

The Author *of* the Bible – God



*All Scripture is given by
inspiration of God...*

2 Timothy 3:16

Calvary Chapel
of Sahuarita 

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1. Scriptures and the prophecies

How many of you have heard some unbelievers or Bible skeptics snort and argue about many different versions of the Bibles or corruptions among the ancient manuscripts of Scriptures? That was a part of the basic concepts of Dan Brown's infamous damnable book "Da Vinci Code". This accusation is actually nothing new.

Questioning the authenticity of God's Word goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

In v1, please note that satan was twisting God's Word and putting a doubt against God's love for them into the heart of Eve. Then, Eve responded to satan with her wrong answer. God didn't say to them not to touch the tree as I've mentioned before. Either she didn't understand what the Lord said, or she chose to be ignorant about it.

Did you hear what kind of word I just used? "She chose to be ignorant." The ignorance of the Bible is the biggest stepping stone of mankind to the road of destruction. Whether you are a believer of Jesus Christ or not, the majority of people choose not to learn the Word of God when they face it.

There are many excuses. Some say that they don't have time. Don't tell me you don't have time to study and learn His Word as a believer of Jesus Christ. You absolutely DO have time. 15-30 minutes a day is all it takes.

This morning and for the next few weeks we are going to have a rather intense study - learning how to study the Word of God; why the Bible is truly inspired by God; how did we get to have the Bible; the canonization of the Bible; the church history; and more. I hope and pray that y'all get equipped with the wisdom and knowledge of the Bible from these studies so that you would not be duped by satan like it happened to Eve.

A. GODLY HERITAGE

2 Timothy 3:14-15 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

How many of you were born to dedicated Christian believer families? How blessed are you!

For my case, I was born in the family of mixed religions. My mama was a buddhist and my daddy was an intelligent agnostic medical doctor. Even though he graduated from a Christian medical school, he never once told me about Christ. It means that he was not a Christian. Several years ago, I had a chance to witness to my mama while I was visiting her in Seoul, South Korea. She prayed a sinner's prayer with me, but I really don't know how much she understood it. I am relying on the mercy of God for that one.

I was not born with a great Christian heritage like some of you or Timothy. But it doesn't matter now. We as Christian parents and parents-to-be, have a solemn duty

and privilege to pass down what we have learned and received from the Lord to our children. Tell them about Jesus from their young ages. You may use well prepared children's Bible story books or other materials that you can find from our Chapel Bookstore or 'Focus on the Family'.

Moms and Dads, listen to me carefully. Don't expect the church Children's Sunday school teachers to take care your children's spiritual condition. They get to have your children only 30 to 40 minutes a week. But you have them the majority of the time. You need to teach them with your life as an example and the Bible.

We are not saved by believing in the Bible, but by trusting the Christ who is revealed in the Bible. Satan knows the Bible but he is not saved. There are many college religion professors who know the Bible very well and can even quote them fluently, yet they are not saved. It is not the knowledge of the Bible that saves, but the faith in Jesus Christ does.

B. ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD

2 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, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Did you get it? All scripture inside of this Bible is given by inspiration of God. There is absolutely no other book that claims it with the exception of the book of Mormon. We will talk more about it later.

God dictated the Scriptures to men and have preserved them for over 4000 years without an error in authorship. In other words, perfect God had His imperfect people to write perfect writings. In this imperfect world, we have one perfect Book - the Bible. I know, some of you are thinking, "He is a preacher, alright. He gets excited about the Bible, a big deal." It is a big deal, guys. Almighty God speaks through this very Book to you and me - absolutely reliable and without one single error.

The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word "biblos," which means "book." The Bible is unarguably an incredible book. The Bible is the best selling, most quoted, most published, most circulated, most translated, most influential, most criticized and most persecuted book in the history of mankind.

As the truth seekers of God, all of us have an obligation to know if the Bible is truly the Word of God or not as it claims in these two verses we just read. Not only should we know whether the Bible is truly from God or not, but we also must understand how it proves itself truthfully in various ways.

People in the world live in phony realities. They are taught and told to believe in the evolution theory, Star Trek and Star Wars movies rather than Almighty God; Global Warming than the global warning from the Bible - speaking of Global Warming, after the last freezing winter, the liberals don't want to call it "Global Warming" anymore. So they have a new name - Climate Change. Change from what to what? People would rather believe in living high on the hog on credit cards and borrowed money. They'd rather believe in the Universal Salvation which means everybody gets saved and lives happily ever after, singing Kumbaya than believing the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ as the Bible says.

For the remainder of this service, we are going to learn two things about the Bible:

- 1) **The Bible is unique.**
- 2) **The Bible is the only Book that gives future prophecies in writing and we witness them in the human history like no other books.**

C. THE BIBLE IS UNIQUE

1) The Bible is unique in its continuity

It was written over 2000 years (from around 1900 B.C. till A.D. 96), over 60 generations, by more than 40 authors, on three different continents, in different circumstances and places, in different times, different cultures, in three languages - Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, concerning scores of controversial subjects, but it speaks with one united voice.

2) The Bible is unique in its circulation

It is the most published and popular book ever written - far and away. Any thing else is a distant, distant, second.

3) The Bible is unique in its translation

It was the first book translated, and has been translated into more languages than any other book in existence.

4) The Bible is unique in its survival

It has survived the ravages of time, manual transcription, persecution and criticism.

5) The Bible is unique in its honesty

It deals with the sins and failures of its heroes in a manner quite unknown among ancient literature.

6) The Bible is unique in its influence

The Bible has had, by far, a greater influence on culture and literature than any other book in existence.

D. THE FULFILLED PROPHECIES

The fulfilled prophecies are something that sets the Bible apart from every other religious book. There are 26 other religious books that people of faith believe are divinely inspired - the Qur'an, the Book of Mormon, and others which I can not even dare to pronounce. Of these twenty-six books, none of them, not a single one, contains any specific, fulfilled prophecies!

The Bible, however, is filled with hundreds of specific, detailed prophecies that were written hundreds of years before their fulfillment. And the authors of the Bible did not just predict some vague things like Nostradamus or Jeanne Dixon - who, by the way, have proven to be wrong over and over again - they were very specific. Consider some of the more than 100 different and very specific prophecies made concerning the Messiah, who the Old Testament prophesied would come.

In your handout, you see the Messianic Prophecies in OT & NT. This is NOT a complete list. Just a handful of them. You can use this to witness to some of your Jewish friends who believe that Jesus is not the Messiah whom they are looking for.

1) Some Bible skeptics would say, "Maybe Christians inserted those so-called prophecies back into the Old Testament after Jesus lived."

Not so fast, homie. Just for the people like the skeptics I have an answer. There are hundreds of manuscript copies of the OT that predate the time of Christ's birth. Some go back to the third century, B.C. They verify that these prophecies concerning the Messiah were already written in the OT.

Two good examples are:

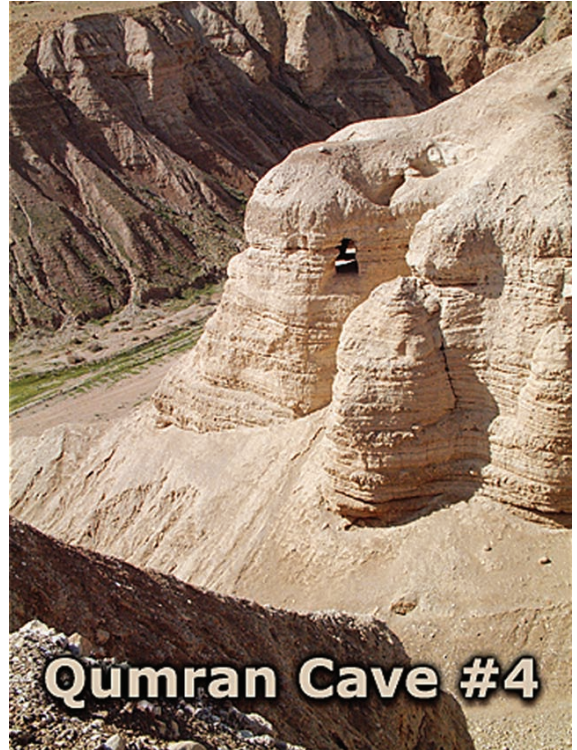
- Septuagint

A Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament. It was written 285 B.C.



- The Dead Sea Scroll

In 1947 a shepherd boy tending his father's sheep in Qumran, north and to the west of the Dead Sea in Israel, made an amazing discovery while looking for a lost goat. There in Qumran, in a hillside cave that had lain untouched for nearly two thousand years, he discovered an ancient collection of hand written copies of the Old Testament. These scrolls had been hidden in caves by the Essenes, a Jewish sect living in Qumran, 2,000 years ago.



These scrolls and writings - now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls - represented every book of the Old Testament except the Book of Esther, and are considered one of the greatest discoveries in modern times.



A portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran Caves

It's manuscript evidence like this Isaiah scroll that dates back to about 100 B.C. that proves, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the Old Testament, and its many prophecies concerning the Messiah, was finished long before Jesus was even born.

2) But then the same skeptics would persistently resist the truth by challenging, "How do you know that the Dead Sea Scrolls date back to before Christ?"

I am so glad that they are willing to be corrected again.

Teams of scholars determined the scrolls age by examining:

- The pottery that housed the manuscripts.
- The weave and pattern of the manuscript cloths.
- The form of the characters.
- The coins found alongside the manuscripts.

3) The skeptics have to make one last challenge, "Maybe Jesus was not the Messiah, but just accidently or even deliberately set out to fulfill his own prophecies."

This is a walk-in-the-park question. As Jesus encountered the Pharisees and religious leaders with questions on questions, I have questions to ask those Bible skeptics:

- Do you know anyone who was able to plan to be born in any particular time, in a particular family and in a particular location? No, duh!
- Do you know anyone who had managed to get arrested, tortured and crucified on a cross according to the Bible prophecy? Of course, I am not talking about make-believe movies.
- Do you know anyone who was smart and capable enough to beat the odds of fulfilling the prophecies of Jesus? Please allow me to explain.



Peter Stoner, a mathematician, and Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, in his book "Science Speaks" (Published by Moody Press 1963) calculated the odds of a single man fulfilling just eight of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled as the mathematical improbability of 1 in ten to the seventeenth power. That is a HUGE number. That's a one with seventeen zeros after it - 100,000,000,000,000,000.

Let me tell you what kind of odd this is. You mark a red circle on a silver dollar and toss it into a tank that is the size of the state of Texas which is

filled with silver dollars up to 2 feet deep. Then you stir them thoroughly until that marked silver dollar is somewhere tucked away. You have one chance to stick your hand in the tank and bring up that marked silver dollar. That is the odd of 1 in a quadrillion.

By the way, please don't tell President Obama and the liberal Congress there is such a number "quadrillion". They might try to spend that much money just to prove that they can.

4) Then, finally the skeptics would say, "It sounds like the Bible is rigged by someone."

Bingo, you got it. It was rigged by God from the beginning.

These fulfilled prophecies in the Bible are amazing testimonies to the divine origin and trustworthiness of the Bible. No other religious writing is able to substantiate its claims to be divinely inspired with this kind of supernatural evidence.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) The Word of God contains the truth of God and true reports about sinful humans. If we disagree with the truth of God, it only proves that we are wrong again.

2) The biblical prophecies are in the Bible for us to have sanctified and holy life, not to meet our prophecy curiosity.

2. Scriptures and other evidences

Last Sunday we learned that the odds of Jesus fulfilling His own prophecies - just 8 out of hundreds that were mentioned throughout the OT was one in a quadrillion which is beyond our comprehension. It shows us that the Bible, the Word of God is trustworthy and its Author, God is faithful to the end.

This morning we are going to go over other evidences to bring forth further proofs of the trustworthiness of the Bible unlike any other religious books around the world because it was written by the Lord our God.

2 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, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE BIBLE

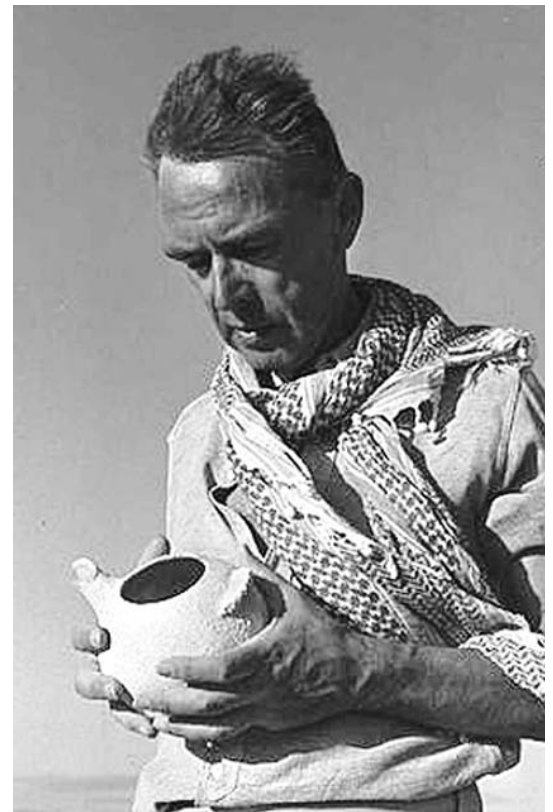
Over the years there have been many criticisms leveled against the Bible concerning its historical reliability. These criticisms are usually based on a lack of evidence from outside sources to confirm the biblical record.

Since the Bible is a religious book, many scholars take the position that it is biased and cannot be trusted unless we have corroborating evidence from extra-biblical sources. In other words, the Bible is guilty until proven innocent, and a lack of outside evidence places the biblical account in doubt.

This standard is far different from that applied to other ancient documents, even though many, if not most, have a religious element. They are considered to be accurate, unless there is evidence to show that they are not. Although it is not possible to verify every incident in the Bible, the discoveries of archaeology since the mid-1800s have demonstrated the reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible texts.



Dr. Nelson Glueck, an American rabbi, academic and archaeologist, probably the greatest modern authority on Israeli archeology, has said, "No archeological discovery has ever overturned a biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries."



Here are some examples:

1) The discovery of the Ebla archive



The discovery of the Ebla archive in northern Syria in the 1970s has shown the biblical writings concerning the Patriarchs to be viable. Documents written on clay tablets from around 2300 B.C. demonstrate that personal and place names in the Patriarchal accounts are genuine. The

name "Canaan" was in use in Ebla, a name critics once said was not used at that time and was used incorrectly in the early chapters of the Bible.

Genesis 1:2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The Hebrew word 'tehom' which means "the deep" in Genesis 1:2 was said to be a late word demonstrating the late writing of the creation story. "Tehom" was part of the vocabulary at Ebla, in use some 800 years before Moses. Ancient customs reflected in the stories of the Patriarchs have also been found in clay tablets from Nuzi and Mari.

