

JESUS

for

KING

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



Jesus For King

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Have you ever considered the fact that God's worldview and people's worldview are different?
(See Prov 16:25, 21:2; Isa 55:6-11) Popular opinion and religious traditions have influenced everyone except the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God.

Your reading this indicates that you may have reached a time in your life where you have a teachable spirit and are ready to take a fresh look at the worldview of God. If this is true, you will have fun learning to increase your intimacy and peace with God and others.

Most topics are multifaceted. Though effort has been made to be balanced, certainly not every facet is covered here. This is more of a springboard to stimulate your thinking and motivate you to study the Bible more thoroughly.

You may not agree with everything presented here, but chew on it and keep reading. We welcome your feedback at JesusForKing.com!

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The Good Story

The Promise

The God of glory appeared to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, “Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.” Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to Canaan. But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him. But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. “And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge,” said God, “and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.” And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph their brother and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household. Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it, and the patriarchs could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent the patriarchs there the first time. On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all. And Jacob went down to Egypt and there he and the patriarchs died. From there they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the Israelites increased and multiplied in Egypt, until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. It was he who took shrewd advantage of the Israelites and mistreated them so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.

The Deliverer

It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home. And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, “Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?” But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, “Who made you a ruler and judge over us? You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?” At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord: "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. But the Lord said to him, "Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt and have heard their groans, and I have come down to rescue them; come now, and I will send you to Egypt."

Ten Commandments

This Moses whom they disowned, saying, "Who made you a ruler and a judge?" is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush. This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, "God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren." This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with the Israelites; and he received living oracles to pass on to them. The Israelites were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, "Make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt -- we do not know what happened to him." At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

Miraculous Nation

But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, "It was not to me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship. I also will remove you beyond Babylon." The Israelites had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. And having received it in their turn, the Israelites brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before them, until the time of David. David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is the footstool of My feet; what kind of house will you build for Me?" says the Lord, "Or what place is there for My repose? Was it not My hand which made all these things?"

The God of this people Israel chose them and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it. For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance -- all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will."

The Messiah

From the descendants of David, according to promise, God has brought to the world a Savior, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie."

You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. There were many witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

Jesus Christ

Listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him, just as you yourselves know -- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, was nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put to death.

For those who lived in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which they read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. He is the stone which was rejected by the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to the Apostles who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to those who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered them to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom the Israelites delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But they disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to them, but put to death the Prince of life by hanging Him on a cross, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which there are many witnesses.

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise in that He raised up Jesus. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to the world, and forgiveness of sins. God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless us by turning every one of us from our wicked ways. We are the

heirs of the covenant which God made with Abraham saying, "And in your Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Prophet, Prince, and Savior

Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people."

And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. These things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." Therefore He also says in another Psalm, "You will not allow Your holy one to undergo decay." For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: "The Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. This Jesus God raised up again, to which there are many witnesses. Therefore let everyone know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus who was crucified.

Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you: "Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; for I am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you." You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as the Israelites did. Which one of the prophets did the Israelites not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers they have now become; those who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.

Brethren, those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth His Spirit into the hearts of men everywhere who obey Him.

Therefore repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins so that your sins may be wiped away; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that

times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you. Be saved from this perverse generation!

The Kingdom of Heaven

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. When they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." When they had threatened them further, they let them go.

But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number.

Trials Continue

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought. But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside." Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.

But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned). When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned

them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

When they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God." They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

They cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

Saul's Witness:

This I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify.

Road to Damascus

So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." And I said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. And I said, "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Lord said to me, "Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do." But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" And at that very time I looked up at him. And he said, "The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." So, I did not prove disobedient, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

Fruit of the Light

It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, "Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will

not accept your testimony about Me.” And I said, “Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.” And He said to me, “Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.” So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.

For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, I am being accused by Jews. Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, for we also are His children. Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Paul was continually discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come; explaining to people by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Someone said to him, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.” But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, but I utter words of sober truth. For you know about these matters, and I speak to you also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape your notice; for this has not been done in a corner. Do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” To which they responded, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”

(The preceding was adapted entirely from the book of Acts. It is *the* gospel that was preached by the first century church. Visit Jesus4King.org to listen to *The Good Story*.)

The Rest Of The Story

Jesus started a spiritual revolution that continues to spread around the world! He rejected the host of extra-biblical traditions invented and imposed by hypocritical religious hierarchies. This is one of the reasons they rejected and crucified Him. He taught His followers how to overcome the fear and intimidation of men. So in spite of severe persecution, they carried on the fight.

Those who believed the good story told it to everyone. They changed their mind about behaviors that were destructive to their stewardships and their relationships with God and others, and they committed to learning all that Jesus commanded.

They were baptized by faith and their sins were washed away (Acts 22:16); their conscience was cleansed of guilt (1 Pet 3:21); they received a new Holy Spirit which is the blessing of Abraham (Acts 2:38-39; Gal 3:14, 26-27); they were anointed priests (2 Cor 1:21-22; 1 Pet 2:4-10); and they were given a gift to serve others (1 Pet 4:7-11).

Their lives were transformed as they exercised their gifts in continual devotion to God. They helped each other to grow spiritually and stay engaged and involved in meaningful ways. Their lives were lived as a community, and they admonished each other as needed.

