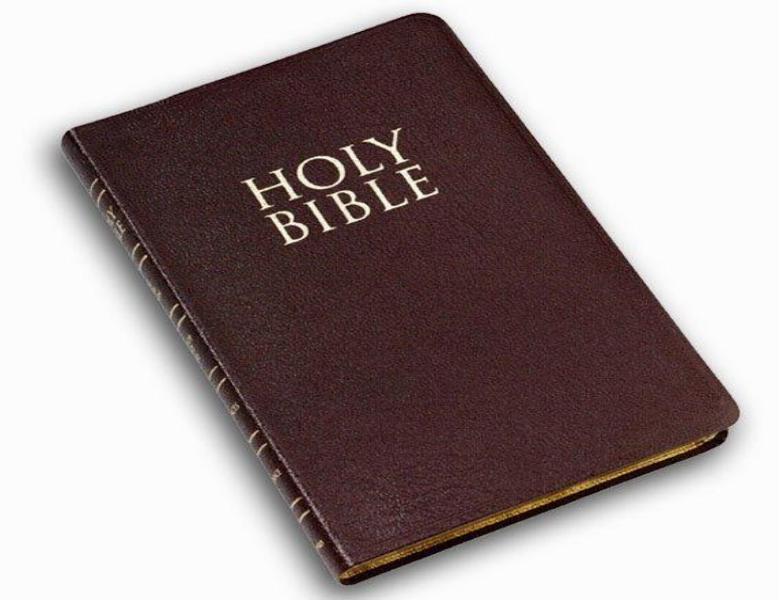


The Bible: Fact or Fiction?

By Douglas S. Winnail



Is the Bible just a collection of myths and legends, or is it the inspired word of God? Many assume that modern scholarship has discredited the Bible, but the facts of history — and the discoveries of archaeology — confirm its contents to be true! The Bible recounts the past with amazing accuracy — and it predicts the future like no other book! Most of the world has been misled and misinformed about the Bible. You need to understand the truth — and how it can affect your life!

Chapter 1

What Do You Believe About the Bible?

Is the Bible really the inspired word of God? Was it accurately preserved for thousands of years as a unique revelation from the Creator of the universe? Or is it just a collection of humanly devised myths and fables? Do we even have the right books in the Bible, or are important sources missing that would change our view of God, Jesus Christ and Christianity? Can we trust Scripture? Is the Bible vital and relevant today?

Discovering the truth about the Bible could prove to be one of the most important and exciting adventures you have ever embarked upon. Although critics attack the Bible, and preachers ignore or gloss over many of its teachings, the Bible contains a dimension of knowledge that is almost totally missing from our modern world. The Bible *reveals* the true purpose of life. Bible prophecies not only *foretold* the rise and fall of ancient nations; they also explain the *real significance* of world events making headlines today and where those events are heading. In spite of what millions have been led to believe, the Bible is *much more* than a pious devotional book or an incense-shrouded source of comfort for the troubled and bereaved!

Today, many educated people *assume* that science and modern scholarship have thoroughly discredited the Bible. This assumption thrives because *so many know so little* about

the Bible. Many people today are simply unaware of discoveries that *continue to confirm* the historical accuracy of Scripture. Instead, people are encouraged to believe that all religions are equally credible—or equally fanciful—without ever comparing the sourcebooks of those religions. As a result, millions are unaware of *how the Bible is unique*, and what amazing features *distinguish* it from all other religious books.

Before you accept the idea that the Bible is “just like any other book,” *you need to examine the evidence for yourself*. That evidence is eye-opening and extremely informative, *and it could change your life!* You need to understand *why* so many today doubt the Bible’s credibility, and what the truth about the Bible can mean to your future.

A Change in Attitude

For thousands of years, Jews and Christians believed, *and died for believing*, that the Bible was the *inspired* word of an Almighty God. Down through the ages, antagonists and sceptics have challenged, attacked and ridiculed the Bible. Popes and pagan Roman emperors attempted to destroy Scripture, and even altered its words. Yet, during these same turbulent centuries, the Bible was *carefully preserved* and its message spread in remarkable ways!

The Bible is surely the most influential book ever written. It has been translated into more languages than any other piece of literature. More than two billion people alive today embrace, at least nominally, its teachings. Even so, many do not realize how profoundly the Bible has influenced the course of all Western civilization. Millions do not understand that biblical laws and teachings provided the basis for social values and legal systems throughout the Western world for centuries. Sir Isaac Newton, one of the most brilliant minds of his century, remarked, “There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.” Britain’s Queen Victoria said of the Bible, “That book accounts for the supremacy of England.” U.S. president

Andrew Jackson stated, “That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic stands.” U.S. president George Washington commented, “It is impossible to govern the world without God and the Bible.” France’s Napoleon observed, “The Bible is no mere book, but a Living Creature, with a power that conquers all who oppose it” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, pp. 18–19).

Yet much has changed since these statements were made. Today, Bibles can be found in far-flung corners of the globe. But in Western nations founded on biblical principles, there has been a *steep decline* in respect for the Bible. There is a pervading notion that the Bible is *just another book*, and that its teachings are archaic, outdated and irrelevant to our modern lives. Many *seriously doubt* that God inspired Scripture. Millions, who live in nations that once learned to read from the Bible, and sent Bible-toting missionaries around the world, cannot even name books in the Bible or explain basic biblical doctrines. Surveys done in recent decades show that even many professing Christians have little real knowledge about the Bible. Coinage in the U.S. proclaims, “In God We Trust.” Yet recent legislation and judicial decisions have made it *illegal* in the U.S. to display the Ten Commandments in public buildings, or for students to pray in school!

What has produced such a *profound shift* in attitudes toward the Bible in the very nations that once professed strong belief in Scripture? *Why* do millions now *doubt* that God inspired the Bible? *Why* are billions searching *everywhere else* for answers found clearly in the Bible? *Why* do people fail to recognize that the Bible contains prophecies *clearly revealing* the course of world history, and even the future of specific nations? *Why* have modern generations chosen to ignore a book that *reveals* essential details about the future and *explains* the way to peace and the ultimate purpose for human existence? *Why* has such vital information *remained hidden* from so many today?

The answers to these important questions read like a novel laced with danger, intrigue and adventure. You will be

surprised by information about the Bible that is readily available, yet has largely gone unappreciated or been ignored. You will be shocked to learn how power-seeking religious leaders have twisted Scripture to support misguided and anti-biblical doctrines.

The more you learn about Scripture, the more you will realize that *you can believe the Bible*, because it *has* been inspired and preserved by a *real God* who is *alive today!* The Bible is firmly based on the facts of history, not on myth and fiction. The evidence presented in this booklet will make this clear.

The Challenge of Scripture

Many today assume that to believe the Bible, you must *ignore the facts* of science and history and just proceed on “blind faith.” Some believers relish the old saying, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it”—but this does not fit well with the scepticism that dominates our age. Others want to *ignore what Scripture plainly states*, and invent ways to “harmonize” the Bible with modern preferences. Many theologians teach that the Bible is only authoritative when it speaks of broad spiritual principles, and suggest that details of science or history in Scripture are merely the untrustworthy additions of human writers.

This desire to *accommodate* the Bible to the modern world is reflected in an October 2005 document issued by Roman Catholic bishops from England, Scotland and Wales. In “The Gift of Scripture,” the bishops warned that while they consider the Bible true in passages regarding salvation, “we should *not* expect total accuracy from the Bible in other matters... We should *not* expect to find in Scripture full scientific accuracy or complete historical accuracy.” Even so, the bishops profess respect for Scripture, telling their flock: “We have rediscovered the Bible as a precious treasure, both ancient and ever new.” These double-minded statements reflect the mindset of many theologians today, who *say* they respect the Bible but *deny* its authority. When religious

leaders urge people to believe in a book *that cannot be trusted* on many topics, it is not surprising that church attendance in many countries has *fallen off dramatically* in recent decades.

The plain teachings of the Bible, however, stand in *striking contrast* to what many religious leaders preach today. The Apostle Paul *did not* encourage first century Christians to “just believe” in Jesus and merely accept the teachings of the Bible and Christianity “on faith.” Instead, he told his audiences, **“Test all things; hold fast what is good”** (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Paul urged people to *check into the facts* and believe what they could *prove to be true!* His admonition reflects Old Testament passages where God *challenged* the ancient Israelites to “*prove Me now... if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*” (Malachi 3:8–10, *KJV*). God urged Israel to put His promises to the test, and promised that He would bless them, *to prove that He was real* and that His promises were *true!* Paul knew that true religious belief involves *evidence, assurance* and *certainty*, not “blind faith.” He wrote that “faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). According to the Bible, faith should rest on *solid evidence*, not just warm, fuzzy, emotional feelings in your heart. You should never believe something *in spite* of the facts, and that includes believing in the authenticity and authority of the Bible!

The Apostle Peter *emphasized* the *credibility* of Scripture and of the Christian message when he wrote: “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eyewitnesses* of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). Peter also *warned* his readers to “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets” because “scorners will come in the last days” questioning and ridiculing Scripture, “saying, ‘where is the promise of His coming?’” (2 Peter 3:1–9). Peter *challenged* prevailing

misconceptions about Scripture; he did not try to water down fundamental scriptural teaching.

The Bible clearly reveals that the apostolic writers were *advocates* of Scripture, and of the teachings of the Christian faith! They knew that they were preaching *the truth!* Their approach followed the example of their teacher, Jesus Christ. The New Testament shows that Christ’s manner of preaching *surprised* His audiences. “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were *astonished* at His teaching, for *He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*” (Matthew 7:28–29).

The contents of Scripture can be *verified* by the facts of history and the discoveries of modern science and archaeology. What is more, the Bible *provides answers* to life’s big questions. Not only do the hundreds of detailed Bible prophecies accurately reveal the future course of world events; they *set the Bible apart* from all other religious books! The Bible provides a dimension of knowledge that is simply not available from any other source.

With so much evidence available, the real question that we face today is simply *whether or not* we can *believe* the Bible. As you read this booklet, you will see that the answer is, “Yes, we can!”

Chapter 2

Prophecy: The Bible’s Unique Dimension

Many assume that all religions are equally credible, that religious people all worship the same God and that the holy books of various religions are of equal value. Yet nothing could be further from the truth! Scholars confidently claim that no one can predict the future with assurance—and that only fools try! However, these assertions overlook or ignore the *incredible phenomenon* of Bible prophecy, which *distinguishes* the Bible from *any other book* that has ever been written.

The God of the Bible claims that He can predict the future and bring it to pass! The Bible contains *hundreds of prophecies* that *have come true*, and are *confirmed* by history. The Bible also contains dozens of prophecies that are *coming alive today!* Bible prophecies explain the *real significance* of global events making headlines today. Bible prophecies also reveal what is ahead for major nations of our modern world—and for the human race! No other book, religious or secular, does this with such accuracy and detail! Prophecy is clearly the Bible’s most striking feature!

Notice this amazing statement by Dr. Gleason Archer, a renowned Old Testament scholar: “*The Holy Bible is like no other book in all the world. It is the only book which represents itself as the written revelation of the one true God, intended for the salvation of man, and demonstrating its divine authority by many infallible proofs. Other religious documents, such as the Muhammadan Koran, may claim to be the very word of God, but they contain no such self-authenticating proofs as does the Bible* (for example, the phenomena of *fulfilled prophecy*)” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Archer, p. 9).

Another authoritative source notes: “One of the *strongest evidences* that the Bible is inspired by God is its *predictive prophecy*. *Unlike any other book*, the Bible offers a *multitude of specific predictions*—some hundreds of years in advance—that have been *literally fulfilled* or else point to a definite future time when they will come true” (Geisler, p. 609). Old Testament professor Milton C. Fisher recognizes a “sharp distinction between prophetism in Israel and the outwardly similar phenomenon in surrounding cultures... both the type of message and the writings of Israel’s prophets is *without parallel*” (*The Origin of the Bible*, Bruce, pp. 105–106). Another scholar has noted that “the Bible... is the most remarkable volume that has ever been produced in some five thousand years... it is the *only volume* that has ever been produced by men, or a group of men, in which is to be found a *large body of prophecies* relating to individual nations, to Israel, to all the peoples of the earth, to certain cities, and to

the coming One who was to be the Messiah. The ancient world had many different devices for determining the future, known as divination, but not in the entire gamut of Greek and Latin literature... can we find any real specific prophecy of a great historic event to come in the distant future, nor any prophecy of a Saviour to arise in the human race” (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p. 22). These are *absolutely remarkable statements* that clearly recognize the *unique nature* of Bible prophecy!

The Challenge of Prophecy

Being able to predict the future *accurately* and *consistently* is simply not a human trait. Even the best strategic planners acknowledge that detailed prediction of future events—especially geopolitical events—is difficult in the short term, and practically impossible in the long term, at least at any level of detail. Yet the Bible *repeatedly* predicts the rise and fall of prominent individuals, nations and empires with amazing accuracy and in remarkable detail! Bible scholars have determined that more than one quarter of the Bible—about 27 percent—is devoted to prophecy, and that the Bible contains more than 1,800 predictions, many of which are very specific. Hundreds of specific prophecies, given centuries before their exact fulfilment, are *undeniable evidence* that an all-powerful God is *alive* and in *control* of future events!

Scripture makes this plain when the God of the Bible *challenges* sceptics to predict the future and bring it to pass! Through the pen of the prophet Isaiah, God thunders: “Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods... indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination” (Isaiah 41:23–24). And again: “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do my pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:9–

10). These verses boldly state that no human being can predict the future and bring it to pass on the scale that the God of the Bible claims He can—and has, and will!