The Hittites territory and the archaeological discovery items >>>

2) The Hittites

The Hittites were once thought to be a biblical legend, until their capital and records were discovered at Bogazkoy, Turkey.

3) Solomon's wealth

Many thought the biblical references to Solomon's wealth were greatly exaggerated. Recovered records from the past show that wealth in antiquity was concentrated with the king and Solomon's prosperity was entirely feasible.



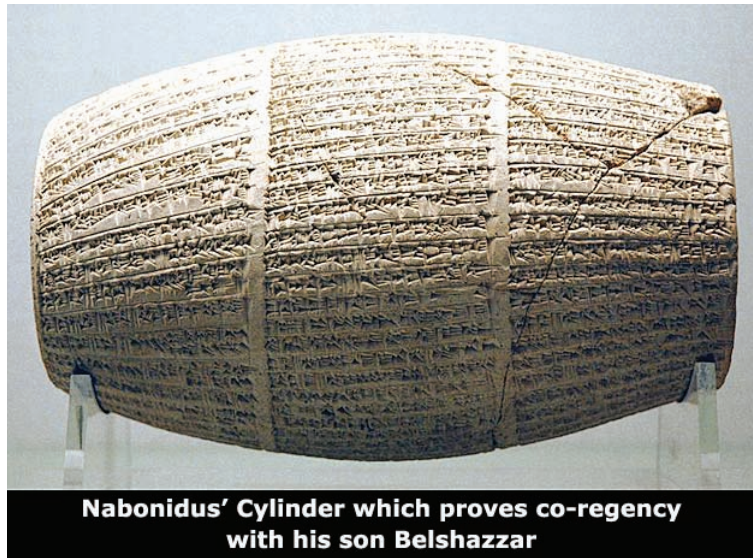
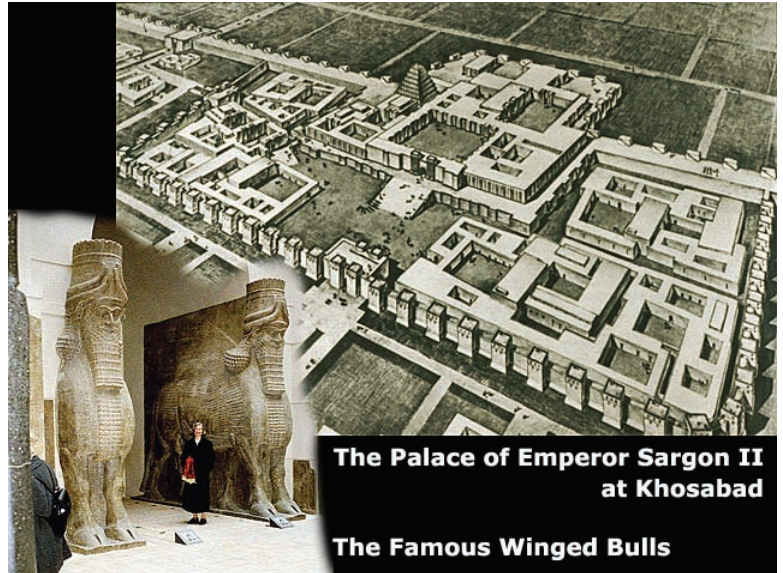
4) Assyrian king Sargon

It was once claimed there was no Assyrian king named Sargon as recorded in Isaiah 20:1, because this name was not known in any other record.

Isaiah 20:1 In the year when King Sargon of Assyria captured the Philistine city of Ashdod



Then, Sargon's palace was discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq. The very event mentioned in Isaiah 20, his capture of Ashdod, was recorded on the palace walls. What is more, fragments of an inscription pillar memorializing the victory were found at Ashdod itself.



5) Belshazzar, king of Babylon

Another king who was in doubt was Belshazzar, king of Babylon, named in Daniel 5. The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus according to recorded history. Tablets were found showing that Belshazzar was Nabonidus' son who served as coregent in Babylon. Thus, Belshazzar could offer to make

Daniel "third highest ruler in the kingdom" for reading the handwriting on the wall, the highest available position.

Daniel 5:16 I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will wear a gold chain around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

6) Pontius Pilate

The Bible says that he was the Roman governor of Judea and the man who issued the official order for Jesus to be sentenced to death by crucifixion. But for some reason, secular scholars believed that it was a fairy tale story because they didn't see his name in the Roman history.



In June of 1961 a team of Italian archaeologists, led by Dr. Antonio Frova, were excavating the Mediterranean port city of Caesarea that had at one time served as the Roman capital of Palestine. It was there in the jumbled ruins of an ancient Roman theater that they uncovered a large 2' x 3', 5" or so thick, limestone rock. The inscription on the rock amazed the archaeologists.



Caesarea and the lime stone that has an inscription: "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea"

It read in: "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea".

Archaeology has not proven so helpful for other religious writings. Consider the Book of Mormon. Not one piece of evidence has ever been found to support the Book of Mormon -- not a trace of the large cities it names, no ruins, no coins, no letters or documents or monuments, nothing in writing. Not even one of the rivers or mountains or any of the topography it mentions has ever been identified. Nothing which demonstrates that the Book of Mormon is anything other than an early nineteenth century piece of American fiction, invented by Joseph Smith has ever been found.

B. THE INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE BIBLE

From the first Book of the Bible, Genesis, to the last Book, Revelation, the Bible is absolutely consistent.

Skeptics insist that there are many inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible for them to trust. When I hear that, I always hand out my Bible or my iPhone which contains two versions of the Bible to them and ask them to show me any inconsistency or contradiction from it. I have not yet been shown a single proof of inconsistency in the Bible from them.

I am sure that you've heard me saying this before, but it is worth repeating: People reject the Bible not because it contradicts itself, but people reject it because it contradicts people's sinful lifestyles.

1) The Bible addresses life's most controversial questions.

- How did the universe come into existence?
- Does God exist? And if so, what is He like?
- Why does man exist?
- What is our purpose for being here?
- Why is there evil and suffering in the world?
- Where is God when bad things happen to good people?
- What happens to me after I die?

Can we get answers for all these questions right away? If you do, I'd like to know your source. We get to have some of the answers from the Lord as we walk with Him everyday for our lifetime and depends on Him more than ever before.

Though we may not get to have all the answers for our questions, we know one thing for sure: If we can believe Genesis 1:1, believing the rest of the Bible and what the Lord Jesus promised to us would be a piece of cake.

2) The Bible is a collection of 66 different documents.

It might be easy to have harmony of thought in a single book like the Qur'an, that contains the teachings of a single man. But the Bible is not a single book. It is a compilation of Books: 39 Books in the Old Testament and 27 Books in the New Testament. All these 66 Books in the Bible are consistently pointing to One person: Jesus Christ.

3) The Bible was written by approximately 40 authors who came from different educational, cultural and historical backgrounds.

Peter was a fisherman; Abraham was a sheepboy instead of cowboy; Paul was a scholar; Matthew was a despised IRS agent; David was a shepherd boy, then a king; Mark was a missionary who AWOLed once; Luke was a historian and medical doctor, Asaph was a musician; Amos was a fig picker who prophesied. Yet, all these people were consistently used by the Lord to speak the truth to us and glorified the Lord.

4) The Bible was written over a period of approximately 2000 years, covering over 60 some generations.

5) Many authors were separated by hundreds and thousands of miles geographically.

Many people don't realize this, but the Bible was written in a variety of places on three continents - Africa (mainly Egypt), Asia (mainly the Middle East and Asia Minor), Europe (Rome and Greece).

Paul wrote four letters imprisoned in Rome, located in Italy. The apostle John, wrote while a prisoner banished to the Isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. The prophet Ezekiel wrote his work while held captive in Babylon. Jeremiah was in a dungeon. Luke wrote while traveling. Daniel wrote from a hillside and in a palace in Babylon. Moses wrote while they were making a journey of Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land.

6) The Bible was written in three languages – Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

In spite of all of these different factors we find the Bible to be a consistent, harmonious, perfectly unified account of how God is seeking to reconcile sinners back to Himself through the person of His Son Jesus Christ. This is an amazing evidence of its divine origin.

Show me one book that has a complete consistency in these requirements like the Bible. You CAN NOT.

C. THE MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

German Johannes Gutenberg invented his first printing press around 1,440. Until that time, if you wanted to have a copy of the Bible, you'd better have a half year or so set aside to start to copy the entire Bible by hand.

The New Testament is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. But, if the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle and Homer.

There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament. If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity and accuracy.

Here are a few comparisons:

- Plato was written in 427-347 B.C. Its earliest copy was done 900 A.D. Approximate time span between original and the first copy is 1,200 years and there are 7 copies found.
- Aristotle was written in 384-322 B.C. Its earliest copy was done 1100 A.D. Approximate time span between original and the first copy is 1,400 years and there are 49 copies found.
- Homer was written in 900 B.C. Its earliest copy was done 400 B.C. Approximate time span between original and the first copy is 500 years and there are 643 copies found. The accuracy is 95%. That is very good.
- New Testament was written in 50-100 A.D. Its earliest copy was done A.D. 130. Approximate time span between original and the first copy is less than 100 years and there are 5,686 copies found. In addition there are over 19,000 in copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000. The accuracy is 99.5%.

In other words, the Bible you have on your lap has the same content as the original manuscripts 2,000 years ago. Try to beat that.

So then, what kind of proof is the Muslim or Mormon able to offer to prove that the Bible has been changed or corrupted down through generations and centuries?
NONE, ZIP, NADA, NOTHING!!!

For them to prove inconsistency and corruption of the textual purity of the Bible, they have to hold up ancient copies of the Bible and the current Bible and should show us the errors in them. But they cannot. Even though they can go to museums and libraries around the world to see these NT manuscripts, they can not dare to make an attempt.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) The Word of God is not temporal, but eternal. It is not one bit affected by cultural, generational, linguistic and historical differences.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

2) The Word of God is not corrupted, not inconsistent like any other human literatures, because it is written by the Lord.

3. Scriptures and more evidences

For the last two Sundays we've been learning the evidences of the trustworthiness of the Bible which is the Word of God and its Author is God. So far, we checked out the prophetic evidence, the archaeological evidence, the internal consistency of the Bible and the manuscript evidence in a logical and methodical way that even a serious atheist must admit that the evidences are good. However, accepting these evidences are strictly subjective due to an individual choice.

This morning we are going to go over three more evidences to build a concrete proof of the trustworthiness of the Bible and to leave no room for anyone to refuse that the Bible is anything but the truth if they can be objective about the evidences.

2 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, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

A. SCIENTIFICALLY ACCURATE EVIDENCES IN THE BIBLE

By any means, the Bible is NOT a scientific Book, nor does it claim to be one. Yet when it speaks about science, it is completely accurate. It is an ancient writing of a minimum of almost 2,000 years old. But what it says in its content would blow away any non-biased, truth seeking scientists' minds.

With the exception of the Bible, every ancient religious writing has certain unscientific views of astronomy, medicine, hygiene, etc. The Qur'an says in Surah 18:86 that the sun sets in a murky water.

18:86 Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it set in a spring of murky water: Near it he found a People: We said: "O Zulqarnain! (thou hast authority,) either to punish them, or to treat them with kindness."

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا

قَوْمًا فَلَمَّا بَيَّنَّا الْقُرْيَيْنِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَعَدَبَ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْتَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾

Qur'an 18:86 "Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it set in a spring of murky water..."

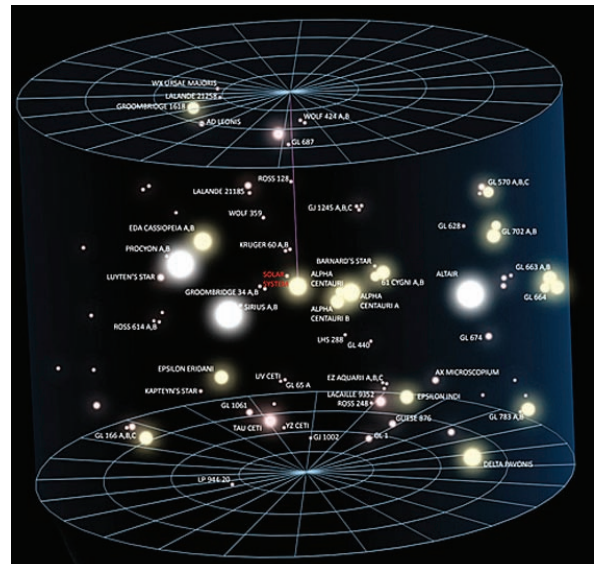
Not only is the Bible free from scientific errors, it miraculously makes known numerous, accurate scientific facts about the universe thousands of years before modern scientists caught up. There are lots of them. For time's sake I will give you seven quick examples.

The Solar System (Red) in the Milkyway >>>

1) The sun on its circuit

Psalm 19:6 Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

In contrast to the Qur'an, the Bible teaches that the sun is actually on a



circuit through space. For many years critics scoffed at this verse, claiming that it taught that the sun revolves around the earth. Scientists at that time thought the sun was stationary. However, it has been discovered in recent years that the sun is in fact on a circuit through space, just like the Bible says.

2) The earth is round.

Isaiah 40:22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

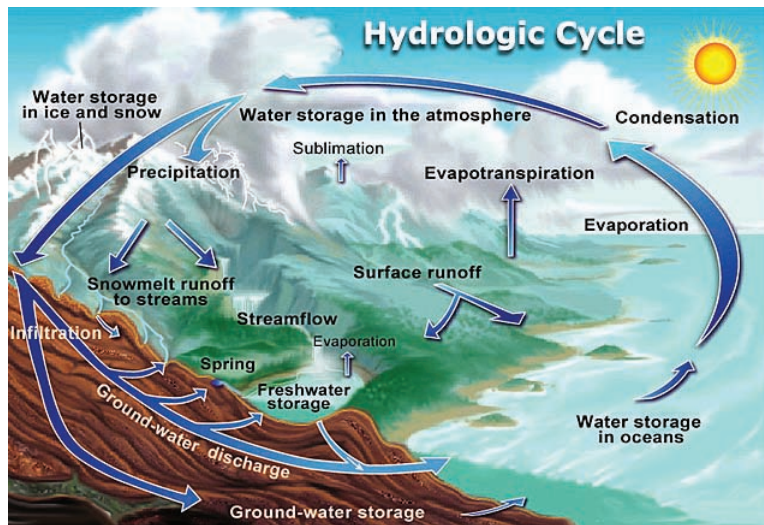
This is not a reference to a flat round disk, as some skeptics insisted, but to a sphere. When did Isaiah write these words? Between 740 and 680 B.C. Secular man discovered this 2,000 years later. At a time when science believed that the earth was flat, it was the Scriptures that inspired Christopher Columbus to sail around the world.