Day by day, from house to house, they met for fellowship, prayer, and studying the word of God, and on the first day of the week they gathered to eat the Lord's Supper (see 1 Cor 10-14). This was like a family get-together in someone's home to enjoy a love feast, and each man prepared a Scripture reading, a psalm, a teaching, an exhortation, etc. Some generous hosts even remodeled their homes to accommodate more Christians.

They practiced telling the good story to each other and others. Each church was accountable directly to God and responsible for sending out evangelism teams. The lifestyle and financial sacrifices that were made by all enabled the story to spread all over the world. These saints were holy new creatures that had been set free from organized religion to demonstrate their love for God. Christianity was the only religion that didn't have temples or a professional priesthood. In spite of severe persecution by Jews and Gentiles, their numbers multiplied exponentially.

Hundreds of years later, Roman Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity, then hijacked the church and transformed it. He gave buildings to the church, mixed in many pagan practices, and paid professional clergy to perform – turning everyone else into spectators and setting the stage for religious tyranny. Power-hungry men claimed to rule the universal church. Through political manipulation they made it illegal for any but themselves to own Bibles, they invented a host of extra-biblical doctrines and traditions, and they persecuted any who didn't submit to their reign of darkness. Catholic means universal; hence the Catholic Church.

Hundreds of years later, the Protestant Reformation was an effort to reform the Catholic Church. But this ended up forming denominations, each protesting various Catholic doctrines while keeping most of the manmade traditions. These denominations each developed their own creeds and hierarchies. In Protestant countries, many who did not submit to their reign were persecuted.

Hundreds of years later, the Restoration Movement quit trying to reform the traditions and creeds of men and attempted a simple and genuine obedience to the Bible. A wide cross-section of people from different denominations and countries, many unknown to each other, rejected many more false doctrines while keeping numerous other manmade traditions. The main thrust of the Restoration Movement was a plea to return to the word of God as the basis for unity among believers and as the sole authority in everything pertaining to life and godliness.

The Spiritual Revolution

Today, the good story is spreading fastest in places where the traditions of religious hierarchies are not imposed and believers feel free to learn and apply the word of God to their unique circumstances. Once again there is an emerging movement of people around the world who are trying to imitate the New Testament church. More manmade practices are being rejected, including “sacred” buildings and the clergy/laity format where the masses pack the pews while the professionals tell them what to think, or just tickle their ears with entertainment.

You can still visit just about any denomination’s “sanctuary” and get some variation of the same basic format that goes something like this: Sunday school hour followed by the main assembly hour which usually includes a prayer, a few songs, communion and/or a collection, and a sermon. Where did this format come from? Not the Bible. Why do so many maintain this rigid ritual as if it were a sacred ceremony? Those wanting to differentiate themselves from manmade religions should be asking many such questions.

Jesus said, “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” (Mark 7:6-8)

Those who unquestioningly follow traditions go through the motions in vain, because their heart ends up far away from God. Those who believe God believe that His ways and thoughts are better than man’s (see Isa 55:6-11).

Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mat 28:18-20)

With primitive means, the first century church reached all the nations in one generation! Why haven’t we? Compared with how they did it, it appears that the task goes unfinished today because the traditions of men still consume the focus, effort, and resources of so many.

Now you know the rest of the story. You know how we got so far from the simple Biblical pattern that was easily duplicated throughout the first century world in one generation. The church today, just like the Judaism of Jesus’ day, is burdened with a host of extra-biblical traditions invented and imposed by hypocritical religious hierarchies. Spreading their religion is overwhelmingly more complicated and expensive than simply telling the good story.

Why not join the growing movement of people around the world who are rejecting organized religion in favor of pursuing pristine Christianity? Why not join the spiritual revolution?

Israel

Abraham was the father of Isaac who was the father of Jacob. God renamed Jacob, Israel. From his 12 sons came the 12 tribes of Israel which became a nation after Moses led them out of Egypt. King David made Jerusalem their capital.

During the Reign of David



*Round numbers, not exact dates

BC

Before Christ

Old Testament

God's covenant with Israel through Moses

AD

Anno Domini
In the Year of our Lord

New Testament

God's covenant with Christians through Jesus

The Word of God

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Have you read the entire, inspired word of God? The Bible is amazingly accurate and is authenticated through the study of God's creation; things like biology, astronomy, psychology, history and archaeology. There is nothing that so truly and completely answers the big life questions. The Bible's accuracy in these things establishes it as a reliable text. Every other book that claims to be inspired by God is debunked by reality.

Thus says the Lord... "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let him declare the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place." (Isa 44:6-8)

The challenge stands! There is no manmade theology, philosophy, or science that can meet the challenge. Where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going? Who can accurately declare the past, present, and future? God can! As the Creator, He intentionally designed creation and history so that we might know that He exists and that the Bible is His word. How do we know the word which the Lord has spoken? It always comes true.

You may say in your heart, "How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. (Deut 18:21-22)

The real proof that the Bible is the word of God can be summed up with one word: prophecy. How can you know if a prophet is a true prophet of God? Simple: if what he says always comes true. If a so-called prophet says things that turn out to be false, he's a false prophet. We'll soon be looking at many prophecies.

"Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (Isa 1:18-20)

The Bible's authority never ceases to be attacked by those who want you to believe the word of men rather than the word of God. They use many deceptive and dishonest arguments to try and invalidate the Bible's authority in order to establish their own. Who would want to confuse people about the truth? Our adversary, the devil.

If you haven't yet heard these malicious lies, you will, so let's deal with some of the most common ones. Has the Bible been translated too many times? Is it missing books? Was it changed by the Catholics? What about the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha?