This *unique capacity to predict the future accurately* sets the Bible apart from any other piece of literature. Bible scholars recognize: “Other books *claim* divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the [Hindu] Veda. *But none of these books contains predictive prophecy.* As a result, *fulfilled prophecy* is a strong indication of the *unique, divine authority* of the Bible” (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p. 13). Bible prophecy stands in *marked contrast* to human attempts to predict the future. A study of 25 top-rated psychics discovered that 92 percent of their predictions were *totally wrong*, and that chance or general knowledge of circumstances could explain the remaining 8 percent that were accurate (Geisler, p. 615). Anyone familiar with the so-called prophecies of Nostradamus (Michael de Nostredame), the 16th century French psychic who dabbled in astrology, alchemy and other occult practices, is aware that his vague and nebulous verses simply *do not compare* to biblical prophecies. Specific prophecies, given centuries before they were *accurately and consistently fulfilled*, are some of the *most stunning proofs that the Bible is the inspired word of God!*

Hundreds of Prophecies About Jesus Christ!

Some of the Bible’s most striking examples of fulfilled prophecies are those that accurately foretold specific details about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, centuries before He was born! More than 200 prophecies, written centuries before His birth, foretold specific events in His life that were fulfilled to the letter. He would be born of a virgin and named Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3–8). He would be a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1; 22:42–45). He would sojourn in Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13–15). His birth

would prompt a massacre of children (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16–18). He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2; Matthew 2:19–23). He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1–5). He would die with transgressors and be buried in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9, 12). He would be resurrected after three days (Matthew 12:40; Jonah 1:17).

The remarkable fulfilment of hundreds of specific predictions, recorded centuries earlier in the Hebrew Scriptures, *demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt* that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah of the Bible and the Son of God. It should be noted that “Mohammedanism cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any cult... rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance” (McDowell, p. 22). Some Muslim scholars cite Old Testament verses that they say prophesied Muhammad (Deuteronomy 18:15–18), but it was Jesus Christ who actually fulfilled those prophecies (see Matthew 21:11; Luke 1:76; 24:19; Acts 3:18–22) more than 600 years before Muhammad was born! The Bible’s prophecies about Jesus Christ are *unique* among religious writings.

Cities and Kings

The Bible contains more than 1,500 prophecies that foretell in remarkable detail the future of prominent cities, kings and kingdoms. Fulfilled prophecies about the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre stand as a sobering testimony to the power and accuracy of Bible prophecy. When Ezekiel recorded his prophecies (around 585BC), Tyre was one of the great cities of the ancient world. It was situated on an island at the centre of a maritime trading network that controlled Mediterranean commerce. Tyre was a wealthy emporium of goods, surrounded by 150-foot-high walls that were considered impregnable. The Bible reports that Tyre’s citizens rejoiced when Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian

army conquered Jerusalem; they anticipated gaining access to valuable inland trade routes passing through Jerusalem. In response, God delivered a series of specific prophecies of Tyre's future devastation. Ezekiel wrote that, "Because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, 'Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples'... Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea... they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water... you shall never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, says the Lord GOD'" (Ezekiel 26:2-14).

To appreciate the power and scope of Ezekiel's prophecies, picture someone trying to predict what will happen to New York or London over the next 2,500 years! Yet history records how Ezekiel's predictions have come to pass. In 585BC, Nebuchadnezzar began a 13-year siege against Tyre. His was the first of many nations that would come like *waves* against Tyre. Around 530BC, the Persians gained control of Tyre. In 332BC, Alexander destroyed the mainland portion of Tyre and threw the debris into the sea to build a causeway for assaulting the island city. When Alexander conquered the island fortress of Tyre, he battered down the walls and reduced the city to ruins. As Phoenician specialist Glenn Markoe wrote, "The conquest of Alexander... marked the beginning of the end for Tyre and Phoenicia... Tyre would soon recover commercially... yet it would never fully reclaim the pride of place it had enjoyed" (*Phoenicians*, Markoe, p. 61). Greeks and Romans later dominated what remained of the city. In 638AD, Muslim armies captured Tyre. Crusaders recaptured the city in 1124, and used it as a staging area for military operations. In 1291, the Muslims retook Tyre and laid it in ruins, "after which she never again regained any importance" (Geisler, p. 870). Today, there is a small fishing village near the ruins of the

once proud city of Tyre, but the city's ancient power and splendour, and its extensive trade network, are gone. The site of one of the wealthiest cities in the ancient world has become "a place for spreading nets," just as the Bible predicted.

The Bible contains prophecies about other cities near Tyre that would have a bloody history but a *different* future. Sidon, an idol-worshipping Phoenician city about 20 miles north of Tyre, was noted for artistic metalwork and fine cloth. Bible prophecies reveal that Sidon would have a bloody history and suffer from pestilence, but would come to "know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 28:21–23). Nowhere did God prophesy total destruction or oblivion for Sidon. History records that the Assyrians destroyed Sidon in 678BC, but the city was rebuilt and it submitted to Nebuchadnezzar after suffering from a devastating pestilence. Persians burned the city in about 351BC. Syria and Egypt fought over Sidon, and it became a free city under Roman rule. The Bible indicates that Jesus may have visited Sidon (Matthew 15:21) and that Sidonians heard Jesus preach the gospel (Mark 3:7–8). The Apostle Paul also visited Sidon (Acts 27:3). Today, modern Sidon is known for its gardens and orange groves. Bible prophecy outlined a *very different future* for Tyre's sister city Sidon—and it came to pass, just as Scripture predicted!

Around 700BC, the prophet Isaiah recorded several specific prophecies about the downfall of the Babylonian Empire and the destruction of the city of Babylon (see Isaiah 13; 14). At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, Babylon was subject to the Assyrians and would not become a major power for another hundred years. Yet Isaiah foresaw the future glory that Babylon would achieve under Nebuchadnezzar with its Hanging Gardens, magnificent palaces, luxurious living, massive walls and military conquests. Isaiah also foresaw the Medes' destruction of Babylon, and the city's ultimate desolation, several hundred years in advance! Isaiah's prophecies foretold: "The burden against Babylon... I will stir up the Medes against them... And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the

Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there... but wild beasts of the desert will lie there... her days will not be prolonged" (Isaiah 13:1–22). History records that these prophecies were fulfilled: "In 539 [BC] Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians... Xerxes destroyed the city in 478, and it was finally abandoned in the 4th century BC" (*Eerdmans' Handbook of the Bible*, p. 382).

The Chosen People

Some of the Bible's most amazing and surprising prophecies deal with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the twelve tribes of Israel, whom God chose to use for a special purpose (Exodus 19:1–6). God promised Abram (Abraham) that in return for obedience, his descendants would become great and be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:1–3). Later prophecies stated that Jacob's descendants through Manasseh and Ephraim would ultimately become a "great" nation, and a great "multitude [company, commonwealth] of nations," who, along with the other descendants of Jacob, would in Bible prophecy be called *Israelites* (Genesis 48:14–22). In the Bible, the terms *Israel* and *Israelite* generally apply to the descendants of all twelve of Jacob's sons. The Jews are the descendants of Judah, who was just one of Jacob's sons. In a more specific sense, *Israel* applies to the descendants of the *ten tribes* that made up the nation of Israel (with its capital in Samaria), which broke away from the nation of Judah (with its capital in Jerusalem) when the kingdom of Solomon was divided (see 1 Kings 12). This biblical distinction between the Jews and the other Israelite nations is an *important key* to understanding Bible prophecy.

Genesis 49 contains a remarkable series of prophecies foretelling how the Israelites—descendants of Jacob's twelve sons—will be recognized "in the last days." Reuben will become powerful and have notions of grandeur, but will lack

national stability; consider how this description could describe France. Judah (the Jews) will provide the Messiah and retain knowledge of the Law of God. Zebulun will dwell by the sea and become a mercantile people; a description evocative of modern Holland. Dan will leave its mark, having travelled from its base in the Middle East; a description evocative of Denmark and Ireland. Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) will become a colonizing people dwelling in the choice places of the earth—and dwelling “separate from his brothers”—a description perfectly apt to describe the former British Commonwealth nations and the U.S. (see Genesis 49:22–26). These remarkable prophecies were not to be fulfilled only by the Jews—to whom the world gives the name “Israel”—but also by eleven other nations that are part of the “whole house” of Israel. These prophecies reveal keys to the *identity* and *location* of the modern descendants of Jacob’s twelve sons—the children of Israel. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, please request our free booklet, *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*.

Understanding the true identity of the Israelite nations is not only a *key* for understanding Bible prophecy; this knowledge is also *essential* for God’s Church, which must fulfil the commission that Jesus gave. Jesus commissioned His disciples to “*go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*”—to *preach* about the coming kingdom of God, and *warn* the Israelites about terrible trials they would face in the last days because of their disobedience to God’s laws (see Jeremiah 30:7–24). Jesus’ disciples took this commission seriously. In their day, the tribes of Israel were not “lost.” The Apostle James addressed his epistle “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Josephus revealed that in the days of the apostles, “ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates... and are an immense multitude” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, 5, 2). This explains why several of the apostles, including Peter and Andrew, travelled in that direction.

Historical sources also indicate that Peter, Paul and others travelled to Western Europe and Britain preaching the gospel. The clear implication of these leading apostles' journeys to the West is that Israelite peoples were there! Examine the history of ancient Ireland, and notice which Israelite tribal name appears in the records. When you study the Genesis 49 prophecies about the characteristics and future history of Jacob's descendants, you will notice the connection with peoples that currently reside in, or emigrated from, northwest Europe! When you understand the identities of modern Israelite nations, you can begin to understand from Bible prophecy what lies ahead for these nations—and for other nations mentioned in Bible prophecy!

The Future of Nations

Bible prophecies are not just about ancient history. The book of Daniel contains detailed yet sweeping prophecies that provide an *outline of history* from the time of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon through the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. Modern critics, seeking to discredit the prophetic and supernatural elements in the book of Daniel, have revived ideas put forward by Porphyrius, a third-century pagan philosopher from Tyre. Porphyrius (also called Porphyry) claimed that the book of Daniel was a fraudulent work produced in the second century BC, *after* the events it recounts had already taken place! *However, this theory does not square with the facts.* The book of Daniel gives precise dates, locations and names that can be verified. The prophet Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel, and mentioned him very respectfully (Ezekiel 14:20). The book of Daniel was widely accepted as inspired, and was included in the Hebrew Bible in the second century BC. Jesus acknowledged Daniel as the author of the book (Matthew 24:15). One respected source notes: "In NT prophecy Daniel is referred to more than any other book in the OT. Moreover, *it contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book in the Bible*" (see *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 3).

Daniel recorded a dream about a huge image (Daniel 2). The four parts of the image—head, chest, belly and thighs, legs and feet—pictured four empires that *would arise in the future* to dominate the Mediterranean world. Bible scholars now recognize these empires as the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire. Daniel also revealed that Jesus Christ will strike the last remnant of the Roman Empire on its feet and toes (made of iron and clay) when He returns to set up His kingdom on this earth at the end of this age (Daniel 2:41–45). Daniel described the same four empires as *four beasts*, and gave additional details about each. The third empire (Greco-Macedonian under Alexander) was pictured with *four heads* (Daniel 7:6). History records that after Alexander’s death, his empire split into *four parts*, about 300 years after Daniel recorded the prophecy. Daniel described the fourth beast (the Roman Empire) as having *ten horns* representing “ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom” (Daniel 7:7, 24). History records the many attempts to continue or revive the Roman Empire down through the centuries. They have all occurred *in Europe*, including revivals under Charlemagne, Charles V of the Hapsburgs, Napoleon and Mussolini. According to Bible prophecy, the *final revival* will be led by a person labelled “the beast,” backed by a religious leader called the “false prophet” (see Revelation 13 and 17). For more information about these end-time prophetic developments, please request our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.

Daniel also mentions a “little horn” that will *disown* the first three attempts to continue the Roman Empire, but will be intimately involved with subsequent revivals of the Roman Empire in its various forms. This figure is prophesied as speaking “pompous words against the Most High... persecute the saints... [and] change times and law” (Daniel 7:8, 20, 24–25). This “little horn” foreshadows those religious leaders who have claimed to be the “vicar of Christ” (meaning “in place of Christ”), who murdered Bible-believing Christians through an Inquisition and who replaced

commanded biblical Holy Days with pagan holidays. Other prophecies identify this “little horn” as a *prominent religious figure* whose latter-day counterpart will play a key role in events leading to Jesus Christ’s return (2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13; 17).

The ten toes of Daniel’s image (Daniel 2:40–43) correspond to ten kings who will give their power and authority to “the beast,” a powerful and deceptive political leader who will emerge on the scene in Europe just before Jesus Christ returns at the end of the age (Revelation 17:1–13). This political leader will receive support from, and be influenced by, a powerful religious leader—the final manifestation of the “little horn.” Like his predecessors, this “little horn” will play a key role in world politics (Revelation 13; 17). History records that Roman Catholic popes have crowned the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, and that popes and bishops have long influenced European politics. The iron and clay of the ten toes of Daniel’s image foretells the attempts by squabbling European nations to form a union by surrendering their sovereignty to a central government (akin to what the E.U. has done in Brussels). Current attempts to create a united Europe modelled on the old Roman Empire have been backed by several popes and the Roman Church. Daniel and other books of the Bible indicate that the *final fulfilment* of these remarkable prophecies will occur in the years just ahead!

It is ironic that while these ancient and detailed prophecies are coming alive today, leaders of the Roman Church insist that the symbolic language used in Daniel and Revelation “is *not* to be interpreted literally. We should *not* expect to discover in this book [Revelation] details about the end of the world” (*The Times*, October 5, 2005)—*yet that is exactly what these prophetic books claim to reveal!* Today, for people who really want to understand where world events are leading, the challenge is: *Whom do you believe*, theologians or the Bible? This is why it is important to determine whether or not the Bible is truly the word of God—whether it is fact or fiction!