3) The Suspension of the Earth

Job 26:7 He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.

Before Isaac Newton discovered gravity, Hindus believed that the earth rested on the back of an elephant who stood on the back of a turtle that was swimming in a great endless sea. The Greeks believed that the mythical god Atlas carried the earth on his shoulders. In one of the oldest books in the Bible, Job says that God hangs the earth on nothing. Scientists did not discover that the earth hangs on nothing until 1650.

4) Hydrology



Psalm 135:7 He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures.

Job 36:27-29 For He draws up drops of water, Which distill as rain from the mist, 28 Which the clouds drop down And pour abundantly on man. 29 Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds,

The thunder from His canopy?

Hydrology is described in two Books of the Bible written before 1,400 B.C. - more than 3,000 years before their discovery by science.

5) The innumerable stars

Jeremiah 33:22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.'"

Before the telescope was invented, man was able to number the stars. The Greek astronomer and mathematician Hipparchus (190-120 B.C.) said there were exactly 1,026 stars. The astronomer, and mathematician Ptolemy said there were 1,056 stars. The German astronomer, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), counted 1,006.

The whole thought of the stars being uncountable was contrary to modern science until the invention of the telescope. Since Galileo first pointed his telescope to the heavens in 1608, we discovered there were a lot more stars than anybody had ever imagined.



Today, with the help of powerful telescopes and modern satellite photographs, scientists estimate the universe contains approximately 100 billion galaxies containing approximately 200 billion stars each. If you are wondering the size of the galaxy we are in, it will take 150 million light years to go from one end to the other.



Dr. Mark Eastman

says, "Counting at a rate of ten stars per second it would take over 100 trillion years. Surely the stars cannot be numbered!"

6) Blood-clotting in a newborn

Medical science has only recently discovered that blood-clotting in a newborn reaches its peak on the eighth day, then drops. The Bible consistently says that a baby boy must be circumcised on the eighth day.

7) Life in the blood

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

The great biological truth concerning the importance of blood in our body's mechanism has been fully comprehended only in recent years. Up until 120 years ago, medical doctors insisted that sick people needed to bleed to remove sickness out of their bodies and many died because of the practice. If you lose your blood, you lose your life. Yet Leviticus 17:11, written 3,000 years ago, declared that blood is the source of life.

B. EXTERNAL VERIFICATION OF THE BIBLE

Many people don't know this but there are dozens of writings outside of the Bible that verify the historical accuracy of many of the names of people, places and events mentioned in the Bible.

In fact, external sources verify that at least 80 persons were actual historical figures, 50 people from the OT and 30 people from the NT. Because of engravings and statues, etc., we even know what 18 (12 from the OT and 6 from the NT) of them looked like.

NEW TESTAMENT FIGURES CITED by NON-CHRISTIAN WRITERS AND/OR CONFIRMED THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGY

Person	NT Citation	Non-Christian Source(s)*
Jesus	Many citations	Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Phlegon, Thallus, Suetonius, Lucian, Celsus, Mara Bar-Serapion, The Jewish Talmud
Agrippa I	Acts 12:1-24	Philo, Josephus
Agrippa II	Acts 25:13-26:32	coins, Josephus
Ananias	Acts 23:2; 24:1	Josephus
Annas	Luke 3:2; John 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6	Josephus
Aretas	2 Cor. 11:32	Josephus
Bernice (wife of Agrippa II)	Acts 23:13	Josephus
Caesar Augustus	Luke 2:1	Josephus and others
Caiaphas	Several citations	ossuary, Josephus
Claudius	Acts 11:28; 18:2	Josephus
Drusilla (wife of Felix)	Acts 24:24	Josephus
Egyptian false prophet	Acts 21:38	Josephus
Erastus	Acts 19:22	inscription
Felix	Acts 23:24-25:14	Tacitus, Josephus
Gallio	Acts 18:12-17	inscription
Gamaliel	Acts 5:34; 22:3	Josephus
Herod Antipas	Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:1; 23:7-12	Josephus
Herod Archelaus	Matt. 2:22	Josephus
Herod the Great	Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5	Tacitus, Josephus,
Herod Philip I	Matt. 14:31- Mark 6:17	Josephus
Herod Philip II	Luke 3:1	Josephus
Herodias	Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17	Josephus
Herodias's daughter (Salome)	Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29	Josephus
James	Several citations	Josephus
John the Baptist	Several citations	Josephus
Judas the Galilean	Acts 5:37	Josephus
Lysanias	Luke 3:1	inscription, Josephus
Pilate	Several citations	inscription, coins, Josephus, Philo, Tacitus
Quirinius	Luke 2:2	Josephus
Porcius Festus	Acts 24:27-26:32	Josephus
Sergius Paulus	Acts 13:6-12	inscription
Tiberius Caesar	Luke 3:1	Tacitus, Suetonius, Paterculus, Dio Cassius, Josephus

*Note: This is not an exhaustive compilation of non-Christian references. There may be additional citations of these New Testament figures in these and/or other non-Christian sources.

An excerpt from "I don't have enough faith to be an atheist" by Norman Geisler & Frank Turek

Many liberal scholars at one time put forth the false idea that Jesus never even existed that He was merely a mythological character. But, today the existence of Jesus is hardly even debated within informed scholarly circles. Because there are 39 external verification evidences and sources for the existence of Jesus' life, teachings, crucifixion and resurrection. I am going to present three of the first and second century historians and their works to you.

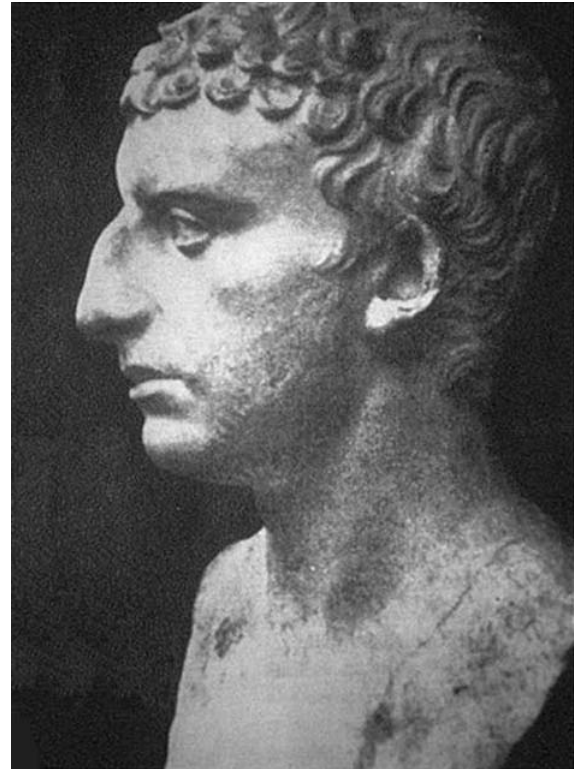


1) **Flavius Josephus** (A.D. 37-100)

In his writings Josephus verifies that Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, John the Baptist, James "the brother of Jesus," Felix, Festus and even Jesus, were all historical figures.

Listen to one of Josephus' statements about Jesus of Nazareth. I have purposely taken this from the Arabic text, of Josephus' writings called *Antiquities*, chapter 18:63-64, a text that is unchallenged by most critics of the Bible:

"At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And His conduct was good, and [He] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became His disciples.



Pilate condemned Him to be crucified to die. And those who had become His disciples did not abandon His discipleship. They reported that He had appeared to them three days after His crucifixion and that He was alive."

These are not the words of the Bible or a Christian, but a Roman historian writing outside of the pages of Scripture. Josephus wasn't the lone voice.

2) **Cornelius Tacitus** (A.D. 55-120)

Tacitus was another Roman Historian who wrote his work around A.D. 115. Although he was not a Christian but he did verify that Jesus lived, that He was from Judea, that He lived during the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), and was executed by Pontius Pilate, who governed the province of Judea from A.D. 26-36.

3) **Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus** (A.D. 69-130)

Suetonius was a prominent Roman historian and the chief secretary of Emperor Hadrian who recorded the lives of the Roman Caesars and the historical events surrounding their reigns.

Suetonius records the expulsion of the Christian Jews from Rome who were mentioned in Acts 18:2 and confirms the Christian faith being founded by Christ.

C. THE WILLINGNESS OF JESUS' DISCIPLES TO BE PERSECUTED

Thousands of communists died for their communism cause; millions died for the belief in Islam; and over one hundred thousand believers of Jesus Christ around the world still get killed and tortured for His name's sake every year. Many millions of people were willing to die for what they truly believed was true.

The critics of Christianity like Dan Brown, the author of *Da Vinci Code*, insist that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was nothing more than a hoax that was invented by His disciples to continue the fad which was created by Jesus, after His death. It is one thing to die for what you truly believe, but it is a completely different thing to die for a deception you created. I believe that just about everyone who lied and now face an imminent death would say, "Forget this. I've lied. Please don't kill me."

The disciples of Jesus had a unique position historically that allowed them to know whether what they were saying was true or not. They actually lived in Israel at the time Jesus lived and was with Him when He was crucified and met Him and talked with Him after He was resurrected. They were the eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ. No other proof can be better and stronger than that.

So whatever happened to those disciples at their death beds? Did they confess their deception and made themselves right? Too much of the Bible critics' dismay, they all got tortured and killed with the exception of apostle John, still believing Jesus as their Savior and God. Please allow me to list their death:

- Matthew was slain with a sword in a city of Ethiopia.
- Mark died in Alexandria, in Northern Egypt after having been cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.
- Luke was hung upon an olive tree in the land of Greece.
- James was beheaded in Jerusalem.
- James the Less (as he's called in Mark 15:40) was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple.
- Philip was hung up against a pillar at Heiropolis in the province of Phrygia.
- Bartholomew was flayed alive.
- Andrew was bound to a cross, and left to die.
- Jude was shot to death with arrows.
- Matthias (the apostle chosen to replace Judas) was first stoned, and then beheaded.
- Barnabas was stoned to death by the Jews at Salonica.
- Paul, that former enemy of Christ, after a variety of tortures and persecutions, was finally beheaded in Rome.
- Peter was crucified in Rome.
- Thomas, the former skeptic of the resurrection, was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies for preaching the Gospel.
- John faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the prison island of Patmos. The apostle John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. He died as an old man, the only apostle to die peacefully.

These disciples sealed their testimony that Christ was alive with their own death. They went to their graves still affirming that the events which they had witnessed had actually occurred.

D. THE BIBLE'S TRANSFORMING POWER

If you've been here for the last two Sundays and today, you've heard my presentation of the trustworthiness of the Bible from seven different angles - the prophetic evidences, the archaeological evidences, the internal consistency of the Bible, the manuscript evidences, the scientific evidences, the external verifications and the eyewitnesses by Jesus' own disciples.

If you consider yourself as a true follower of Jesus Christ, you should have all the more faith in Him with these airtight evidences and eyewitnesses about Jesus and His Word the Bible. Dig into these studies and make them to be yours so that you can be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. It is the Bible's transforming power through the Holy Spirit.

If you consider yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ, yet you are not quite sure how the Bible this ancient Book is the Word of God and the manual for your life, I hope and pray that these studies have helped you understand the trustworthiness of the Bible and the Holy Spirit spoke to you. You don't ever need to have a doubt in the Word of God. Don't listen to the devil but listen to the Lord through the Bible. It is the Bible's transforming power in Him.

If you consider yourself as an unbeliever and never thought of the Bible as God's Word, now you have a serious challenge on your hand. Either Jesus is your God and Master of your life, or He becomes your ultimate enemy by your own choice. I hope that you are smart enough to choose Him to follow. It is the Bible's transforming power by the Holy Spirit.

There is no other book that transforms a person like the Bible. It is not the power of the Book itself. Rather it is the power that comes from the Author God Himself.

4. How did we get the Bible?

Ask just about any Christian how we got the Bible. The majority will shrug their shoulders and say, "I don't know." Some smart-alecks will respond, "From the Chapel Bookstore." Brilliant, Einstein!

Interestingly, many Christians still are somewhat unsure as to exactly how we came to possess God's Word. Consider for just a moment if a friend or coworker were to ask you to describe how we got the Bible. What would your answer be?

A. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

1) The Old Testament

- Books of law (a.k.a. Pentateuch) – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- Books of history – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah
- Books of wisdom – Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- Major prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor prophets – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

2) The New Testament

- The Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- Epistles
 - * Pauline Epistles – Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
 - * General Epistles – Acts, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
- Apocalyptic Book – Revelation

Again, many Christians may not come up with an answer why we have the New Testament. Was it 'Plan B' because the Old Testament didn't work for God? Absolutely not! The OT was written to show us how sinful we are without our Savior Jesus through the eyes of the law of God. And the NT shows us the life and sacrifice of Jesus and His teachings through His apostles so that we can live the holy and sanctified lives that bring honor and glory to the Lord.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

In other words, the OT is to prophesy the NT and the NT is to fulfill the OT.

B. THE OLD TESTAMENT

It was almost 3500 years ago when Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament. While we still have his words with us today, those original documents have been destroyed long ago. So how do we know what we have today is what Moses penned many years ago?

The answer lies in how those words arrived in our hands. In ancient times, there were diligent Jewish scribes who spent their entire careers copying material. These individuals were very meticulous in regard to providing an exact duplicate of the original document.

One group of scribes, known as the Masoretes, set its standards much higher than all the other scribes. The Masoretes counted every single letter, word, and verse of the Old Testament in order to preserve its accuracy.

Then an obvious question arises: If these men spent their entire lives doing nothing more than making thousands of copies of the Old Testament, then why do we not have innumerable copies still in existence? The fact is, only scarce copies from these ancient scribes are still in existence today.

The reason so few remain has to do with the people responsible for making the copies. They took great pride in their ability to copy without error, so that anytime a copy began to fade or show signs of wear, the scribes would either burn it or bury it in the ground. They did not want anyone obtaining a poor copy that could be misread or recopied incorrectly. After all, it was God's Word that they were responsible for accurately passing on to unknown descendants.

We learned about the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran. These scrolls gave us a complete set of the OT with the exception of the Book of Esther.

In your bulletin, you have a couple of sheets of "Timeline of Bible Translation History". It probably is way more than you need to know. But it is a nice thing to have around if you choose to dig deeper.

The ancient Hebrews had a clearly defined body of Scriptures. The Word of God was recognized from the very beginning, and there was no doubt which books belonged. The Jews did not arrange their books in the same way as Christians do, however, and some books were combined - e.g., 1 and 2 Samuel were one Book, so were 1 and 2 Kings as well as 1 and 2 Chronicles. But the content was the same.