Let's start with the basics. The Bible is divided into two sections known as the Old and New Testaments. We'll deal with each one separately.

Old Testament

The Old Testament (aka. Old Covenant) is about the creation and history of the world – all leading to the covenant between God and the people of Israel made through Moses. It is translated from the Hebrew language it was originally written in. It contains 39 books and was written – over a period of about a thousand years – by prophets, beginning with Moses, and accepted by succeeding prophets, including Jesus. It was completed several centuries before Jesus Christ's birth.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, are the library of a religious sect which had separated themselves from the Jews. Significantly, this providentially preserved library contains hundreds of religious and legal documents dating from between 250 and 100 BC. It includes every book of the Old Testament except Esther, with multiple copies of many of the books.

Gregory I (590-604) is generally regarded as the first real pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Dead Sea Scrolls predate the Catholics by hundreds of years, this proves that the Old Testament has in fact come down to us unchanged!

What about the other religious scrolls that were part of the library? Let's illustrate the answer by imagining that your house is suddenly buried and 2000 years from now someone digs up your library. Should they assume that the books in it were missing from the Bible? Of course not. The point is that people have always written about all kinds of subjects, and just because an ancient religious text is found, it doesn't mean it should be considered Scripture.

Approximately 250 BC the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek, which was the common language spoken throughout the Greek and Roman empires for the next several hundred years. This translation is called the Septuagint and it was instrumental in the spread of Christianity after Jesus was crucified in 30 AD. It was the Bible used by Jesus and the Apostles and is a translation of the same Old Testament that is in our Bibles today.

The Old Testament contains many historical prophecies, some of which look hundreds of years into the future and give unmistakable details. For example, Daniel (see Daniel 2) predicted the rise and fall of four world empires as he looked six hundred years into the future, and even foretold the establishment of Christ's church as revealed in the New Testament. These fulfilled prophecies prove the inspiration of the Bible.

As you'll soon see, the Old Testament also contains hundreds of specific prophecies about a Man who would come and be the Savior of the world – and it was completed centuries before the prophecies were fulfilled. God revealed His plans bit by bit over hundreds of years, recorded it in the Old Testament, and carried it out over a period of several millennia. He planned His work

and worked His plan. It's all verified by history and fulfilled in the New Testament. This is proof that the Bible is indeed the word of God.

New Testament

The New Testament (aka. New Covenant) is about Jesus Christ and the covenant between God and Christians made through Him. It is translated from the Greek language that it was originally written in. It contains 27 books and was completed in the first century after Jesus' birth. The New Testament books were written and accepted by first century apostles and prophets, eye-witnesses and converts, many of whom died (martyred) for their belief in the resurrection – as demonstrated by Christ.

Christianity spread rapidly, Scriptures were translated into many languages, and all the world took notice – then as now. Historical and archaeological records reveal how Christianity changed the world with the message of love and peace. But false religious and evil political leaders opposed the truth everywhere it spread - then as now. After a couple of centuries of cruel and violent attempts to exterminate Christianity, they finally attempted to hijack it instead. Roman emperor Constantine made it official and paved the way for Roman Catholicism leading to ridiculous superstitions, doctrines, and traditions of men.

New Testament texts predate the Catholic Church by hundreds of years. Books known as the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, some of which have been added to Bibles printed for Catholics, were not accepted as Scripture by any prophets or by Jesus and the Apostles. They contain inaccuracies and are contrary to the message of the Bible. Many of these books were written by false prophets like the Gnostics, who are called the antichrist by the Apostle John.

There's a whole field of study called textual criticism that examines the authenticity of ancient manuscripts. Besides the Bible, all kinds of well known and lesser known writings are the subject of examination. While most people don't question the authenticity of other manuscripts, the Bible has always been a target of attack by those who hate God. But no ancient manuscripts, including the most popular ones (eg. Homer, Caesar) have anywhere near the historical documentation and manuscript authority of the Bible.

Bible Study Today

Another interesting demonstration of God's authorship of the Bible are the stories of Ruth, Tamar, and many others. When you read their stories, it's puzzling why they were recorded in Scripture. But then, over 1000 years later, the dots are connected in the genealogy of Jesus at the beginning of Matthew and the puzzle is solved. Of all the history that could have been included, God knew exactly what He was doing when He inspired the authors of the Bible. The more you study, the more you see that it's all about Jesus.

The genealogy of Jesus at the very beginning of Matthew won't mean much to you until you become more familiar with the Old Testament. But please do read the book of Matthew, the first book in the New Testament, and notice all of the fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament. Many Bible translations will indicate a quote from the Old Testament by using ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.

When the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament, they quote from the Septuagint. If Jesus and the Apostles used a translation, it's alright for us to use a translation. Anyone can learn Hebrew or Greek and read the Bible in the language it was written in. This is certainly a worthy endeavor, especially in light of the many languages of the world that still need a Bible translation, but it is not a requirement in order to learn the truth.

In the front of most Bibles is a section describing the principles of translation. There are two major methods: word-for-word and thought-for-thought. The translators may or may not use those exact phrases, but let's briefly describe each.

A thought-for-thought version can be anything from a children's Bible that is conveying basic stories to an easy-to-read version that has every book, chapter, and verse, but still summarizes the ideas as simply as possible. The accuracy of thought-for-thought versions depend on the understanding of the translators, and it would be nearly impossible to entirely exclude their personal biases. The most popular of these is the New International Version.