The End of the World

Sadly, modern sceptics—and even many who claim to believe in Jesus Christ—dismiss ideas about the end of the age as pure fantasy and wild-eyed doomsday talk. Yet the Bible takes a *linear view* of history, and pictures all events moving toward a climax. The prophecies in Daniel take this view, with the climax being Jesus Christ’s return to establish the kingdom of God on this earth. Jesus spoke freely and in detail about specific events that would signal the end of the age. When Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “what will be the *sign* of your coming, and of the end of the age” He did not beat around the bush or try to avoid answering the question, as many theologians do today (Matthew 24:3). He told His disciples to *watch* for a time when they would see widespread religious confusion and deception, and increasingly frequent reports of violence, wars, ethnic strife, famines, disease epidemics and natural disasters on a global scale (Matthew 24:4–7).

These are the very headlines dominating our news today! Yet Jesus said that this would be just the “beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8). Christ went on to reveal that there will be a global persecution of Christians, but that the *true gospel* of the coming kingdom of God will nevertheless “be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Jesus said that all these events leading up to the climax of this age will occur at a time in history when the very existence of life on this planet will be threatened. Notice Jesus’ description that “unless those days were shortened [by Jesus’ return], no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22). Jesus admonished His disciples to *watch*—to remain alert—so that they will *recognize* when the civilizations of this world are entering their *final hour* (Matthew 24:36–44; 25:1–13; Mark 13:32–37; Luke 21:34–38).

In the 1950s, world leaders first realized that, with the development of nuclear weapons, mankind has created the

capacity to destroy all life from the face of the earth. This was never possible until the last half of the 20th century! Is it just a coincidence that between 1950 and today we have seen the global spread of HIV-AIDS, the return of drug-resistant tuberculosis and the threat of international pandemics of bird flu and other infectious diseases? Is it just a coincidence that today we are concerned with the emerging threat of global warming and the sobering consequences of global climate change? Is it just a coincidence that all this is happening amid rising fears about international terrorism and escalating conflict in the Middle East—all of which Scripture predicted long ago? *Is this all coincidence, or are we seeing the approaching fulfilment of ancient Bible prophecies that describe in detail the end of the age?* These astoundingly accurate prophecies *distinguish* the Bible from any other book on this planet, and they offer proof that the Bible was written by “the finger of God.”

Chapter 3

Did God Inspire the Bible?

One of the Bible’s most striking features is that it plainly *claims* to be the *inspired word of an Almighty God*. We see this in the words of the Apostle Paul, a highly educated Hebrew who wrote, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Apostle Peter wrote that the content of Scripture “never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21). To early Church leaders, “inspiration was not an ecstatic overpowering of the writer’s consciousness, but rather a high degree of illumination and calm awareness of God’s revelation... extending to every word of Scripture” (*The Origin of the Bible*, Bruce, et al., p. 38). Scripture indicates, and the early Church recognized, that God *inspired* the biblical writers to use their own minds and their own styles to write what God wanted them to write.

The Bible describes the process of divine inspiration in the way God worked with Moses, “And God *spoke* all these words... And Moses *wrote* all the words of the LORD... when Moses had completed writing the words of this law *in a book*... Moses commanded the Levites... *Take this Book of the Law*, and put it beside the ark of the covenant” (Exodus 20:1; 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:24–26). Centuries later, Ezra and Nehemiah read to the people of Israel from the “Book of the Law of Moses,” which was also called “the Book of the Law of God” (Nehemiah 8:1, 18). Jesus acknowledged its divine inspiration when He said, “have you not read in the book of Moses... how God *spoke* to him” (Mark 12:26). The prophet Jeremiah recorded a similar experience: “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ‘Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: *Write in a book* for yourself all the words that I have *spoken* to you” (Jeremiah 30:1–2). The phrase, “Thus says the LORD” is used more than 350 times in the Old Testament, clearly implying that the words of Scripture *came from God*.

As we will see, other religious books may claim divine inspiration like the Bible, yet they lack the specific characteristics that *confirm* the Bible’s authenticity.

Not only does the Bible claim to be divinely inspired, it claims to be the *ultimate source of truth*, revealed by the one true God. The Apostle John wrote, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17, *KJV*). David wrote, “Your law is truth... all Your commandments are truth... The entirety of Your word is truth” (Psalm 119:142, 151, 160). The prophet Isaiah asserted, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Isaiah meant that if statements and ideas do not agree with Scripture, we can recognize them as false. The Apostle Paul also calls Scripture “the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

These statements stand in marked contrast to the uncertain words spoken by Pontius Pilate, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Today, many sceptics and cynics share Pilate’s question. Yet the Bible’s bold claims show that its writers

clearly believed that the words they recorded were *absolutely true* and *inspired* by a wise and all-powerful God (see Genesis 17:1; Psalm 86:10; Jude 1:25). What is truth? You need to prove that for yourself!

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes, “the LORD is the *true* God” (Jeremiah 10:10; see also John 17:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 John 5:20). Scripture records that when the ancient Egyptian priests saw the miracles announced by Moses, and saw their own gods *powerless*, they concluded: “This is the finger of God” (Exodus 8:16–19). Daniel records that Nebuchadnezzar, pagan king of Babylon, came to the same conclusion after encountering the God of the Bible: “Truly, your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a reveller of secrets” (Daniel 2:47). The Bible records that the Apostle Paul, distressed at seeing Athens “given over to idols,” taught superstitious Greek philosophers about the *true* God (Acts 17:16–34). For more information about the *true* God of the Bible, request our free booklet, *The Real God: Proofs and Promises*.

The Bible’s clear and unambiguous message is that Scripture is the *inspired word of a real God*, and is the ultimate source of *truth!* This is difficult for many today to believe, because we live in a sceptical age where even so-called biblical scholars *doubt* that the Bible really is God’s word. However, the Bible’s bold claim that it is the *inspired* word of an all-powerful God, and is true in its entirety, *can be verified* in the records of history and the discoveries of archaeology. The *evidence* is there for anyone willing to look!

Critics Challenge the Bible

Scripture boldly asserts that “the word of our God *stands forever*” and “the word of the LORD *endures forever*” (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25). King David wrote, “His truth *endures* to all generations” (Psalm 100:5). Yet, down through the

centuries, antagonists and critics have tried to undermine, disparage, defy and destroy Scripture, and even mock the God of the Bible. The Bible warns, “Do not be deceived; God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7). The Old Testament records that during the Assyrian invasion of Judah (ca. 700BC), Sennacherib, a pagan Assyrian king, *mocked* the God of Israel before king Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:9–19). Shortly thereafter, “the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valour... in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he [Sennacherib] returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there” (2 Chronicles 32:21–22).

Historical records *confirm* that Sennacherib did *not* conquer Jerusalem, and that his own sons killed him. Secular history does not explain why this occurred. However, the Bible reveals that dire consequences can arise when doubters and critics *mock* the *real* God! Next to the exodus from Egypt, this is one of God’s most dramatic interventions in Israel’s history, and the facts of secular history *support* the biblical record. Incidentally, the Greek historian Herodotus relates that Sennacherib also suffered an embarrassing setback, with supernatural overtones, when his army invaded Egypt and a swarm of field mice chewed up their weapons, causing him to flee from the field near Pelusium with heavy losses (*The Histories*, 2:141). This truth of Scripture—that God will not be mocked—stands *confirmed*.

In the century after the apostles, historical sources confirm that Celsus, an articulate pagan philosopher, created a major stir when he wrote a blistering attack against the Bible and Christianity. Celsus wrote that biblical teachings were “absurd,” that the gospel accounts were “a deception” and that anyone who believed in one God was “deluded” (*Is the Bible True?*, Sheler, p. 9). The Bible *survived*, and Christianity *spread around the world*, but few people today have even heard of Celsus! Modern biblical critics who have resurrected Celsus’ ideas should remember that his attack on

Scripture was answered by an early religious scholar named Origen, whose eight-volume *Against Celsus* gave a point-by-point rebuttal in defense of the Bible.

At the beginning of the 4th century, the Roman emperor Diocletian sought to wipe out the Christian religion. He unleashed a terrible persecution of Christians, and commanded that all Bibles be burned. However, within a few short years a new emperor (Constantine) actually ordered the production of 50 Bibles! During the Middle Ages (ca. 500–1500AD), scholars influenced by pagan philosophy taught that scriptural accounts were merely allegories and should not be taken literally. Their allegorical approach *assumed* that Bible passages hid a deeper meaning, making the literal meaning unimportant. The Bible survived, but this way of thinking also survives today in many theological schools. The allegorical approach is a very subtle way of *undermining* the Bible's clear message, because it *ignores* what the Bible actually says.

Secular scholars in the 18th century became enthralled by the apparent power of human reason and the new discoveries of science. Regarding human reason as the ultimate authority, and armed with a bias against the supernatural, these critics began to offer speculative theories about the Bible's *supposed* origins, *apparent* contradictions and *assumed* errors. However, the assumptions and speculations of these critics have not stood the test of time. In fact, some of their bold pronouncements now appear extremely presumptuous and naïve. Toward the end of the 18th century, the French philosopher Voltaire predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence within a century. Yet, 50 years after he died, the Geneva Bible Society produced stacks of Bibles *in Voltaire's house on his own press* (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p. 10). The facts of history and the discoveries of archaeology make it plain: secular critics' ill-founded pronouncements and theories are intellectual castles built on *hot air*.

Evidence from Archaeology

Over the last 200 years, the rise of biblical criticism spawned many confident assertions by scholars who doubted the inspiration of Scripture. Sceptics at first claimed that since there was no evidence outside the Bible of various people and places mentioned in the Bible, the writers of Scripture must have invented them. This approach found fertile ground in “progressive” schools of theology, and in secular academic circles. The press and media fed these ideas to society, furthering doubts about the Bible’s credibility. This doubt and scepticism persists today, even though ongoing archaeological discoveries *continue to validate* the Bible’s historical accuracy, and *discredit* the sceptics’ assumptions!

As recently as 1992, some scholars were confidently asserting, “There are no literary criteria for believing David to be more historical than Joshua, Joshua more historical than Abraham, and Abraham more historical than Adam” (see “House of David Built on Sand,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1994, pp. 54–55). Yet, just one year later, archaeologists digging in upper Galilee discovered a 9th century BC inscription about the “house of David.” Jeffrey Sheler, an award-winning journalist and a religion writer for *U.S. News & World Report*, wrote: “The fragmentary reference to David was a *historical bombshell*. Never before had the familiar name of Judah’s ancient warrior king... been found in the records of antiquity outside the pages of the Bible” (*Is the Bible True?*, p. 60).

For decades, critics viewed the biblical story of David and Goliath as a fanciful tale of religious fiction. Yet, recently, “archaeologists digging at the purported biblical home of Goliath [Gath, see 1 Samuel 17:4] have unearthed a shard of pottery bearing an inscription of the Philistine’s name, a find they claimed *lends historical credence* to the Bible’s tale of David’s battle with the giant” (*The London Times*, November 13, 2005). This is the oldest Philistine

inscription ever discovered, dated to 950BC—within 70 years of the biblical narrative.

Doubting scholars for years assumed that “there were no Hittites at the time of Abraham, as there were no records of their existence apart from the Old Testament. They must be a myth” (McDowell, p. 11). However, later “archaeological research... uncovered more than 1,200 years of Hittite civilization” (*ibid.*). In similar fashion, critics assumed that the biblical patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were fictional figures from Hebrew folklore. Yet cuneiform tablets discovered in the royal archives of the palace of Mari in northern Syria, dating from the start of the second millennium BC (the approximate time of the patriarchs) mention “such names as Abam-ram (Abraham), Jacob-el and Benjamites” (*When Skeptics Ask*, Geisler & Brooks, pp. 186–187). All these discoveries *support* the biblical record and *refute* the charges of critics.

Scholars sceptical of the Bible have noted the similarity between the Genesis creation account and Babylonian clay tablets describing the creation of the world. These scholars have glossed over major differences in the accounts, and suggested that biblical writers simply borrowed their material from other sources. However, the discovery of more than 17,000 clay tablets at Ebla (in modern Syria), dating from 2500BC, has overturned the critics’ theories. The Ebla tablets (which predate the Babylonian creation epic by some 600 years) contain “the oldest known creation accounts outside the Bible... The creation tablet is *strikingly close* to that of Genesis, speaking of *one being* who created the heavens, moon, stars and earth. Parallels show that the Bible contains the older, less embellished version... They [the Ebla tablets] *destroy* the critical belief in the evolution of monotheism from supposed earlier polytheism” (*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Geisler, p. 208).

There have been dozens of other remarkable discoveries. The Merneptah Stela describes an Egyptian pharaoh conquering Israel (ca. 1200BC). The Black Obelisk from

Nimrud pictures Israelite king Jehu bowing before Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. An inscription near Jerusalem refers to “Joseph, son of Caiaphas” (Caiaphas was the high priest in Jerusalem at the time of Christ’s crucifixion; see Matthew 26:57). An inscribed stone from first century Caesarea reads, “Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea” (Pilate was the Roman governor at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion; see Matthew 27:2). Such evidence, carved in stone, supports the conclusion that the Bible writers were recording *facts* and not fiction (see *The Signature of God*, Jeffrey, pp. 72–74; *Is the Bible True?*, Sheler, pp. 110–112).

The manner in which archaeology has *verified* the historical accuracy of the Bible has been nothing short of *remarkable!* As noted archaeologist Nelson Glueck has written, “it may be clearly stated categorically that *no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single biblical reference*. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible” (*Rivers in the Desert*, Glueck, p. 136). Glueck’s comments echo the words of another prominent archaeologist, William F. Albright, who stated, “There can be no doubt that archaeology has *confirmed* the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition... The excessive scepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries... has been *progressively discredited*” (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, vol. 1, p. 65). The evidence of history and archaeology defies the critics, and *supports Scripture!*

Chapter 4

Has the Bible Been Preserved Accurately?

How can we know whether the text of the Bible has been preserved accurately down through the centuries? Is it logical to believe that a book written by more than 40 authors

in different locations over 1,500 years can be trustworthy? Can we prove that the text we have today is reliable?