Jesus verified that the OT writings were always Scripture when He quoted from the OT and claimed, "It is written". Apostle Paul had no doubt that the Jews were entrusted with the very oracles of God. Let me put it in this way: The church inherited the OT, and Jesus defended, encouraged and exemplified faithful submission to these writings as an inspired canon.

Some of you are wondering what the canon of the Bible is. I will explain that to you shortly. Don't run ahead of me now.

Timeline of Bible Translation History

- 1400 BC: The first written Word of God: The Ten Commandments delivered to Moses.
- 500 BC: Completion of All Original Hebrew Manuscripts which make up The 39 Books of the Old Testament.
- 200 BC: Completion of the Septuagint Greek Manuscripts which contain The 39 Old Testament Books AND 14 Apocrypha Books.
- 1st Century AD: Completion of All Original Greek Manuscripts which make up The 27 Books of the New Testament.
- 315 AD: Athenasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, identifies the 27 books of the New Testament which are today recognized as the canon of scripture.
- 382 AD: Jerome's Latin Vulgate Manuscripts Produced which contain All 80 Books (39 Old Test. + 14 Apocrypha + 27 New Test).
- 500 AD: Scriptures have been Translated into Over 500 Languages.
- 600 AD: LATIN was the Only Language Allowed for Scripture.
- 995 AD: Anglo-Saxon (Early Roots of English Language) Translations of The New Testament Produced.
- 1384 AD: Wycliffe is the First Person to Produce a (Hand-Written) manuscript Copy of the Complete Bible; All 80 Books.
- 1455 AD: Gutenberg Invents the Printing Press; Books May Now be mass-Produced Instead of Individually Hand-Written. The First Book Ever Printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.
- 1516 AD: Erasmus Produces a Greek/Latin Parallel New Testament.
- 1522 AD: Martin Luther's German New Testament.
- 1526 AD: William Tyndale's New Testament; The First New Testament printed in the English Language.
- 1535 AD: Myles Coverdale's Bible; The First Complete Bible printed in the English Language (80 Books: O.T. & N.T. & Apocrypha).
- 1537 AD: Tyndale-Matthews Bible; The Second Complete Bible printed in English. Done by John "Thomas Matthew" Rogers (80 Books).
- 1539 AD: The "Great Bible" Printed; The First English Language Bible Authorized for Public Use (80 Books).

- 1560 AD: The Geneva Bible Printed; The First English Language Bible to add Numbered Verses to Each Chapter (80 Books).
- 1568 AD: The Bishops Bible Printed; The Bible of which the King James was a Revision (80 Books).
- 1609 AD: The Douay Old Testament is added to the Rheims New Testament (of 1582) Making the First Complete English Catholic Bible; Translated from the Latin Vulgate (80 Books).
- 1611 AD: The King James Bible Printed; Originally with All 80 Books. The Apocrypha was Officially Removed in 1885 Leaving Only 66 Books.
- 1782 AD: Robert Aitken's Bible; The First English Language Bible (KJV) Printed in America.
- 1791 AD: Isaac Collins and Isaiah Thomas Respectively Produce the First Family Bible and First Illustrated Bible Printed in America. Both were King James Versions, with All 80 Books.
- 1808 AD: Jane Aitken's Bible (Daughter of Robert Aitken); The First Bible to be Printed by a Woman.
- 1833 AD: Noah Webster's Bible; After Producing his Famous Dictionary, Webster Printed his Own Revision of the King James Bible.
- 1841 AD: English Hexapla New Testament; an Early Textual Comparison showing the Greek and 6 Famous English Translations in Parallel Columns.
- 1846 AD: The Illuminated Bible; The Most Lavishly Illustrated Bible printed in America. A King James Version, with All 80 Books.
- 1885 AD: The "English Revised Version" Bible; The First Major English Revision of the KJV.
- 1901 AD: The "American Standard Version"; The First Major American Revision of the KJV.
- 1971 AD: The "New American Standard Bible" (NASB) is Published as a "Modern and Accurate Word for Word English Translation" of the Bible.
- 1973 AD: The "New International Version" (NIV) is Published as a "Modern and Accurate Phrase for Phrase English Translation" of the Bible.
- 1982 AD: The "New King James Version" (NKJV) is Published as a "Modern English Version Maintaining the Original Style of the King James."

C. THE NEW TESTAMENT

The NT was written between approximately A.D. 35 and A.D. 100. Unlike the scribes who copied the Old Testament, people who copied the NT Books did not see the need to bury or burn old, worn-out copies of the Scriptures. As a result, we still possess literally thousands of manuscripts of the NT.

D. CANONIZATION OF THE BIBLE

"Canon" is derived from the Greek word "Kanon," signifying a 'measuring rod'. Thus, to have the Bible "canonized" meant that it had been measured by the standard or test of divine inspiration and authority. It became the collection of books or writings accepted by the apostles and leadership of the early Christian church as a basis for Christian belief. It is the standard by which all Christians throughout the generations live and worship.

So how was the canon decided?

1) The Old Testament

The books accepted by the Jewish community originated over a period of approximately one thousand years.

Here are the guidelines they used for the OT:

- Was the book written by a prophet of God?

Generally the prophecy book would have statements of "thus says the Lord," or "the word of the Lord came."

- Did miraculous signs or accuracy of fulfillment serve as confirmation of a prophet's message?
- Was the book internally consistent with the revelation of God found in the teachings of other canonical books, especially what God gave through Moses?

The OT was canonized at the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.

2) The New Testament

Here are the guidelines they used for the NT:

- Did the book come through the apostles of the Lord or through persons under the guidance of an apostle, such as Luke or Mark?
- Did the book come with the power of God and be effective for changing lives?
- Was it generally accepted by the people of God?

Determination of the New Testament canon took place over a period of years, reaching its final form at the Synod of Carthage in A.D. 397.

By now, someone would have a question, "In what authority did they choose which books for the Bible?" I believe that the answer is rather simple: The same God who inspired 40 authors for over almost 4000 years period, inspired the group of godly people to choose the right Books to make a compilation for the Bible.

Then again some others might think, "Yo preacher, what about those books known as "the Apocryphal books"? Why are they not included in the Bible? Are they chopped liver?" I am glad that you are wondering about that.

E. WHAT ABOUT THE APOCRYPHAL AND THE LOST BOOKS?

Apocryphal means "hidden" and it is a group of 14 books which were written between 400 B.C.-100 B.C., not considered canonical, but included in the Septuagint

and the Latin Bible Vulgate as part of the Old Testament. However, they were usually omitted from Protestant editions of the Bible.

While the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches treat some of these books as Scripture, Protestant Christians never have. Here are the reasons:

1) The Jews never considered them as part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

They believed that there was, throughout that period, no voice of the prophets in Israel. For the Jews, God's revelation of the Scriptures through the prophets ended around 430 B.C. with the Book of Malachi.

2) Jesus and the apostles never considered the Apocryphal as part of the Scriptures.

Although there are hundreds of quotations and references to the OT in the NT, never did Jesus or the apostles quote from the Apocryphal. Incidentally, the authors of the Bible do refer to other books, but this does not make them Scripture. For example, Jude 14-15 refers to the book of Enoch, which is not part of the Roman Catholic Apocryphal.

3) Unlike the OT prophets, none of the books of the Apocryphal ever claimed divine authority.

4) The Apocryphal contains teachings that are clearly unbiblical - for example, they encourage prayers for the dead, teach salvation by works, and they even include an account where God is shown to be assisting someone in a lie.

Many of the "lost Gospels" or "Gnostic Gospels" teach that Jesus was God, but not man. This is a heresy known as 'Docetism', which was prevalent in the second and possibly even first centuries. In fact, the popular gospel of Thomas likely teaches that Jesus is a divine teacher, but it is quite doubtful whether he is even human. Many of the infancy gospels, such as the infancy gospel of Thomas, etc., were written to explain how Jesus was basically non-human by having the child Jesus perform amazing miracles that were never mentioned in any other Gospel.

F. THE JESUS SEMINAR'S SCHOLARS VERSION

The late 1980s began wide exposure for the Jesus Seminar, a group of extreme-left scholars who would study a passage of the Gospels and then gather together and vote on whether a particular saying of Jesus was actually to have been said by Him by voting.

This group likewise took upon itself the task of reevaluating, and overthrowing, the entire consensus of Christian history in granting to the second-century Gnostic Gospel of Thomas to be fully canonical status, to the point of publishing this work right along with the four canonical Gospels. If truth be told, the fellows of the Jesus Seminar believe the gospel of Thomas to be more relevant and useful to historical inquiry than the Gospel of John. That is a heresy from hell.

G. OXFORD'S INCLUSIVE VERSION

This version seeks to introduce Christians to a "politically correct" version of the New Testament and Psalms, starting with the New Revised Standard Version as a base text. With such words as "Father/Mother God" and "divine Child" - instead of the "Son of God", Oxford's Inclusive Version should never, ever find a place in regular usage among God's people.

A quick glance at just some of its renderings explains why:

"We have Abraham as our father and Sarah and Hagar as our mothers." (Matt. 3:9 – OIV)

Matthew 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

"For God so loved the world that God gave God's only Child, so that everyone who believes in that Child may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16 – OIV)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

H. NO OTHER GOSPEL

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

A friend of mine once told me that he'd like to read the entire gospel of Thomas. So I took him out to the desert and put him out of his misery. Just kidding.

If you have enough time to read garbage like that, use that time to read and learn more about the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why in the world would you put yourself under any influence of a heresy unless you read it to counteract against it?

The Bible we have has survived through tremendous persecutions from kings, emperors, tyrants, even clergies just like the Lord prophesied.

Matthew 5:18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Next time we are going to study the church history, we will learn what the religious people did to keep the Bible away from the believers of Jesus Christ.

I. A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER

1) Don't neglect your Bible. If you do, you will neglect your own spiritual health.

2) A well-worn Bible is a sign of a well-fed soul.

3) Sin will keep you from the Bible, and the Bible will keep you from sin.

4) The Word of God is perfect, powerful enough to transform us and can give us wisdom to obey His commands.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 15:10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

5. The church history – Part 1

One of my favorite classes during my senior high school period was history classes. I don't know why, but I just liked them. Someone who is wise once said, "History tells us what time we are in; theology tells us who God is."

It is important for the believers of Jesus Christ to know how the church history unfolded in the past. If we choose to ignore the past mistakes and faults, we are bound to make the same ones in the future. That is the precise reason why the Lord included the Old Testament as a part of the Bible.

A. APOSTOLIC CHURCH – A.D. 30-100

1) A.D.

Many of us can readily answer the meaning of 'B.C.' - "Before Christ". But the majority of us would fumble if we were asked to explain what the meaning of A.D. is. It is "Anno Domini" - Latin for "the Year of the Lord". It refers to the number of years since Christ's birth. A sixth-century monk was the first to date history by the life of Christ. But his calculations were off by between one and five years. Jesus may have been four or five years old in A.D. 1.

2) The leaders and members

The Apostolic Church was the community led by the apostles who were former disciples of Jesus. In His "Great Commission," the resurrected Jesus commanded them that His teachings should be spread to all the world.

The first Christians were essentially all Jewish or Jewish converts due to their nationalism which was drilled into their heads since they were kids.

In spite of Jesus' "Great Commission" to them, they were somewhat comfortable with their own people and in their own home setting.

The Book of Acts records the martyrdom of the Christian leaders - Stephen, James and others - pushed them outside of their comfort zone to the world. The name "Christian" was first applied to the disciples in Antioch.

Acts 11:26 When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching great numbers of people. (It was there at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

3) The persecutions by the Romans

In midsummer, A.D. 64, Rome burned. Flames ravaged the city for six days. When the public wanted to take out their anger on Emperor Nero, he quickly blamed an unpopular minority group - the Christians. The persecution against these Christians started.

Christians believed in only one God unlike the polytheistic Romans. Besides, they talked about 'eating the body and drinking the blood of Jesus', 'being washed by the blood of Christ', 'the fire that would bring the end of the world', calling one another 'brothers and sisters' - terms used in Egypt to refer to sexual partners. To the unknown Roman people, Christianity was nothing more than cannibalism and incest.

On August 5, A.D. 70, Jerusalem was burned down and all the Jewish revolts were over. The persecution against the Christians started in full swing.

Psalms 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints.

B. THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH – A.D. 100-325

1) Structure and the episcopacy

In the post-Apostolic church bishops emerged as overseers of urban Christian populations, and a hierarchy clergy gradually took on the form of 'episkopos' which means overseers, bishops, elders and deacons which means servants.

Among these bishops, Polycarp of Smyrna, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons and Justin of Caesarea stood head and shoulder above others. These men reportedly knew and studied under the apostles personally and are therefore called Apostolic Fathers.

The early church understood that God gives instructions to one leader and the congregation follows the instructions of God. They'd never adopted congregational voting systems like many contemporary denominations. Democracy shows nothing more than the majority of public opinion, not the truth of God. The recent public opinion from November, 2008 brought the mess we are in to America.

2) Why did the churches grow in spite of the persecutions?

Because the Spirit of God was still working, what else?

I find three main reasons:

- **Christianity provided moral guidelines**

By the mid-100s A.D., the moral depravity of the ancient Roman Empire repulsed not only Jews, Christians, but also even the Roman citizens. It was a literal spiritual cesspool.

- **Christianity offered equality and respect**

In the Roman Empire, women were pretty much sexual objects and reproduction tools for the next generations. And slaves were treated as nothing more than living tools. It is no wonder why many of the early Christians were slaves and women. They found equality and respect in Christianity.

- **Christianity offered a personal relationship with God**

More than moral guidelines, equality and respect, Christianity gave them eternal hope through Jesus Christ who died for their sins and resurrected from the death. Throughout their lives, their Roman gods always demanded sacrifices from them without giving them anything, but this Christian God Jesus sacrificed Himself for them that they may have eternal life in heaven.

3) Early heresies

All the heresies against Christianity come from departing literal interpretation of the interpretation of the Scriptures. Once you start to interpret the Bible in an allegorical manner which means there are other meanings than what the texts say, you can make them say anything you want.

The biggest common denominator of all the cults is denying the deity of Jesus Christ and that He was completely human without sin while He was on the earth.

- **Gnosticism**

The Gnostics believed that everything physical was corrupt. Only spiritual things were pure; since physical side is corrupt, it didn't matter how a person acted. The Gnostics drew heavily from Greek philosophers like Plato. They claimed that they had secret

knowledge of God and brought them to a higher realm than others.

Apostle Paul tells us otherwise:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

- **Docetism**

The people who embraced this heresy believed that Jesus' humanity was merely an illusion, thus denying the incarnation - God becoming human.