A word-for-word translation strives to bring each Hebrew or Greek word into English in the most equivalent way possible. Vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure are carefully considered for clarity and readability. The 1995 New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word-for-word translation and was widely regarded as the most literally accurate translation in the English language, is the version that was quoted throughout these study guides. The 2020 Literal Standard Version (LSV) is a more recent translation that makes the NASB appear liberal by comparison.

Serious students of the word will want to examine and compare the accuracy of modern translations. Fortunately there is a wealth of resources for performing all kinds of comprehensive studies of the word of God, many of which are also freely available online:

- Exhaustive Concordance: alphabetical index of all the words in a Bible translation, showing every contextual occurrence of a word. (Great for word studies!)
- Lexicon: a word book describing language with definitions; dictionary.
- Interlinear: printed with different languages or versions in alternating lines.
- Software: apps (eg. AndBible) are loaded with features such as those above and below as well as parallel Bibles, audio Bibles, open source and cloaking for use where it's forbidden, and more.

Additional study tools include an English Dictionary (Webster's 1828 is often more helpful than modern versions) and Thesaurus; Hebrew, Greek, and Expository Dictionaries; and Bible Encyclopedias. You can do word studies, topical studies, book studies, related historical and archaeological studies, etc.

But the easiest way to get started is simply to read the word of God; then read it again, and again, and again. Every time you read it your understanding will increase, and because of concepts you discovered last time, all of a sudden new things will begin to make sense. Make daily Bible reading a part of your routine, such as doing it at breakfast to start your day with spiritual nourishment.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

It's also good to mix up your Bible study habits occasionally. An example of a different approach is the 3-column study method. Take a piece of paper and make three columns. In the first column write a section of Scripture. In the next column write what it means in your own words. In the third column write what you will do about it. You can make your way through entire books this way.

Fathers can lead their family in Bible study by simply reading a chapter a day together and asking discussion questions such as: What did you learn? What stood out to you? What questions were raised? How does it apply to your life?

Who's Word?

There are multitudes of books on theological subjects arriving at all kinds of conclusions. Many of them are garbage and many are very good. But instead of leaning on the understanding of men, study the Bible first and foremost. Learning what God has to say is much more important than learning what men have to say about God or His word.

We do need to learn from other Christians; we just need to make sure that we also “examine the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so.” (Acts 17:11) Your Biblical understanding will become a filter to reject falsehood while you build your most holy faith.

The disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “He said that because we did not bring any bread.” But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Mat 16:5-12)

Each new generation should take a fresh look at the word of God to make sure they don't end up like the religious people Jesus warned against:

This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. (Mark 7:6-7)

Some traditions have begun with good intentions, only to later become a set of doctrines that separate believers. Throughout history men have tried to “improve” God's plan. Instead, they create “the precepts of men.” Thankfully, there are also those who want to stand on the authority of the Bible. This naturally creates division. Are you going to believe the uninspired authors of religious commentaries, or the inspired authors of the Scriptures?

If you've been led to believe one thing, and then Scripture is brought to your attention that says something to the contrary, what do you do? Let's ask the question this way: Are you going to follow men, or are you going to follow God?

For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mat 16:26)

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar. (Prov 30:5-6)

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

And Jesus cried out and said, "...He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." (John 12:44-50)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us... (John 1:1-3, 14)

Jesus Christ is King!

The blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (1Tim 6:15)

God's desire has always been a people for His own possession; people who have chosen Him to be their God. From before the flood until now He has sent preachers to deliver the message. The one and only, true and living God, Who created the entire universe, Who was violently crucified to demonstrate His love for you, wants to share the riches of His glory with you for all eternity. But only if you want Him more than you want anything else!

All authority belongs to Jesus (see Mat 28:18), but He gives every individual, every family, and every nation the freedom to elect Him King. Those who refuse and rebel suffer consequences in this life and in the life to come. Those who make Jesus their King, though they die for Him, are blessed now and forever.

Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isa 55:6-7)

Our prayer is that before you finish this study guide you will understand the Creator's desire for you and you will make Jesus your King. Not only for your benefit, but also for those who may be impacted by your life. It's alright if you don't immediately understand every detail mentioned in this study. Learning God's word is a lifelong adventure. We start by focusing on the essentials, but even the essentials can and should be studied in greater depth.

God Prophesied the Coming King

Christ comes from the Greek word *christos*, which means anointed one. The Hebrew equivalent is *mashiah*, translated into English as Messiah. A thousand years before Jesus' birth, David was anointed king by the prophet Samuel. God promised David that one of his descendants would be anointed as an eternal King. For the next thousand years, prophecies multiplied and anticipation grew about the coming Messiah.