If the Bible *is* the inspired word of an Almighty God who encourages people to “check the facts,” we should *expect* to find *convincing evidence* that Scripture *has* been preserved carefully and accurately over time. Such evidence *is* available—in Scripture itself! Evidence can also be found in Jewish historical literature, in the writings of early Church scholars and in a multitude of modern sources. The evidence for the accurate transmission of the Bible is *remarkable, overwhelming* and, indeed, *irrefutable!*

Old Testament Preservation

The Apostle Paul revealed where to find evidence of Scripture’s preservation when he wrote, “*What advantage then has the Jew...? to them were committed the oracles of God*” (Romans 3:1–2). Biblical scholar Bernard Ramm comments, “The Jews preserved it [the Old Testament] *as no other manuscript has ever been preserved*” (McDowell, p. 9). When God revealed His laws to their ancestors, they were given a mandate: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it... be careful to observe them [the statutes of God]... teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (Deuteronomy 4:1–10). History clearly shows how this has occurred.

The Bible records that God gave His laws directly to Moses (ca. 1400BC), and that “when Moses had completed writing the words of this law *in a book*... Moses commanded the Levites... *Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant*” (Deuteronomy 31:24–26). This ark was a box containing stone tablets of the law carved by God and the writings of Moses (see Deuteronomy 10:5). It was kept in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Bible shows Ezra the priest reading and explaining the “Book of the Law of Moses” to Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon in the fifth century BC (Nehemiah 8:1–12). By 150BC, there is even evidence from extra-biblical sources that

the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was attributed to Moses (*The Origin of the Bible*, Bruce, et al., p. 56). In the first century AD, Jesus and the apostles also quoted from and referred to the books of Moses as *inspired Scripture* (see Mark 12:19–27; John 1:17; Romans 10:5). Thus, the Bible provides its own account of how Scripture was preserved and used over generations.

Canon Vs. Confusion

Evidence also exists from the Bible, as well as from historical sources, that the Old Testament consisted of specific books that were *widely recognized* as divinely inspired. The *list of books recognized as inspired* became the *canon* of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. In the first century AD, both Jesus (Luke 24:44) and the Jewish teacher Philo referred to three major divisions of the Old Testament canon: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (see Bruce, p. 60). Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, acknowledged that the Hebrew Bible consisted of 22 books—essentially the same text which, divided differently, forms the 39 books of our modern Old Testament—and that these books “*have all been accepted as canonical from time immemorial*” (*ibid.*, p. 61). The fact that 22 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament comprise the 49 books of the complete Bible (49 is considered a number of completion) indicates that a divine mind was guiding this process. The Bible is not just a haphazard collection of books!

Modern scholars generally agree that the Hebrew Scriptures were recognized as inspired from an early date. According to one source: “The evidence supports the theory that the Hebrew canon was established well before the late first century AD, more than likely as early as the fourth century BC and certainly no later than 150BC” (McDowell, p. 26). Another source states: “No one doubts that the Pentateuch was both complete and canonical by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the fifth century BC... such evidence implies that by the beginning of the Christian era the identity

of all the [Old Testament] canonical books was well known and generally accepted” (*The Origin of the Bible*, Bruce, et al., p. 56). It is worth noting that *none* of the biblical writers or early Church scholars accepted as inspired the apocryphal books written in the inter-testamental period.

Exact Copies Prepared!

But how reliable are the Old Testament books that we have today? Has the text of the Old Testament been transmitted to us accurately? Consider the evidence. “In Judaism, a succession of scholars was charged with standardizing and preserving the biblical text” during a period extending from about 500BC to about 1000AD (McDowell, pp. 73–77). The earliest scribes, the Sopherim (400BC to 200AD), worked with Ezra and “were regarded as the Bible custodians until the time of Christ” (*ibid.*). They were followed by the Talmudists (100AD to 500AD) and finally by the Masoretes (500AD to 1000AD). Numerous accounts confirm that these scribes copied the biblical texts with *extreme care*, counting the number of words in a book, counting the number of times a letter appeared in a book, and even pointing out the middle letter in the Pentateuch and the middle letter in the Bible!

Because of such careful attention to detail in the preparation and transmission of Old Testament manuscripts, modern scholars acknowledge that “the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy... it may safely be said that *no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted...* [it is] little short of miraculous” (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, pp. 55–56). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 proved just how accurately the Jews have preserved and transmitted the Old Testament text. Before the discovery of the scrolls in a cave near the Dead Sea, the oldest copy of the Hebrew text dated from around 1000AD. The newly discovered scrolls

dated to the first century BC—about 1,000 years earlier! The scrolls contained two nearly complete copies of the book of Isaiah, which proved “to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of the variations consisted of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling” (*When Skeptics Ask*, Geisler & Brooks, pp. 158–159). The Dead Sea Scrolls provide *solid evidence* that the text of the Old Testament has not changed in more than 2,000 years!

The New Testament Preserved

The reliability of the New Testament rests on a wealth of material that is available. Scholars readily acknowledge, “There are earlier and more manuscripts of the New Testament than of any other book in the ancient world” (*Baker Encyclopaedia of Christian Apologetics*, Geisler, p. 93). These manuscripts clearly reveal that the New Testament “has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation” (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p. 44).

More than 24,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament in Greek, Latin and other languages provide evidence about the text. The earliest New Testament manuscripts date within a few decades or a few centuries of the apostolic writers. By comparison, there are only 643 manuscripts of Homer’s *Iliad* (written in the 8th century BC), and the earliest copy in existence today dates from about 400BC—some 500 years after it was composed. Only 10–20 copies of writings of Julius Caesar, the Roman historian Tacitus, and the Greek historian Herodotus exist today, with the oldest manuscripts copied 1,000 years after the originals were composed (McDowell, pp. 39–43). Compared against the New Testament, *no other document* from the ancient world has left such a wealth of material documenting the reliable transmission of its text. In addition to the many available manuscripts, early Christian writers quoted the New

Testament so extensively that almost the entire New Testament could be reconstructed from other sources.

Critics have theorized that unknown authors composed the gospels centuries after the apostles. Yet the earliest fragment of John's gospel is dated 130AD, about 30 years after the apostle's death. This supports the traditional view that John wrote his gospel towards the end of the first century (see McDowell, pp. 39–47). Also, "there is no evidence from the first two Christian centuries that the gospels ever circulated without the names of the authors attached" (Sheler, p. 33). One scholar has observed: "If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must... declare it *marvellously correct*" (McDowell, p. 45). Another prominent scholar stated: "It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible *is certain*: Especially is this the case with the New Testament... *This can be said of no other ancient book in the world*" (*ibid.*).

New Testament Canon

For decades, critics have charged that the books of the New Testament were not written until a century or more after Jesus and the apostles lived, and were probably pieced together by anonymous authors. Such a late composition would allow time for myths and legends to creep into the text. Some progressive theologians and modern authors, as in *The DaVinci Code*, also assert that the books of the New Testament were selected by politically motivated committees, and that valuable books were deliberately omitted, thereby compromising the Bible's accuracy and value. However, the internal evidence of the New Testament books, the facts of history and the weight of modern scholarship all refute these ideas!

Today, most credible scholars concur that "the New Testament canon with the Gospels and most of Paul's Epistles was formed by the end of the first century... The attested date for the canonical Gospels is no later than 60–

100” AD (Geisler, p. 520). Neither Luke’s gospel nor the book of Acts (also written by Luke) mention the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which was for Jews the most significant event of the century. Indeed, no New Testament author mentions the destruction of the Temple, which strongly suggests early authorship of the New Testament canon.

The New Testament books themselves reveal that the authors recognized which writings God had inspired, and belonged in the canon. The Apostle Paul wrote that “the things which I write to you are *the commandments of the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul wrote that the teachings of the apostles were divinely inspired and were to be read in the churches, “because when you received *the word of God* which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 5:27). Peter warned that those who were twisting Paul’s writings were twisting “*the Scriptures*” (2 Peter 3:15–16). Scholars in the early centuries of the Church accepted the apostles’ writings as Scripture, but they “all draw a clear distinction between their own [writings] and the *inspired, authoritative apostolic writings*” (Bruce, p. 71). This argues strongly that the New Testament canon was recognized very early in Church history.

Tertullian, a religious historian who wrote in the early 200s, appears to be the first writer to call Christian Scripture the “New Testament.” This is significant, because it “placed the New Testament Scripture on a level of inspiration and authority with the Old Testament” (Bruce, p. 66). From the 300s we have records showing that the New Testament canon consisted of 27 books—the same books we have today. A letter written in 367AD by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, provides the earliest documentation of the exact 27 books of the New Testament canon. His letter, which was “designed to eliminate once and for all the use of certain apocryphal books,” warns: “Let no one add to these; let nothing be taken away” (Bruce, p. 74). Later, in 397AD, a church council in Carthage decreed that “aside from the canonical Scriptures

[which the council listed as 27 books] nothing is to be read in church under the Name of Divine Scriptures” (Bruce, p. 74). The clear purpose was to *identify* which books was part of the inspired New Testament canon, and to *eliminate* the use of apocryphal literature.

What About Apocryphal Books?

Just what are the apocryphal books? Why were they an issue of controversy in the early Church? Are they relevant today? The “Apocrypha” (which means *hidden* or *concealed*) refers to books that neither the Jews nor the early Church ever accepted as inspired or as part of the canon (see Bruce, pp. 79–94; Geisler, pp. 28–34). Most apocryphal books date to the inter-testamental period, and were written by anonymous authors or under the name of a person or a place named in Scripture. These books do not claim to be inspired. They contain no predictive prophecies, but instead contain historical and geographical errors and promote fanciful ideas and false doctrines that contradict canonical Scripture. Jesus and the New Testament writers never acknowledged the Apocrypha as Scripture. “No canonic list or church council accepted the Apocrypha for nearly the first four centuries” (Geisler, p. 33).

Although some apocryphal books were published along with canonical books in the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures produced by 70 scholars in Alexandria ca. 250BC), this translation was *not* supervised by scribes of the Judaic tradition, who had their centres in Tiberius and Babylon.

Josephus, writing in the first century AD, *specifically excluded* apocryphal books from the Hebrew canon when he wrote, “we have... but only twenty-two books, which are justly believed to be divine” (*Against Apion*, 1:8). Philo, a first century Jewish teacher in Alexandria, “quoted the Old Testament prolifically from virtually every canonical book. However, he *never once* quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired” (Geisler, p. 32). Prominent early writers such as

Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius of Alexandria and Jerome all *rejected* the apocryphal books as inauthentic. In fact, it was Jerome (who prepared the Latin Vulgate Bible ca. 400AD) who first used the term *Apocrypha* when referring to books that were *not* considered part of the inspired biblical canon and *should not* be used to establish doctrine. Jerome disputed with the theologian Augustine, who felt that the apocryphal books were inspired and should be included in the canon, apparently because they had been included in the Septuagint.

The Apocryphal books became a major issue during the Reformation, when Protestants (following Jerome's thinking) rejected the Apocrypha as uninspired. However, at the Council of Trent in 1546, Roman Catholic leaders (following Augustine's ideas) declared those books part of the New Testament canon. This was an attempt by the Roman church to counter the influence of Martin Luther and other reformers who were teaching against celibacy, prayers for the dead, and purgatory—ideas that do not come from canonical Scripture but are found in some *apocryphal* books. Yet this was not the end of the controversy over apocryphal writings.

Gnostic “Gospels”?

In 1945, a group of books commonly called “Gnostic gospels” were found near Nag Hammadi, an Egyptian town north of Luxor, on the Nile. Gnosticism encompassed a collection of heretical ideas that early Church leaders attributed to Simon the Sorcerer (see Acts 8:9–25; Geisler, p. 274). Gnostic writings contain purported “secret sayings” of Christ that *differ dramatically* from His New Testament teachings. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus flies into a fit of rage and causes a child who has offended Him to wither (3:1–3). In another work, Jesus makes clay birds on the Sabbath; when His parents correct Him, He claps His hands and the birds fly away. The *Gospel of Philip* suggests that Christ had a romantic relationship with Mary Magdalene.

The *Gospel of Mary* asserts that Mary was the real leader of Christ's disciples.

Early Church leaders denounced the Gnostic writings as spurious and heretical. Yet modern biblical critics, along with revisionist theologians, creative writers and mystical New Agers, have *resurrected* these "alternative" gospels and present them as *equally credible* as canonical Scripture. Dan Brown, author of the widely read fictional novel *The DaVinci Code*, draws heavily on the heretical ideas of Gnostic writings, as well as on occult, pagan goddess worship and mysticism. In his novel, he "makes the case that Mary Magdalene was... a strong independent figure, patron of Jesus, cofounder... of his movement, his only believer in his greatest hour of need, author of her own Gospel, his romantic partner, and the mother of his child. To the millions of women who feel slighted, discriminated against, or unwelcome in churches of all faiths today, the novel is a chance to see early religious history in an entirely different light... *The DaVinci Code* opens everyone's eyes to a startlingly different view of the powerful role of women in the birth of Christianity. These themes have become mainstream at Harvard's divinity school and other intellectual centres" (*Secrets of the Code*, Bernstein, p. xxvii).

When Dan Brown makes his leading characters say, "almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" and, "The Bible is a product of man, my dear, not God," he is promoting an agenda and world view that seeks to undermine and discredit the Bible, and the Jesus Christ of the Bible. Though the plot of *The DaVinci Code* appears to "advocate a courageous search for truth at any price, its real goal is to undermine one of the fundamental characteristics of the Christian faith—the belief that the original message of the Gospel, enshrined in the Bible, is the unique, inspired word of God" (*Cracking the Code*, Garlow & Jones, p. 72). The real danger of books like *The DaVinci Code* comes from doubts planted in the minds of people who lack historical and biblical knowledge. For such people, *the fiction of*

apocryphal writings can appear to be fact, which leads to *deception* about the true nature of inspired Scripture. One of the primary reasons for public declarations about what books comprised the canons of the Old and New Testaments was to clearly distinguish between *inspired books* and the false and misleading writings of the Gnostics.