A similar concept is adopted by Jehovah's Witness and Mormons. Jehovah's Witness believe that Jesus was merely a physical manifestation of Michael the archangel. Mormons believe that Jesus and satan are spirit brothers. According to Brigham Young who was considered the 2nd prophet of the Mormon Church, God had sexual relations with Mary to make the body of Jesus. NOT!

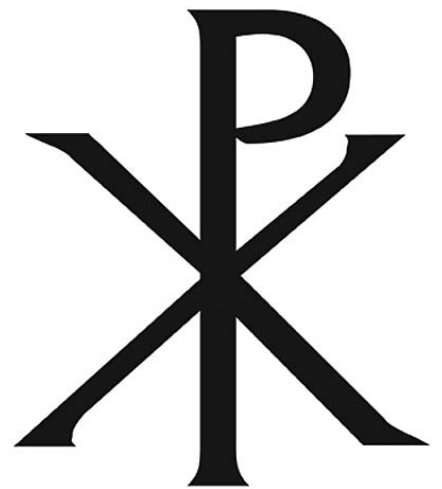
C. THE CHURCH OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE – A.D. 313-476

Galerius, who had previously been one of the leading figures in persecution, in 311 issued an edict which ended the Emperor Diocletian persecution of Christianity. After halting the persecutions of the Christians, Galerius reigned for another 2 years. He was then succeeded by an emperor with distinctively pro-Christian leanings, Constantine the Great.

1) Christianity legalized and endorsed by Constantine the Great

The Emperor Constantine the Great was exposed to Christianity by his mother, Helena. At the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312, Constantine commanded his troops to adorn their shields with the Christian symbol "XP" - a.k.a. Chiron - in accordance with a vision that he had had the night before. After winning the battle, Constantine was able to claim the emper- orship in the West.

How much Christianity Constantine adopted at this point is difficult to discern. Nonetheless, the accession of Constantine was a turning point for the Christian Church. After his victory, Constantine supported the Church financially, built various basilicas, granted exemption from certain taxes to clergy, promoted Christians to some high ranking offices, and returned property confiscated during the Great Persecution of Diocletian.



In 325, Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea, issued the Nicene Creed, which among other things professed a belief in "One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church."

2) Trinitarian Christianity adopted as the official state religion of Rome

On February 27, 380, the Roman Empire officially adopted Trinitarian Christianity as its state religion. Emperor Theodosius I supported the Trinitarian doctrine as

expounded in the Nicene Creed. He declared that only the followers of Trinitarian Christianity were entitled to be referred to as Catholic Christians, while all others were to be considered to be followers of heresy, which was to be considered illegal.

This new state sponsored Christianity brought two problems:

- o The former Roman pagan priests embraced Christianity for survival without true conversion.
- o Churches grew more rapidly than ever before. Still, not all growth is good. Now if you were a Christian in the Roman Empire, you got special perks. Who wouldn't profess to be a Christian and join the church? More people, more institutional aspect of the church, and the Gospel became diluted.

In God's kingdom, quality matters far more than quantity. It is easy to become caught up in what we can count. We call it 'Nose and Nickel' - "How many people and how much revenue does your church have?" This becomes the focal point of evaluation for a church by many Christians.

Would I like to have a bigger congregation with our own church building? Yes, a thousand times YES. But NOT at the cost of diluting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the depth of the congregation's spiritual condition. Am I saying that all the big churches' congregation have shallow spiritual condition? No, but it is a very clear and present danger to many big and small churches.

What good is it for us to be a big congregation church with a mile wide and an inch deep immature spiritual understanding? I'd rather have you guys to be absolutely in love with the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and obedient to His Word every day in your life than having thousands of people in our church.

Sometimes growth is good, but growth alone doesn't guarantee that God is being glorified. What matters most isn't always the growth that we are able to count. What matters is whether we're faithful wherever God has placed us.

3) Papacy and primacy

During the fifth century, the western region church leaders of the Roman Empire gained even more political power. As a result, the idea of the pope - the bishop of Rome emerged.

The official Catholic Church position is that Jesus had essentially appointed Peter as the first pope, with universal primacy as bishop of Rome. This is derived from his seeming primacy among the Twelve in New Testament texts on Peter.

Matthew 16:17-19 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The Greek word that was used for 'Peter' is 'petros' which means 'rock' or 'stone'. But the Greek word 'rock' is 'petra' which means 'boulder'. Jesus was mentioning Himself, not Peter. Thus, Jesus is the Rock of our salvation and He has built His church on Himself.

The Christian Church built its identity on the Apostles as witnesses to Christ, and responsibility for pastoral leadership was not restricted to Peter. The New Testament also does not contain any record of the transmission of Peter's leadership, nor is the transmission of apostolic authority in general very clear.

According to the guidelines of the papacy, Peter would be disqualified. Because he was married. He even had a mother-in-law. Some theologians say that Peter never forgot Jesus healing his mother-in-law. That is why he denied Jesus three times. I think that was a horrible interpretation.

4) Pope Gregory and Purgatory

Influenced by Augustine of Hippo - that is not an animal, rather it was a city where he came from, Pope Gregory started to develop the foundation doctrine of 'purgatory', a place between death and heaven where God supposedly keeps sinners still tormenting them in a gigantic waiting room.

But according to Gregory's concept, these sinners can still come out of the purgatory to heaven by repentance and intercessory prayers by others. There is absolutely no biblical reference you can find anywhere in the Bible regarding purgatory, nor praying someone out of it.

So far, we covered 600 years of the church history.

D. THE THINGS TO REMEMBER AND APPLY

1) The persecutions against the church of Jesus Christ never hurt the church; rather the Lord used it to purify the church.

2) Modern-day Gnosticism is still active to trap the believers of Jesus Christ. We must love, serve and follow our God with all of our hearts, minds, souls and bodies.

3) To God, the depth of a church congregation's spiritual condition is far more important than the size of the church. It should be to us as well.

4) Any doctrine without solid biblical references in context should be ignored immediately.

6. The church history – Part 2

Last Sunday we studied the first 600 years of the church history that encompassed from the apostolic church to the beginning stage of the Roman Catholic Church and its papacy.

It is my desire and prayer that you don't get these lessons as mere historical lessons, but as the examples of what to do and what not to do so that we may have sanctified and godly lives to bring honor to our Lord and Savior Jesus.

A. KNIGHTS AND PEASANTS

When you see medieval movies, plays or reenactments, you see a shining armored knight and a beautiful princess' romance. But in reality, many knights were nothing more than thugs in tin cans who worked for local lords who ruthlessly ruled over poor peasants with heavy taxes and hard labor.

These local lords didn't have to worry about a central government or empire. Lords paid priests who just became somewhat Christian priests with hodgepodge theologies plus their own pagan concepts to serve their manors.

Unfortunately, since kings and lords chose their own priests, obedience to their earthly lords could far exceed obedience to the heavenly Lord.

Few people could read. Priests relied on statues, stained glass and their own ideas to teach their people about God. Church buildings became important; images and architecture replaced the preached and written Word of God.

B. MUHAMMAD AND MUSLIMS

During this period, Muhammad lived in Mecca, a small Arabian trading post of current Saudi Arabia. He claimed that the angel Gabriel had entrusted him with a message from Allah supposedly, the only true God. He had gathered an army of followers and he called them 'Muslims' which means "those who submit to Allah". Their religion became known as 'Islam' which means "submission".

After Muhammad's death, his followers conquered Arabia, Syria and North Africa. In A.D. 638 Jerusalem fell to the Muslims. In A.D. 711 Muslim troops even had invaded Europe, conquering Portugal and Spain.

C. NOT UNUSUAL POWER STRUGGLES

While the Muslims were increasing their territories and power, there were never ending power struggles among the kings, lords and even popes and bishops. During this time, Christianity was nothing more than a byword. Less and less people were clinging onto the faith and hope in God. Because the priests were out there to mark their territories like stray animals and to build their own political and financial interests.

Eastern Christian Byzantine church and Roman church members had constant bickering for centuries, but they still thought they were one in spirit. However, between the 9th and 13th centuries, they were permanently separated into Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic.

A church in Spain added one Latin word to the Nicene Creed that was made A.D.

325. The original creed said, "The Spirit proceeds from the Father." The revised one claimed, "The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son." We would say, "So what, who cares? It is the same." But they didn't think so. The Roman church soon adopted the revised Nicene Creed and the Eastern rejected it vehemently.

Pope Leo IX sincerely believed that God had given the pope authority over all Christians including the Eastern Byzantine church. So the Pope sent his envoy with a bull. A bull is a notice written in the pope's name. We get the English word "bulletin" from this Latin word 'bull'.

On July 16, 1054, the Pope's envoy walked into a communion service of the Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople. He flung the bull on the communion table and walked out. What was the point of Pope Leo's bull? Well, it was like a Texas long horn: It had a point here, a point there, and lots of bull in between. It was nothing more than an excuse to excommunicate the Eastern Byzantine church Christians from their own idea of Christianity.

Jesus' disciples constantly argued who was the greatest among them. It was non-stop argument even all the way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Please don't think that we, the modern day Christians would be any different. If so, there wouldn't be any church split or church gossip.

Mark 9:33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

In v35, Jesus clearly tells us that to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God, we must be the servant of all. This is opposite of what the world tells us. In the worldly idea of power, the great man is distinguished by how many people serve him. But Jesus declares that true greatness is shown not by how many serve us, but by how many we serve.

It is not that Jesus hates ambition. Rather He teaches us to have the right kind of ambition. It is the ambition to serve others. True humility means knowing ourselves, accepting ourselves, being ourselves - our best selves - and giving of ourselves for others.

D. THE CRUSADES, REALLY?

Many medieval people believed they could turn from sin by going on a 'pilgrimage.' Pilgrims typically traveled to local shrines, but the ultimate pilgrimage was a trip to Jerusalem.

But since 638, Muslims had controlled Jerusalem and the roads that led to Jerusalem. And they caused havoc to the Christians who wanted to go to Jerusalem.

In A.D. 1095, Pope Urban II used this opportunity to round up an army to fight against the Muslims. The response was astounding. Just about the whole of Europe joined together. The way the pope convinced the people was that it is a pilgrimage

to Jerusalem and the journey would be the equivalent of penance which means a confession and forgiveness of sin. The first Crusade was underway.

On July 15, A.D. 1099, Jerusalem fell to the royal Crusaders. They torched a synagogue and burned the Jews inside alive. Because they thought that it was the Jews who killed Jesus Christ. They didn't realize that it was their sins that crucified our Lord on the cross. They also forgot that Jesus was a Jew. Besides, Jesus was not murdered. He willingly laid down His life for us.



In A.D. 1198 Pope Innocent III inspired the fourth Crusade that finally divided Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic permanently. On Good Friday, A.D. 1204, rather than attacking the Muslims, the Crusaders decided that they were going to conquer Constantinople,

the capital city of Eastern Byzantine Empire. The Crusaders, with red crosses on their tunics, sacked Constantinople. For three days, they raped and killed Christians, destroyed the city in the name of Christ. I don't think that pope Innocent III was as innocent as he wanted to appear.

Nothing can excuse any selfish offense undertaken in Christ's name. The end result does not justify the means.

E. THE RELIGION BUSINESS WAS BOOMING

During all this time, the Catholic religion business was booming. Bishops openly sold positions of leadership in the churches. Priests freely hawked indulgence.

Some of you may not know what indulgence is. It is supposedly meant to be a partial remission of the temporal punishment. It is completely unbiblical. It is a fancy way to say, "A license to sin." It was a demonic marketing strategy by ungodly popes and his bishops who did just about anything to accumulate wealth and power for their church and themselves at the cost of people's souls.

This was a part of the root reasons for the Reformation.

F. THE REFORMATION MOVEMENT

1) John Wycliffe

According to the Roman Catholic Church's teachings of the medieval time, only the true church could correctly understand the Scriptures. But their definition was limited to the pope, bishops and priests, not the common believers of Jesus Christ. John Wycliffe, a professor at Oxford University of England disagreed with them.

Wycliffe believed that every believer should read the Bible in their own common language, not in Latin that only the priests could read. So he and his followers started to translate the Scriptures into English.

2) The imitation of Christ

Around 1374 a fresh form of faith arose in the Netherlands - it is as known as the Common Life Movement. The followers of this movement denounced corruption among priests and bishops.

Their focus on personal devotion to Jesus became known as "the Modern Devotion" which brought a book called "The Imitation of Christ".

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.



3) Martin Luther

Like many people today, the vast majority of the Roman Catholic people believed they could earn salvation through good works and indulgences. In many contexts, tradition of the Roman Catholic had replaced Scripture as the church's supreme authority. Because the church's leadership was corrupt.

One question haunted Martin Luther, a German monk: How can anyone please a righteous God? When he considered the verse from Romans 1:17

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Through the insight that was given to him from the Holy Spirit, Luther realized that the word 'righteousness' means not only the condition of being righteous, but also the act of declaring someone to be righteous. God also can give righteousness to sinners, through faith in the righteous life and death of Jesus Christ. For years Luther had searched for peace. In the end, peace found him.

Fed up with the sale of indulgences and the misuse of the Roman Catholic Church's power, Luther wrote a list of 95 topic theses. On October 31, A.D. 1517, he nailed his theses onto the chapel door in Wittenberg, Germany. Here are a couple of his topics:

- The pope has no power to remit guilt, except by confirming it has been remitted by God. In other words, the forgiveness by a priest at the confession booth is not biblical, because a priest does not have authority to forgive a person's sins only God does.

Mark 2:7-10 "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"

- Confidence in salvation through letters of indulgence is vain.

Galatians 2:16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

When a Catholic ruler outlawed Lutheranism in his territory, one group of Lutherans protested so harshly that they were called "Protestants." The term was soon used to describe both Lutheran and Reformed churches.

4) Ulrich Zwingli

Zwingli was a contemporary of Luther from Zurich, Switzerland with the same Reformation movement.

5) John Calvin

John Calvin was a French cleric and doctor of law turned Protestant reformer. He belonged to the second generation of the Reformation, publishing the first systematic summary of Protestant theology which was known as "the Institutes of the Christian Religion" in 1536. Calvin established himself as a leader of the Reformed church in Geneva, which became an "unofficial capital" of Reformed Christianity in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Calvin's theology is best known for his doctrine of "Predestination", which held that God had, from all eternity, providentially foreordained who would be saved (the elect) and likewise who would be damned (the reprobate). Predestination was not the dominant idea in Calvin's works, but it would seemingly become so for many of his Reformed successors.

6) William Tyndale

William Tyndale was a 16th century scholar and translator who became a leading figure in Protestant Reformation towards the end of his life. Tyndale was the first to translate considerable parts of the Bible into English for the public. While a number of partial and complete translations had been made from the seventh century onward, particularly during the 14th century, Tyndale's was the first English translation to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts.