"David, I will raise up your descendant after you... I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be a father to Him and He will be a Son to Me." (2 Sam 7:8-16) **1000 BC**

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." (Luke 1:30-33) **4 BC**

Here are a few other prominent Messianic prophecies:

- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; fulfilled in Mat 2:1-7; John 7:42; Luke 2:47)

- Preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; fulfilled in Mat 3:1-3; 11:10; John 1:23; Luke 1:17)
- Messiah entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9:9; fulfilled in Luke 35-37; Mat 21:6-11)
- Betrayed by a close friend (Psalms 41:9; 55:12-14; fulfilled in Mat 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21)
- For 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12; fulfilled in Mat 26:15; 27:3)
- The money was thrown “to the potter” in God’s house (Zech 11:13; fulfilled in Mat 27:5-7)
- Silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; fulfilled in Mat 27:12)
- Executed by crucifixion with criminals (Psalm 22:16; Zech 12:10; Isaiah 53:5,12; fulfilled in Luke 23:33; John 20:25; Mat 27:38; Mark 15:27,28)
- Raised from the dead (Psalm 16:8-10; Isaiah 53:10-11; fulfilled in Luke 24:1-7; Acts 13:32-37)
- Enthroned on high (Psalm 1; Psalm 110; fulfilled in Acts 2:30-36; Heb 1:3-9)

Listen to these words spoken to those who lived at the same time as Jesus:

Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22-24)

The things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. (Acts 3:18)

Moses [1500 BC] said, “The Lord God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.” [Deut 18:17-19] And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel [1000 BC] and his successors onward, also announced these days. (Acts 3:22-24)

I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light. (Acts 26:22-23)

He was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. (Acts 28:23)

Do you believe the Prophets? (Acts 26:27)

The Seed

As God placed a curse on Satan in the garden of Eden, He said:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” (Gen 3:15)
4000+ BC

God indicated from the very first pages of the Bible that He was going to use a man – the Seed of woman – to deliver a blow to Satan’s head. A head wound is more serious than a heel wound, indicating that the Seed would prevail over Satan.

But from Adam onward, what man is there whom Satan has not corrupted? “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23) Where would we find such a Hero among men who could defeat the prince of darkness? A couple thousand years passed and Satan only got craftier in his ways of destroying people’s lives, families, and nations.

But God had not forgotten His plan for a Savior. He promised a faithful man named Abraham that it was going to be one of his descendants – his Seed – Who would be the Hero that would bless all the nations:

In your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. (Gen 22:18) **2000 BC**

Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. God revealed that it was going to be through Isaac, not Ishmael, that the Seed would come. Isaac had two sons also, Jacob and Esau. God again narrowed down the ancestry of the Savior, this time to Jacob, who was later called Israel. Israel had twelve sons whose descendants came to be known as the twelve tribes of Israel, or Jews.

God gave these people their own land and made them into a mighty nation. God likes to take somebody who is a nobody and use them to do great things. He chose a shepherd named David from the tribe of Judah. Because David had faith, God was able to make him into one of the greatest kings the world has ever known. God promised King David that his Seed would sit on his throne forever:

I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your Seed forever and build up your throne to all generations. (Ps 89:3-4) **1000 BC**

Let’s summarize the information we’ve gathered out of these prophecies. This Seed would be a man; a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David; and heir to an eternal throne. He would conquer Satan, not just for His own nation, the Jews, but for all the peoples of the earth. His kingdom would then be established forever, and would be built up to all generations. This is already quite a bit of information about this One Who was to come!

But from David’s time on, during the thousand years leading up to the arrival of Jesus, there is a dramatic increase in the number of prophecies and the details given about the coming King and His kingdom, including the fact that he would be preceded by a forerunner. Now you can understand the growing anticipation that was in the air when John the Baptist arrived on the scene!

Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals.” (Luke 3:15-16)

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “Behold, I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’” John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:2-4)

Jesus’ mother, Mary, was a descendant of David, which is why Jesus was called the Son of David or the Son of Man. Mary, who was a virgin at His birth (see Mat 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35), had a Son whose Father was God, which is why Jesus is called the Son of God. We’ll soon talk more about His Deity.

In a heated discussion with some Jewish authorities who argued that they were the seed of Abraham, Jesus told them that they were the seed of the devil (see John 8:31-47). The Seed of David was “bruised on the heel” when he was crucified by the religious and political authorities. They conspired together to keep themselves in power by getting rid of Jesus, Whom they perceived to be a threat to their authority. Unfortunately for them, they underestimated the Christ!

Through His resurrection from the dead, Jesus delivered a crushing blow to Satan and his seed. He was crowned King and then came back in Spirit to empower Christians worldwide to throw off the power of darkness and be transformed into a conquering, resurrected army.

God’s Kingdom Come

In the days of [the Roman] kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. (Dan 2:44) 600 BC

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mat 4:17) 27-30 AD

And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.” (Mark 9:1)

The last three statements were all made before the kingdom had come, but it was going to be set up during the lifetime of those who saw Jesus crucified. After His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the throne, the kingdom is no longer referred to as something in the future, but as something that has now been established.

Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (Rev 12:10-11)

He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:13-14)

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. (Mat 6:33)

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5)

When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (Acts 8:12)

Men and women who elect to obey Jesus' terms of entrance into the kingdom and be born again are rescued from sin, being cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. They have entered into the New Covenant with God through Jesus Christ. They are now called saints and Christians, having become a subject in His kingdom, which He also calls His church.

Here are a few prophecies you can read about the kingdom: Jer 3:17, Ezek 36:23-27, Ezek 37:21-28, and Mic 5:2-5. Also read Isaiah chapter 53, an entire chapter of prophecies about Jesus, and keep in mind that this was written over 700 years before Christ!

You can do fascinating word studies on different aspects of the Christ, revealed centuries in advance: Seed, King, Prince, Prophet, Priest, Son, Rock, Savior, Root, Branch, Judge, Spirit, Living Water, Lord of Hosts, Arm of the Lord, and others. You will find prophecies about the time and place of His birth, His way prepared by a forerunner, details about His ministry, how He would be accused by false witnesses and hated without reason, pierced but no bones broken, sneered and mocked at, buried with the rich, etc.