Chapter 5

Real Answers to Life's Big Questions

Today, many people live in a materialistic world of affluence and abundance. More people enjoy a higher standard of living today than at any other time in human history. Yet with more money in our pockets and more time on our hands, millions of people still find life empty and meaningless. More and more people today are finding that money; material things and searching for the ultimate experience simply do not provide lasting happiness, remove the emptiness or provide meaningful answers to the big questions of life: Why was I born? Why am I here? Why do I exist? What is the real purpose of life? What happens when I die?

Those who take time to look beyond themselves soon notice the *tremendous inequities* in our modern world, and wonder: Why do millions of human beings suffer from a lack of food, lack of fresh water, lack of sanitation and inadequate shelter? Why are so many people exploited and abused by corrupt leaders in failing countries? Why are wars and deliberate acts of horrific violence and terrorism proliferating around the world? Why is there no peace? Millions want a better world, but know they cannot make it happen. Why, then, does God fail to intervene—if indeed there is a God?

Few people find satisfaction in the vague answers they hear from most religious leaders and secular philosophers. To hear that human beings are merely “trouserred apes”—nothing more than bags of DNA struggling to survive in a purposeless universe, awaiting eternal nothingness at death—

does not provide an inspiring reason to live. On the other hand, it seems like purposeless fantasy to believe that the goal of life is to spend eternity sitting on a cloud, playing a harp. To hear that “God is love”—and then to witness all the evil and inequality in the world—simply does not add up. Tragically, many today have been led to believe that these answers are “as good as it gets.”

But this is nonsense! Most people who assume that these are the best answers to life’s big questions have *never heard the real answers that God recorded in the Bible!* Many theologians either do not know or do not believe what the Bible actually says about life’s big questions. Because of our society’s prejudice against the supernatural, fostered by biblical scholars who do not believe in the personal and all-powerful God of the Bible, millions have been *conditioned to be sceptical* of whatever Scripture might reveal about these subjects. However, the Bible provides *real answers* to life’s big questions!

The Purpose of Life

Contrary to popular modern notions that life emerged from hot slimy pools of pre-biotic soup (akin to an idea espoused by pagan Greek philosophers) and that human beings evolved from an ape-like ancestor (as postulated by the disciples of Charles Darwin), the Bible reveals that God created human beings *in His own image* (Genesis 1:26–28). Whether or not you can believe this statement will depend on whether you can accept the plentiful evidence that the Bible is truly the word of God. According to Scripture, human beings were not created to amuse the gods, as some ancient philosophers assumed. The Bible reveals that God created

humans so that they could learn to manage the earth (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15), and build character by learning to discern right from wrong (Genesis 2:16–17). According to Scripture, God established the institutions of marriage and family (Genesis 2:18–24). He also established *roles* in marriage and *revealed important guidelines* so that these divinely ordained institutions would function smoothly and successfully (Matthew 19:3–9; Ephesians 5:22–33; 6:1–4; 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

The *reason* for the biblical emphasis on learning to manage our own lives, and on functioning smoothly in marriage and family, is that we have been created to become members of God’s spiritual family (see Romans 8:15–17; Hebrews 2:5–11; 1 John 3:1–3). If we qualify to become members of that spiritual family, we will reign with Jesus Christ when He returns to establish the kingdom of God on earth (see Revelation 1:4–6; 5:10). The Bible, when properly understood, clearly reveals that we do not fly off to heaven when we die (see John 3:13; Acts 2:29, 34; 13:36). When you understand what Scripture actually reveals about the purpose of life, you can begin to understand why the teachings of today’s “mainstream” Christianity are not very satisfying or convincing. To learn more about the real purpose of life as it is revealed in Scripture, request our free booklet, *Your Ultimate Destiny*.

The Plan of God

But what is the cause of the human suffering that has occurred down through time? Why is there so much evil in the world? Why does God allow it? If there is a God, why does He fail to act? People ask these questions because they do not understand that God is working out a plan and a purpose on this earth. Scripture reveals His plan, and it is pictured in the Holy Days that He commanded His people to observe (Leviticus 23). God’s plan reveals not only the cause of, but also the solution to, the problems we see in our world.

Many today do not believe in God's existence, but even fewer believe that Satan is real. However, Scripture reveals quite a bit about this spirit being. The Bible reveals that Satan was originally an "anointed cherub" covering the throne of God, who sinned, "became filled with violence" and led a rebellion against God involving one-third of the angels (see Ezekiel 28:1–19; Isaiah 14:12–17; Jude 6; Revelation 12:4). We see so much evil in the world today because Satan is the "god of this age... who deceives the whole world" by influencing people to reject the instructions and way of life that God has revealed in the Bible (2 Corinthians 4:3–4; Ephesians 2:1–2). You need to read these scriptures for yourself to verify what the Bible actually says about this individual who has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

The biblical Holy Days picture the major steps in God's plan of salvation. Those steps reveal that Jesus Christ came to die for the sins of mankind, to replace Satan as the god of this world. Jesus then raised up His Church (Acts 2)—called the "Church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1)—to preach the gospel of God's kingdom to the world (Mark 16:15) and to prepare a group of believers to become the "firstfruits" (James 1:18; Romans 8:23; Revelation 14:1–5) who will reign with Him in the coming kingdom of God for a thousand years—a period called the *Millennium* (Revelation 20:4–6).

The Bible also reveals that when Christ returns, Satan will be bound and put out of commission (Revelation 20:1–2). This is how God will eliminate evil, and will use the individuals whom He has prepared to solve the world's problems. This will all happen according to God's plan, which is revealed in Scripture. To learn more about God's great plan for humanity, request our free booklet *The Holy Days: God's Master Plan*. To learn more about the Church that began with Jesus Christ—and the remarkable and perilous course it has travelled through the centuries—request our booklet, *God's Church Through the Ages*.

The Age to Come

But what is the *real hope* for the future? Why should we struggle against the trials and temptations of this world? What is the value of learning to live by God's laws and the Bible's instructions? The answers emerge when we understand what the Bible reveals about the kingdom of God, and why it is called the "gospel." The word "gospel" means "good news" and the *biblical* message about the kingdom of God *is good news—it is exciting news!* The gospel of the kingdom of God, as described in the Bible, is not about some warm fuzzy feeling in your heart. It is about *a coming world government* that Jesus Christ will establish on this earth.

The Bible clearly reveals that Jesus will return to Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). He will take charge of the kingdoms of this world (Revelation 11:15–18) and set up a world government that will bring true justice and lasting peace to this planet. Jesus will be aided by the saints, individuals who understand the laws of God and have learned to function within the family of God, who will serve as civil and religious leaders—"kings and priests" (Revelation 5:10). God's government will bring peace and justice to the earth (Isaiah 9:6–7). The saints will also function as teachers (Isaiah 30:20–21) who will explain the laws of God (Isaiah 2:2–4), show people the way to peace (Psalm 119:165) and help them understand the real causes of strife and war (James 4:1–4). Christians are urged to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord" (2 Peter 3:18) so that they will be prepared to rule with Christ in this coming kingdom.

The Bible reveals that in the coming kingdom of God, rebuilt cities will promote a sense of community and will be in harmony with the environment (Isaiah 61:4; 11:6–9; Amos 9:14–15). Our polluted planet will be restored and made productive (Isaiah 35:1–7; Amos 9:13). The global curse of disease will be eliminated as people learn to live by the Bible's personal and public health laws (see Leviticus 3:17; 7:23–27; 11:1–47). The peoples of the world will learn to

speak one language (Zephaniah 3:9), and “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). The Bible speaks of the coming kingdom of God as the “times of refreshing” in which there will be a “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:19–20). The Apostle Paul called this “the world to come” or “the age to come” (Hebrews 2:5). We also call it *Tomorrow’s World*. The Bible holds out these scriptural teachings as our *real hope for the future!*

Modern critics scoff at taking Scripture literally, at face value. Many preachers do not even mention the exciting biblical information we have covered in this booklet. Instead, most willingly overlook or even ignore *what history reveals* about the teachings and beliefs of the early Church. Historian Edward Gibbon wrote: “The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ... a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect... would reign upon earth... The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples... Though it might not be universally received, *it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers*; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith” (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon, vol. 1, pp. 187–188).

Gibbon wrote plainly that early Christians believed and taught about the Millennium—the coming kingdom of God. The Bible’s exciting and inspiring gospel of God’s kingdom motivated believers and spurred the growth of the early Church. However, Gibbon also recorded how early theologians, influenced by pagan philosophy—believing they knew better than God’s inspired word—gradually watered down this important teaching of Scripture and then explained it away, first calling it allegory, then calling it heresy. Millions have lost sight of—or have never heard—the real

biblical answers to life's big questions, because most scholars and religious leaders have rejected—or never heard—those answers! This is one reason why so many today find life empty and meaningless.

Conclusion: Truth and Consequences

In our modern age, many *seriously doubt* or *openly disbelieve* that an all-powerful supernatural God inspired Scripture. Many *assume* that the Bible is no different than any other humanly authored book. Many also *assume* that modern scholarship has completely discredited the Bible, and that no evidence exists that proves otherwise. Yet, as we have seen in this booklet, *the truth is just the opposite!* These widely held beliefs and assumptions are, in reality, *fictions* that are *totally contrary to the facts!*

The big question that you face, and the challenge that confronts many others today, is: What exactly will you believe about the Bible? Will you *believe the facts* discussed in this booklet (which only scratches the surface of this vast subject), or will you accept sceptics' speculations that undermine and discredit the Bible—*largely by ignoring the facts?*

The God of the Bible can challenge us to “examine all things” and “prove” whether He exists (and whether He inspired the Bible), because there is so much remarkable and irrefutable evidence available! True biblical scholars *know* that the Bible is *unlike* any other religious book in the world, and that the most distinctive feature of the Bible is *prophecy*. Students of prophecy *know* that the Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies that have been consistently and accurately fulfilled. No other book on the face of the earth contains such remarkable prophetic material, and human efforts to predict the future simply do not compare to the scope and accuracy of Bible prophecy. All this provides *powerful evidence* pointing to the Bible's *divine origin*.

The *facts of history* demonstrate that the Bible has been preserved and accurately transmitted for thousands of years, in spite of concerted efforts to outlaw, suppress, corrupt, burn and destroy it. The continued existence of the Bible under such adverse and hostile conditions offers *strong support* that an all-powerful God inspired such biblical statements as “the word of the Lord endures forever” and “My counsel shall stand.” The remarkable way that archaeological discoveries *continue to confirm* Scripture’s historical accuracy, and *undermine* critics’ speculative theories, *clearly affirms* that the Bible is the inspired word of God! The Bible provides *real answers* to life’s big questions, unlike academics, philosophers and theologians who offer mere platitudes. This *strongly indicates* that the Bible’s answers were *revealed* from a supernatural source.

But *why* do critics and sceptics—who are often highly educated—ignore the facts and continue to claim that the Bible is only a collection of myths and legends, and is untrustworthy as a source of historical, theological or scientific information? Is it significant that secular-minded scholars have planted doubts about the Bible in the minds of millions of people today? What are the *consequences* of *ignoring evidence* that the Bible is the *inspired* word of God? Scripture provides informative answers and offers sobering warnings.

The Bible *reveals* the cause of this widespread deception: Satan “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). We can certainly see this when we consider the incredible misconceptions that so many have acquired about the Bible. Jesus prophesied that one sign of the “end of the age” would be the increasing number of false teachers who “*will deceive many*” by spreading false teachings (Matthew 24:3–5, 11). The Apostle Peter warned that false teachers would subtly bring in “destructive heresies” that would discredit the truth of God and *deceive many people* (2 Peter 2:1–3). He also warned that “*scoffers will come in the last days*, walking according to their own lusts”—casting doubts on Scripture and ignoring the facts of history (see 2 Peter

3:3–9). This deception will be widespread *at the end of the age*.

However, the Apostle Paul reveals that scoffers and false teachers will *reap serious consequences* from the God they are mocking and defying. He wrote: “For the *wrath* of God is revealed from heaven against all... who *suppress the truth* in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them... so that *they are without excuse*, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God... but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. *Professing to be wise, they became fools*” (Romans 1:18–22). Paul’s condemnation of the misguided pagan intellectuals of his day also applies to the misguided scholars and critics of today—who ignore the powerful evidence that points to God as the author and sustainer of the Bible. We need to remember that there is a judgment coming!

The stinging reproofs that the prophet Jeremiah levelled at his contemporaries also apply in our present day. Jeremiah warned that “the prophets become wind, for the word [of God] is not in them... *The prophets prophesy falsely... and My people love to have it so...* the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood... the prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them... they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who *try to make My people forget My name* by their dreams... and *cause My people to err by their lies* and by their recklessness... they shall not profit this people at all” (Jeremiah 5:13, 31; 8:8; 14:14; 23:26, 30–32). God said through Jeremiah that because His people “have forsaken My law... and have not obeyed My voice... but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts... I will scatter them also among the Gentiles... I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them” (Jeremiah 9:13–16). The Bible clearly reveals that *serious consequences* will befall those who *forsake* the laws of God and promote their own theories, or *follow* those who do.

However, *wonderful benefits* come to those who *prove and believe* that the Bible is God’s inspired word, and who

follow God's biblical instructions. King David wrote: "*Blessed* are [they]... Who walk in the law of the LORD... Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path... Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble... All Your commandments are *truth*... The entirety of Your word is *truth*" (Psalm 119:98, 105, 151, 160, 165). The Bible reveals that God will look favourably on those who develop a deep respect for His word, and are willing to follow its instructions. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *who trembles at My word*" (Isaiah 66:2).

The Bible reveals that God has not left human beings to flounder without fundamental guidelines, or without important answers to life's big questions. God has inspired and preserved the Bible in a way that no other book has ever been preserved. He has filled Scripture with hundreds of prophecies that accurately predict the future—setting the Bible apart from all other religious books on earth. The discoveries of archaeology and the facts of history continue to confirm the validity of Scripture, even though it was written thousands of years ago. These facts are simply astounding and cannot reasonably be denied!