In 1535, Tyndale was arrested by Catholic Church authorities and jailed for over a year. He was tried for heresy, strangled and burnt at the stake. The Tyndale Bible continued to play a key role in spreading Reformation ideas across Europe.

One estimation suggests the King James New Testament is 83.7% Tyndale's and the Old Testament 75.7%.

With the Protestant Movement by Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Tyndale, the honeycomb of the Roman Catholic's prima donna attitude was violently shaken.

So far, we covered 1000 years of the church history from A.D. 600 to later part of 16th century.

G. THE THINGS TO REMEMBER AND APPLY

- 1) The ignorance of Scripture by us is not the result of persecution, outside pressure, or lack of time, but simple laziness on our part.
- 2) The true greatness in the Kingdom of God is not by how many serve us, but by how many we serve.
- 3) Any theology that encourages us to sin must be rejected immediately.

7. The church history – Part 3

If you are like me, you've heard from others, especially unbelievers asking us why there are so many denominations within Christianity. Most likely, you didn't have an answer. Surely Jesus didn't create denominations within the body of Christianity.

Some might say, "He may not, but He didn't mind having a Baptist as a cousin." For that, the proper translation should have been 'John the Baptizer' rather than 'John the Baptist'. And no, he was not the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I believe that the denominations within Christianity started with pride and selfishness of men. If we simply obeyed the Word of God as is, do what it says, there wouldn't be any other denomination but the one the Lord Jesus made. But His followers argued, bickered, and separated from each other like a group of children. They would pick up their toys and go home after their argument. I wonder if the Lord had to shake His head for our stupidities.

Now that we have hundreds of denominations within Christianity, I am glad that we have denominations. Because there are a number of them that do not follow the Word of God, they follow their own denominational traditions and rules in certain issues. Are they still brothers and sisters of Christ? Yes.

This morning, we are going to learn the last segment of the Church History that largely represents the history of the Protestant.

A. PURITANS AND KJV

In 1604, a band of English reformers had met with King James I at Hampton Court. Their desire was to purify the Church of England. So they became known as "Puritans." And they preferred the Geneva Bible which was one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible into the English language. It was the primary Bible of the 16th century Protestant movement.

However, King James disliked the Geneva Bible because it included study notes that were quite Calvinistic. The Puritans suggested to King James a new translation of the Scriptures, and King Jimmy quickly agreed. Forty seven scholars worked for 33 months on the King James' Version. In 1611 the first King James Version of the Bible rolled off the presses. It became the most popular English translation of the Scriptures and remained popular until the closing decades of the 20th century.



B. ISAAC NEWTON AND DEISM

Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) was an English physicist, astronomer, mathematician, and theologian who is considered to be one of the most influential people in human history. With his Universal Gravitation theory, he explained the mystery of the planets' movements in the universe.

Out of the new-found facts of the universe by Newton, a group of twisted-minded people known

as 'Enlightenment' thinkers began to mold a new concept which became known as 'deism'. They rejected every belief that reason could not confirm. Here are their ideas: Miracles? Impossible. The Trinity? Absurd. Jesus? A human teacher. God's mystery? Gone. To them, being a Christian is simply being nice to others according to Christ's ethics.

Around this time, a group called 'Masonic Brotherhood' became clubs dedicated to charity, peace and education. Their focus on education and peace led them to support 'Deism' in the 1700s.

Deism remained popular in Europe in 1800s. Influenced by this deceiving demonic concept, many churches embraced 'Unitarianism' the belief that God is not a Trinity. Unitarianism is a cult without a doubt.

C. THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING AND PIETISM

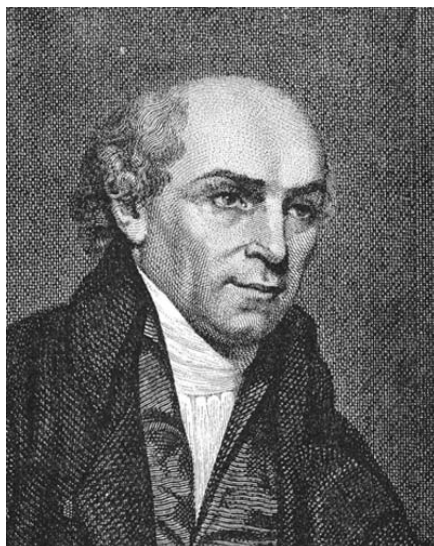
In 1734 flashes of revival began to light up the Northampton church's spiritual darkness in Northampton, Massachusetts. It was sparked by the Holy Spirit through a sermon of Pastor Jonathan Edwards - "Sinners in the hands of an Angry God." However, the first wave of revival lasted only three years.

In the meanwhile, the Lord used a European movement known as 'Pietism' to bring about a spiritual awakening that would reach around the world to this day. Pietism began with a booklet entitled 'Pious Desires' by Jacob Spener. The book urged Christians to pursue a personal relationship with Christ through intense meditation on the Scriptures.

During this time, the people like Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts wrote Pietist hymns that we still sing today.

Charles Wesley's brother John taught the Scriptures to his congregation so methodically that they started to call him 'Methodist.'

One of the great Methodist preachers was George Whitefield. He became a part of the First Great Awakening. Later he and John Wesley split over the doctrine of predestination.



D. THE MODERN AGE AND THE PARTICULAR BAPTIST

The Modern Age lasted from the end of the Enlightenment in the late 1700s until the mid 1900s. In the Modern Age, people emphasized human potential, progress and the material world.



William Carey (1761-1834) was an English Baptist missionary and known as the 'father of modern missions.' His most famous quote was "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."

In April 1793, Carey and a doctor volunteered to go to India. Later, the missionary doctor stole their funds. Two of the Carey's children died. While Carey focused on missions, depression seized his wife. After seven years of missionary work, he had one convert in India.

However, Carey continued, eventually, translated and published New Testaments in 24 of India's native languages. His work laid the foundation for thousands of future missionaries.

E. UNIVERSALISM AND THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

Many people on the American frontier started to embrace an unbiblical theology, known as 'Universalism' - the belief that God would never condemn anyone to hell; everyone would be saved. It is another deception from the spiritual darkness of hell.

Around 1800 many American Christians began to seek a renewed vision of the true God. The Presbyterians set aside days for prayer. They begged God to redeem their nation from darkness. In 1801, at a Christian believers' camp meeting, the fire of revival started and went across America for 30 years.

F. MORMONISM

Mormonism began with Joseph Smith when he supposedly met Jesus in a Vermont forest. He claimed that America stood at the center of God's plans and Native American Indians were, he claimed, displaced Israelites. He claimed that he was 'king of God's kingdom.' After a mob murdered Smith, Brigham Young led the so-called "Latter-Day Saints" to Utah.

G. HIGHER CRITICISM AND FAITH THROUGH SOCIAL ACTION

Another bogus theology surfaced around this time - Higher Criticism. These people tried to question the accuracy of the Bible. They were self-convinced that the Gospel writers didn't write about the real and historical, flesh-and-blood Jesus Christ.

In the 1800s the believers of Jesus Christ started to take what they learned from the Scripture to their society - their faith through social action. Wilberforce led to the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 in England; William Booth organized the Salvation Army; Wealthy British believers founded the YMCA. It has nothing to do with the Village People.

Charles H. Spurgeon, pastor of the London Metropolitan Tabernacle was providing balanced social reforms with an emphasis on evangelism to Great Britain.

H. THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

A self-proclaimed biblical scholar, William Miller, prophesied Christ's return in March 21, 1844. Nothing happened. He readjusted his calculation to October 22, 1844. Still nothing. I guess his Miller Time didn't come through.

Out of this shenanigan, 19 year-old girl Ellen White prophesied that one reason Christ hadn't returned was because Christians were not obeying God's OT laws. Her sabbath-keeping followers became known as 'Seventh-Day Adventists.'

Around that time, another cuckoo Charles Russell claimed that Jesus returned spiritually in 1872. Russell's followers - known today as 'Jehovah's Witness' revived the Arian heresy - Jesus did not always exist, but was created by God the Father and is therefore inferior to the Father. Both of them are cults.

I. THE THIRD GREAT AWAKENING AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

After a stock-market crash in 1857, the Third Great Awakening began in Canada and swept England and America. On the eve of the war, Christian believers were divided over the slavery issue. Throughout the Civil War, Americans on both sides assumed that God supported their cause.

The first Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1865 in Tennessee by veterans of the Confederate Army. In their fanatic minds, they claimed that God hates the Jews, blacks and any colored people.

I'd like to ask you to join me in a day of fasting and praying each week for the Lord that might start the fourth Great Awakening in our country and the world. I'd like you to join me on Monday in spirit from wherever you are. You can do this fasting and praying a whole day or just a meal depending on your health condition. I am sure that many of us can skip a meal without any problem. The idea of fasting is instead of eating a meal, we'd spend that time in praying and interceding for our church, for our country, for this world to turn our hearts back to the Lord. But don't tell others about your fasting.

2 Chronicles 7:14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

You may ask, "For how long?" Until the Lord answers. Who knows, this might be the last revival before the Rapture and the Great Tribulation on earth happens.

J. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION BY POPE PIUS IX

In 1854 Pope Pius IX personally decreed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception - the tradition that Mary was free from original sin. And he insisted that the pope is infallible. I don't know what he had been smoking. Another heresy.

K. D.L. MOODY AND THE FUNDAMENTALS

God turned a simple shoe salesman Dwight L. Moody to a soul salesman for Himself. In 1871 a great Chicago fire destroyed a large portion of its city including his home. Instead of lamenting his loss, he went across the Atlantic Ocean to preach in Britain. Someone remarked, "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him." Indeed, God's fire was blazing in Moody's soul.

Perhaps one of the wisest and most balanced responses to the Modern Age came from a Bible conference in Niagara, NY. They declared five basic truth of Christian faith:

- 1) Jesus was uniquely divine
- 2) He was born of a virgin
- 3) He died as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind
- 4) He will come again
- 5) The Scriptures contains no errors. The Bible is inerrant.

The booklet that contained these five points called 'Fundamentals,' and the people who accepted the five basic beliefs became known as 'Fundamentalists.'

L. WWII

A conservative politician campaigned for family values in Europe in the 1930s. He condemned homosexuality, pornography and communism. German Protestants even formed a Christian coalition to support him. The politician was Adolph Hitler.

Hitler attempted to merge all German Protestants into a single Pro-Nazi denomination. 5000 Christian leaders stood against Hitler's plan; consequently his claws had begun to clench the Christians in Germany. During the Holocaust, most church members, Protestant and Catholic alike, did little to stop Hitler's onslaught with the exception of Pope Pius XII. He sheltered many Jewish people in Vatican.

One of the most profound German Christians was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He said, "Cheap grace is our church's deadly enemy. Costly grace is the Gospel which must be sought again and again. Such grace is costly because it costs one's life; it is grace because it cost God His Son's life. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon His son to be too dear a price to pay for our life." Pastor Bonhoeffer was killed by Nazi Gestapo.

M. THE BIRTH OF EVANGELICALISM

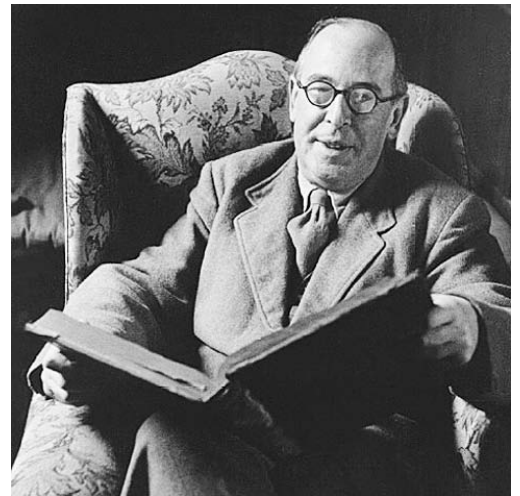
In October 1941, several conservative Christian leaders gathered at Moody Bible Institute to lay the foundation for the National Association of Evangelicals. Because they realized that the fundamentalist focus on total separation from everything modern and did not want to do anything with the secular world.

Jesus prayed for us to be in the world but not be of the world.

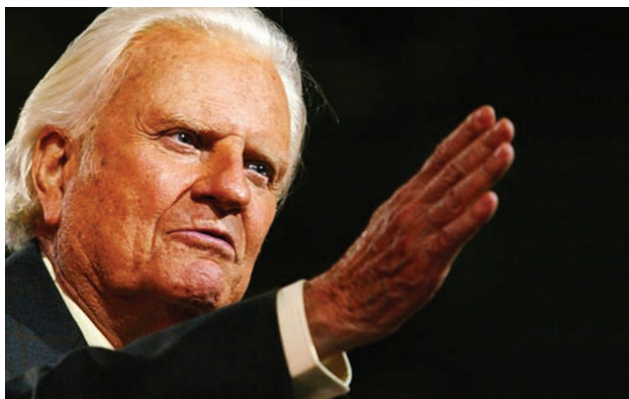
John 17:15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.



Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the writings of a British Christian C.S. Lewis encouraged many evangelicals to think more deeply about their faith in the world.



N. AN EVANGELIST WITH A PASSION



In 1949, a thirty one year old evangelist preached a simple message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to many unbelievers who packed a gigantic tent in Los Angeles. His name is Billy Graham. Billy Graham had led more people to Jesus Christ through these massive crusades than anyone in history.

O. MANNING THE BRIDGES BY POPES OR MAYBE NOT

In 1958 pope John XXIII called all Protestants "separated brothers" even though the previous popes had condemned them.

In 1962 pope Paul VI and the leader of the Orthodox Church forgave each other for the schism of AD 1054, when each church had condemned the other.

After the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005, new pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed that the Roman Catholic Church is the sole true church. According to him, organized groups of believers outside of the Roman Catholic Church are merely "ecclesial communities" that should "not be called churches in the proper sense."

P. THE JESUS MOVEMENT

The Jesus movement was a movement in Christianity beginning on the West Coast of the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s and spreading primarily through North America and Europe. Many, many dope headed hippies came to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord through this movement.

Right in the middle of this Jesus Movement was Pastor Chuck Smith with Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. Calvary Chapel is evangelical, dispensational, pre-tribulationist. Calvary Chapels place great importance in the practice of expository teaching, a "verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book" approach to teaching the Bible. It started with a 25 person church in Costa Mesa, CA. Now there are over 1400 Calvary Chapels across the U.S.A. and around the world.