Today, many people are unaware of the historical reality of Jesus, let alone the overwhelming amount of archaeological and historical evidence supporting the Old Testament, which was the Bible at the beginning of the first century. You can actually discover an astonishing amount of information about the Jews, Jesus, and early Christianity from the writings of many non-Christian historians who were alive in those days (e.g. Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Thallus).

God specifically prepared history so that we can look at the facts and know for certain that Jesus is the One we should obey. He put an inconceivable amount of work into demonstrating the unchangeableness of His purpose to those who have ears to hear. He is the One Who can set you free from the destructive power of sin and darkness.

Do you believe the Prophets? Do you believe the facts of history? Are you ready to put your trust in Him Who knows the past, the present, and the future?

Our Great God and Savior

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14)

We won't come close to covering the hundreds of Messianic prophecies in this study guide, but check out the supplement at the end for a few more. The following prophecies clearly let you know Who the Messiah really is, the eternal King of kings and Lord of lords, our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isa 9:6-7) **700 BC**

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," [Isa 7:14] which translated means, "God with us." (Mat 1:21-23)

Jesus Christ is Lord! He is almighty God. Do you believe the Prophets? God Himself became one of us. He met us at our level so He could take us to His level.

Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5-8)

The Mystery (see 1 Pet 1:10-12)

Clues to a mystery were hidden throughout the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the mystery is revealed. People knew the Christ was coming, but many details eluded them. The blessing of Abraham was not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles – all the nations! And the blessing of Abraham was not just Jesus in the flesh, but Jesus in Spirit – Christ in you!

In order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith... Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your Seed," that is, Christ. (Gal 3:14, 16)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:9-11)

The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:26-27)

The promised blessing of Abraham, the Seed, is Christ in you, the Holy Spirit of God, who gives us victory over the sin that has wrought havoc in every relationship. This is explored in great detail in the [Transformation](#) study guide.

It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thes 2:14)

Mere men are made of body, soul, and spirit (see 1 Thes 5:23). But Christians aren't mere men (see 1 Cor 3:14). We're going to show you how to receive God's Spirit by faith, but first let's define faith.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

We believe God's word because of all the evidence we've been talking about – prophecies that are way beyond what man is capable of. Faith doesn't involve our physical senses – we can't see, hear, touch, taste, or smell Him; faith involves logic and reason – doing the mental work necessary to believe with assurance and conviction (see John 6:28-29).

By faith we know that Deity is spirit (John 4:24) and He can be in you, in a Christian on the other side of the world, and seated on the throne in heaven all at the same time. We don't have to understand how in order to believe He can simultaneously manifest Himself in different ways in different places. Here is an example of three different manifestations all at the same time:

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a **voice** out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Mat 3:16-17)

The Problem

Sin separates us from God just as it destroys every other meaningful relationship in our lives. It hurts. You have likely experienced being a victim of hurt. Have you ever hurt anyone? Of course you have. When you hurt one of His children, it also hurts God. When an adult sins he loses fellowship with God, for God has no fellowship with a sinner.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1:14-15)

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (James 2:10-11)

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Tim 1:8-11)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9-11)

Children don't have the same problem as adults because they have fellowship with God (see Mat 19:14). They are accountable to their parents, and parents are accountable to God for their children (see Eph 6:1-4). (For a larger discussion of this topic, see [Adult baptism v. Child baptism](#) in *The Spiritual Revolution*.)

God's Plan for Saving Man

When an adult who has not been reconciled to God dies, they remain separated from God for all eternity in hell. But that is not God's desire (see 1 Tim 2:4), and He has left us no excuse for that. He has gone so far as to pay the price for our sin! Though innocent, He stood condemned in our place and suffered what we deserve. He was painfully crucified as a substitute sacrifice for us.

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2:24-25)

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (Heb 2:9-10)

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Heb 2:14-18)

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom 5:8-10)

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9-11)

Righteousness, Self-Control, and the Judgment to Come

When we recognize the effects of sin on our relationship with God and others, and we realize the price that an innocent man, Jesus, paid to save us from our sin, it moves us to repentance. That is, we change our mind about careless behaviors that hurt our relationship with God and others. We determine to do things differently; no longer living our lives with selfish motives. Instead, we learn to love God and others and we become givers rather than takers.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom 2:4)

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:18-21)

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29)

The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Mat 13:41-43)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor 5:10)

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

But one day soon...

The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day. (2 Thes 1:6-10)

The Good News

When the gospel (i.e. good news or good story) was preached in the first century, it produced self-sacrificing conviction and zeal. People knew what the prophets had foretold hundreds of years in advance. After the events unfolded and seekers of truth pieced everything together, the resurrection was unmistakably real to them. They had been reading the Old Testament Scriptures generation after generation and were eagerly anticipating the arrival of the Messiah (Christ).

The gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 1:1-4)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time. (1 Cor 15:3-6)

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom 10:9-10)

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you... God said to Abraham, “And in your Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways. (Acts 3:18-26)

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized [i.e. immersed] in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” (Acts 2:36-41)

We have just scratched the surface of what could be said about the eternal King of kings and Lord of lords, our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. God’s plan, successively revealed and fulfilled, was to deliver us from the power of Satan, which is sin, and to share His glory with us.