When you weigh critics' claims about the Bible against the tremendous evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration, you are left with a clear choice. You can choose to believe that critics' theories might have some foundation in fact, while waiting for the next theory to change and assumptions to be revised. Or you can *trust the evidence* from archaeology, history and fulfilled prophecy, which *clearly reveals* that the Bible is *the* inspired word of God —*fact, not fiction*.

I am sure it comes as no news to anyone today when I say that the religious world is full of confusion. It seems there are so many voices beckoning for the floor, so many causes seeking our allegiance. One church says, "We have the truth." Another church says, "No, we do! It reminds me of the story of a little girl who was invited to go to church with a neighbour. She replied by saying, "I'm sorry, I can't go to church with you. You see, we belong to a different abomination!" While we can smile, friend, we are discussing an issue that is a very significant one in the Christian world. While we have one Book as our guide, one Lord as our God, there are some 250 or 300 different denominations.

It is not God's plan that the Christian church should be so fragmented. As a matter of fact, we discover just exactly what God's plan is for His church in Ephesians. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Ephesians 4:11-14. God's plan is that we come into the unity of the faith and that we not be blown about by "every wind of doctrine." But, friend, God's purpose is that His people be

unified in the truth, not simply united in some great super-church, but rather joined together in the truth of Scripture.

This is the dilemma that faces us. As we walk down the street and knock on the church doors of this city or any other city, and ask them some questions, we get surprisingly different answers. The layman says, "If the clergy can't understand these passages of Scripture and come to a knowledge of God's will and truth, how can the layman ever come to understand?" That is a very valid question.

As we go down the street and ask one church, "What do you believe about baptism?" we could get any one of a dozen different answers. The Bible says, however, in the chapter we just read that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:5. We ask one church, "What do you believe about the ten-commandment law of God?" The church says, "We believe that it is ever binding upon all Christians." We go down the street a little further and ask another group; and they say, "Well, that has been done away with and nailed to the cross. We are no longer under that law. We are under grace now, you see." We ask another church, "What do you believe about the second coming of Christ?" One will say, "Well, we believe that Jesus is going to come and bring an end to the reign of sin and that we will see Him with our eyes." Another church says, "We believe that Christ is going to come at the end of a long period, a thousand years of peace and happiness." Then another church says, "We believe Christ has come already, quite a few years ago. He is already here."

We ask one church, "What do you believe happens when a man dies?" The first church tells us, "Well, we believe that when a man dies, he goes immediately to the grave, and there he awaits the call of the Lifegiver." We talk to the folk from another church, however; and they tell us, "We believe that when a man dies, he goes immediately to his reward, either heaven or hell." We ask one church, "What do you believe

about what God is going to do with the wicked?" One says, "We believe that God is going to destroy them, burn them up, leave them neither root nor branch." Another group says, "We believe that He is going to torment them forever and forever, throughout eternity." How can we know the truth for the world when preachers can't agree, when theologians misunderstand? They can't all be right, that is obvious. That is the point I wish to make right now. They cannot all be right.

You have heard it said, "All the churches are roads leading to the same place." How can that be true if one of them, if some of them, are teaching error? Do you see how important it is for us to understand the truth of Scripture, the "truth as it is in Jesus"? Do you see why it is that we must have a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything that we believe? Friend, I don't know of any other safeguard! We are not concerned with what a church teaches, but rather with what the Bible teaches. Remember this, truth is progressive. We have referred to this text a number of times, and I want us to read it again today, "But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18. Now, keep this text in mind, because we will have occasion to refer to it later on in our study.

You know, it is interesting to ask people why they belong to a certain church. This is a great age for surveys. Not long ago I heard that they are going to take a survey of the surveyors to see what things are being most surveyed! Some months back somebody took a survey of a cross section of American people because they wanted to discover the reasons people give for belonging to the church to which they belong. I thought the results were interesting. You know what was number one on the list? You might guess. "I belong to that church because my parents did, and I was reared in it." The second reason was, "My friends go there." Not much theology in that, is there? Number three, "I attend the church I do because it's nearby." Number four, "I attend the church I

do because I like the pastor." That is good, but really it isn't too much to anchor to as far as a belief is concerned, is it? Number five, "I attend the church I do because I believe what they preach." Number six; interestingly enough, "I attend the church I do because I like the beautiful building." Way down at position number five on the list was the reason, "I believe what they preach."

There is no doubt that God wants us to join a church. For Jesus told his disciples, in Matthew 16:18, "...I will build My church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." While the floodgates of hell have been loosed against God's true church through the centuries, we are thankful to God that His true church still stands. In Ephesians 5: 23, 25 we are told, "...Christ is the head of the church... Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." If Christ loved the church so much, should we not also love the church and desire to be a part of it?

Christ is the head of the church, and His church is the body. He wants us to be members of that body. How do we become members? In apostolic days, those who heard the Word were pricked in their hearts, and asked, "...What must we do?" Then Peter answered them, "...Repent and be baptized..." Then what was the very next step? In verse 47 we read, "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Jesus loved this church so much that He gave minute instructions in dealing with the erring, to prevent them from straying.

Having settled the necessity of belonging to a church, the next question is, "Which church?" Some join a church because it is a popular church or near where they live. Some join a church because they like the preacher, or the choir, or the congregation. But we are told, in 1 Peter 3:15 "...Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."

We should have a good Bible reason for joining a particular church. Paul advises us in Ephesians 4: 14, 15 "That we henceforth be no more...carried about with every wind of doctrine... But speaking the truth in love..." Jesus tells us what truth is, in John 17:17 "...Thy word is truth." So if we know what the Bible says, we will not be carried about with false doctrines. We should join a church because we endorse its teachings. Therefore, we should discover which church preaches the Bible truth. The church is to be God's representative on earth, demonstrating His power to save men and women from sin.

Many people ask me, "How can I know for sure which is the true church." There are so many churches. Is there a Bible guide to direct my search? Is it possible to really know? To all of these questions I would say emphatically "Yes". If you really mean business with God. And if you are willing to follow when God shows you from the Bible His true church. Then you can know. And it is not hard. In fact God puts down a very simple way to know. So easy that many people look right over God's answer without ever realizing it. Revelation 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." God says to start with; just find a people who keep all of the Ten Commandments and have faith in Jesus and it will take away a lot of confusion. But now let's get a little background of God's church and how it started back at the creation of this world.

There have been seven great religious movements in the history of our world. All of them were established by God. The Lord made it clear right after sin entered into this world that He would have a church, and that that church would be in direct conflict with Satan and his work. So, down through the ages God has always had a church, a special church, to carry on His work.

The very first church was the church of Adam, 4004 B.C., was founded by God in the Garden of Eden. At creation it was a pure church, and God committed a lot of truth to our first parents in that Garden Church. The Bible teaches us to protect in every way possible the purity of that original truth once delivered to the saints. Here is the text on it in Jude 3:4 "...Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares...turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice the word "once." The true faith of God is unchangeable, and it was delivered by God Himself to the saints, once and for all. Through the ages it has been the great objective of the enemy of all righteousness to corrupt or pervert this faith "Once delivered to the saints."

What kind of doctrine did God give to that first church? Was it the same we read about in the book of Revelation, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus? Yes, it most certainly was. They did have faith in a Saviour. That faith was put in operation as soon as sin entered that beautiful world. And they did have the commandments of God from the lips of the Creator Himself. Notice that even though man was made with freedom of choice, we are told in Genesis 2:16, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying..." The religion of Eden was implicit obedience to the commands of God.

And please notice, friends that the Sabbath commandment had to be one of those included in that original faith once delivered to the saints in the Garden of Eden, because God blessed it and sanctified the very next day after creating Adam and Eve. (Genesis 2:2, 3). Now if God saw that the Sabbath was vital to man's happiness before sin entered, how could it be possible that in a world of sin it should be discarded? The Sabbath was made free from local restrictions, national boundaries, racial characteristics and peculiarities.

Thus, we see that the religion of the Garden of Eden was the keeping of the Commandments of God and Creator worship. Satan soon succeeded in getting man to disobey the commandments of God. In eating of the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve broke nearly all the commandments found in the law given at Sinai. They stole that which was not theirs. They put another god before the God of Heaven. They really committed a slow suicide, and tried to hide and deceive God Himself. God made it clear that it was the transgression of His commandments that caused the entrance of sin and sorrow.

However, immediately after the fall of man, God revealed the wonderful plan of salvation. The hope of man was to center in the coming Redeemer. Thus was added to the commandments of God, the promise of the Saviour, or the faith of Jesus. This plan of redemption is the same now as it was then. It has been the same since the beginning of time, and will be till the end of time. And it included the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. God's true Church on earth, whether the first or the last, the Edenic or the Remnant Church, will be built upon the same foundation.

After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord spoke to Satan in their presence and said: "And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman (the church), and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel (referring to the death of Christ, which was not lasting)." Gen. 3:15. Christ was slain, but He rose again. When Satan is finally destroyed, he will never rise again.

God made it very clear to Adam and Eve that there would always be enmity between the church and the devil and that God was going to fight Satan. God also indicated that there would be a way of escape for Adam and Eve and all their descendants. In the fourth chapter of Genesis we find that God immediately instituted a round of religious services for Adam and Eve and their children. Sacrificial ordinances were

given to them, pointing to the death of Jesus on the cross. By performing these sacrifices, they recognized that there was to be a Saviour who would die for them and their sins.

They looked forward in faith to the death of Jesus of the cross. Today, we look back in faith to the death of Jesus on the cross. Genesis 4:4 says: "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." This makes it clear that the family of Adam were offering sacrifices to God as He had directed them. It also indicates that they knew something about the plan of salvation for the sacrifices of animals was a type of the death of Jesus on the cross.

Adam and Eve soon saw the results of sin, that the wages of sin is truly death. They saw the falling leaves, the thorns, the thistles, and the briars; they saw the fading flowers, and all the evidences of death and sin that surrounded them. It was not long after the Church of Adam was founded that corruption began to eat out its moral fibers. In fact, there was even a murder in Adam's own family. Abel was slain by his brother Cain.

The Church of Adam started to go down, down spiritually, until finally it had become so sinful that God looked upon the earth and saw that it was corrupt in every way. So God decided He must start another religious movement to call out His true saints from the Church of Adam and organize a new church. And this was the church of Noah 2348 B.C.

Were the Ten Commandments Known Before Mount Sinai?

Sometime around 1400 to 1500 B.C., God spoke directly to the Israelites from Mt. Sinai, located in a desert region south and west of modern-day Israel. Exodus chapters 20 through 24 chronicle the establishing of a covenant, or agreement, between God and the descendants of Abraham; his son, Isaac; and grandson, Jacob.

God gave the Ten Commandments, and He spoke from the mountain directly to the people. They were so frightened by the sound that they pleaded with Moses for God not to speak to them, but that they would hear from Moses what God wanted.

When God spoke the Ten Commandments, did He reveal something entirely new to the Israelites, and through them, to the gentile nations and peoples of the world? Or did God "codify," or write down and then include in a specific covenant with Israel, preexisting definitions of sin and righteousness?

Many say that the Ten Commandments were simply the "old covenant." They also say that when the old covenant passed away, so did the need for obeying the Ten Commandments, unless they were specifically repeated in the new covenant.

Others say that God has had a standard of righteous conduct that began at the time of the creation of Adam and has not changed since. Let's study this together and see what we can discover about God's intention for how His people should act toward each other and toward Him, and whether His

standards of sin and righteousness have changed through the years.

Exodus 20:1-20

Discussion: Why are the Ten Commandments important?

Who decides what is right and wrong?

- Who has the right to decide what is right and wrong for everybody to do?
- Are there any books or writings other than the Bible that define for us what God says is righteousness and what is sin?
- Which of the Ten Commandments reveal information that man cannot understand except by revelation from God? Which could be understood through scientific study or contemplation?

What are the general definitions of sin given in the Bible?

Discussion: What do these scriptures teach us about what sin is? (How do these define sin. Are there other scriptures that define, in general terms, what sin is)?

- **Romans 14:23** Whatsoever is not of faith
- **James 4:17** Not doing the good we should
- **1 John 3:4-10** Transgression of the law (lawlessness)
- **1 John 5:17** All unrighteousness
- **James 2:19** Having respect for persons

Discussion: What conclusions can we draw about what defines sin? (In what ways does God use definitions that relate to physical conduct and definitions that relate to attitudes to define sin?)

Was there sin before God spoke the Ten Commandments to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai?

Discussion: What examples are there that specifically define sin, wickedness or other lawless conduct before Exodus 20? (Look up the following, read the passage and identify which Commandments were broken.)

- **Genesis 4:1-16** Cain
- **Genesis 6:1-12** Noah
- **Genesis 18:17-22** Sodom and Gomorrah
- **Genesis 20:1-20** Abimelech and Abraham
- **Genesis 26:5-11** Abimelech and Isaac

Did God have a different standard of sin for a gentile nation than He did for His chosen people? (Was Abimelech, the gentile king in Genesis 20, subject to the same commandments defining sin and righteousness as was Abraham?)

What are the consequences of sin?

- **Romans 6:23** Eternal death
- **Ezekiel 20:7-43** Being cut off from God
- **1 Samuel 15:7-31** When leaders reject the commandments, it causes them to be rejected by God as leaders, and new leaders to be put in their place (example of Saul)

Discussion: What other consequences are there for sin? (What the physical and psychological consequences are when people sin. Also, what happens to relationships when there is sin? How are families, communities or even nations weakened by sin? Does righteous conduct strengthen relationships?)

Has God always wanted obedience from the heart?

- **Genesis 4:1-12** Did God want Cain to master the temptation before it mastered him? Is temptation a matter of the letter of the law or the spirit of the law?

