Martin states the following pertaining to the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses by quoting from their own literature. Mormons – "His [Christ's] unique statue in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother (Mary) and an immortal, or resurrected and glorified Father (Adam-God)...Brigham Young declared: He (Christ) was not begotten by the Holy Ghost...Jesus our elder brother was begotten in the flesh by the same character who was in the Garden of Eden, who is our father in heaven. There can be no mistaking the fact that the Adam-God is here meant."⁵¹ Jehovah's Witnesses – "...The Bible shows that there is only one God...greater than his Son...And that the only Son as the first-born, Only begotten and the creation by God, had a beginning. That the Father is greater and older than the Son is reasonable, easy to understand and is what the Bible teaches...Jesus was the Son of God. Not God himself...As the chief of the angels and next to the Father, he (Christ) was known as the Archangel (highest angel or messenger), whose name Michael signifies, Who as God or God's representative...Only the religious Trinitarians are presumptuous enough to claim, without Scriptural basis, that the two other persons are equal with Jehovah God; but Jesus does not himself claim to be one of such person."⁵²

Without real deity, there are no real miracles!

Gary Bates, in his unique book Alien Intrusion, give us a wonderful quote from a scientist by the name of Burgess who professes to be a Christian.

*There is a popular misconception that science has shown that miracles do not happen and cannot happen. This is why modern scientists argue that the biblical creation account is not a valid theory of origins. . . . However, science has not proved that miracles do not happen. Science simply shows how things work when miracles are not in operation. One of the useful aspects of scientific understanding is that it actually helps to identify when a miracle has taken place.*⁵³

*"The truth is that there is no other book in the world other than the Bible whose truths are confirmed by historically credible supernatural events."*⁵⁴

IX. The Bible Is Unique In Its Influence Upon The Early Literary World

Of all secular writers, past and present, no one is as famous as William Shakespeare. "According to Peter Milward (*Shakespeare's Religious Background*), Shakespeare's familiarity with the Bible is extensive. There is hardly a book in the OT or NT which is not represented in his plays; this argues for his close knowledge of Scripture. The books he seems to have known most thoroughly, even in places by heart, are Genesis, Job, the Psalms, Ecclesiasticus, Matthew, Luke, and Romans. In his use of them he does not merely borrow an occasional phrase or allusion for enrichment of the dramatic language, but he derives the central ideas and images

⁴⁹ The Koran. Translated with notes by N.J. Dawood. Published by Penguin Books USA, Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014. Sura 5:113. p.91

⁵⁰ Ibid. Sura 6:37ff. p.96

⁵¹ Martin, Walter. The Kingdom of the Cults. Bethany Fellowship Inc., Publishers: 6820 Auto Club Rd., Ste. J, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55438-2849. 1974. P.187

⁵² Op. Cit. Martin. pp.47,51

⁵³ Bates, Gary. Alien Intrusion. Master Books Inc. P.O. Box 727 Green Forest, Ar. 72638. p.110.

www.masterbooks.net

⁵⁴ Geisler, Norman. Systematic Theology. Bethany House Publishers: 11400 Hampshire Avenue South Bloomington, Minnesota 55438. 2002, volume 1. p.555

that run through all his plays. It might be possible to characterize each stage of his dramatic development in terms of some major Biblical influence.

The comedies, Milward says, turn on the great texts on marriage from Genesis, Matthew, and Ephesians; the history plays on the treatment of kingship as a sacred institution in the books of Samuel; the problem plays, on the Pauline theology of sin and redemption; the great tragedies on the accounts of Adam's sin and the passion of Christ; the romances on Christ's teaching of forgiveness and Paul's proclamation of new life in Jesus Christ. Each play, of course, treats a secular subject in a secular way, but its thought is invariably charged with religious overtones, largely in virtue of the frequent though subtle Biblical allusions. In brief, it may be said that Shakespeare's view of human life in neither more nor less than the Biblical view with the imperfections of the OT supplemented by the teaching and life of Christ in the NT."⁵⁵

The Bible and Constitutions

The Bible's effect upon the framing of The U.S. Constitution and state constitution is without question. The following quote from "BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CIVIL GOVERNMENT" should illustrate this proposition.

"The idea of covenant relationships between people and between God is as old as Genesis. This subject is given depth and perspective in Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel, by Daniel Elazar (Transaction Publishers, 1995). Although a somewhat laborious read, the book details events in the Old Testament that can be seen as theo-political rather than purely theological.

As the roots of the Christian faith trace to Genesis 1:1, so do the roots of Covenant polity. "Politically, a covenant involves a coming together (con-gregation) of basically equal humans who consent with one another through a morally binding pact supported by a transcendent power, establishing with the partners a new framework or setting them on the road to a new task that can only be dissolved by mutual agreement of all the parties to it." 2.

In legal terms, a contract is an expression by two or more parties of an intention to be bound by the terms of an agreement. It is assumed that the parties to a contract are more or less equal as to their power to negotiate for themselves favorable terms. To avoid future allegations of breach, the contract should be written in unambiguous language so that much later, if a conflict arises, a disinterested third party might examine the language of the document, discern the intent of the parties, and determine whether the parties are acting in conformity with their original intentions. The Founding Fathers viewed the U.S. Constitution as the written declaration of their intent to "form a more perfect Union" in accordance with expressly stated objectives.

The Bible teaches that a covenant (constitution) is a tool of God for men to establish and "regularize" (make more regular) their relationships with one another AND with God. This concept is modeled by the Jewish people in the Old Testament and by the teachings of the Torah. Further, if our political institutions follow the biblical pattern, they will emerge as federations of people (tribes) that are instituted and reaffirmed by God's covenant. Accordingly, they will function with a sense of unity and purpose, binding themselves in a common constitution and common laws.

John Locke (1632-1704), an English Philosopher, Physician, Historian and Political Scientist wrote that, in a "state of nature," (without any artificial institutions such as government) men would reasonably acquiesce to the institution of some government in order to avoid self-destruction. In other words, our natural "sinful" state can be avoided if people realize their natural tendencies and trade some of their absolute individual power in exchange for the protection of society. Locke believed that this "reasonable" exchange was not only possible, but that it was the design of Almighty God. Government, thus deriving its authority from the consent of the governed, is empowered to execute judgment on behalf of the people. (See Romans 13:1-7) In addition, NOTE Locke was widely read by the Framers of the U.S. Constitution and is credited with being the philosopher most widely quoted in the 1760's and 1770's. In fact, he was one of the top three political philosophers most often quoted during the half-century from 1760 until 1805.*

It should be self-evident that when left to their own devices, absent the restraining influence of external pressure (law, morality, pressure to conform), men will permit their standards of conduct to disintegrate. The founders, although not all Christians, did all seem to embrace the notion that the heart of man was predisposed towards evil and therefore needed the external restraint of government. They uniformly held that the foundations for our liberty,

⁵⁵ This article in its entirety may be found at www.montreat.edu/dking/shakespeare/shakespeareandthebible.htm
The entire pdf free format of "Shakespeare and The Holy Scripture" may be downloaded from
<http://www.archive.org/details/shakespeareandho00cartuoft>

and the constitution which guarantees the same, have been laid by God through a covenant with those who will hearken to Him. English law during this period was not, by and large, codified (written down) but rather, was "proclaimed" by the judiciary. Even absent legislative prohibitions, however, the law was commonly known, and observed. It was "common law."

Sir William Blackstone wrote his best-selling *Commentaries on the Law of England* from the perspective that Biblical principles form the foundation of all legitimate law. No legislative body nor monarch nor judge may usurp the authority of that divine law. Judges were to reach their decisions based upon what Blackstone refers to as "general custom" which he understood to be reflective of Christian tenets. He said that judges were, "the depositories of the laws-the living oracles, who must decide in all cases of doubt, and who are bound by an oath to decide according to the law of the land." The overriding assumptions, and the reason why the "common law" was effective, was that the rules of conduct were generally accepted as true and the authority of the court to decide matters of law was generally unquestioned.⁵⁶

With the exception of Alaska and Hawaii, all the states have mentioned God in the preamble of their constitutions. Time only permits us to view the one of our own state of Michigan.

"MICHIGAN 1909: We, the people of the State of Michigan, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of freedom, and earnestly desiring to secure these blessings undiminished to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution."⁵⁷ You may view the complete listing at the proceeding footnote.

X. The Bible Is Unique In Its Translations and Circulation

Realizing the importance and vastness of this area, I believed it to be essential for me to confer with professionals. Therefore, I contacted The American Bible Society and quickly became acquainted with my new friend, Dr. Liana Lupas, Curator of the Scripture Collection. She was extremely helpful by immediately responding. Here is her same answer to the same question set before her earlier this year. "I am afraid no one can give you an exact number for the English translations and paraphrases of the Bible printed since Tyndale's New Testament of 1526. In part this is due to the difficulty of determining what should be considered just a correction or a revision of an existing translation and what should be defined as a new translation. There is the additional question of how we should count translations that include not a complete Bible or Testament, but just a group of books or even a single book. And then, of course, there is the difficulty of sheer numbers. With all these caveats in mind, the number of printed English translations and paraphrases of the Bible, whether complete or not, is about 900."

Secondly, Dr. Lupas was so kind as to point me in the direction of an article by the United Bible Societies that she discovered last year in her research. "The Bible Society of the United Kingdom calculates that the number of Bibles printed between 1816 and 1975 was 2,458,000,000. By 1992 the estimated number rose to nearly six billion. Furthermore, worldwide sales of the Bible number more than a staggering 100 million each year, far outpacing any other book in history. Without a doubt, the Bible is the best selling book of all time. This means that as of 2007 approximately 7.5 billion Bibles have been distributed throughout world—with the vast majority still available for use! And these figures do not include the various digital versions of the Bible being used today by millions on computers, Blackberries and i-Phones. Currently, the complete Bible has been published in over 450 languages. The New Testament alone has been published in nearly 1,400 languages, with the Gospel of Mark in over 2,370 languages. Although these figures represent less than half of the languages and dialects presently in use in the world, they nonetheless include the primary vehicles of communication of well over 90% of the world's population. Consider what this means. With the world's population approaching six billion, there is approximately one Bible for every living person on Earth! There is, however, an uneven distribution of Bibles among the nations of the world. Some countries have very few Bibles compared to their overall populations, such as the Asian nations, the Middle East and the countries of the former Soviet Union where religious freedom—specifically "Christianity"—is not tolerated or, at best, is greatly restricted. On the other hand, countries in the Western World may have more Bibles than people, such as in the United States. The Harper San Francisco book catalog recently published some interesting statistics. It states that the annual expenditure for Bibles in America is currently \$425 million and that the average American household contains four Bibles (Harper San Francisco Book

⁵⁶ <http://www.lawandliberty.org/history1.htm>

⁵⁷ http://bible.com/bibleanswers_result.php?id=109

Catalog, May-August, 2007, page 15)... Moreover, Jesus said, "The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away" (Mark 13:31). In addition to any direct preaching or proclaiming of the Gospel, it is evident that God has caused to be published and distributed into all the world more than 7.5 billion printed and digital "witnesses" in the form of the Holy Bible—a personal written message from God, readily available to 90% of the world's population. And there is no plausible justification for not reading the Bible. For those who have a Bible but fail to read it, those individuals have still received a written testimony from God! God has accomplished His part by causing it to be easily accessible, just as Jesus prophesied. Since the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ appear to be in the not-too-distant future, we need to ask some pertinent questions concerning the Word of God: How many more Bibles will be published between now and Christ's return? Will a "saturation point" be reached, with 100% of the nations having access to the Word of God before the end comes? Time will tell. But, truly, we can expect Jesus' prophecies to be fulfilled exactly as He said. This is why there are so many Bibles in the world today. All those who love God the Father and believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, should read and study the Word of God daily. It is God's personal instruction book for you, so that in steadfast certainty you can live in this present age with godly faith, hope and love—all in preparation for eternal life and the triumphant return of Jesus Christ to rule this world as King of kings and Lord of lords.⁵⁸ The Bible still stands solo in a unique category!

XI. The Bible Is Unique In Producing The Same Testimony With Each Changed Life

The Bible is without any doubt a book that changes lives! Over the years, its message has changes scores of multitudes. These people have been murderers, prostitutes, drug addicts, extortionist, religious fanatics, royalty, politicians, common law abiding citizens, and the list goes on and on.