It was prophesied in advance that He would cleanse us of sin to make us a fit dwelling for His Spirit and restore fellowship with us. The kingdom of God consists of those who obey King Jesus and who receive an eternal inheritance with Him; a spiritual land to dwell in and possess forever (see Rom 2:28-29; 9:6-8). These, taken from among all the nations, are the new “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) and “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22-29) is their capital city.

Obey the Gospel

Do you believe the Prophets? Are you convinced that Jesus is both Lord and Christ? Are you willing to confess Him to all? Do you recognize what sin has done to your relationship with God and what the eternal consequences are? Are you ready to obey the gospel and be reconciled to God? Are you willing to step down from the throne of your life and seat Jesus there? Are you ready to become a faithful subject in His kingdom?

Though you might expect to pay a high price to be forgiven of your sins and clothed with kingdom garments, becoming a Christian is simple and free because Jesus paid the price for you. If you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and you’re ready to begin confessing Him to others; if you repent of your sins, want to leave them behind, and be transformed into His righteousness; if you want your sins forgiven so you can be reconciled to God and receive His Spirit:

Why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name. (Acts 22:16)

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Gal 3:26-27)

Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Col 2:12)

Baptism now saves you -- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience -- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:21)

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3-5)

When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

You have been born again not of Seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23)

Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mat 28:18-20)

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. (1 Peter 2:2)

Understanding Scripture

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you. (Hos 4:6)

When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel. They spurned all my reproof. (Prov 1:27-30)

The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly. (Prov 15:14)

Math is a great subject. It helps us develop critical thinking skills. If we don't know how to reason clearly, we can easily be deceived. When teaching math to children, we start with the basics. Addition and subtraction are the foundation that multiplication, division, and all other skills are built upon. We should also start with the easy-to-understand basics of Scripture which help us understand things that aren't as clear and avoid speculations.

We also want to mentally prepare for the tests we will face. Just as someone could show an advanced math problem to a gullible beginner and convince him that a false answer is correct, many people will be surprised on judgment day because their "teacher" convinced them that he was trained to do their religious thinking for them.

And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit. (Mat 15:14)

First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Mat 7:5)

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1 Peter 2:1-3)

If we remain at a beginner level, our faith will not be in the word of God but in the word of men. Manmade religions are filled with flocks of mentally lazy people who don't know the Scriptures. False teachers can make their arguments sound very reasonable to those who are ignorant, but have a hard time deceiving those who know the word.

Organized religion, also known as institutional churchianity, is religion in which belief systems and rituals are systematically arranged and formally established. Organized religion is typically

characterized by an official doctrine (or dogma), a hierarchical or bureaucratic leadership structure, and a codification of rules and practices. This description fits the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day but not the Christianity He established.

It is challenging to set aside your religious background to read and study the New Testament without your preexisting understanding and biases. But it is worth the challenge to attempt to understand the church as it develops and is revealed to the world.

False teachers often try to discredit those who speak truth with personal attacks, slander, and other logical fallacies to divert people's attention away from the truth. They say things like, "This guy is a fanatic, unloving, a member of a cult, not showing tolerance, dresses funny, etc." Don't be shaken or misled!

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:17-18)

Unfortunately, some of the most difficult people to reason with may not be those we think of as false teachers. Often, rejection comes from our own family and friends.

But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:23-26)

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Heb 5:12-14)

7 Rules for Discerning Truth

1. Prayer

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Eph 1:18-19)

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all

steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. (Col 1:9-12)

2. Let God Interpret His Word

The Bible isn't written like an encyclopedia where you can look up a word and find out all about it. Instead, you must look up all the verses that mention a topic in order to get a complete picture of the truth about that topic. You can't just take one verse and interpret it any way you want. If a passage has multiple possible meanings, which meaning is most consistent with and supported both by the immediate context and the rest of Scripture?

So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Example 1: What is the important promise that is received by faith?

The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Gal 3:22)

Let God's word answer:

In order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:14)

Example 2: Jesus' interpretation of His parables about the kingdom teaches us how to interpret His other parables about the kingdom:

And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear." (Mat 13:3-9)

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who

hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.” (Mat 13:18-23)

Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’” (Mat 13:24-30)

Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.” (Mat 13:36-43)

Example 3: The Old Testament contains many types or foreshadows that are symbolic of something that is revealed in the New Testament.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Heb 11:17-19)

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

3. The Old Testament Is the New Testament Concealed – The New Testament Is the Old Testament Revealed

The Old Testament gave evidence of the resurrected, glorified Messiah – but the New Testament clearly reveals that the anticipated Son of David is the Son of God. He was raised up and seated, not on the throne of physical Israel like David, but on the throne of God, from which He sent the promise of the Spirit.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet’? If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Mat 22:41-46)

“And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten You.’ As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ Therefore He also says in another Psalm, ‘You will not allow your holy one to undergo decay.’ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.” (Acts 13:32-37)

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” (Acts 2:32-39)

4. The Scripture Cannot Be Broken

“I and the Father are one.” The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’” (John 10:30-36)

A sign was put on the cross above Jesus’ head. The four gospel accounts each include information about what is recorded on the sign. Some include more, some less. There is an important lesson here about how to study Scripture: although every verse contains truth, no one passage gives you all the information about any particular subject.