- **Hebrews 8:7-13** What laws were to be written on the "new heart" of a Christian? (This is cited from Jeremiah 31:31-34.)
- **Matthew 15:1-9** Did Jesus want obedience that was "lip service," or did He want heartfelt obedience?
- **Ezekiel 36:24-36** Was this new heart free from commandment-keeping? What was this new heart supposed to do? What will God's attitude be in the Millennium toward commandment-keeping? What will God's Spirit cause people to do?

Discussion: What kind of obedience did Jesus want from His people? (Was keeping the "letter of the law" enough? What does the phrase "keeping the spirit of the law" mean to you? Can we keep the intent of the law and break the letter of the law? Should the intent or spirit of the law guide us in how we can best keep the letter of the law?)

How many of the Ten Commandments can you find mentioned before Exodus 20? (Look for either a specific statement about them, like the Sabbath in Genesis 2, or the scriptures showing a sin, like murder in Genesis 4:6. A concordance will help with this study.)

Why is sin, or unrighteousness, bad? Why is righteousness, or obedience to God's commandments, good? Who is hurt when any of the Ten Commandments is broken? What happens when the Ten Commandments are obeyed? (You might go through each of the Ten Commandments individually and ask the same questions for each: "What happens when this Commandment is broken? What happens when this Commandment is obeyed?")

Does the New Testament teach commandment-keeping? Will there be commandment-keeping for all people after the return of Jesus Christ?

- **Matthew 5:19-32** What did Jesus teach about obedience to the commandments?
- **1 John 2:3-6** What did John say about those who do not obey the commandments?
- **Revelation 22:10-21** At the end of all things, does Jesus Christ want commandment-keepers?

Today it's my desire to take you with me on an imaginary journey back across the centuries of time to visit two very important historic gardens. The story of each of these gardens is found in the Bible although their history is separated by four millenniums. Each has important memories of the past that speak to us today with important lessons for our own lives.

The first garden is brought to our attention in Genesis 2:8, where it is recorded that God planted a garden in the midst of the beautiful world He had just created. This garden, called Eden, was to be the home of Adam and Eve, our first parents. On every hand the beauties of the creative power of God were manifest. The third chapter of Genesis records the fall of Adam and Eve in sin when they listened to and followed the temptation of Satan. And suddenly the joy in the hearts of the early parents was gone. Somehow the beauty of the garden seemed dimmed. They felt alone and sad, which was a new experience for them.

Then came another experience which they had never known before. Verses 8 to 10 reveal the story. The Lord God came walking among the trees of the garden. Adam and Eve had communed daily with God face to face. The joy of these occasions is beyond man's ability to describe, but on this day Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Surely all nature is stunned. The entire universe looks upon this scene. What will God do with the sinful pair? He has created them, thus He has the power to slay them if He will or will He wink at the sin? Will He overlook it? Will He

make some change that will destroy Satan and forget about the sin of Adam and Eve?

Of course, Adam and Eve were ashamed. Already they're experiencing the promise of Satan when he told them if they would eat of the fruit, their eyes would be opened and that they would have new experiences. They feel condemned, and now their Creator is come into the garden. Will He condemn them? Suddenly the sound of the voice of God is heard calling, "Adam, where art thou?" This is the cry of the Saviour as He tenderly seeks the lost to bring them back to the fold. This is the call of God's love that was to be heard all the way to Calvary as He called to men everywhere to come, repent, and live anew in Christ. This call was to be heard down to the end of time, down to the very last moment before the door of mercy shall close eternally, calling men and women to come and accept of His love. Not in condemnation does God call, but in love and forgiveness. "Adam and Eve, come forth." Ashamed and heart-broken, they confessed their sin. God does not kill them for God is a God of mercy. Already a plan has been laid in heaven that provides a ransom for their sins. Neither does God condemn them. The Son of Man will descend in their place and will die to pay the penalty of sin which is death. But God can't excuse them either. The wages of sin is death. There must a death for the sin that has been committed but the only death that will suffice to pay the penalty once and for all would be the death of the Son of God. No other death will do. Thus the promise is made in Genesis 3:15.

One day Satan will be destroyed. One day, again, the Kingdom of Righteousness will reign throughout the Universe. All trace of evil will be gone forever. In the meantime Adam and Eve can't live in the Garden of Eden. They must leave it. We read in Genesis 3: 22-24 that God drove them out of the garden and placed an angel at the East gate to keep the way of that gate from man's eating of the tree of life and living on forever. If sinful man would be

permitted to eat of this tree, then God would never be able to destroy sin, for man would live forever and sin would thus live in man forever.

Today we stand at the gate of the empty garden. We look in past the angel with the flaming sword in his hand and we ask, "What does this garden teach me?" In the first place, the empty garden reveals anew that God means exactly what He says. It seems such a little thing to eat the forbidden fruit from that tree, but oh, what trouble it caused. Paul tells us in Romans 5:12 that the single sin of Adam and Eve has caused all of us to be sinners, for all the children of Adam would be born in sin and sinful natures. But just what was it that drove Adam and Eve out of the garden? Surely, it was God that drove them out actually, but really, now, was it not sin that actually did drive them out? Sin, what a little word. But just what is sin? The Bible defines it in 1 John 3:4. "Sin is the transgression of the law." In Genesis 3:17 we read where God told Adam he had broken a direct command of God by eating of that tree. Adam transgressed the commandments, thus he sinned and was cast out of the garden.

But somebody says, "I don't believe really that there were commandments back there at that time. I believe the commandments began when God gave them to the children of Israel." Let me ask you something, friends, do you believe Adam and Eve sinned when they took the forbidden fruit? I'm sure you agree with me that they did sin; in fact, the empty garden proves that they sinned, otherwise God would not have driven them out. He wouldn't have had a right, even, to drive them out of the garden. Thus, we must admit that they surely did sin in the garden of Eden. Now listen to what Paul says in Romans 4:15. He says, "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." If there had been no law then, there would have been no transgression of the law and thus no sin and thus no empty garden. Listen again to Paul in Romans 3:20 where he says, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." The only way man would know sin is by

the existence of a law. Here he even quotes some of the Ten Commandments to illustrate his point more emphatically.

Listen, friends, according to the Bible principle of sin, every single sin committed by man before Mt. Sinai proved the existence of the Law of God. The empty garden standing there for perhaps centuries was mute testimony to mankind that God's law was exact and that God's law had been broken. When Cain, years after his parents had been driven from the garden, killed his brother, he committed sin. He transgressed the commandment that said, "Thou shalt not kill." When the world was consumed with evil thoughts and actions to the point that God determined to send a flood and destroy all men, they were destroyed because they had broken the Ten Commandments and turned to their own ways, away from God. Our human reasoning may lead us to wonder if God did not want to change something when Adam and Eve sinned so that He would not have to drive them from the garden. But God could change nothing, for the Ten Commandments had been broken and the sin which was in the human flesh now was the sin against the very character of God. The Ten Commandments are but a revelation of the character of God and it's impossible for God to change His character. Thus, He could not change the law to accommodate sin when Adam and Eve broke the law.

But the empty garden teaches us another very vital lesson as well. God had the right to kill Adam and Eve immediately. They had sinned. The wages of sin is death. They had willfully separated themselves from God's program for their lives, and since God is life, they had chosen the opposite of life which is death. They deserved to die. Why didn't they die? Why didn't God drive them from the garden? Why did He let them live? It was because of His grace and His love. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." There are some who feel that men were saved by keeping commandments, by works in the Old Testament, and by faith

and grace alone in the New Testament. Friends, I submit to you today that there in the Garden of Eden the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus met together. The commandments had been broken but the Lord stepped into that scene and offered His grace to Adam and Eve. He promised them that one day the Saviour, the Son of God, would come and die in their place. Romans 3:24 says that we're justified freely by His grace. Ever since the first sin, God's grace has been working to save men from their sins. God does not remove His character as a standard for a man; He doesn't lay aside His commandments; but rather reveals Himself to us through those commandments. But because we've sinned, He offers us abundantly of His grace and His love which is unearned and undeserved by us.

Come, we must hasten across four millenniums to catch a quick glimpse of the other empty garden. This one is situated outside the city of Jerusalem to the north of that ancient city. As we see it today, it is on a Thursday night in the year 31 AD. Twelve men, having just completed supper in an upper room in Jerusalem, have made their way down the steps from the room out into the darkened streets of Jerusalem. As they walk they're listening intently to the one who seems to be their leader. They make their way rather slowly to the little gate by the footpath that leads out the north wall of the city and down the pathway into the valley that leads across to the Garden of Gethsemane. Across the valley they go, climbing the little hill of the entrance of the garden. We can see that this is not the first time they have been here for they seem familiar with every detail of the garden, even in the night darkness.

The leader of the group asks eight of the men to remain near the entrance of the garden and to enter into a season of prayer with Him. The four men remaining make their way further into the garden where the leader asks that they, too, pray with Him. And now the leader goes further still and there prostrates Himself upon the ground in the garden in extreme

agony of soul. "My Father," He prays, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." This is the darkest hour for Jesus. One of His disciples has turned against Him and is even now gathering a mob to seek Him out here in this very spot. The hour of His death upon the cross is about to come and a careless world is unconcerned. The people to whom had been entrusted the message, to tell the world of the coming Messiah, are busy tonight in preparing for the Passover, all unmindful that the true Lamb of God prays alone in the garden. Even the disciples are now asleep and all concern for the great events about to take place pass from their sleepy minds.

For three hours the agony continues, and finally the quietness of the night is broken by the sound of a mob coming through the valley, up the little hill and into the garden, led by none other than the deserting disciple. The disciples waken now, ready for flight. They stand amazed and stunned as Jesus allows Himself to be taken by this mob as though some criminal has been caught in a crime. Back down the hill and through the little gate on the North wall they go, leading their prisoner, and now the garden is empty.

Like Eden four thousand years before, this garden, too, stands silent and empty, and as we look into it today we ask, "What does this empty garden teach us?" Because the commandments of God could not be set aside or abridged or changed in any detail, it was necessary that the full penalty of breaking the law be paid. Thus, it was impossible for the Father in Heaven to answer the cry of His own Son, "If it be possible, let this cup pass." Jesus, the Saviour, was to pay the penalty of the broken law. He was to become death for all who would accept Him. The commandments would stand fast forever. They had been vindicated and now the garden was empty, standing throughout the centuries of time, a vindication of the character of God and of His Ten Commandments. But Jesus' prayer had concluded with these immortal words. "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be

done." The grace of God had won again. Jesus would go all the way to Calvary. There He would give His own Precious innocent blood to pay the full eternal debt of sin. His blood has set men free.

	GOD IS	THE LAW IS
Good	Luke 18:19	1 Timothy 1:8
Holy	Isaiah 5:16	Romans 7:12
Perfect	Matthew 5:48	Psalms 19:7
Pure	1 John 3:2,3	Psalms 19:8
Just	Deuteronomy 32:4	Romans 7:12
True	John 3:33	Psalms 19:9
Spiritual	1 Corinthians 10:4	Romans 7:14
Righteousness	Jeremiah 23:6	Psalms 119:172
Faithful	1 Corinthians 1:9	Psalms 119:86
Love	1 John 4:8	Romans 13:10
Unchangeable	James 1:17	Matthew 5:18
Eternal	Genesis 21:33	Psalms 111:7,8

THE LAW OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	THE LAW OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
1. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.	1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3.
2. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." Acts 17:29.	2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:4-6.

3. "That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." 1 Timothy 6:1.	3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Exodus 20:7.
4. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." "There remaineth therefore a rest ["keeping of a sabbath," margin] to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." Hebrews 4:4, 9, 10.	4. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.
5. "Honour thy father and thy mother." Matthew 19:19.	5. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Exodus 20:12.
6. "Thou shalt not kill." Romans 13:9.	6. "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13.
7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Matthew 19:18.	7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14
8. "Thou shalt not steal." Romans 13:9.	8. "Thou shalt not steal." Exodus 20:15.
9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Romans 13:9.	9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Exodus 20:16.
10. "Thou shalt not covet." Romans 7:7.	10. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Exodus 20:17.

MOSES' LAW	GOD'S LAW
Called "the law of Moses" (Luke 2:22).	Called "the law of the Lord"

	(Isaiah 5:24).
Called "law ... contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15).	Called "the royal law" (James 2:8).
Written by Moses in a book (2 Chronicles 35:12).	Written by God on stone (Exodus 31:18; 32:16).
Placed in the side of the ark (Deuteronomy 31:26).	Placed inside the ark (Exodus 40:20).
Ended at the cross (Ephesians 2:15).	Will stand forever (Luke 16:17).
Added because of sin (Galatians 3:19).	Points out sin (Romans 7:7; 3:20).
Contrary to us, against us (Colossians 2:14).	Not grievous (1 John 5:3).
Judges no one (Colossians 2:14-16).	Judges all people (James 2:10-12).
Carnal (Hebrews 7:16).	Spiritual (Romans 7:14).
Made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:19).	Perfect (Psalms 19:7).

Were the righteous people of the Old Testament saved by the law? 2

Timothy 1:9

No one has ever been saved by the law. All who have been saved in all ages have been saved by grace. This "grace ... was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Timothy 1:9. The law only points out sin. Christ alone can save. Noah "found grace" (Genesis 6:8); Moses found grace (Exodus 33:17); the Israelites in the wilderness found grace (Jeremiah 31:2); and Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many other Old Testament worthies were saved "by faith" according to Hebrews 11. They were saved by looking forward to the cross; we, by looking back to it. The law is necessary because, like a mirror, it reveals the "dirt" in our lives. Without it, people are sinners but are not aware of it. However, the law has no saving power. It can only point out sin. Jesus, and He alone, can save a person from sin. This has always been true, even in Old Testament times. (Acts 4:10, 12; 2 Timothy 1:9).

How did the Israelites have moral standards before the Ten Commandments? How did they know how to behave?

Before the Ten Commandments were written down in stone, the Bible tells us that the law was written in the hearts of the people. In addition, it was transmitted orally from

father to son.

However, by the time of Moses, after the people had been in slavery under Egypt, and thereby under the influence of the Egyptian pagan religion, their memory had been corrupted somewhat.