As a boy growing up in Southern Indiana, I remember one fellow who stood out above the rest. His name was Chet. Chet was a farmer and contractor and he seemed to be pretty well off financially. I remember him as being a very large, frightful, and angry man. His reputation of being violent, bossy, and every other negative thing one can imagine, always preceded him. Everyone always seemed to talk about him and went out of their way to avoid being where he was. Over the years, I grew up and moved far from my old stomping grounds. For the most part, I forgot all about Chet – that is, until one Sunday following an invitation to preach in a little church south of my early boyhood hometown. When I arrived at the church, you know who I saw when I entered the doors. That is right - it was old Chet! I am positive he did not know me even though I certainly recognized him. Somehow, we found ourselves in the same Sunday School class. After all those years, I still found myself dealing with flashbacks from my youth. Suddenly I listened in amazement as Chet became involved in a class discussion. Someway, somehow God had done a miracle in Chet's life! After Sunday School, he cornered me in the hallway, probably because I was a stranger, and found great delight in sharing how great God had been to him throughout the week. To hear the stories from his lips almost made me feel like I had somehow temporarily slipped into a kind of holy twilight zone. During the service, I occasionally noticed that Chet was writing something. I was impressed because I thought the old boy was taking notes. Little did I know that he was making a list of added adventures to share with me after the service, thus, immediately following the benediction, Chet cornered me again. Chet began greatly detailing of his adventures with God from the previous week. Chet's excitement seemed to soar when he informed me that he considered his ministry as being that of witnessing and passing out tracts to the farmers, workers, and anyone else who might show up at

⁵⁸ <http://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/why-are-there-so-many-bibles-in-the-world.html>

the feed mill. Truthfully, they were probably too afraid not to listen! By the time I got away from Chet, with the exception of my wife, the entire congregation had not only left the building but the parking lot! I suddenly noticed that the pastor was in his car, too. I quickly ran to his car to say goodbye when he suddenly rolled down his window and said, "I see you met the church chatter box." I said, "yes but look at what he talks about!" My experience of being with Chet that Sunday blessed my life for most of the following week. There is no doubt but that God had changed that wicked old man into one of the sweetest and admirable characters I have ever had the privilege of being around! About two weeks later, my mother sent me a newspaper clipping announcing that Chet had lost his life in a backhoe accident. He and I will talk again another day!

Only God can miraculously change a person like Chet. In fact, over the centuries God has transformed multiplied millions of Chets because, truthfully, every soul in the world is a Chet! We may live in different times, speak different languages, and grow up in different cultures, but deep inside we are a Chet. We all possess a sinful nature; unfortunately, Chet's old nature was just a little more obvious. The Bible says, "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Rom. 3:23)**" The Bible's author has a divine way of taking His Word and His Spirit, blending the two together, in such a fashion whereby an exposed soul can realize his lost condition and the consequences and helplessness thereof. He then, at the same time, graciously presents the same soul with the gloriously privilege of reaching away from themselves and offers to them the perfect plan that God has provided in Jesus Christ. "**So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10:17)**" "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Rom.10:13)**"

The Bible is the only book that can produce the same testimony in the life of every person who has, and will, believe its Words and fully trusts in its Author!

Just this week I was able to refresh an old acquaintance after approximately 49 years. He and I have had such fun the last few days exchanging stories. He now runs a web site very similar to mine. When I asked him permission to use an excerpt from this monthly newsletter, he quickly informed me that I did not need to ask permission to utilize anything. Here is what I quoted.

HEART TO HEART with Danny Griffin

"Our heritage is filled with references to God, His Word and His grace. The first prayer in Congress, offered extemporaneously by Rev. Mr. Duche in Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia, on September 7, 1774 is as follows: Be Thou present O God of Wisdom and direct the counsel of this Honorable Assembly; enable them to settle all things on the best and surest foundations; that the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that Order, Harmony and Peace may be effectually restored, and the Truth and Justice, Religion and Piety, prevail and flourish among the people. Preserve the health of their bodies, and the vigor of their minds, shower down on them and the millions they here represent, such temporal Blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world, and crown them with everlasting Glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Savior, Amen

America is not a Christian nation but a nation of Christians, that is a nation of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life. It is this remnant that God blesses and will continue to bless. Remember God would have preserved Sodom if but a remnant believed, as is spoken in Genesis 18. 18:20... There is a great remnant of believers in America and God continues to hear our prayers and bless us. We must pray much and speak out when opportunity arises. Paul said we should make it our ambition to 'live a quiet life, mind our own business and work with our hands' and

Peter declared that we should be 'ready to give a reason of the hope within us, to those who ask'. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12 / 1 PETER 3:15

John Burke said, “all evil has to do to triumph is for good men to do nothing” and an old sage declared “that it is better to light one candle than to curse the dark”. Solomon declared, “righteousness exalteth a nation and sin is a reproach to any people.” The need is great and we must pray more, complain less, listen more and talk less, seizing the opportunity to declare God's love and grace. In the spirit of this ministry, Spritual Maintenance ‘we who have believed God will be careful to seek to maintain good deeds with great humility for these are good and profitable unto men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.’ TITUS 3:8 / MATTHEW 5:17

I have become convinced that it is necessary to TALK MORE TO GOD ABOUT MEN THAN TO MEN ABOUT GOD, BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE AND GLORY LET US DO BOTH UNDER THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE.” - Danny Griffin⁵⁹

In Conclusion

Truthfully, we have merely scratched the surface of the Bible's uniqueness. Writers could assemble volumes on this most amazing subject. My feeble attempts and time limitations have only permitted me to flash a light on a few areas of the Bible's uniqueness. Now it is your turn. Please allow me to challenge you to dig deep in God's unique Book, write down and cherish your findings, and be sure to give God the glory!

After the death of Moses, Joshua quickly found himself in an impossible situation. Not only did he have multitudes looking to him for leadership but also he somehow had to get God's people across a flooded Jordan River into the Promised Land. In the midst of this mind-boggling dilemma, God stepped in with the secret solution, **“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Jos. 1:8)”**

“Part IV. BIBLICAL MARVELS”



Our state takes great pride in bragging about its one-hundred and sixteen lighthouses. Over the years Rita and I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting over three-score of these historical landmarks yet, usually, as we approach another one, I find myself wondering if perhaps I have acquired some sort of unknown addiction. Nevertheless, every time we discover a new light, or even revisit an earlier one, suddenly my mouth drops open and, once again, I stand in amazement at the structure's grandeur. I wonder what changes would occur in our churches if all

of God's redeemed marveled as we approached, viewed, believed, and repeatedly returned to the “Blessed Book”!

⁵⁹ <http://www.spiritualmaintenance.org/web-storage/Newsletters2011/Jan11.pdf>

You will find that part IV of “Basic About The Blessed Book” is divided into four parts – Biblical Background, Biblical Components, Biblical Statistics, and Biblical Oddities.

When one considers a subject such as this, two fundamental concerns need to be set forth at the beginning. First, no book or thesis has or will ever exist that is capable of exhausting the wonders of our Bible. Secondly, with literally hundreds of English translations on the market which one should we examine and use for our *modus operandi* in this lesson? This is extremely important, especially when we deal with Biblical statistics. If you could see the lists I have examined from the internet and my library, you would also conclude that no two are alike. Thus, since a fundamental, reliable, familiar, and easily attainable translation must be the obvious choice, the following information, especially when numerical counts are required, will be the 1769 edition of the Kings James Bible. Why use this edition rather than the commonly known 1611? Few people know that there were approximately 24,000 differences in punctuation and text found in the four major editions of the *King James Bible* from 1613 to 1769. The *King James Version* commonly used today is not identical to the 1611 original edition, but, in reality, it is the one and same edition that became the official selected standardized edition in 1769 in order to discourage further revisions. Since the beginning of the 19th Century, almost all printings of the Authorized Version have derived from the 1769 Oxford text. Often people are shattered to discover this but the truth remains.

Please note the following simple contrast.

“(Jn.3:16) For God so loued ye world, that he gaue his only begotten Sonne: that whosoeuer beleeueth in him, should not perish, but haue euerlasting life.”

“(Rev 1:1-3) The Reuelation of Iesus Christ, which God gaue vnto him, to shewe vnto his seruants things which must shortly come to passe; and he sent and signified it by his Angel vnto his seruant Iohn, Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimonie of Iesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is hee that readeth, and they that heare the words of this prophesie, and keepe those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (KJV 1611)

“Jn. 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“(Rev.1:1-3) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified [it] by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed [is] he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time [is] at hand.” (This commonly referred to today as the KJV 1611 but in reality it is KJV 1769 version)

Above all, please remember that the Bible is the Holy, infallible, and preserved written will of God and it is the final authoritative basis in all matters of faith and practices. The Bible informs us that it is the Word of God approximately 2,500 times.

I. Biblical Background

The Book of God was written over a period of about sixteen hundred years (B.C.1500 - 100A.D), covering a span of forty generations and it all was accomplished on three different continents - Asia, Africa, and Europe. God used approximately forty different writers from every conceivable

lifestyle. In this assembly we find Moses (a political leader trained in the universities of Egypt), Peter (a fisherman), Amos (a herdsman), Joshua (a military general), Nehemiah (a cupbearer to the king of Persia), Daniel (prime minister in the courts of Babylon), Luke (a physician), Solomon (a king), Matthew (a tax collector), and Paul (rabbi and tentmaker). In addition, we must never overlook the prophets, peasants, philosophers, scholars, poets, musicians, farmers, and many others, some of whom are very obscure.

Not only was the Bible written by many over a vast span of time separated by continents but also it was written in different places and at different times on these continents. We find Moses writing in a wilderness, Jeremiah in a dungeon, Daniel on a hillside and in a palace, Paul inside prison walls, Luke while traveling, John in exile on the isle of Patmos, David in the time of war, Solomon during the times of peace, and Ezekiel while in exile.

God had the writers at work during times when they were in the heights of joy while others wrote from in the midst of sorrow, discouragement, and what appeared to be hopeless situations.

God used three different languages to accomplish His recording plan. The first is Hebrew. This is the common language of the Old Testament and is referred to as “the Jews Language” (II Ki.18:26,28). Next, we find that part of the Book of Daniel (2:4-7:28) was written in Aramaic. This ancient language was the common tongue of the Near East, i.e. 6th to the 4th century B.C, until the time of Alexander the Great. Many scholars believe that the Aramaic language came into existence during the time of Daniel. Thirdly, due to the success of Alexander the Great, Greek became the universal language at the time of Christ and throughout the New Testament world.⁶⁰

In approximately 1228 A.D., Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury between 1207 and 1228, divided the Bible into chapters. Although Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro is also known to have devised a systematic chapter division of the Bible between 1244 and 1248, it is Langton's arrangement of books and chapters that remains in use today.

About 220 years later (1448 A.D.) the Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan.

“...in 1551, a printer named Robert Stephanus numbered the sentences in all the books of the New Testament. According to his son, the verse divisions that his father created do not do service to the sense of the text. Stephanus did not use any consistent method. While riding horseback from Paris to Lyons, he versified the entire New Testament within Langton's chapter divisions. It was the year 1551 that changed how we look at scripture.”⁶¹

The Wycliffe Bible was the first translation of the English Bible. Although John Wycliffe was responsible for initiating the new translation, John Purvey finally completed the work in 1388 A.D. Note the following verse from Wycliffe's 1385 New Testament translation: **“For God louede so the world, that he yaf his `oon bigetun sone, that ech man that bileueth in him perische not, but haue euerlastynge lijf. (Jn.3:16)”** Now let us compare the same verse from the much later, original, 1611 King James Bible. **“For God so loued ye world, that he gaue his only begotten Sonne: that whosoever beleueth in him, should not perish, but haue euerlasting life.(Jn.3:16)**

Often it is needful to pause and remind ourselves that the above translations, and countless other publications, were completed and marketed long before the standardization of spelling and rules of grammar.⁶² One of the earliest translations with accomplished efforts toward

⁶⁰ _ Please refer to the author's work “The uniqueness Of The Bible”. It may be found at www.rogerluther.com

⁶¹ _ <http://soulpants.wordpress.com/2008/02/29/who-is-robert-stephanus/>

⁶² The standardizations to the American English language we speak today, started to appear around 1830-1840. As time passed, many early books written in American would be re-written to reflect the new standardized changes.

standardized spelling is that of Noah Webster in 1833. He assembled this work just a few years after the completion of his famous dictionary. Listen to how Mr. Webster sets forth John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.** Blessed are those with standardized spelling and grammar!

The entire Bible divided into chapters and verses first appeared in the Geneva Bible in 1560 A.D.

Although John Eliot published the first Bible printed in America in the native Algonquin Indian language in 1663, the first Bible in the English language printed in America was a King James Version by Robert Aitken in 1782.

II. Biblical Components

The word “*Testament*” means “*covenant*” or “*agreement*.” The Old Testament is the covenant God made with man about his relationship with God before Christ came. The New Testament is the agreement God made with man about his relationship with Him in regards to Christ.

A. The Old Testament

The Old Testament is composed of 39 books.

1. – The first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) have been named the Pentateuch (meaning five). These books are more commonly called “*The Law*” or the “*Torah*”

2. – The next twelve (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther) are historical in nature.