Q. THE THINGS TO REMEMBER AND APPLY

- 1) A good start does not guarantee a good finish. – e.g., Methodist
- 2) The result of God's work does not depend on what we accomplish right now, but how the Lord brings it out for His glory. – e.g., Carey
- 3) The majority of the population on this earth will end up in hell. It is our solemn duty - every one of us - to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

8. How to study the Bible alone *Part 1*

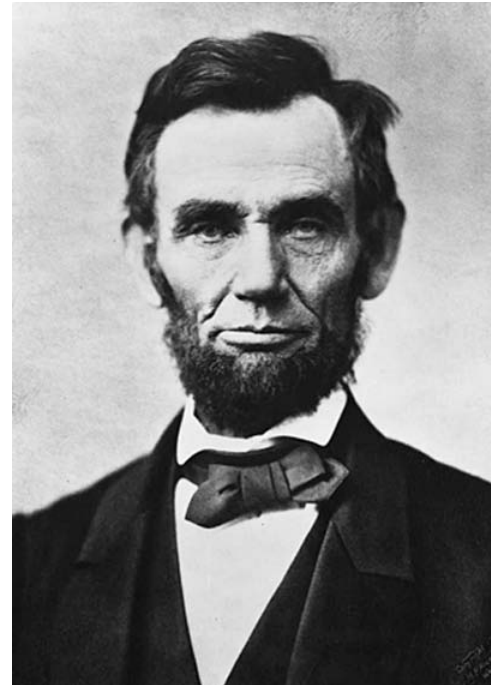
2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Since it says that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, we really need to know how to study the Word of God properly.

An American President once said he would rather live in Russia than in America. Which President would make such a remark? I know what y'all are thinking. No, it is not him. To your surprise, it was said by the Great Emancipator himself, Abraham Lincoln.

Of course, he was quoted out of context. He actually said, "I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty - to Russia, for instance." Lincoln wrote these words while he feared that many wanted to change "all men are created equal" to "all men are created equal, except non-whites."

Taking verses out of context from the Bible happens all too frequently. As I have said this many times before that all the cults use the Bible out of context to give more creditability to their demonic religions.



A. ONE RULE TO STUDY THE BIBLE WITH CONFIDENCE

This particular basic rule of Bible study should stand above all others - the law of context. Equipped with this one simple basic principle, you can begin immediately to spend a lifetime searching and discovering the treasures in the Bible.

With the law of context, there are four basic ways to keep Scripture in context:

1) Context of Immediate Setting

Behind every verse of Scripture is an immediate setting. This provides clues as to what the Lord has in mind. Once that main idea is identified, it becomes the key to opening up the meaning of the text in question.

To discover the flow of ideas streaming through a passage, good Bible students become childlike and - at the same time scientific - in asking a lot of questions:

- Who is the author?
- Why?
- Where?
- To whom is he writing?
- When?
- How?

Careful Bible students don't assume that the Lord is saying what they think He is saying, until they have done their homework. They don't try to plant an idea in "unworked ground." They dig and turn over the soil of the biblical ground until they discover the growing, living and life-changing ideas that God has planted inside of Scriptures.

Let's look at a couple of examples of specific texts whose immediate contexts have been ignored.

MISQUOTE #1: "The Bible says that if you confess your sins you'll be saved."

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This familiar verse is often quoted as a formula for salvation. But with the presence of the Scripture we in the immediate context makes it clear that John was not addressing the unsaved. Rather, he was talking to people who were already believers in Christ within context of v6, 7, 8 and 10. And he was showing them how to be restored to a right family relationship with God who had saved them.

If we don't consider the immediate context, we might conclude that we are saved by admitting our sins rather than by believing the Gospel of Christ.

MISQUOTE #2: "The Bible says that it's wrong to wear jewelry."

1 Peter 3:3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel--

Some have used these words to say that godly women should not style their hair, use cosmetics or wear jewelry. But if we read on, we find the true meaning in context,

1 Peter 3:4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

By these additional words we see that the apostle's main purpose was not to tell women that they either should or should not style their hair or wear jewelry or make herself look like an unmade bed. He was saying that they should focus on the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit rather than relying on outward appearance. Just don't overdo like this woman. >>



MISQUOTE #3: "The Bible says that I can do anything with God's strength."

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

This optimistic verse is often taken to mean that if our faith is strong enough we can do anything we set our mind to do. But the immediate setting in which Paul said this is important. The apostle was talking specifically about his ability to live by God's strength in times of great poverty as well as in times of plenty.

Paul wanted us to know that the person whose confidence is in God who supplies strength to the person so that he can live and thrive in all kinds of situations.

2) Context of plain and normal meaning

The second rule of context says that the language of the Bible can be taken at face value. The Word of God does not have to be decoded to find deeper and hidden

meanings. When studied and interpreted in context, the Holy Spirit says what He means and means what He says. That is why our children can understand the Word of God often faster and better than us.

Let's make an example here as well:

Y'all remember prophet Balaam who had some serious conversation with his donkey in Numbers 22, do you not?

According to this familiar incident, the donkey saw the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword in the middle of the road while her disobedient master Balaam was totally clueless. When the donkey refused to go ahead, Balaam started to strike the donkey.

Numbers 22:28-30 Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" 29 And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!" 30 So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No."

I'd love to be there to watch this greedy, disobedient prophet being rebuked by a donkey. I bet Balaam felt like a donkey.

Normally donkeys cannot carry conversation with humans; some say this is simply a parable meant to show that even dumb animals sometimes make more sense than their human masters. They say that the talking donkey depicts how our own stubborn thoughts can be around and talk back to us. And the crushed foot of Balaam represents the physical pain we often incur in the process of acting against our own conscience. These people sure have a wild imagination.

This kind of off-the-wall spiritualized interpretation is known as 'allegorical interpretation'. There should be no place for any allegorical interpretation in Bible study.

This incident was not a parable, but an actual event. Why is it so difficult for people to believe that God who created the heavens and earth in the beginning was able to make a donkey to speak in a human voice? The plain, normal language of the text calls for us to interpret it as a real historical event.

3) Context of the Bible as a whole

A third rule of contextual interpretation is to consider the verse in its relation to the whole Bible. Because the 39 Books of the Old Testament and the 27 Books of the New Testament are in a way 'chapters' of one Book - the Bible. Those who want to live by the whole counsel of God need increasingly to be able to see each individual part in light of the whole.

The best way to interpret the Bible is using the Bible.

The many perspectives of the whole Bible cannot be quickly mastered. Gathering and combining the insights of the whole Bible is the process of a lifetime. This is one reason the Bible says that God gives pastors and Bible teachers to His people. Those who know more than the majority of believers do about the Bible can help them to balance their understanding of individual passages with complementing perspectives.

Please allow me to make an example here:

The Lord Himself showed how important it is to be able to see one passage in light of another. On the occasion of His temptation in the wilderness, He skillfully quoted from the Old Testament to offset the devil's own use of Scripture.

Matthew 4:5-7 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

By quoting what Moses had said in Deuteronomy 6:16, Jesus indicated that it was not right for a man to willfully put God to the test. Something Moses wrote as many as 1,500 years earlier allowed Jesus to show that it is not our right to arrange circumstances in such a way as to attempt to force God's hand of provision.

4) Context of Foundational Truths

This fourth rule of context, like the third, calls for a wide view of Scripture. There are some basic, foundational truths in Scripture that we need to understand first to get a better interpretation of many individual verses.

o **Law:** Generally, it refers to the commandments of Moses. In a broader sense, law that mentioned in the Bible is any statement that describes the high standards of God. Some of these are social as well as moral. However, some of these laws do not apply to us directly due to what the Lord Jesus had done on the cross or they are laws of animal sacrifice for the Hebrew priests.

- **Grace:** The grace of God to anyone who comes to the Savior and Lord Jesus is a system of mercy and undeserved help that allows them to be accepted by God. It is not mercy of God that saves a person, nor the love of God that rescues the spiritually dying person from one way to hell. It is the grace of God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross alone. God's good response to our repentance comes from His grace, not from justice.

- **Justification:** Justification is the legal act by which God declares righteous all who trust His Son for salvation. The only thing we can do to qualify for this status is to believe in Christ.

- **Sanctification:** Sanctification is the process by which God continues to set apart and distinguish those who have believed in His Son. He doesn't make us to be set apart by His brute force; rather He continuously gives us choices to be godly in our lives.

- **Israel:** Israel is a nation of Hebrews that can trace their ethnic background back to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. God made specific covenant with her and no one can destroy her permanently. Israel is the nation that will be in the center of world events in the last days.

- **The Church:** The church is also known as the Body of Jesus Christ, the Bride of Jesus Christ, not a building. It has no single ethnic identification. It is made up of men and women of every nation who confess Christ as Savior and Lord. Beginning at Pentecost, the church will remain on earth until she is removed in an event called 'the rapture'.

• **The Rapture:** The rapture can happen at any moment and ABSOLUTELY NO ONE KNOWS. There is not one single prophecy which must be fulfilled before it happens. Christ will come down TOWARD the earth, but not touching down. The trumpet call of God will raise the dead believer of Jesus Christ from their death physically; then we who are the believers of Jesus will be caught up together with them and Jesus in the air and head back to heaven. After the rapture, seven year of the Great Tribulation will happen on earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

If you don't have a clear understanding of this Pre-Tribulation theology, your end-times theology which is known as eschatology will be in a great confusion.

• **The Second Coming:** The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will happen at the end of the Great Tribulation. At this time, Jesus will not come down to earth as a babe in a manger, rather as the Conqueror against satan, his demons, the Antichrist and unbelievers on the earth. It is the time for the Lord to judge them with His holiness and righteousness.

B. FOUR ESSENTIALS FOR FINDING TRUTH IN CONTEXT

While interpreting the Bible according to the rule of context, there are some timeless considerations that need to be kept in mind.

1) Dependence On God

The author of Psalm 119 reminded us of the role God can have in our Bible study.

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

His confidence in God's ability to help is similar to what the apostle Paul expressed:

2 Timothy 2:7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

2) A Good Conscience

A bad conscience creates a conflict of interest for the Bible student. Those with unconfessed sin, in order to justify one's own sin, he or she would ignore the truth and twist its interpretation.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

3) Self-study

Acts 17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The people of Berea are an example for all of us. They searched the Scriptures to make sure that what the apostle Paul was telling them was true. Without personal involvement, the Scriptures remain second-hand, pre-digested and subject to the accuracy of the teacher.

4) Use Of Gifted Teachers

2 Peter 1:12-13 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you

Along with self-study, gifted Bible teachers can provide a depth and breadth of contextual knowledge. They provide orientation for new believers and reminders to those who are mature.

9. How to study the Bible alone *Part 2*

2 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, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Whenever I study the Bible, there is one item I grab first. It is not my computer which has many Bible commentaries in software. It is my legal notepad. After I read the texts from the Bible, I grab this pad and start to write down whatever the Lord impresses upon me in observation, interpretation and application method.



Why do I need to write it down? Because I remember what Sir Francis Bacon once said, "Reading makes a broad man; speaking a ready man; and writing an exact man". Writing helps me to process from abstract concepts in my head to precise and concise words in logical sentences. I highly recommend you have a notepad when you study the Word of God.

A. COMMON METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

1) **Inductive (Exegesis)** – This method of Bible study "pulls out the facts." We come to the Scripture in an orderly way to find out what it says, what it means and what it means to us! Definition of Inductive Bible Study: "in logic, the process of reasoning or drawing a conclusion from particular facts and the conclusion reached by such reasoning"

conclusion from particular facts and the conclusion reached by such reasoning"

2) **Deductive (Eisegesis)** – This method "starts with a premise and shares opinion." People do it not because it's inspired, but because they find it inspiring to go off on their favorite topic. Some pastors have a tendency to take isolated texts and pull them out of context to force their points. By the way, a text without its context is a pretext. This can be dangerous - the premise must be accurate.

B. INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

While God's plan has been to give His people pastors and teachers, there is no substitute for personal study of the Scriptures. The inductive method challenges the student to form conclusions only after observing and analyzing the elements of immediate context and normal word meanings.

Here are the steps you can go through to achieve a proper inductive Bible study method:

- 1) **Pray** - Ask God to reveal His truth and instruction to us
- 2) **Read** - the text a minimum of three times
- 3) **Observation or Outlining** - What does it say?
- 4) **Interpretation** - What does it mean?

5) Application - What does it mean to me? It requires actions from "I, My, Me and Myself"

C. THE PROCESS OF OBSERVATION – a.k.a. OUTLINING

Observation is an act of noticing something, paying special attention to it, examining it. What does it say? What do I see? Observation moves from the general to the specific, investigating the facts in a passage. Inductive students should be curious. They shouldn't take anything for granted.

Good observations are the key to inductive Bible Study. If this step is not done well, with great care, the rest of the study will be weak. Remember we are interested in what the text says, not what we think!

1) Make a simple outline of the text. Find the basic structure of the passage.

2) Write down key words or phrases of actual Bible text.

Record the major facts you observe.

3) Ask and answer these simple questions about the text:

- Who? - Who are the characters mentioned in the text? What relationship do they have with each other?
- What? - What are the key truths or happenings?
- Where? - The geography and location of the events?
- When? - The time sequence of events. What is the historical setting, the lifestyle of the people?
- Why?
- How?
- What words need to be looked up to determine a range of possible meanings?
- What is the main point of the section?
- What recurring words indicate a main idea?
- What elements, arguments, or illustrations does the author use to support the main point?

At this point, it is extremely important not to include your personal interpretation. Remember, this should be a strict observation - what the Scripture says.

D. THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

Only after doing a lot of careful observation should you ask, "What, then, does the Holy Spirit mean by these words as they relate to the words that precede and follow?", not "What do these words mean to me?" Now it is the process of interpretation.

If we don't get the proper interpretation according to the Holy Spirit, we will naturally have wrong applications. It is very important for us to interpret the Scripture according to the Holy Spirit's way, not the way we think it should be interpreted.

In other words, observation and interpretation should be strictly objective, not subjective. Just facts, just facts, ma'am.

The more we study the Bible, the better our interpretation will be.

1) What was the content? Find the purpose or main point of the text

2) Study the passage in its context.

3) Compare the passage with others. Use 'Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.' As I've said many times before, the best commentary of the Bible is the Bible itself."

E. THE PROCESS OF APPLICATIONS

What does it mean to me? How should I respond? Examine yourself and your walk with the Lord. How does this passage apply to us today? Look for: Examples to follow; Sins to forsake; Errors to avoid; Promises to believe; Commands to obey; Actions to take.

Ask the question: How can I personally respond to the truth presented in this passage?

Application must be relevant to the time that the passage is taught. Some of the application presented in the NT was the application for that time of the church and doesn't necessarily apply to us today in a different culture and different time. We will always have more interpretations than observations and applications.

F. GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Many controversial Messianic prophecies could have been settled if the interpreters had stuck with one basic principle and six rules of interpretation.

The basic principle of Messianic prophecies

The prophets often described future events in one picture without indicating that they would be separated by periods of time. It is like seeing mountain peaks in one view without realizing the distance of the peaks between them.



Jesus used the principle of prophetic perspective when He read the Scriptures in a Nazareth synagogue. He opened the scroll to Isaiah and read:

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Then Jesus stopped and rolled up the scroll. People familiar with Isaiah 61:1-2 must have wondered why Jesus stopped in the middle of the second verse. He did not read on because the last part of verse 2:

Isaiah 61:2b And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

The rest of the verse speaks of the great tribulation. Jesus said He fulfilled the first part of Isaiah's prophecy in Luke. 4:21. The last part is about His second coming. The prophet, seeing it all in one look, did not know that at least 2000 years would separate those two phases of his prophecy.

The six rules for interpreting Messianic prophecies

1) Interpret in context

As with all Bible passages, consider the speaker, the situation, the people addressed and the subject of the prophecy.

2) Interpret literally

We need to get words their normal meaning, recognizing figures of speech. When prophets specify numbers of days or years, take them literally. Don't interpret prophecy symbolically when a literal interpretation makes sense.

3) Be careful with symbols

Don't give a prophetic passage a symbolic or spiritual meaning when literal interpretation makes sense. For example, the earthquake of Revelation 6:12-17 is exactly that; it does not represent the breakup of society.

4) Look for immediate fulfillment

Look first for the elements of a prophecy that were fulfilled within a few years, and then consider fulfillments during Christ's first and second comings.

5) Be consistent

Don't treat Christ's predictions in a different way from Old Testament prophecies.

6) Don't go too far

Some questions about end time events must remain unanswered.

G. THE NECESSARY ITEMS FOR SERIOUS BIBLE STUDENTS

A **Study Bible** provides introductions and outlines for each book of the Bible, footnotes, maps, cross-references, doctrinal summaries, historical and cultural background, time charts and a basic commentary on the text.

An **Exhaustive Concordance** offers an alphabetical listing of every word of the Bible and every place where that word is found. Make sure you choose a concordance that matches the translation of the Bible you use. The standard concordance for the King James Version, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, has a helpful numbering system that provides a number connecting words to their root words in the original languages.

A **Bible Dictionary** provides definitions and general background information for the people, places, things, and ideas of the Bible.

A **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** has been an enduring cross-reference resource for Bible students worldwide. This highly respected and nearly exhaustive compilation of cross-references was developed by R.A. Torrey from references in the Pastor Thomas Scott's Commentary and the Comprehensive Bible. With nearly 500,000 cross-references it is the most thorough source available.

A couple sets of **Bible Commentaries** would offer helpful explanations a lot of historical and cultural backgrounds that would take a long time to research.

To buy all these resources, it would cost quite a lot of money. Or you can buy Bible software for your computer. Nowadays, there are so many excellent Bible computer programs in the market. But if you have cable, Satellite or DSL connection for your computer internet, you can go visit www.BlueLetterBible.org that provides all the resources I mentioned just now and much more at no charge.

H. HOW TO USE A COMMENTARY

Commentaries are indispensable to effective Bible study, but they must be used properly. I recommend that you consult them only after you have carefully worked through the passage yourself.

After you have done your best to understand a passage, then consult one or two good commentaries. If you use them before you have done your own work, you will short-circuit your thinking. If you evaluate only what others have written, you are robbing yourself of the thrill of discovery and the joy of creative, Spirit-led Bible study.

What kind of results can you expect by using commentaries after your own study first?

1) Sometimes they will confirm your understanding of the passage.

You can be confident that you are on target in your conclusions.

2) Sometimes they will refine your understanding of the passage.

The commentators may present insights that didn't come to your mind, thus deepening and enriching your understanding of the passage.

3) Sometimes they will lead you to reconsider your interpretations.

Occasionally you will find that the commentaries present conclusions somewhat different from your interpretation. You may also discover that the commentators differ from one another. When this happens, you'll be glad you did your own homework. It will help you evaluate the views expressed. After careful thought, you may select an interpretation quite different from the one you had when you started.

4) Sometimes they will show you that your understanding of the passage was almost entirely wrong.

Reading the commentaries may give you information that will make you realize you have overlooked or misunderstood an important element in the passage or verse you have been studying. When this happens, go back to the text and think it through again.

Do some of the commentary books I use contradict my own study sometime? Yes, time to time. In those cases, those commentaries are wrong. No, just kidding. I prayerfully re-evaluate the study. I might change my direction or keep it. It depends on what the Lord wants, not my ego.

I. THE BIBLE IS OURS

Many people think that they won't be able to understand the Bible, no matter how hard they try. Yes, we cannot understand everything in the Bible. But when we continuously try our best, it will get easier and more exciting to know His truth.

The Bible, the speaking Word of God is ours. Not only do we possess it physically in our hands, but also we can possess it through our spirits. Let the Speaking Word of God speak to you everyday because you diligently seek God's Word through His Spirit. Let your Bible be yours.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

10. How to use BlueLetterBible web site

www.BlueLetterBible.org is a FREE web site that provides a tremendous amount of Bible information.

I personally use this site often for my study.

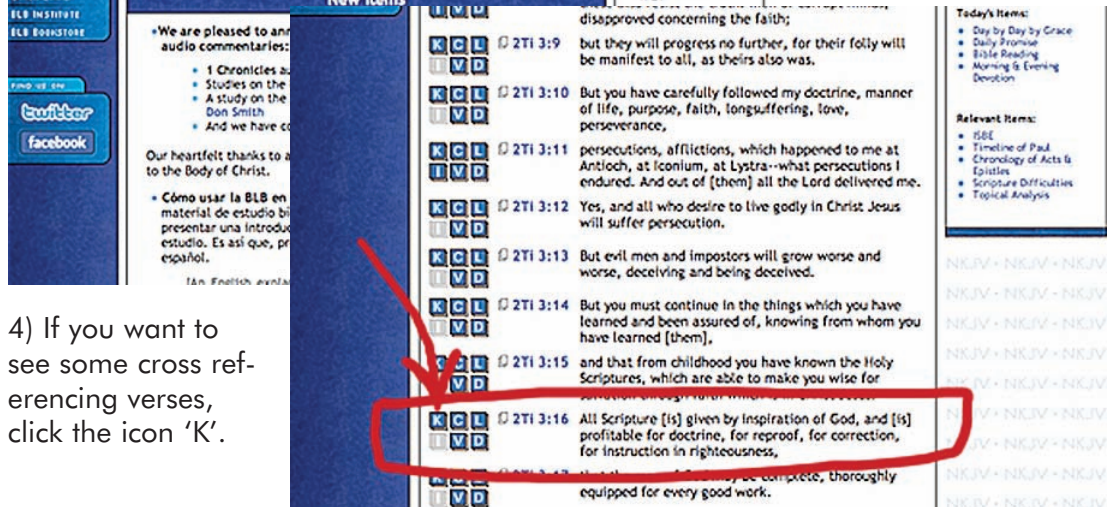
I'd like to share with you how I get around in this web site to learn more about the Lord's speaking Word – the Bible.



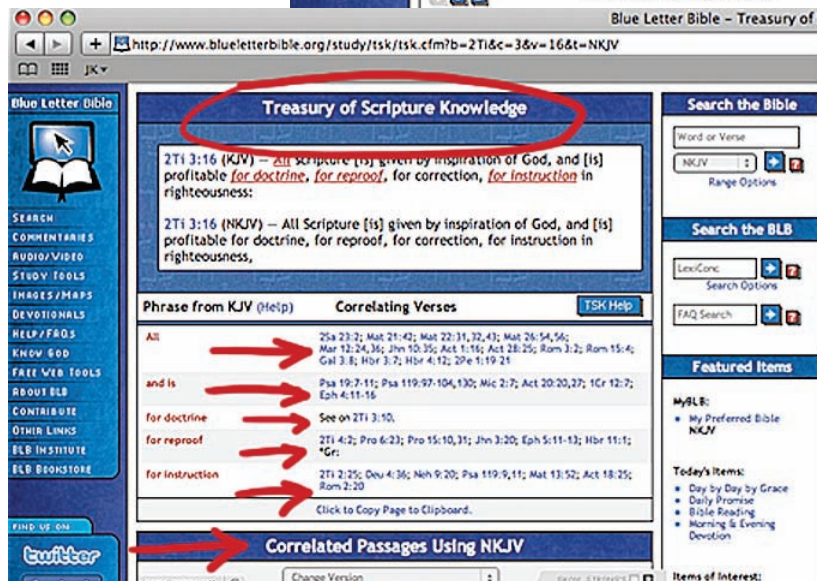
1) Type in a verse (s) or word (s) in the first blank area.

2) Select your Bible version.

3) Click "Search".



4) If you want to see some cross referencing verses, click the icon 'K'.



5) Then you will have 'Treasury of Scripture Knowledge' that covers just about every word with cross-reference verses.

6) If you want to look into Greek or Hebrew words, click the icon 'C'.

7) Notice the numbers in the middle column? It is a Strong's Exhaustive number. When you click it, you will have all these:

Lexicon / Concordance for 2 Timothy 3:16

3:16 πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν πρὸς ἐλεγχον, πρὸς ἐπανάρθωσιν πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ

English (KJV) (Help)	Strong's	Root Form (Greek)	Tense
All	G3956	πᾶς pas	
scripture	G1124	γραφὴ graphē	
[is] given by inspiration of God,	G2315	θεόπνευστος theopneustos	
and	G2532	καὶ kai	
[is] profitable	G5624	ὠφέλιμος ophelimos	
for	G4314	πρὸς pros	
doctrine,	G1319	διδασκαλία didaskalia	

Lexicon Results

θεόπνευστος

Transliteration: theopneustos
Pronunciation: the-oh'-pnyoo-stos (Key)

Part of Speech: adjective
Root Word (Etymology): From θεός (G2316) and a presumed derivative of πνέω (G4154)

TDNT Reference: 6:453,876
Vines: View Entry

Outline of Biblical Usage:
 1) inspired by God
 a) the contents of the scriptures

Authorized Version (KJV) Translation Count — Total: 1
 AV — given by inspiration of God 1

Thayer's Lexicon (Help):
 θεόπνευστος, -ου, (θεός ἀπὸ πνέω), inspired by God: γραφή, i. e. the contents of Scripture, 2 Tim. iii. 16 [see πᾶς, I. 1 c.]; σοφία, [pseudo-] Phocyl. 121; δειροί, Plut. de plac. phil. 5, 2, 3 p. 904 f.; [Orac. Sibyll. 5, 406 (cf. 308); Nonn. paraphr. ev. Ioan. 1, 99]. (ἐμπνευστος also is used passively, but ἄπνευστος, εὐπνευστος, πύριπνευστος, [πύριπνευστος], actively, [and δυσανάπνευστος appar. either act. or pass.; cf. W. 96 (92) note].)*

Word / Phrase / Strong's Search
 <- Previous Strong's G2314 Next Strong's G2316 ->
 G2315 NKJV Search

You get to have original word in Greek or Hebrew on the top, English spelling below.

If you click the Pronunciation triangle icon, you will hear how to pronounce the word in Greek or Hebrew.

Underneath that, you will see the root word for the Greek or Hebrew word.

It even provides you a Lexicon definition. I love this page. It totally rocks.

8) If you are looking for commentaries, you don't need to go any further. Just click "L". Viola! You have more than enough here.

2Ti 3:14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned [them].

2Ti 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

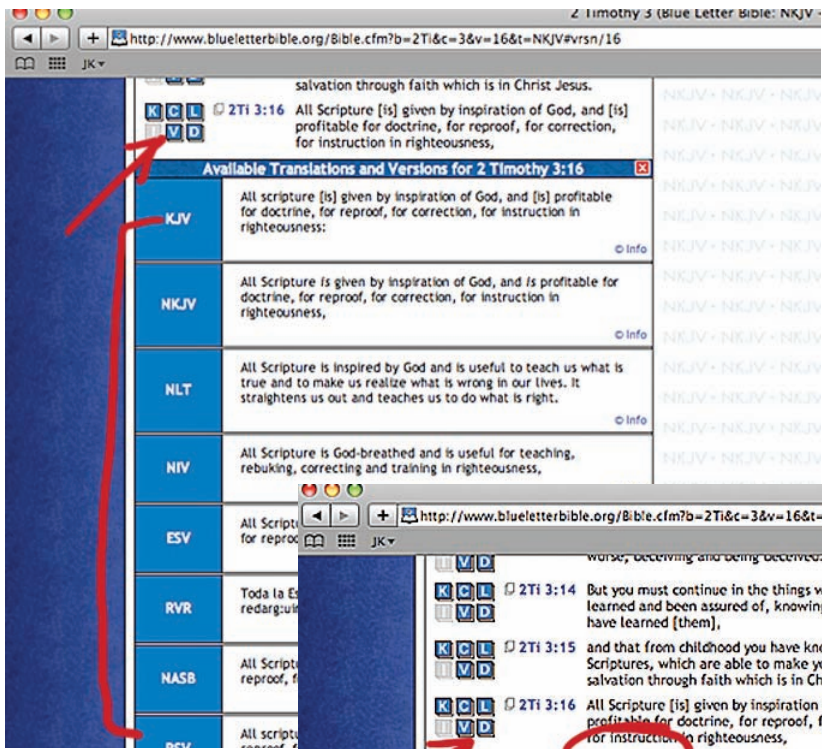
2Ti 3:16 All Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Available Commentaries for 2 Timothy 3:16

✓ Please Choose Commentary for 2Ti3:16 - Then Click "Go"

AUDIO / VIDEO (English):

- Chuck Smith 2 Timothy 3-4 (1982-85 Audio)
- Ray Stedman How Not to Collapse (2 Timothy)
- Ray Stedman Thinking Christianly (2 Timothy 3:14-16)
- Jon Courson 2 Timothy 3-4
- Bob Hoekstra Being Equipped for Ministry
- Bob Hoekstra Equipping for Counseling Ministry
- Bob Hoekstra God's Word in Counseling
- Chuck Missler 2 Timothy 3-4
- J. Vernon McGee 2 Timothy: Intro
- J. Vernon McGee 2 Timothy: Apostasy
- J. Vernon McGee 2 Timothy: Depravity of Man
- J. Vernon McGee 2 Timothy 3:16-17



9) What if you want to compare a particular verse in several different versions of the Bible? No sweat!

Click 'V', you will have 16 different versions at your finger tip.

10) "What about a Bible dictionary?" No problem. They've got you covered. Click 'D', you will have several dictionaries and Nave's Topical Dictionary as well.

Dig deep into the Word of God.