That's why Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, so his people would not be confused. Of course, God ultimately wrote the Ten Commandments so there would never have to be any guessing about what is right and wrong.

To prove this point: Long before Moses wrote the Ten Commandments onto scrolls, the Bible says, "Abraham obeyed my laws and statutes and commandments" (Genesis 26:5). And not only did Abraham obey God's law, statutes, and commandments, Joseph knew it was a sin to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife. He said, "How can I sin against God?" How did he know that before the Ten Commandments were written on paper or stone? It had been passed on, so he knew what God's law was.

Originally, it came from Adam orally straight out of the Garden of Eden and became part of the oral tradition. In addition, Adam and Even were created in the image of God, so they knew their Father's character, which is revealed in the Ten Commandments. They passed this knowledge to their offspring, and eventually had to write it down.

God rested the 7th day at creation. He blessed and sanctified it. What do these 2 words mean. Just because it doesn't specifically say that Adam & Eve rested that first 7th day, as you have stated, what did God leave earth and celebrate the Sabbath. Or did Adam & Eve do their own thing while God sat there and observed the Sabbath without them. I John 3:4 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law' if no law exists then no sin has been committed. Why was it wrong for Cain to kill Abel. It was only wrong because there is a commandment that say it. Romans 4:15 'where there is no law, there is no transgression' Someone cannot be guilty of a sin unless the law is already there (or known.) I John 3:8 '...for the devil sinneth from the

beginning' Lucifer was in heaven when he sinned, before the world was created, - no law, no sin - if you commit sin - there is a law that was broken. Plain and simple. II Timothy

The Ten Commandments Before Sinai?

"On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning's, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Then [Moses](#) brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. And [Mount Sinai](#) was wrapped in smoke, because The Lord [see [Rock Of Ages](#)] descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. And The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and The Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." (Exodus 19:16-20 RSV)

The formal receiving of [The Ten Commandments](#) is one of the most well-known events of [Bible History](#). But did The Ten Commandments *originate* at Mount Sinai? No, they did not. All were recognized long before.

The First Commandment

"I am The Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:2-3 RSV)

- [Adam And Eve](#) were commanded by God to obey Him. He made plain to them right in the Garden of Eden that He was their God, their Creator. But they chose to believe and obey Satan. And Satan is yet "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). For

their violation of The First Commandment, among other things, they were cast out.

- Long before Sinai, violating the First Commandment was sin:

"Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, [Terah](#), the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods." (Joshua 24:2 RSV)

The Second Commandment

"You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I The Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Exodus 20:4-6 RSV)

- Long before Sinai, God told Jacob to get rid of the idols (see [Images and Idols](#)), so Jacob collected them and buried them under a tree:
"God said to [Jacob](#), "Arise, go up to [Bethel](#), and dwell there; and make there an altar to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother [Esau](#)." So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments; then let us arise and go up to Bethel, that I may make there an altar to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem." (Genesis 35:2-4 RSV)

The Third Commandment

"You shall not take the name of The Lord your God in vain; for The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain." (Exodus 20:7 RSV)

- Long before Sinai, profaning The Name of God was sin:
"and so profane the name of your God ... for all of these abominations the men of the land did, who were before you, so that the land became defiled."
(Leviticus 18:21,27 RSV)

The Fourth Commandment

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to The Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days The Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore The Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:8-11 RSV) (see [Remember The Sabbath Day](#) and [Sun Worship](#))

- The Sabbath originated at [The Seven Days Of Creation](#), long before Sinai:
"And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation."
(Genesis 2:2-3 RSV)
- Before the formal giving of The Ten Commandments, the people were commanded to observe the Sabbath by not gathering [Manna](#):
"Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." (Exodus 16:26 RSV)

The Fifth Commandment

"Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which The Lord your God gives you."
(Exodus 20:12 RSV)

- Long before Sinai, Noah's son sinned by dishonouring his parent:
"When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan." (Genesis 9:24-25 RSV)

The Sixth Commandment

"You shall not kill." (Exodus 20:13 RSV)

- The first murder of course occurred all the way back in the Garden of Eden:
"And The Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand." (Genesis 4:10-11 RSV) (see [Cain and Abel](#))

The Seventh Commandment

"You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14 RSV)

- Long before Sinai, Joseph (see [Coat Of Many Colours](#)) refused to sin by committing adultery with Potiphar's wife:
"But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Lo, having me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand; he is not greater in this house than I am; nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife; how then can I do this great

wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:8-9 RSV)

The Eighth Commandment

"You shall not steal." (Exodus 20:15 RSV)

- The first recorded theft, and the penalty for that sin, occurred right in the Garden of Eden:
"Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Genesis 3:11 RSV)

The Ninth Commandment

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16 RSV)

- The ultimate liar, Satan, was also right in the Garden of Eden:
"And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die." (Genesis 3:2-4 RSV)
- "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44 RSV) (see [That Old Serpent](#) and [Did God Create The Devil?](#) and [Sweet Nuthins!](#))

The Tenth Commandment

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his

maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's." (Exodus 20:17 RSV)

- Coveting was a sin that began very early, right in the Garden of Eden:
"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit." (Genesis 3:6 RSV)

Fact Finder: Did God's Ten Commandments ever stop being in force?

See [The Ten Commandments Now?](#)

by [Wayne Blank](#)

Christians can only be saved by the grace of God, through the blood sacrifice of [Jesus Christ](#). There is *nothing* that we can ever possibly do to save ourselves. We don't have the power to do it, and no amount of "law keeping," or "righteous acts," or "Levitical rituals," or "works" can possibly make God owe it to us. We can't earn salvation.

But, does that mean that God's Commandments were "nailed to the cross," and that we are now somehow *lawless*? Are we free to worship false gods, or bow down to idols, or blaspheme God's name, or ignore His Sabbath Day, or abuse our parents, or commit murder,

or run wild in adultery, stealing, lies and coveting? Of course not.

Our salvation is *made possible* by grace, but *whether or not* we will be saved depends upon our repentance and obedience to God. God isn't going to grant His gift of eternal life to those who do not obey Him. The unrepentant *lawless* are going to find themselves in the lake of fire with the wicked and *lawless* Satan.

Are God's Ten Commandments now abolished? What does the *New Testament* have to say about it? What does *The Saviour Himself* have to say about it?

In The Savior's Own Words

"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, *Till heaven and earth pass* [Note: heaven and earth are still here], one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-19 KJV)

"And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments. He saith unto Him, Which? [Note: Jesus then went on to clearly identify that by "Commandments," He meant the Ten Commandments] Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 19:16-19 KJV)

"If ye love Me, keep My Commandments. And I will pray The Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even The Spirit of Truth;"
(John 14:15-17 KJV)

Plain Language From Your Holy Bible

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with The Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know Him, *if we keep His Commandments*. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:1-6 KJV)

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His Commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is Truth." (1 John 5:1-6 KJV)

Satan Does Not Want You To Obey God

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the

Commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:17 KJV)

"If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:9-13 KJV)

The Reward Of The Obedient

"And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His Commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." (Revelation 22:12-15)

Fact Finder: Did James say that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"?
James 2:26

Sin Defined

Before proving that the Ten Commandments have existed since the creation of man, we need to understand the Bible definition of sin: "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" ([I John 3:4](#)).

[Romans 6:23](#) defines the penalty—the end result—of sin: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Notice: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned*: (For until the law sin was in the world: but *sin is not imputed when there is no law*. Nevertheless *death reigned from Adam to Moses*, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come)" ([Rom. 5:12-14](#)).

In other words, Adam sinned. Sin is not imputed—does not apply—where there is no *law* ([Rom. 4:15](#)). Death reigned from Adam to Moses. (Remember, death is the penalty for sin, which is defined as the transgression of the law.) The only way Adam and his descendants could sin—break God's spiritual law—is if God's law *already* existed!

Instead of rejecting sin, false religionists reject the law. They view the law as a burden—they want to be free from keeping it. But notice the key lessons found in [Romans 7:7](#): "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. No, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet." It is not the law that is at fault, but

sin. God reveals to us what sin is. He does this by His perfect law. On his own, man cannot discover God's perfect law. God has to reveal and teach it to us.

Man's First Sin

In the Garden of Eden, God talked to Adam and gave him clear, understandable instructions. Adam needed this. He was an adult with an adult mind, but God had to reveal to him the spiritual boundaries that Adam could not discover on his own, without breaking God's laws. [Genesis 2:15](#) states, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." And [Romans 6:23](#) states "the wages of sin is *death*."

Adam was given instructions on how to maintain the garden. He was also commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (not to decide for himself what is right or wrong), and was told what the penalty would be for disobeying this command.

God revealed to Adam, and to his wife, Eve, right knowledge about how to live. But He gave them the freedom to decide whether or not they would follow His way. This was free moral agency, which God has given to all mankind.

Satan, in the form of a serpent, told Eve that if she took the fruit of the forbidden tree, “You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” ([Gen. 3:4-5](#)). Being gullible in the face of Satan’s shrewd tactics, Eve fell for his deception and ate from the tree, as did Adam.

Adam sinned by acting against God’s command. He broke God’s law. In doing so, he became the servant of the one whom he obeyed—Satan. This principle is explained in [Romans 6:16](#): “Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

Whoever or whatever someone obeys and serves is his god. In this case, Adam and Eve broke the First Commandment by *putting another god before the Creator God*. In doing so, they also broke the Fifth Commandment, by *dishonoring their Parent*, in the sense that Adam was a created *son* of God ([Luke 3:38](#)). Their sin also involved *stealing* (the Eighth Commandment), in that they took something that was not theirs. Besides this, Eve *lusted* for the forbidden fruit. Lusting is coveting, which breaks the Tenth Commandment.

Breaking one commandment leads to breaking all of them. This is precisely what the Apostle James expressed in [James 2:10](#): “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of *all*.” God’s laws are interrelated and intricately woven together—if you break one, you eventually break them all.

In [Genesis 4](#), Adam's first son, Cain, became angry against his brother Abel, because God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but not Cain's. Notice how God admonished Cain in [verses 6-7](#): "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why are you wroth [angry]? and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, *sin* lies at the door. And unto you shall be his desire, and you shall rule over him." Cain murdered and broke the Sixth Commandment.

When someone is in the wrong frame of mind, sin does lie at the door, waiting to happen, because sinful thoughts lead to sinful actions. God commands us to rule over sin—to control those pulls and impulses to commit sin. Cain murdered Abel and lied to God about it. This is a direct violation of the Ninth Commandment, which forbids "bearing false witness against your neighbor." Cain had sinned and he knew it. This happened a few decades after Adam had first sinned. Adam and Eve's expanding family knew that sin was the breaking of God's law; else God would not have held them accountable.

Other Commandments in Force Before Sinai

The Bible gives examples of each of the Ten Commandments being kept before Moses' time. When God called Jacob to return to Bethel, where God had appeared to him approximately 21 years before, Jacob warned his people, "*Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went*" ([Gen. 35:2-](#)

3). Jacob knew that God forbade idolatry—breaking the Second Commandment. By telling his household to put away their idols, this fulfilled the principle in [Proverbs 16:6](#), “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.”

When Abram told King Abimelech that Sarah, his half sister and wife, was merely his sister, he lied—another breaking of the Ninth Commandment. Believing this, Abimelech sent for Sarah. Now notice [Genesis 20:3-4, 6](#): “But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, you are but a dead man, for the woman which you have taken; for she is a man’s wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, will you slay also a righteous nation?...And God said unto him in a dream, Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart; for I also withheld you *from sinning against Me*: therefore suffered I you not to touch her.” In this situation, Abimelech would have committed adultery, which is a sin. He would have broken the Seventh Commandment.

When Joseph was tempted by the advances of Potiphar’s wife, he “...refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master knows not what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither has he kept back any thing from me but you, because you are his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and *sin against God?*” ([Gen. 39:8-9](#)). Joseph was well aware that adultery was sin. This occurred about 250 years before the law was officially presented to Israel at Mount Sinai!

During their march to the Promised Land, God told the Israelites to gather their daily amount of manna each morning. On the morning before the weekly Sabbath there would be enough for both days. This was because no manna would appear on the Sabbath, God's day of rest. God intended that they rest on the Sabbath, rather than spend time gathering manna. This account is given in [Exodus 16](#). In [verse 28](#), after some of the people deliberately broke the Sabbath by attempting to gather manna, God told Moses, "How long refuse you [Israel] to keep *My commandments and My laws?*"

Now notice [verses 29-30](#): "See, for that the Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide you every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day." So, the Fourth Commandment was in effect *before* the law was given at Mount Sinai.

By the time Israel entered the land of Canaan, the nations there had "run the full course"—they had surpassed the threshold of moral collapse, much like nations have done today. God knew that this would happen and had told Abram about it, over 400 years earlier: "And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they [Abram's seed—the nation Israel] shall come here again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" ([Gen. 15:15-16](#)).

Here, the word "iniquity" comes from the Hebrew word *avon*, which means "perversity, mischief or sin." If there had been no law in force, there would not have been any iniquity or sin for

the Amorites, or any other nation, to commit. Refer to [Leviticus 18:3, 19-30](#) for more description of the iniquity and abominations committed by the Canaanites. They included sacrificing—murdering—their children in the fire of Molech, every form of adultery and sexual perversity, and profaning the name of God.

Take a look at the pre-Flood world: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” ([Gen. 6:1-3, 5-6](#)). The word “wickedness” used here comes from the Hebrew word *rah*, which means “exceedingly evil.” So wicked was mankind that [verse 6](#) tells us, “And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.” This wickedness brought every conceivable type of sin and blatant disregard for the sanctity of life.

These sins were imputed—pointed out—by the laws of God—the Ten Commandments, which existed from the creation of mankind.

These examples show that *all* the Ten Commandments preceded Moses. From Adam to Moses, all men had sinned—had broken God’s laws, the Ten Commandments. That is why God commended Abraham, saying, “Abraham *obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws*” ([Gen. 26:5](#)).