3. – The middle five (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes) are personal, dealing with human problems. Whereas the first seventeen were books of our Bible were prose, this section is composed of Hebrew poetry.

4. – The last Seventeen (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) are prophetic. The first five in this category are referred to as “*Major Prophets*” and the remaining twelve are simply called “*Minor Prophets*”. Many years ago, scholars began utilizing the terms “*major and minor*” to refer to the length of the books, not their contents. Obviously, the descriptions have remained.

Thus, we have observed that the Old Testament Books have been wonderfully divided into three major groups. The first group of seventeen consist of five (the *Pentateuch*) plus the twelve *historical books*. Second, we have the five book of *poetry*. Thirdly, the last group of seventeen is divided into the *five Major Prophets* plus the twelve *Minor Prophets*.

B. The New Testament

For those interested, an e-book overview of one of the earliest know text books (copyrighted 1887) on The English language, its grammar, history and literature is available at -
http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=TpAAAAAYAAJ&dq=English+punctuation+grammar+history&prints=frontcover&source=web&ots=D5wVr8Z-5P&sig=6SNwNGpYo5CI2PtPjtkYGzWFvyE&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#v=onepage&q=&f=false

1. The first grouping consists of five books – the four *Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) plus *the historical book* of Acts. Educators often refer to these as the foundational books because they skillfully provide the eternal support for all that follows.

2. The next twenty-one books are the *epistles* (letters).

a. The fourteen of Paul

1. Nine *church epistles* (Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians)

2. Five *pastoral or personal epistles* (I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews) \ Although the writer of Hebrews is positively uncertain, more indicators point to Paul than any other.

b. Seven are *general epistles* (James, I & II Peter, I, II, and III John, Jude).

3. The last New Testament book (The Revelation) is *prophetic*.

4. Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians are called Paul's *prison epistles* because they were written during his imprisonment in Rome.

5. We ,thus, discover that our New Testament has five foundational books on which to build the instructional letters and it closes with a book of future events with the greatest being the appearing of our Savior.

III. Biblical Statistics

Realizing that no one has, nor ever will, exhaust this area, I am limited to those I only have access to or knowledge of.

A. Things in general

1. The words found in *italics* were not in the originals. The translators, to help convey the thoughts of the verse, added and notated them for the benefit of the readers.

B. The Old Testament

1. Its books

Book #	Name	Chapters	Verses	Words
1.	Genesis	50	1,533	38,262
2.	Exodus	40	1,213	32,685
3.	Leviticus	27	859	24,541
4.	Numbers	36	1,288	32,896
5.	Deuteronomy	34	959	28,352
6.	Joshua	24	658	18,854
7.	Judges	21	618	18,966
8.	Ruth	4	85	2,547
9.	I Samuel	31	810	25,048
10.	II Samuel	24	695	20,600
11.	I Kings	22	816	24,513
12.	II Kings	25	719	23,517
13.	I Chronicles	29	942	20,365
14.	II Chronicles	36	822	26,069
15.	Ezra	10	280	7,440
16.	Nehemiah	13	406	10,480

17.	Esther	10	167	5,633
18.	Job	42	1,070	18,098
19.	Psalms	150	2,461	42,704
20.	Proverbs	31	915	15,038
21.	Ecclesiastes	12	222	5,579
22.	Song of Solomon	8	117	2,658
23.	Isaiah	66	1,292	37,036
24.	Jeremiah	52	1,364	42,654
25.	Lamentations	5	154	3,411
26.	Ezekiel	48	1,273	39,401
27.	Daniel	12	357	11,602
28.	Hosea	14	197	5,174
29.	Joel	3	73	2,033
30.	Amos	9	146	4,216
31.	Obadiah	1	21	669
32.	Jonah	4	48	1,320
33.	Micah	7	105	3,152
34.	Nahum	3	47	1,284
35.	Habakkuk	3	56	1,475
36.	Zephaniah	3	53	1,616
37.	Haggai	2	38	1,130
38.	Zechariah	14	211	6,443
39.	Malachi	4	55	1,781

2. Old Testament summaries of the King James Bible

a. Total books = 39

b. Total chapters = 929

c. Total verses = 23,145

d. The shortest Old Testament book is Obadiah. This small book contains 1 chapter, 21 verses, and 669 words.

e. “Eber, Peleg, Reu, (1Chr.1:25)” is the shortest verse in the Old Testament. This verse of three words contains only 12 letters.

C. The New Testament

1. Its books

Book #	Name	Chapters	Verses	Words
1.	Matthew	28	1,071	23,343
2.	Mark	16	678	14,949
3.	Luke	24	1,151	25,640
4.	John	21	879	18,658
5.	Acts	28	1,007	24,229
6.	Romans	16	433	9,422
7.	I Corinthians	16	437	9,462
8.	II Corinthians	13	257	6,046
9.	Galatians	6	149	3,084
10.	Ephesians	6	155	3,022

11.	Philippians	4	104	2,183
12.	Colossians	4	95	1,979
13.	I Thessalonians	5	89	1,837
14.	II Thessalonians	3	47	1,022
15.	I Timothy	6	113	2,244
16.	II Timothy	4	83	1,666
17.	Titus	3	46	896
18.	Philemon	1	25	430
19.	Hebrews	13	303	6,897
20.	James	5	108	2,304
21.	I Peter	5	105	2,476
22.	II Peter	3	61	1,553
23.	I John	5	105	2,517
24.	II John	1	13	298
25.	III John	1	14	294
26.	Jude	1	25	608
27.	Revelation	22	404	11,952

2. New Testament summaries of the King James Bible

- a. Total books = 27
- b. Total chapters = 260
- c. Total verses = 7,957
- d. The longest verse is Rev.20:4 with 68 words.
- e. The longest chapter is Luke 1 with 80 verses and 1,583 words.
- f. The largest book is Luke (see chart above)

D. Summaries and facts of the whole

1. Total books in the King James Bible = 66
2. Total chapters of the entire King James Bible = 1189
3. Total verses in the entire King James Bible = 31,102
4. There are two middle books in the King James Bible – Micah and Nahum
5. The longest book in the King James Bible is Psalms. It contains – 43,738 words, 178,147 letters, 7,281 phrases, 2,585 sentences, and 1,864 words in italics.
6. The shortest book in the King James Bible is II John. It contains - 13 verses, 298 words, 1,204 letters, 50 phrases, 15, sentences, and 3 words in italics.
7. The longest chapter in the King James Bible is Psalm 119 – It has 176 verses, 2,445 words, with the shortest verse (8 words) being verse 56 and the longest verse (18 words)being verse 128
8. The shortest chapter in the King James Bible is Psalms 117 – This small chapter contains 2 verses with a total of 33 words.
9. There are two middle verses in the King James Bible – Psa.103 verses 1 and 2.
10. The longest verse in the King James Bible is Esther 8:9 – Here we find 90 words, 426 letters, 12 phrases, 1 sentence, and 3 words in italics.
11. The shortest verse in the King James Bible – If one counts words, then we have two

“Jesus wept. (Jh.11:35) and “Rejoice evermore. (ITh.5:16)” If we count letters the shortest is Jn.11:35 – 1 verse, 2 words, 9 letters, 1 phrase, 1 sentence, and an average word length of just 4.5 letters.

12. The word “God” is used 4,473 times in 3,893 verses in 64 books. (*Esther & Song of Solomon excluded*)

13. The word “Lord” is used 7,970 times in 6,749 verses in 61 books. (*Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, I John, III John*)

14. The word “Jesus” is used 983 times in 942 verses in 26 books.

15. The word “Heaven” is used 583 times in 551 verses in 51 books.

16. The word “Hell” is used 54 times in 54 verses in 17 books.

17. The word “blood” is used 447 times in 375 verses in 41 books.

18. The word “and” is used 51,708 times in 23,872 verses in 66 books.

19. The word “the” is used 64,016 times in 24,123 verses in 66 books.

Statistics are needful and informative but they are only good up to a point. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Eph.6:4)”** All of us are to be about growing spiritually and assisting others, especially family members and fellow church members, to join us.

Lesson From A Donkey

Years ago, a man had a donkey and one day the donkey came up missing. The old farmer started looking for him and suddenly heard a faint scream. As he came near the scream, he shockingly discovered that his faithful donkey had fallen into his old hand dug well. He had no way of getting him out so he acquired the help of a neighbor. The two did not know what to do. Finally, the farmer said, “He’s old & useless anyway. Let’s just cover him up” so the men started throwing dirt in on top of the donkey. For a while, the donkey screamed even louder then suddenly there was a silence. The farmer thought the donkey had died. Shortly he heard another sound but this time it sounded like laughter. The farmer looked over the side of the old well and could not believe his eyes. He thought to himself, “that can’t be. He’s not that smart.” After a while, the laughter became even louder. The farmer looked again. Sure enough, the donkey was laughing. You see, every time a shovel of dirt hit the old donkey’s back he would shake it off and quickly step over on top of it. The farmers were mad and doubled their efforts but the harder they shoveled the closer the donkey neared the top. Finally, the old donkey stepped out of the well, wagged his tail, had one final laugh, shouted the victory and trotted off.

Often the devil finds us in a fix and he gathers friends and they assemble to burry us alive. Instead of panicking, we need to learn to take advantage and utilize what God has given to us! Two of the greatest gifts God has given us are His Holy Spirit and His Word. If we apply these, we will step out on top and bring others with us!

III. Biblical Oddities (Just in case you wanted to know.)

We have all heard the statement that fact is often stranger than fiction and sometimes this is true. No book exemplifies this axiom more than The Bible.

A. Things within Scripture

- Methuselah lived to be 969 years old - Gen. 5:27
- The sons of God married the daughters of men - Gen.6: 2
- Jacob used a stone for a pillow - Gen. 28:11
- A baby had a scarlet thread tied around its hand before it was born - Gen. 38:28,29
- A battle won because man stretched out his hand - Ex.17:11
- A battle was won after a man stretched out his hand – Ex.17:11
- Balaam was spoken to by a donkey - Num. 22:28-30
- Og had a bed 13 1/2 feet long and 6 feet wide - Deut. 3:11
- Women who had to shave their heads before they could marry - Deut. 21:11-13
- Women forbidden to wear men's clothing - Deut. 22:5
- The Sun stood still for a whole day - Josh. 10:13
- A woman killed a man by driving a tent peg through his head - Judg. 4:17-21
- Men lapped water like dogs - Judg. 7:5
- An army with seven hundred left handed men - Judg. 20:16
- Man whose hair weighed about 6 2/3 lb. when it was annually cut - 2 Sam. 14:26
- Where a ferry boat was used - 2 Sam. 19:18
- Man who had twelve fingers and twelve toes - 2 Sam. 21:20
- An iron ax floats in the water -: 2 Kin. 6: 1.6
- A woman boiled and ate her son - 2 Kin. 6:29
- A man (Solomon) had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines - 1 Ki.11:3
- The man who fathered eighty-eight children - 2 Chr. 11:21
- There is no taste in the white of an egg - Job 6:6
- A day when the Sun traveled backward - Is. 38:8
- This man walked naked for three years - Is. 20:2,3
- An angel destroyed an army of 185,000 in one night - Is. 37:36
- A man whose life was increased by 15 years because he sought God - Is. 38:1-5
- The Scroll that was cut with a pen knife - Jer. 36:20-23
- A vision of a graveyard full of dead bones being resurrected - Ezek. 37
- A harlot in the lineage of Christ - Matt. 1:5
- The man that dined on locusts - Matt. 3:4
- The longest name is “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (second son of Isaiah) Isa.8:1-3
- There are two men in Scripture who never died – Enoch (Gen.5:22-23) and Elijah (II Ki.2:11)
- Excluding Jesus, Moses was the meekest man in the Bible (Nu.12:3)

B. Things about Scripture

- With the exception of combining Isa.37:15 and verse 16, in II Ki.19:15, the 37th chapter of Isaiah and the 19th chapter of II Kings are absolutely identical.
- The name of God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther.
- The 21st verse of the 7th chapter of Ezra contains all the letters in the English alphabet except the letter “J”.
- Josh.7:24, IKi.1:9, IChr.12:40, IChr.36:10, Ez.28:13, Dan.4:37, and Hag.1:1 contain all the letters of the English alphabet but “q”.
- IChr.4:10 contains all the English alphabet but “z”.

- Gal.1:14 contains all the letters of the English alphabet except “k”.
- There are 8,674 different Hebrew words used in the Old Testament.
- The Greek version from which the New Testament of the King James Bible was translated used 5,642 Greek words.
- In the entire King James Bible, we would be able to count 12,143 different English words.
- The 8th, 15th, 21st, and 31st verses of the 107th Psalm are alike.
- Each verse of the 136 Psalm ends alike.
- The Book of Malachi is the youngest book in the Old Testament (about B.C 400)
- The earliest written New Testament book is probably the Book of James (as early as 45 A.D.)
- The youngest New Testament book is the Book of Revelation (around 95-98 A.D.)

C. Things related to, parallel with, and lifted from Scripture

- Between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, both Confucius and Buddha died (B.C. 516-458)
- Biblical commands = 6,468
- Biblical predictions = over 8,000
- Fulfilled prophecy = 3,268 verses out of 31,102 verses in the KJV
- The average grade reading level of the Old Testament = 6.74
- The average grade reading level of the New Testament = 5.57

Common sense tells us that there are only so many basic theme plots in literature. How many do we have? Guesses have been all over the board. In 1900, a French literary critic named Georges Polti published an analysis of literary plots entitled "The 36 Dramatic Situations". All situations in any story or drama are supposed to fall into one of these categories. There may be more than one situation in the plot of a story if it is long enough. Thus, all stories are only variations of these fundamental plots. When I examined this large list, it became obvious that all of these are woven within Scripture. You be the judge. Here they are:

1. Petition/Supplication (A persecutor, the petitioner, an Authority who is petitioned)
2. Deliverance (Victims, Source of Threat, Rescuer)
3. Revenge (Avenger, Criminal)
4. Vengeance by Family upon Family (Avenging Kinsman, Guilty Kinsman, Relative)
5. Pursuit (Fugitive, Pursuer)
6. Victim of Cruelty or Misfortune (Victim, Source of Cruelty or misfortune)
7. Disaster (Vanquished Power, Victorious Power or Messenger)
8. Revolt (Tyrant, Conspirator(s))
9. Daring Enterprise (Bold Leader, Goal, Adversary)

10. Abduction (Abductor, Abducted, Guardian)
11. Enigma (Problem or a Riddle)
12. Obtaining (Two or more Opposing Parties, Object, maybe an Arbitrator) Over the course of the campaign it escalates with their opposition becoming more ruthless or associating with powers even less scrupulous than they.
13. Enemy of Kinsmen (Two Family Members who hate each other)
14. Kinsmen Rivalry (Similar to #13 but often with no less dire consequences.)
15. Murderous Adultery (Two Adulterers, the Betrayed)
16. Madness (Madman, Victim)
17. Fatal Imprudence (An unwise act or carelessness has cost one's life)
18. Involuntary Crimes of Love (Lover, Beloved, Revealer)
19. Kinsman Kills Unrecognized Kinsman (Killer, Unrecognized Victim, Revealer)
20. Self Sacrifice for an Ideal (Hero, Ideal, Person or Thing Sacrificed)
21. Self Sacrifice for Kindred (Hero, Kinsman, Person or Thing Sacrificed)
22. All Sacrificed for Passion (Lover, Object of Passion, Person or Thing Sacrificed)
23. Sacrifice of Loved Ones (Hero, Beloved Victim, Need for Sacrifice)
24. Rivalry Between Superior and Inferior (Superior, Inferior, Object)
25. Adultery (Deceived Spouse, Two Adulterers)
26. Crimes of Love (Lover, Beloved, theme of Dissolution)
27. Discovery of Dishonor of a Loved One (Discoverer, Guilty One)
28. Obstacles to Love
29. An Enemy Loved
30. Ambition (An Ambitious Person, Coveted Thing, Adversary)
31. Conflict with a God (In our case – with God)

32. Mistaken Jealousy (Jealous One, Object of Jealousy, Supposed Accomplice, Author of Mistake)

33. Erroneous Judgment

34. Remorse

35. Recovery of a Lost One

36. Loss of Loved Ones ⁶³

In conclusion, please permit me to be the first to notify you that I have not come close to exhausting all the marvels found in the Bible. At this time, I would like to challenge every pilgrim that can read to dig in to the “Blessed Book”, expand upon some of my meager findings, then start collecting your own. Today there are countless Bible reading plans. If you have a reading plan, you like, you stay with it but years ago, an old professor showed me the simplest one I know. Count the pages of your Bible, divide them by 365 and you have it! You will be amazed at your answer! Are you up to the challenge of living in the Blessed Book of Marvels?

It has been said there are five things you can NEVER recover:

The stone...after the throw

The person...after they are gone

The word...after it is said

The occasion...after it is missed

The time...after it is passed

⁶³ <http://home.earthlink.net/~duanevp/dnd/36plots.htm>

V. Fundamentals of Interpretation

Introduction



This little fellow, Jadon, is my grandson. Obviously, this was his first encounter with a ketchup bottle. He seemed to be so excited about every possible facet of this new thing. My little buddy handled the outside and admired the illuminated contents but, truthfully, in this photo he currently has no earthly idea what is on the inside. On the other hand, I am positive that in time he will take great joy in having the access and ability of getting to the contents. Every time I look at this amusing photo, my heart cries out that this would be the attitude of God's pilgrims toward Scripture! Unfortunately, for a large crowd of Heaven bound citizens they find themselves distracted by sin and, for some unknown reason, appear to lose interest and, still others, are simply overwhelmed. Truthfully, I have a strong hunch that the largest portion of these deprived individuals are not being of taught simple fundamentals of Scripture, as well as Scriptural interpretation. The "why" as to why believers in the pew are not currently being exposed to these fundamentals, is another subject for another time. My reasoning behind the following presentation springs from a deep desire to apply ointment to a severe wound, I am convinced, that lies deeply imbedded within the body of Christ.

Years ago in my first pastorate, I slipped in on an adult Sunday School class in progress in the sanctuary. As I listened, I could not help but marvel at the ability of the gifted teacher. Suddenly there was a discussion and out of the wild blue yonder, his wife remarked, "*You know, the Bible says that every tub has to sit on its own bottom.*" I almost passed out! She then broke the silence by saying, "*That's right isn't it pastor?*" Feeling the blood rush to my head I remarked, "*well...point out the passage we'll discuss it.*" That was the end of the matter. Even though my story is a little far out in left field, it may very well be typical of how many deal with interpreting Scripture.

In theological circles, scholars refer to the science of interpreting Scripture as hermeneutics [The foundation of this Greek-based word means to interpret from Hermes, the messenger of the gods]. This skill is different from exegesis (*explaining*) because exegesis focuses upon the laws of interpretation with the objective of application. Many times a lack of sound principles of Biblical interpretation may come through something like this, "*This is what I feel (or think) it is saying to me.*" Regardless of pulpit, pew, or classroom, learning to deal properly with God's Word is imperative! "**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**" (2Ti. 2:15) Since every Christian pilgrim, often unknowingly, utilizes some method of hermeneutics, why not grab some basics and give our best to God?

What you are about to read is but a brief overview stressing the importance of proper interpretation, schools of interpretation, and fundamentals of interpretation. My deepest desire is that you will grow in your commitment and excitement toward the Blessed Book.

I. Proper Interpretation Exalts God, Not Man

Common sense tells us that not all faiths, cults, and schisms claiming to use the Bible can be right. For instance, what constitutes salvation? Does it rely upon some feeling, enduring to the

end, a manifestation of some sort, baptism (if so, then what mode), worshipping on a certain day, following only one member of the God head, or perhaps it is trusting in the work of Christ plus or minus some sort of mixture of the preceding or even something not mentioned. The Bible unequivocally teaches that God's perfect personal salvation come only when one honestly and fully trusts in the perfect work of The Lord Jesus Christ! **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12) **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."** (Rom. 10:13) **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** (Eph.2:8-9) May God have mercy on the man or movement that tries to add or take away from what the Bible has to say about the finished work of Jesus! Yet, frightful as this condition is, this may very well exist within a pilgrim who shuns the value of properly dealing with Scripture and, most assuredly, it already thrives in some form within any heart that intentionally refuses to practice orthodox rules of interpretation. How do we go about checking to see if the **"Word of truth"** is being rightly divided? Truthfully, there are several indicators of wrongdoings but one is easily discernable from others. This cleaver art surfaces when religious leaders deliberately attempt to carefully manipulate Scripture in order to give credence to their pre-conceived ideas or doctrines. Conservative theologians refer to this malicious act as proof-texting. Let me encourage you not to be an average church member that never questions what and how a leader, regardless of personal connection or education, is teaching. Today, the common cliché use among believers to describe this passiveness is one gleaned from the secular world - that of *political correctness*. Although the arenas are different, the principles are the same. The follower of this is projecting, by default, that truth is relevant and that the most important thing is not to offend anyone. It is recorded that John Wesley once ran what was called a *"preacher's school."* On Monday, he would assemble his students and ask them a simple question, *"How many of you made people glad yesterday? How many of you made people sad?"* Rightly dividing the **"Word"** will not provide a foundation for *political correctness*, in any form! On the other hand, when Scripture is properly interpreted, it will rightfully point out, exalt, and expound upon God and His will!

II. Primary Schools of Thought

There are two fundamental schools of interpretation - the allegorical camp and the literal camp. Today, many tentacles of interpretation have woven themselves through our churches but, in reality, a thorough investigation will reveal that they all have their genesis in one of these two schools.

A. The Allegorical Camp

1. The Early Alexandrian School in Alexandria Egypt

Throughout Old and New Testament times controlling powers would often rise, flourish for a while, break up, and another growing power would step in and the process would begin all over again. Each successive power had some effect upon Judaism, the land of Israel, Scripture, and later Christianity. These powers are as follows: the Assyrian, the Babylonians, the Medo-Persian Empire, the rise of the Grecians under Alexander the Great, and, finally, the great Roman Empire.

During a time when Greece was losing her national independence and intellectual leadership Alexander the Great sailed to the Northern coast of Africa and founded the city of Alexandria in B.C. 331. Alexandria's location, available wealth, and famous philosophical culture made it ideal for Alexander's dreams.

As time progressed, a mixture of Jewish theology and Greek philosophy began producing a school of interpretation that would be at odds with conservative Christians for at least the next 1,500 years. This affect upon Scripture would become known as the allegorical method of interpretation.

Historians believe that the ancient Jewish historian Aristobulus of Paneas⁶⁴ was the first to begin teaching that early fathers had lifted Greek philosophy from the Old Testament. Aristobulus' student, Philo, who was also a student of Stoicism, striving to bring his master's concepts into harmony with Scripture, and seasoning things a little with some of his own pagan convictions, assisted in persuading Jewish leaders to utilize their religion by reeducating the Greek world. As time progressed, especially during the era of the Roman Constantine onward, other men such as Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine of Hippo would continue to have tremendous impact upon the Alexandrian School. With the exception of Aristobulus, each succeeding man would build upon his predecessor's philosophy; add personal bits of his own seasoning, and then proceed to push it to the forefront for acceptance. When one examines the lives of these men, he will discover that they have many common factors. They were all born into pagan families with little or no early Christian influence, all studied Greek Philosophy, studied or taught ancient pagan or mystery religions, eventual settled in Alexandria, later many professed some sort of conversion to Christianity, became key leaders in the Alexandrian School, and there were always overtones of their early philosophical teachings in their students and propositions. Without a doubt, history will always remember these fellows as the founding fathers of allegorical interpretation.

Two hundred and fifty one years after Alexander the Great founded Alexandria, she would fall to the Romans in B.C. 80. Two hundred and thirty two years later the Roman Emperor Constantine would profess conversion to Christianity in 312 A.D. Since he easily saw the advantages of Christianity over prevailing paganism, it took little effort to proclaim Christianity as the new state religion. With the seat of religious thought being at Alexandria and Alexandria being under Roman jurisdiction since B.C.80, we discover Constantine's resource for his new marriage between church and state. With God's truth already polluted with philosophical pagan concepts and distortions from the powerful religious theologians of the day, it is no wonder that as history progressed, this school became the primary power behind making Scripture conform to the church. Rest assured that "*political correctness*" is not a modern term!

Through history if anything has found itself in a perpetual state of evolution, it must be The Roman Catholic⁶⁵ Church. In spite of some of its conservative views on life, creation, and wonderful works of benevolence, their concept of their authority is alarming! According to Roman Catholic belief, the decrees of the Roman church are *infallible*. Although current catholic doctrine does not consider the decrees of the archbishops, bishops, cardinals, and priests as being *infallible*, those of the church's leader, the pope, are.⁶⁶ Hypothetically, the pope can, at his discretion, address a new issue or perhaps review an existing practice or belief and make a

⁶⁴ "Caesarea of Philip" Capital city founded by Philip the Tetrarch, son of Herod the Great. This city was located in the N part of Palestine, on the S slope of Mount Hermon near one of the main sources for the Jordan River. Ceasarea Philippi was about 120 miles from Jerusalem, 50 miles from Damascus, and 30 miles from Tyre. It was first formerly a Canaanite sanctuary for the worship of Baal, possibly Baal-hermon (Judg 3:3; 1 Chron 5:23). It was called by the Greeks Paneas because of its cavern, which had a peculiar similarity to the places dedicated to the worship of the god Pan.

⁶⁵ The word Catholic is derived from the Greek adjective καθολικός (*katholikos*), meaning "universal"

⁶⁶ The Catholic Encyclopedia. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Imprimatur November 14, 1975. pp. 292-293

declaration for what he believes to be in the best interests of the church. Consequently, the church would recognize his declarations on the matters as being infallible. Thus, this man, regardless of his compassion, concern, commitment, or convictions, would be placing his authority on the same level as that of God's. Thus, it is no wonder that the Roman Catholic Church is still defending allegorical interpretation - one compliments the other! How alarming when one considers that advocates of this school of interpretation treat Scripture as a mere tool to give credibility and strength to that which they already view as being stronger!

The great church historian Philip Schaff adds, "This theology is, on the one hand, a regenerated Christian form of the Alexandrian Jewish religious philosophy of Philo; on the other, a catholic counterpart... The Alexandrian theology aims at a reconciliation of Christianity with philosophy... the Alexandrians were more learned, and made much freer use of the Greek philosophy... They saw in it not sheer error, but in one view a gift of God, and an intellectual schoolmaster for Christ... The elements of truth in the heathen philosophy they attributed partly to the secret operation of the Logos in the world of reason, partly to acquaintance with the writings of Moses and the prophets. So with the Gnostic heresy. The Alexandrians did not sweepingly condemn it, but recognized the desire for deeper religious knowledge, which lay at its root, and sought to meet this desire with a wholesome supply from the Bible itself... The Alexandrian theology is intellectual, profound, stirring and full of fruitful germs of thought, but rather unduly idealistic and spiritualistic, and, in exegesis, loses itself in arbitrary allegorical fancies. In its efforts to reconcile revelation and philosophy it took up, like Philo, many foreign elements, especially of the Platonic stamp, and wandered into speculative views..."⁶⁷

Dr. Pentecost, in quoting Charles T. Fritsch, writes, "Allegorism is the method of interpreting a literary text that regards the literal sense as the vehicle for a secondary, more spiritual and more profound sense."⁶⁸ Perhaps to simplify things a bit, this method believes that there is always some mystical hidden meaning to what Scripture is stating rather than what it actually says. Before moving on it is needful to remember that Augustine, probably the primary theologian of his day, had set forth the rule that the Bible must be interpreted with reference to church orthodoxy, no Scriptural expression can be out of accordance with any other, and if anything in Scripture appeared to be unorthodox or immoral it must be interpretably mystically. For almost nine hundred years, this type of interpretation was the *modus operandi* of the Roman Church. Anything else, including having copies of Scripture, reading, or teaching Scripture, outside of obtaining permission from the established church, were treated as heretical. Why was the church treating others in such a manner? Once again, the famous church historian, Philip Schaff, perhaps answers this better than anyone does. "Strictly speaking, the Holy Ghost, who is the author, is also the only infallible interpreter of the Scriptures. But it was held that the Holy Ghost is given only to the orthodox church, not to heretical and schismatic sects, and that he expresses himself through assembled orthodox bishops and universal councils in the clearest and most authoritative way. 'The heretics,' says Hilary, 'all cite the Scriptures, but without the sense of the Scriptures; for those who are outside the church can have no understanding of the word of - God.' They imagine they follow the Scriptures, while in truth they follow their own conceits, which they put into the Scriptures instead of drawing their thoughts from them."⁶⁹ Thus, since The Roman Catholic Church viewed itself as the only true church, thus, they easily categorized all other schools of interpretation as being heretical and, as such, they were aggressively attacked.

It was not until the 16th century, at the beginning of the reformation period, that things began to turn around a little – and then at a tremendous price.

The Alexandrian school of interpretation is not alone in allegorizing Scripture. Movements such as cults also find allegorizing Scripture a convenient method of gaining a sense of

⁶⁷ Schaff, Philip. History of the Christian Church. William Eerdmans Publishing Company: 2140 Oak Industrial Drive NE. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49505. 1979. Vol. II pp.777-780

⁶⁸ Pentecost, Dwight J. Things To Come. Zondervan Publishing Company: 5300 Patterson SE. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530. 1967. pg.4

⁶⁹ Schaff, Op. cit., Vol. III pp.612-613

credibility in support of their agenda and doctrine. One can discern such an example from past publication of the Christian Science. *“The Bible is full of hundreds of thousands of textual errors. Its divinity is so uncertain, its inspiration so questionable, that it has required councils of the Church to settle what should and what should not be accepted as the authorized canon, as the Word of God. It is made up of metaphors, allegories, myths and fables. Unless it is interpreted and made plain by Christian Science, it is of no more value than” moonbeams to melt a river of ice. It cannot be read and interpreted literally. As a material record it is of no more importance to us than the history of Europe and America. The only book which can unlock and bring forth its values; the only book which can separate the chaff from the wheat and guide through the intricacies of its false and foolish statements, is the book, Christian Science and Health with Key to the Scripture. Christian Science and Health is the only book in the world in which truth is to be found without mixture of error.”*⁷⁰ Of course, the author of *Christian Science and Health with Key to the Scripture* is none other than Mary Baker Glover Eddy – the founder of the movement!

One must remember that the primary force behind allegorical interpretation is that of acquiring and defending authority i.e., where does it come from, what qualifies one to receive it, how do you retain it, and in what fashion may it be used in an advantageous matter by the possessor(s). The advocate’s mode of operation is as old as Genesis – inflict doubt, set forth a replacement, and persuade the hearer of personal advantages for acceptance. Unfortunately, accounts throughout history remind us that very often this persuasion boiled down to either submission or death.

a. Fundamental Dangers of This Method.

Time and space will only permit us to examine a few basic dangers of the allegorical camp.

1. Truthfully, this method does not interpret Scripture. Once this practice is accepted, fantasies and personal convictions become the tools of the so-called expositor rather than Scripture. Although Scripture contains several forms of allegories such as types, symbols, and parables, we are not to interpret these allegories allegorically because all Biblical allegories have literal meanings! Often advocates of this school have sited Galatians 4:21-31 as a defense for this practice but when one examines this passage he will discover that the apostle Paul is explaining an allegory rather than teaching it as a school of interpretation.

2. *“The basic authority in interpretation ceases to be the Scriptures, but the mind of the interpreter.”*⁷¹ Consequently, this permits the interpreter to adjust his teachings to promote a doctrine, agenda, or an even an entire movement. While an outsider may easily detect the interpreter flashing his educational background and his (or her) political or religious persuasion, most devoted insiders would consider themselves privileged to be a part of this insightful group. Instead of swallowing everything without question, perhaps folks in the camp should be asking themselves, “Is this real Biblical truth and freedom?” Jesus said, *“... to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (Jn. 8:31-32)”*

3. If our leaders or readers suppress Scriptural authority as being the basis for all matters of faith and practice, we will find ourselves stranded with no means of testing the interpreter. *“Thus, the great dangers inherent in this system are that it takes away the authority of the Scripture, leaves us without any basis on which interpretation may be tested, reduced Scripture to what seems reasonable to the interpreter, and, as a result, makes true interpretation of Scripture impossible.”*⁷²

Is it any wonder that Scripture commands, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2Ti. 2:15) This small verse contains a

⁷⁰ This quote is from *Christian Science in Light Of The Holy Scriptures* by I. M. Haldeman. P.377. A free copy is available in pdf format from <http://books.google.com/books?id=e8MPAAAAIAAJ&oe=UTF-8>

⁷¹ Pentecost, Op. cit. p.5

⁷² Ibid. p.6

wealth of theological insight. Within it we discover that it commands every redeemed worker of God to assume the responsibility of diligently and earnestly setting forth the effort to properly divide the inspired revealed truth of God i.e. His Word. A failure here opens the door to every breeze of new doctrine and or teacher that comes our way. One of the ways to examine our modus operandi is simply to ask ourselves what's more important - Godly personalities or God's principles. On the other hand, a worker's blessing for being obedient to the above verse consists of boldness before God and knowing that not only is he hearing God's Word being properly interpreted, he will also wonderfully discover that it is being properly applied by the interpreter and ,even more so, by the Holy Spirit!

B. The Literal Camp

1. Early Days

Most students of hermeneutical history believe that proper Scriptural interpretation began at the time of the return of the Israelites from Babylon during the time of Ezra as recorded in **Nehemiah 8:1-8**. The seventy year period of Jewish exile into Babylon not only separated them from their beloved homeland but it was gradually instrumental in replaced their native tongue, Hebrew, with that of Aramaic. Anyway, we may safely assume that the passages Ezra interpreted were a literal Scriptural interpretation from the sacred text, which Hebrews had previously recorded in Hebrew for Hebrews.

2. The Antiochian School

The Antiochian school was not a structured educational facility, such as the one in Alexandria, but rather it was a mode of Biblical interpretation that had its roots in the city of Antioch in ancient Syria. Antioch become a vibrant hub of Christianity in the Book of Acts, and it was here where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians (**Acts 11:26**).

Although scholars believed and recorded that the Antiochian school of thought began in 200 A.D., the earliest record is that involving the one attributed as being the school's founder - Lucian (240 A.D. – 01, 07, 312 A.D.).⁷³ After Lucian's martyrdom, the school went into decline but later Diodore of Tarsus re-started it in the middle of the fourth century. From Diodore's time the school continued to thrived through the sixth century, producing an array of well know theologians i.e. Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and John Chrysostom.

Due to the reality that the allegorical method of interpretation was rapidly being taught to and widely spread by the students of the structured theological institution in Alexandria, the Antiochian School's object became that of opposing this heretical practice. Therefore, back in Antioch, they established, practiced, and taught several core principles of interpretation that still remain with us today. Unfortunately, time only permits us to reflect upon two.

First, they emphasized the value of utilizing grammar and history in Biblical study. Secondly, they correlated the Old and New Testament by utilizing types. This specific principle quickly set forth the truth that the Old Testament types had literal New Testament realities.

In addition, the Antiochian school eventually led to two major developments.

⁷³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09409a.htm>
<http://www.wildernesschurch.com/prayerbook/creedoflucian.htm>

First was that of establishing foundational principles for the literal method of interpreting Scripture. Consequently, this practice set the stage for tremendous power and boldness, both in teaching and preaching. For instance, through the writings of John Chrysostom (347 A.D. – 407 A.D.), this wonderful resurgence shines as a bright star in the night! One historian puts it this way, *“...John Chrysostom was foremost a preacher, aptly earning the title Chrysostomos, or Golden-Mouthed. The vast majority of Chrysostom’s writings were expositions of the Bible, in which he demonstrated himself to be a rigid proponent of Antiochene literalism. His sermons are reflections of the ecclesiastical, cultural, and social status of Constantinople and Antioch in that day. Not hesitant to denounce and condemn heresy, Chrysostom’s legacy to Orthodoxy is that of an outstanding rhetorician, writer, homilist, and liturgist.”*⁷⁴

Secondly, the Antiochian school found itself upon a battlefield with the deeply entrenched allegorical method. History clearly records that for over one thousand years this battle would prove to be extremely costly, demanding the lands, wealth, and lives of literally multitudes, yet, at the same time we see that God has sustained and blessed this proper method of dealing with Scripture, even to our day.

The entire Reformation period would be activated in the 16th century by a return to the literal method of interpretation. History would record, *“Every word should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning and that it should not go abandoned.”* (Martin Luther), *“The whole error in the knowledge of scripture was the ignorance of grammar and logic”* (John Wycliffe), *“The scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense.”* (William Tyndale), and much later a man by the name of Cooper would pen, *“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.”*

3. Advantages Of This Method

a. This method gives to each word the same exact meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, and customary usage, regardless if used in writing, speaking, or thinking. In the New Testament, it is obvious that Jesus and the writers used the literal method of interpretation. This is especially noted when reference is made to the Old Testament. A literalist does not deny the existence and use of figurative language; rather, he simply believes that the reader should not use figurative language to destroy the literal meaning of the Scripture. Secondly, when the Old Testament records a prophecy both the writers and readers anticipated, and, if yet unfilled, still anticipate, a literal fulfillment. This axiom is especially noticed when one reads the prophecies of the birth and life of Christ. Once again, it is wise to keep in mind that if past fulfillments were literally fulfilled the same must hold true for future ones!

b. It grounds the interpretation in facts. Let us say that an angler has his small boat anchored in a lake. Although the boat may float around a bit, he has it tethered to an anchor that is holding fast to a stationary point. In the interpretation of Scripture, the literal method anchors us to objective data such as grammar, history, geography, archeology, theology, etc. On the other hand, in the allegorical method, one may have a boat and anchor line but there is neither anchor nor a desire to use one!

c. With the literal method, the interpreter or the hearer recognizes the Scripture as being the final rule to measure all interpretations. It is imperative that our faith, regardless of sincere persuasions, must rest upon God’s principles, as found in His Word, rather than personalities! Consequently, the teacher or the hearer must reject all interpretations that do not measure up to this standard. With the exception, of course, of our Lord, if principles and personalities are treated synonymously, be aware that discord, and manipulation will eventually usurp control.

⁷⁴ www.westernorthodox.com/schools.html

God told a man weeping over such things, **“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. (Jer.33:3)”**

d. This method has the greatest success in opening up the Word of God. We need never forget that unredeemed souls are in a constant state of restlessness i.e. there is an inward sense that something is missing. Although pleasure and earthly accomplishments may offer comfort and satisfaction, at their best they will only be temporal. Thus, the unredeemed continue their quest in vain. Suddenly, if this searching soul is fortunate enough to hear the gospel and, secondly, smart enough to be open and responsive in a positive way, he will gladly testify that he has found the golden key to life! Jesus said it like this, **“...whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (Jn.4:14)”** How does all this happen? When God’s perfect news is easily and simply presented, not only will man ponder upon it but also the Holy Spirit will take its truth, expand, and apply it to any willing heart! Once this happens, this same soul will crave for more from the same source because he has personally discovered that God’s Word is God’s written will and testimony that deals with all matters of existence, life, death and eternity! At one time or another we all have approached tables covered with healthy food properly prepared and presented, sat down, and at the appropriate moment dug in. While the motivation to do so was ours because of a natural desire, the incentive to indulge was that which our eyes and minds could grasp. Only the literal method of interpretation can open up and spread Scriptures before us in a way that the Holy Spirit’s craving can grasp!

e. The literal method of interpreting Scripture establishes authority whereby the child of God may test what he or she hears. Dr. Pentecost says it best, *“In the literal method Scripture may be compared with Scripture, which, as the inspired Word of God, is authoritative and the standard by which all truth is to be tested. Related to this we may observe (e) it delivers us from both reason and mysticism as the requisites to interpretation. One does not have to depend upon intellectual training or abilities, nor upon the development of mystical perception, but rather upon the understanding of what is written in its generally accepted sense. Only on such basis can the average individual understand or interpret the Scriptures for himself.”*⁷⁵ Not only did the early church had a way of testing what they heard, (**“...not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ICor.2:13”**), but, they were commended by Jesus for doing such - **“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: Rev 2:2”**. The only possible way for them of having an authority for comparing and testing what was being taught was by reading or hearing the available portions of the Word of God, accepting it in the literal sense, and then by faith trusting God for the rest. Truly, the Word of God was their basis for all matters of faith and practice!

III. Interpretation Particulars

A. Three Details

1. Words

The world as we know it could not exist apart from communication. Although we may communicate through the use hand signs, pictures, vocalization, and scribing with pens, the fundamental medium of communication for humanity past, present, and future, will always be that of words, regardless of any other mode of communication. In keeping with the importance of the simple literal meaning of words it is noteworthy to reflect upon Dr. Ramm in his wonderful textbook on Hermeneutics - *“The spiritual, mystical, allegorical, or metaphorical usages of language reflect layers of meaning built on top of the literal meanings of a language. To interpret Scripture literally*

⁷⁵ Pentecost Op. cit. p.12

is not to be committed to a 'wooden literalism,' nor to a 'letterism,' nor to a neglect of the nuances that defy any 'mechanical' understanding of language. Rather, it is to commit oneself to a starting point, and that starting point is to understand a document the best one can in the context of the normal, usual, customary, tradition range of designation which includes 'facit' understanding.⁷⁶ To further drive home the value of using simple and understandable words in their literal sense, Ramm goes on to utilize a wonderful quote from Horn's work - **Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures**. "Further in common life no prudent and conscientious person, who either commits his sentiments to writing or utters anything, intends that a diversity of meanings should be attached to what he writes or says; and, consequently, neither his readers, nor those who hear him, affix to it any other than the true and obvious sense....The Literal Sense of any place of Scripture is that which the words signify, or require, in their natural and proper acceptance, without any trope [figure of speech], metaphor, or figure, and abstracted from mystic meaning."⁷⁷ Certainly, words in Scripture are no different. If anything, we should view God's Word as being more important than those utilized in common speech. God inspired His own Words! Thus, He recorded His Words through man to man in man's words. Without a literal sense, there is no sense. Please permit me to quote from a previous section: "*The entire Reformation period would be activated in the 16th century by a return to the literal method of interpretation. History would record, 'Every word should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning and that it should not go abandoned.' (Martin Luther), 'The whole error in the knowledge of scripture was the ignorance of grammar and logic' (John Wycliffe), 'The scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense.' (William Tyndale), and much later a man by the name of Cooper would pen, 'When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.'*"

Not only does God place great emphasis upon His Words but also He does the same for each one of His Words!

Let us select a few key words from the following verse.

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

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Word

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2. Grammar

Webster defines grammar as "(1) that part of the study of language which deals with the forms and structures of words (morphology) and their customary arrangement in phrases and sentences (syntax)...(2) the system of word structures and word arrangements of a given language at a given time...(3) a system of rules for speaking and writing a given language..."⁷⁸

Whereas words are units of a language, the sentence is the unit of thought.⁷⁹ In Bible study, as with common study, we are often required to work with parts (words) and wholes (sentences) at the same time.

The ideal is for everyone to have an understanding of the original languages of the Bible – primarily those of Hebrew and Koine (*common*) Greek. Since very few have been taught in these areas, the student's recourse will be addressed a little later.

⁷⁶ Ramm, Bernard. Protestant Biblical Interpretation. Baker Book House: 2768 East Paris Avenue, SE. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970. p.121

⁷⁷ Ramm. *Ibid.*, p.121

⁷⁸ Webster' New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabridged. Collins + Word Publishing o. Inc. 1977 p.792

⁷⁹ Ramm. *Op. cit.*, p.136

Languages are put together in different ways. Some like English and Hebrew are structured in what is called an *analytic* form i.e. this form stresses word order. On the other hand, Greek is seen as a *synthetic* language. With the *synthetic* language, the meaning is only partially understood by word order and much more by word or case endings. Greek, like English often uses something in front of, in the middle of, or at the end of words to indicate special meanings. When these add-ons (called inflection) become very complicated, they are referred to as being *synthetic*. Therefore, with Greek, a lot of meaning is packed into the word and sometimes this, consequently, complicates the sentence structure.

Now, you may be asking, “is it possible for me to accurately understand the Bible without a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew?” Even though scholars might disagree with me, I most definitely affirm that you have the potential of having an in depth understanding of your Bible! After all, God has mightily used translators to bring the Scripture over into our language for that very purpose. Dr. Ramm has a challenge for us at this point, “...students of the Holy Scripture who work only in English should have some understanding of such concepts as subject, predicate, number, gender, mood, tense, participle, preposition, and so forth. What is important here for the student who works in English alone is more a sensitivity than a list of rules. He will much more readily understand the text if he has a sense about grammar or a sensitivity to syntax (the way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, or sentences)”⁸⁰

Now, let us take those same key words and pick up the modifiers within the verse that clarifies its structure and God’s message

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

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⁸⁰ Ibid., p.138 (italics added)

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3. Context

If one so desired, he could easily take a daily newspaper, lift out paragraphs and sentences, and then restructure the conglomeration to suit his own fancy. Although most would see such an act as foolishness and a waste of time, many pilgrims may very well be guilty of treating God's Holy Writ in such a fashion. An old adage states, *"A text out of context is a pretext."*

Perhaps some fundamentals are needful at this point.

(a) Develop the habit of reading what is before and after the selected verse or passage. Not only does this action equip the reader to decide if the selected Scripture needs to be viewed in a literal or figurative manor but, it will aid in determining what, if any, historical significance the text may have. Until this issue is resolved, it may be needful to read large portions in both directions, the entire chapter, and perhaps the entire book wherein the verse is located.

(b) If possible, check out the meaning of every word in the text and its connection to those around it. This action illuminates the subject matter that the text desires to communicate.

(c) Closely examine whether the writer continues his subject or changes to another in the next verse or group of verses. This will assist in determining parameters for the subject at hand.

(d) At times it may be needful to research other passages in the Bible that deal with the same subject, in order to develop a sound Biblical prospective of the text's subject and its progression throughout Biblical revelation. This rule is essential when studying Biblical Prophecy!

(e) If there is no connection found with the verse at hand with preceding or following portions of the book wherein you are working, or elsewhere, the student should seek none.

(f) Be willing to let the text speak for itself. All too often teachers and students have fallen prey to reading into a text preconceived ideas. I know of nothing that leads to unsound doctrine any quicker than this!

Please note how the context sheds additional light upon the verse we have been using.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Mat 4:1-4)"

"Every word of God [is] pure: he [is] a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. (Pro.30:5-6)

B. Three Perspectives

How we view the structure of Scripture at any given time will greatly influence our objective in studying. In the next two lessons, we will examine three fundamental perspectives of Scripture that should forever be our navigation points for any aspect of sound Biblical study. Although this section will include the historical, doctrinal, and spiritual ways of viewing Scriptures, due to the extreme priority demanded by the spiritual application, we will carry it over save it to the next lesson.

1. Historical

Anyone who, even briefly, reads the Scripture, will quickly acknowledge that the Bible is fundamentally a book of History. It is the history of a people, a plan of redemption, and a perfect Redeemer. The people, of course, are the Jews. The plan of redemption is God's plan revealed and recorded in messages and types all through the Old Testament. The Book's perfect Redeemer is God in the flesh. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (Jn.1:1, 14)"**

"(Lu.19:10) For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus came into this world not only to simply seek and save the lost, but also, in order for Him to accomplish this miraculous task, it was necessary for Him to perfectly fulfill and furnish all the necessary requirements for a soul to be acceptable in God's eyes. Thus, this is exactly what He provided!

Our Bible plainly states, **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom.3:23); For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom.6:23)"** He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (Jn.3:18)" As a result, of God's mercy, grace, and perfect unmerited love, this perfect plan is available for all who realize this sinful condition, understand the consequences of remaining in said condition and accept the fact that they cannot reverse nor remove themselves from their dilemma. Secondly, in order for lost souls to be redeemed by God, it is absolutely essential that he or she willingly trust in what the Bible states about God's ability, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to eradicate this terrible and condemned fix.

The Bible clearly announces, **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Rom.10:13)"** Lastly, it is necessary for an unsaved soul to sincerely call out to God, personally confess his or her sins to Him, and then individually invite and accept Him into his or her life.

In the old adage, *"all roads will take you to the same place"*, there is one exception. Only one road will take us to the Heavenly Father with all the rights and privileges thereof! Jesus, clearly speaking unto Thomas in the text, stated, **"... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (Jn. 14:6)"**

Truthfully, our Bible is the only book in existence written by and about the only true sovereign God moving through time announcing and perfectly carrying out His will!

If you still have doubts, permit me to remind you that the same book that expresses God personal love and work for you also declares in two places **"The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. (Psa.14:1 & Psa.53:1)"** In the New Testament, James writes, **"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (Ja.2:19)"**

I am very confident that all who read these words are not fools and they are smarter than devils (or demons) yet, in all truthfulness, what we do with Christ will, in reality, be the judge!

2. Doctrinal

Although we briefly touched upon the process of obtaining this information in the last section (under context), perhaps it is needful, early on, to explore this topic just a little.

Let us begin by asking the question - what is doctrine? The first use of the word in the Old Testament is located within the song of Moses delivered just prior to his death - **"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. (Deu. 32:1-3)"** Here the word **"doctrine"** – (לקח) *leqach*, pronounced *leh'-kakh*, means, *"Something received, that is, (mentally) instruction (weather on the part of the teacher or hearer)."* In the New Testament we discover the word first used in reference to Jesus, **"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: (Mat 7:28)"** Here the word is translated from the

Greek word διδασκῆ - *didachē* - pronounced as *did-akh-ay'* - the meaning is *instruction (the act or the matter): - doctrine, hath been taught*. If you check Mr. Webster, you will learn that “**doctrine**” has its roots in the Middle English word “*doctrine*” and the Latin word “*doctrina*”. It means “*instruction from doctor, a teacher, instructor...something taught as principle or creed...*”⁸¹ Thus, be it Hebrew, Greek, or of English the definition is fundamentally the same.

Obtaining an accurate count of Bible doctrines is an extremely difficult to calculate. Truthfully, every time any Bible teacher or preacher opens their mouth they are, in part, conveying some sort of doctrine. The number as set forth in the classic All The Doctrines of The Bible by Herbert Lockyer is thirty-one while Alan B. Stringfellow in his study, Great Truths of the Bible, wonderfully expounds upon fifty-two.

Sound Biblical doctrines are important because they make up the Biblical foundational stones of our faith. Expositors have and will continue to bring these eternal truths to the surface only by utilizing sound Biblical principles of interpretation and by possessing a deep commitment to Bible study. Apart from an exposure, understanding, and acceptance of sound doctrines, Christians, from the pew to the pulpit, will find themselves like a ship afloat on the sea without a sail or rudder. Consequently, all who follow them will eventually discover themselves in like condition. As Paul wrote to the church of Ephesus, “**That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (Eph 4:14)** Very often we discover sound Bible doctrines being contrary to current trends, feelings, or preconceived personal Biblical ideas. Paul, knowing this danger instructed the young Timothy, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, “**Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (2Tim. 4:2-3)**”

Although studying and developing a Biblical doctrine may require a great measure of discipline from the student, the fundamentals of the process are extremely important and the rewards are beyond description. In the following, you will find an adoption and expansion upon tremendous guidelines set forth by the late Dr. Herbert Lockyer.⁸²

(a) Strive to assemble all Bible references together into one place that addresses the desired topic. Next, prior to plunging into this adventure, it is essential to equip yourself with an exhaustive concordance or a modern day computer program. Even with these assets, it is essential that the student have several additional references to assist in locating the verses and passages because many texts, rather than using the exact wording of your subject, only refers to the subject or event that describes you search. In fact, apart from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, I have no doubt but that this principle is undoubtedly the most valuable ingredient to Bible study! I might also add that it is at this point, where we find far too many teachers, pastors, and pilgrims in the pew being bogged down, overwhelmed, and eventually finding themselves succumbing to a life of laziness, thereby trusting in whatever comes down the pike. On the other hand, many wonderful and fully reliable works are available whose authors have already researched, assembled, and set forth an array of doctrines for us. Even with the availability of such scholarly works, the student can be extremely blessed by personally doing a little additional personal research. After all, only God is infallible! I firmly believe that even the use of

⁸¹ Webster. Op. cit., p.540

⁸² Lockyer, Herbert. All The Doctrines Of The Bible. Zondervan Publishing Company: 5300 Patterson SE Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530. 1975. pp.2-3

abbreviated overviews and surveys of Bible doctrines within our churches would probably produce one of the greatest revivals in our lifetime!

(b) Trace doctrine as it progressively unfolds itself through Scripture.

(c) Balance one doctrine by another. Doctrines complement each other.

(d) State Biblical doctrines in Scripture language. *“The Authorized Version of the Bible is the purest English to be found in any literature, and one cannot do better than to saturate the memory with its exact language...Modernism would have us adopt softened words for sin, regeneration, hell. Such language, we are told, is antiquated.”*⁸³

(e) Be sure to combine doctrines with application and practice. Knowledge without application produces dryness.

(f) Make no subject of personal interest that is not a matter of Scripture into a doctrine – such as some have attempt to do in the study of unidentified flying objects.

(g) Do not make conclusions about doctrines until the Word of God clearly sets them forth as such. Bible doctrines are Heavenly truths, regardless of our personal convictions!

(h) Accept the same prominence of a doctrine that Scripture ascribes to it. For example, doctrines such as redemption and the second coming are unquestionably strong New Testament doctrines and, therefore, they should have crucial roles in our everyday lifestyles and in our times of worship.

(i) When a doctrine is important and necessary Scripture will be full of details to assist in making it clear.

(j) Always, remember – Although man contradicts himself, the Bible never does!

3. Spiritual

When one considers Scripture from a spiritual perspective there is only one primary matter being examined – that of applying Scripture to lives. Truthfully, apart from including this objective, all Bible study will eventually be reduced to that of acquiring knowledge for an array of reasons, most of which originate from man to bring attention to man. Always remember, Biblical study apart from considering God’s message, to us and others, can only cause swelling, much like that of a balloon being filled (1Cor.8:1). On the other hand, when God’s will is sincerely sought He will take His Word, harness it with the leadership of His Spirit, and the student, regardless if one day old in the Lord or decades, will personally discover that the Bible is far more than just another book!

Should this mode of study exclude all of the proceeding attention given to the importance of history and doctrine – not at all! A general understanding of Bible history adds real places, people, and events, while doctrinal soundness provides assurance and foundational stones upon which the Holy Spirit builds. As just a reminder, if these two aspects are willingly or ignorantly omitted the doors stand wide open to distortion and deception. Truth be known, doctrinal instability is the primary reason many believers cannot separate God’s will from their own! Another manifestation of this deficiency is seen in those who associate themselves with groups majoring primarily on one or several subjects that may not be Bible doctrines at all. In addition, it is often commonplace that these same sincere folks are somehow practically forced into feeling inferior, if they do not commit their lives to promotion of the beliefs of the group.

The spiritual application of Scripture is at the heart of what we commonly call devotional literature. Researchers and writers of this material have as their objective that of

⁸³ Lockyer. Loc. Cit. p.3

taking a text, opening it up, and guiding the reader to personally see the need of applying the deep truths of God's will to their lives.

I might add that it is imperative that this be the primary target of true expository preaching and teaching! If preachers fail here all his efforts will amount to no more than heat lightening – a lot of flashing but no strikes. If Bible teachers fail here they, too, have forsaken the text. Merely being exposed to Bible teachers, preachers, and devotional literature does not, entirely, get the job done for the pilgrim. One must individually develop the desire of personally hearing from God. A failure here is like travelling on a voyage destined for failure. .

An old adage declares, *“Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.”* Over the past thirty years, I have had the privilege and opportunity, like other pastors, of training and a number of believers. Some were new in the lord while others had been Heaven-bound for decades. What I am about to share with you is by no means exhaustive nor is it the final authority on the subject. The following suggestions are simple fundamental principles from which to begin developing and perfecting the lifelong process of communicating with God.

a. The market is currently flooded with over four hundred English translations of the Bible. Selecting and investing in one is an extremely important task. Although any simple text Bible will work for devotional purposes, when you select a good study Bible you have selected a travelling companion for years. Study Bibles have an abundance of supplement materials such as maps, notes, charts, etc. These assets will aid in your growth and over all understanding of Bible doctrines, history, and geography. It is amazing how different Bible passages look when conservative scholarship places everything into perspective before our eyes. Although the choices may look overwhelming, please permit me to suggest that you examine a The Old Scofield Reference Bible, The Thomson Chain Reference, or a Ryrie Study Bible.

(b) Have paper and pen nearby. In a fast-paced world filled with slang, colloquialisms, abbreviated texting, and cell phones, writing is still the best way to express our focus. Although cards and scraps of paper are beneficial in enabling us to carry reminders of our discovery throughout the day, the ideal thing is to have a tablet or notebook specifically set aside for recording our daily findings. If you choose to do so, you could even shelf this spiritual journal or logbook at the end of each year, thus, over the years this habit would provide you with a priceless and growing perpetual library of volumes filled with personal messages from God.

(c) Designate a specific place and time for this task.

First, it is essential that your place be free from distractions. It may take a little experimenting but eventually you will find it. This secret place will become your personal holy place with God. One of the most outstanding influences in my early life was a man I simply knew as Mr. Nichols. Mr. Nichols' was, without doubt, one of the Godliest men I have ever had the honor of knowing. Shortly after his death, his wife graciously shared the secret of this spiritual giant with me. Every morning, weather permitting, her husband would pick up his bible and walk to the chicken house. Behind the little shed a large limestone rock protruded from the bank and overlooked a valley and woods. It was here that this dear saint would meet with his Lord. When I reflect back, I can still clearly remember sitting at his table and hearing his humble voice as he sincerely thanked God for the food, family, friends, and the farm, even including the cows and chickens! The secret of his genuine piety was not the rock, but rather, it was the fact that God honored his commitment of daily disciplining himself to give his Master the preeminence. Obviously, his place for accomplishing this commitment was personal, private, and, yes, I am certain he would joyfully say it was holy! Paul wrote to the Romans, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service. (Rom.12:1)”** The very least we can do is to systematically

offer our entire being back to God. This will only happen when we bar distraction from destroying our determinations.

Equally important is the allocation of time. Every man on earth has always had the same amount of time every day. In managing time, after stripping away all excuses, we discover that the bottom line consist of self-discipline and desire. One of the ironies of modern times is the fact that we say we say we never have enough time yet we always find time to do what we really desire! The old adage, “**where there is a will there is a way**”, definitely applies here. Listen carefully to what God says through the words of Solomon, “**Blessed [is] the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. (Pro.8:34)**”

When one examines some of the spiritual giants in Scripture, such as Abraham, he will discover that the will and discipline to designate a time and place to meet with God produced a life motivated by God because he was accustomed to meeting with God. Be advised, though, if you commit to this you will be embarking upon the greatest adventure of your life!

(d) While starting may be the greatest inertia to overcome, being overwhelmed is usually one-step from defeat. A personal fundamental principle has always been to start everything with a little acrostic I simply call *KISS* (“*Keep It Simple Silly*”). A good place to begin this voyage is in the book of Proverbs. This little book of Hebrew poetry covers about every imaginable facet of life and it has a chapter for every day of the month – even the long ones. Shortly we will learn that, although you may not necessarily ready a chapter every day, within a year you will be amazed just how much of the book you have absorbed.

(e) Now having a designated place and time to meet with God, equipped with writing tools, let us briefly examine a few basics.

(1) Start everything with a prayer. Remember, we need to be willing to empty our vessel before God and allow Him to cleanse the inside prior to being filled with His morning freshness!

(2) Humbly begin reading slowly and prayerfully. Our objective is not to cover territory but rather to be sensitive enough to detect God’s message. Listen to David, “**Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. (Psa.119:18)**”

(3) Be filled with anticipation because it will not be long before a verse, a few words in a verse, or several verses will draw our attention, much like a magnet attracts iron.

(4) When this happens, park here and do not read beyond unless you feel deeply moved to do so. Examine the details i.e. blessings, promises, sin to confess, or perhaps something from your life will immediately connect with the God’s Words before you.

(5) Make every effort to record your findings and feelings in your journal, on a slip of paper, or both.

(6) Pray and thank God for His message to you.

(7) Carry the message in your heart or on that slip of paper in order that you might review it throughout the day.

(8) Travel through the day with faith and a sense of expectancy that God will soon reveal His reason for attracting you to His personal message to begin with. Most always, you will make this discovery before the Sun sets. Remember - just like the manna of old, tomorrow God will give you a fresh portion!

(9) Repeat the above entire process every day and soon your secret meeting with God will become a cherished, guarded, and life-long part of your life!

(10) Oh yes, do not be overly concerned about the timeframe of this devotional time. Although we cannot put God in a timeframe, please permit me to challenge you to begin by

making a commitment to start with fifteen minutes and work from there. You will soon discover that time flies when you are hearing from God!

Please be mindful that while these principles are not the only way to get a Word from God, they set forth a good place to begin. These are simple and they work!

“Faith is not positive thinking or optimism. It is not a feeling that you can do something. It is not a hunch or looking on the sunny side of the street. Faith is getting a word from God and acting upon it. You see, you can get a word from God and believe that word. That is belief. But when you act upon it, that is faith. Faith is belief with legs on it.” Adrian Rogers

Jesus said, **“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly.” Jn. 10:10** Without any doubt, abundant life begins the instant we receive Christ as Savior yet, common sense tells us that many family members appear to have an abundance of everything except the leadership and power of God!

“Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed [is] the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.” Prov.8:33-35

C. Three Groups

Although there are two distinct families in Scripture (the redeemed and the unredeemed), without question there are also three distinctive groups with the Bible. Paul quickly pointed these out to the church of Corinth. **“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God (1Cor. 10:32)”** Recognizing, understanding, and keeping these groups separated in Bible study is essential! A failure here will produce confusion and unsoundness that will extend its tentacles into the study of every miracle, parable, covenant, promise, doctrine, prophecy, and every era of history throughout the Bible. Those who remain in ignorance about these three groups will have tremendous difficulty making much sense out of Scripture. Although they may very well be redeemed, they will always find the Scriptural past, present, and future shrouded in mystery. The worst scenario would be their entrapment within a cultish type of movement. On the other hand, those who defiantly refuse to recognize these groups are those who either have a pre-conceived agenda or see themselves as being the final authority. In this scenario, one group is ignorantly being led astray while the other group usually does the leading!

The objective in this section is that of briefly introducing the reader to these groups. At the end reference will be made to direct the student to additional and more exhaustive resources.

1. The Jews

Dr. C.I Scofield writes, *“Whoever reads the Bible with any attention cannot fail to perceive that more than half of its contents relate to one nation: the Israelites. He perceives, too, that they have a distinct place in the dealings and counsels of God. Separated from the mass of mankind, they are taken into covenant with Jehovah, who gives them specific promises not given to any other nation. Their history alone is told in Old Testament narrative and prophecy; other nations are mentioned only as they touch the Jew. It appears, also, that all the communications of Jehovah to Israel as a nation relate to the Earth. If faithful and obedient, the nation is promised earthly greatness, riches, and power; if unfaithful and disobedient, it is to be scattered among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other”* (Deut. 28:64).⁸⁴ The nation of Israel began with the call of one man – Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham unlike any other. Note the following references,

⁸⁴ /www.biblebelievers.com/scofield/scofield_rightly01.htm

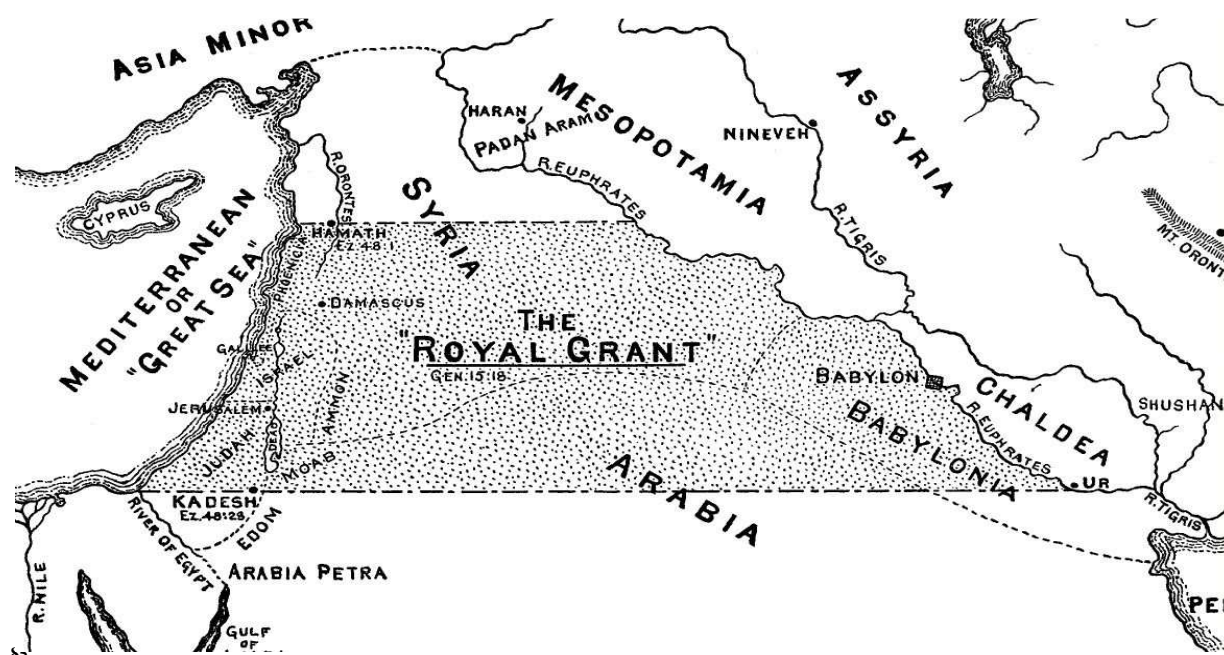
“(Gen.12:7)And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.” “(Gen.13:15-16) For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *[then]* shall thy seed also be numbered.” “(Gen.15:18)In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:” “(Gen.17:7-8)And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

The Bible records, “**And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**”(Gen 15:6) Even though Abram believed God there was one little problem: he had no son and they both were well beyond the childbearing years. Shortly thereafter, the special couple became impatient and stepped out of God’s will. They reverted to an old custom that permitted Abram to father a son, Ishmael (*“God will hear”*), with Sarai’s Egyptian handmade Hagar (Gen.16:15-16).

What happened to Abraham’s first born?

Ishmael was born in Abraham’s eighty-sixth year (BC 1910). This was fourteen years before the birth of the promised son - Isaac. Constant friction between Hagar and Sarah finally forced Abram to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael would eventually settle down and established himself in the wilderness called Paran. Hagar took for him an Egyptian wife and he fathered twelve sons (Gen.25:13-15). History records very little about his later years but we do know that he eventually settled east of Egypt in a land from Havilah to Shur toward Assyria (Gen.25:17-18). Although Abraham’s two sons separated for a number of years, they eventually reunited at their father’s funeral (Gen.25:9). Finally at the age of one hundred and thirty-seven, (BC 1773), Ishmael breathed his last. He had preceded Isaac in death by fifty-seven years. Ishmael’s descendents would be called the Ishmaelites and occupy lands from Egypt to the Euphrates and possibly beyond. Today we recognize them as the Arabic people.

After almost twenty years of waiting, Abram and Sarai finally experienced the prevailing power of God’s Word! At the ripe old age of ninety-nine God appeared to Abram to affirm HIS covenant. During this visit, God also changed his name to Abraham (*“father of a multitude”*) and Sarai’s to Sarah (*“princess”*). Shortly thereafter, an angel announced that within one year the promised baby would arrive. In about the year BC 2061, at ninety years of age, Sarah gave birth to a little boy named Isaac (*“laughter”*). By this time, the old patriarch had reached at the century mark. (Gen.15:1-18:33)



“(Gen.15:18) In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:” “(Gen.17:7-8) And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

God also told Abraham about the new nation’s time of bondage and exodus.

“(Gen.15:13-16) And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *[that is]* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *[is]* not yet full.”

God’s directive will for the nation from the start.

“(Ex. 19:1-6 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *[into]* the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *[to]* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *[how]* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *[is]* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *[are]* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

“(Psa. 117:1) O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.”

⁸⁵ Larkin, Clarence. Dispensational Truth. Rev. Clarence Larking Est.: 2802 N. Park Ave. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19932 p.66 / Although the nation of Israel has not had this land in its entirety thus far, someday they will!

“(Isa. 60:1-4) Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at [thy] side.”

“(Isa. 49:5-6) And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb [to be] his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

God’s covenant continued long after his death

God’s covenant with Isaac:

“Gen. 26:1-5) And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

God’s covenant with Jacob

“(Gen. 28:10-16” And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put [them for] his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I [am] the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I [am] with thee, and will keep thee in all [places] whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done [that] which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew [it] not.”

Who is the seed of Abraham?

In the shadow of the above verses, we glance upon the words of Dr. Pentecost, “It would seem obvious to all who are not deliberately trying to pervert the plain teaching of scripture that the seed of Abraham, of necessity, is the term applied to the physical descendents of Abraham.”⁸⁶ Dr. Pentecost continues by quoting Dr. Walvoord, “Obviously...reference to the physical seed, Isaac, and his physical descendents. God did not say that no spiritual blessing would come to those outside the physical seed, but the physical line of Isaac would inherit the promises given to the seed of Abraham.”⁸⁷

In afore mentioned passages we note - God’s man, God’s land, and God’s plan. Consequently, we must conclude that Abraham was a real literal man and his descendents were, and still are, real people. Lastly, the land is a real land and the boundaries of this land will be given by God to

⁸⁶ Things to come p.85

⁸⁷ Op.cit p.85

⁸⁸ Good Things Company. Drawer N.. Normon, Oklahoma, 73070 / www.goodthingscompany.com/index.html

Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, [even] Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.” / “(Isa.51:2) Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah [that] bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” / Jesus said, “(Jn.8:56-57) Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw [it], and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Therefore, in spite of what other may think, Scripture as well as the Jewish people have always depicted Abraham as being the father of the Jewish nation.

There is only one avenue presented in Scripture where Jews and Gentiles are the same. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:28-29) “They are Abraham's seed in the spiritual sense only and heirs of the promise given to all the families of the earth.”⁸⁹ Please never forget that the only possible key to this spiritual assimilation is “in Christ Jesus”.

3. The Church

The word is distinctively a New Testament word, doctrine, and group. Our Lord first used the word “Church”. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt.16:18) Before pushing forward, it is extremely important that we note a few brief things within the preceding verse. “Peter” = (Πέτρος) pronounced as *pet'-ros* is a piece of a rock or a small rock while the word “rock” as us in the phrase - “this rock” (πέτρα), pronounced as *pet'-ra*, means a massive of rock or a large rock. The significance of this is profound! The verse teaches that Jesus told Peter that He would be building His church upon the large rock, rather than the smaller rock i.e. Himself rather than Peter. On the other hand, when one rejects the definitions he can twist the verse teach something different. Secondly the word “church” (ἐκκλησία), pronounced *ek-klay-see'-ah*, means a called out group. We must therefore conclude that, after Jesus reminded Peter of his relationship to Him, He went on to inform him that He would soon be calling out a new group established upon Himself.

“...This body also has a peculiar relation to God and, like Israel, has received from Him specific promises. But similarity ends there, and the most striking contrast begins. Instead of being formed of the natural descendants of Abraham alone, it is a body in which the distinction of Jew and Gentile is lost. Instead of the relation being one of mere covenant, it is one of birth. Instead of obedience bringing the reward of earthly greatness and wealth, the church is taught to be content with food and raiment, and to expect persecution and hatred; it is perceived that just as distinctly as Israel stands connected with temporal and earthly things, so distinctly does the church stand connected with spiritual and heavenly things.

Further, Scripture shows the student that neither Israel nor the church always existed; each had a recorded beginning. The beginning of Israel he finds in the call of Abram. Looking then for the birth of the church he finds (contrary, perhaps, to his expectations, for he has probably been taught that Adam and the patriarchs are in the church) that it certainly did not exist before, nor during, the earth life of Christ, for he finds Him speaking of His church as yet future when He says (Matt. 16:18), ‘Upon this rock I will build my church.’ Not, have built, nor am building, but will build.”⁹⁰

Although some have attempted to make Israel into the church, when one learns to rightly divide the Scriptures, he will discover this is not possible! I know of no other who aids us in

⁸⁹ Pentecost. Op. cit. p.88

⁹⁰ www.biblebelievers.com/scofield/scofield_rightly01.htm

discerning this distinction more than the renowned scholar Dr. Pentecost as he read him quoting Dr Ryrie.

“Because we are the seed of Abraham spiritually by the new birth, it does not mean we are the physical seed of the patriarch...the gentile believers of the present day, while reckoned as a seed to Abraham, are not the seed in which national promises are to be fulfilled. This is well proved by observing certain facts in the New Testament usage of the words. (1) national Israel and the Gentiles are contrasted in the New Testament (Acts.3:12; 4:8; 21:28; Rom.10:1). The fact that Israel is addressed as a nation after the establishment of the church and that the term Jew continues to be used as distinct from the church (ICor.10:32) shows that the Gentiles do not supplant Israel in God’s covenant program. (2) Natural Israel and the church are contrasted in the New Testament (Rom.11:1-25; ICor.10:32). In Romans 11 it is shown that God has taken the nation of Israel out of the place of blessing temporarily, but will restore them to that place of blessing when His program with the church is terminated. This consideration shows that the church does not supplant Israel in God’s covenant program. (3) Jewish Christians, who would be a part of spiritual Israel, and Gentile Christians are contrasted in the New Testament (Rom.9:6, where Paul contrasts these promises which belong to Israel according to the flesh and those which belong to Israel who enter into them by faith; Gal.6:15-16, where Paul specifically mentions believing Jews in the benediction pronounced on the whole body of Christ).”⁹¹

Although many pastors and people in the pew have never taught the value of separating these three groups, it is never too late to learn. Start by asking the question, “To or about who is this speaking?” This simple question will profoundly affect how the student of Scripture grows in their doctrinal stability and overall understanding of the Bible.

In Conclusion

If we were to read our Lord’s wonderful prayer we would find the following, **“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (Jn.17:3)** In light of this verse, please listen to Bob Hoekstra’s comments, *“To finish that profound beginning, one must add an all-encompassing truth. One must speak of the full dimensions of eternal life. What is large enough to complete that majestic opening? Only the one reality of **knowing God** would be adequate: ‘that they may **know You.**’ Yes, knowing God is what eternal life is all about. It is only through meeting the Lord that forgiveness is found. It is only by being in Christ that we escape hell and secure heaven. Then, it is only through getting acquainted with the Lord that meaning and purpose for our lives are made real to us. Also, it is only through a growing intimacy of trust in Christ that spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit can properly mature. Furthermore, it is only through an increasing acquaintanceship with the Lord that Christian fellowship and biblical insight are appropriately developed.”⁹²*

No peace of literature on the face of this earth can surpass the value and majesty of The Bible! It contains history of the past, strength for today, and the assurance for the future. Only through its revelation can man have the deep questions of life answered, put the world’s chaos into perspective, and personally discover what those who reject it only experience in their dreams! The Bible is the only Book that has stood the test of time, one whose message can change a life for eternity, and it is a Book, without a doubt, that will be around when Heaven and earth pass away! Since it is so special, we should give our best to utilizing proper techniques in interpretation!

My craving is a two-fold prayer. One, for God to continue building His Church using His Word, His Spirit, and His people! Secondly, that everyone who reads these words will joyfully

⁹¹ Pentecost. Op. cit. pp.88-89

⁹² Pastor of Calvary Chapel of Irvine, CA. and a devotional writer within one of my Bible programs.

find himself or herself somewhere in the midst of His Heavenly will and actively involved in His kingdom's work!

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