And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews.” (Mat 27:37)

The inscription of the charge against Him read, “The King of the Jews.” (Mark 15:26)

Now there was also an inscription above Him, “This is the King of the Jews.” (Luke 23:38)

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. (John 19:19-20)

The King of the Jews. -Mark

This is the King of the Jews. -Luke

This is Jesus the King of the Jews. -Matthew

Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews (in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek). -John

When you put together the different accounts you find that this is actually what it said, “This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews (in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek).” God wrote the Scriptures in such a way that the mentally lazy will not figure them out. You have to look at many passages to really learn any particular subject. This is partly why you don’t understand everything you read your first time through the Bible. On your second, third, fourth... adventure through Scripture, more and more will make sense.

Neither is anything proved by the absence of something in a particular passage. Because the following Scripture doesn’t say anything about faith, it doesn’t prove that you don’t need faith to be saved: I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. (Luke 13:5)

The book of Acts records many gospel presentations that were preached to lost souls. If the Holy Spirit had written every word that was shared in every message, the book of Acts would likely be bigger than the entire Bible. Instead, different aspects of the gospel are revealed in each recorded message. This doesn’t mean that there are different gospels and you just pick the one you like, but you have to put them all together to know the complete gospel that was proclaimed by the inspired preachers of the first century.

If you put together all the Scriptures about any concept, you will discover God’s interpretation. Leave some out and you’ll likely end up with an incomplete understanding. You will find that each passage you read will build upon your overall understanding. It’s all true!

5. If Something Doesn’t Fit, Pay Attention

Rather than trying to make the Scripture fit your thinking, make your thinking fit the Scripture. It’s like a jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes you find a piece you think has to fit a certain way, but it just won’t. So go back and study it out. It’s worth it.

As things come together you begin to see a glorious picture. Sometimes you find a piece that doesn’t seem to fit anywhere. These little gems, when you pursue them, often bring you new enlightenment.

Those who market Jesus for personal gain often make people think that Christianity is all about entertainment and “warm fuzzies.” Many present Jesus as a wimpy, flower-sniffing kind of guy Who would never say anything to offend anyone (check out Mat 23). Because of this widely promoted view, many people don’t take Jesus seriously. The following gem of a prophecy about Jesus at the judgment should set the record straight:

I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and I did not turn back until they were consumed. I shattered them, so that they were not able to rise; they fell under my feet. For You have girded me with strength for battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, and I destroyed those who hated me. They cried for help, but there was none to save, even to the Lord, but He did not answer them. Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind; I emptied them out as the mire of the streets. (Ps 18:37-42)

6. Concepts Are More Important Than Words

Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. (2 Tim 2:14)

It’s easier to read the Bible like a rulebook and wrangle about words than it is to figure out the concepts and live by the principles. Anyone can submit to a list of physical ceremonies on a regular basis and still have an evil heart. It takes wisdom, mental effort, and the power of God to be transformed into a mature Christian whose heart is truly righteous. In order to do this, one must learn to understand and discern the more important truths of Scripture.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! (Mat 23:23-24)

Why do billions of people follow manmade religions rather than the truth? They submit to external religious laws which take no mental effort, but they reject doing the mental work necessary to practice love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Jesus said (see John 3:19-21) it’s because they love the darkness rather than the light.

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) -- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Col 2:20-23)

Submitting to a list of decrees is not what motivated Jesus to figure out the Old Testament concept of “rivers of living water.” This exact phrase never shows up in the Old Testament, but the concept shows up in many places. In the following quote, Jesus summarizes a number of Scriptures in one sentence. The concept is more important than the words.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

Another example is found in the following passage of Scripture which contains three different concepts of perfection. The first is imputed perfection (the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith). The second is perfection of the body (when the dead are raised on the last day, Christians will be given a perfect, glorified body). The third is perfection of character. If you don’t understand the difference in concepts, this passage would contradict itself and make no sense at all.

And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Phil 3:9-17)

7. Context

The Bible says in Psalm 53:1, “There is no God.”

A plain statement of fact is a plain statement of fact, but context has to be taken into account in order to understand the truth. Read the whole context of Psalm 53:1:

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; there is no one who does good. (Ps 53:1)

This is a simple example of something taken out of context. Many times it isn’t nearly this obvious. Those who twist Scripture aren’t usually interested in discovering the truth, but rather in advancing their own agenda. You can be easily deceived if you are unfamiliar not only with the immediate context, but also with the context of the Bible as a whole.

As we’ve pointed out, the whole of Scripture fits together into one neat package. As you piece it together, don’t be taken captive by those who play on people’s ignorance. Don’t hesitate to ask pointed questions like, “Where does it say that in the Bible?” and, “Show me the book, chapter, and verse that specifically says that!” and, “What other Scriptures clearly support this idea?”

Another aspect of studying the Bible is putting it into its historical context. When John the Baptist showed up on the Jewish scene, people were asking this strange fellow if he was the anticipated Messiah whom they'd been expecting for hundreds of years. With this knowledge, you can imagine the excitement in the air when they found out that he was sent to prepare the way for the Christ.

Understanding the culture in which the Bible was written will also help you to better understand it; along with using your imagination to picture the drama of what's going on. If you just read through the Bible without considering the social, economic, and political influences, you really miss a lot.

As you read Matthew 21-26, imagine the tension in the air as Jesus' spiritual revolution was overthrowing the religious authorities, and consider the personalities and the events leading up to His execution. It will mentally prepare you so that you're not surprised when the religious authorities of today respond in similar fashion as we carry forward Jesus' spiritual revolution.

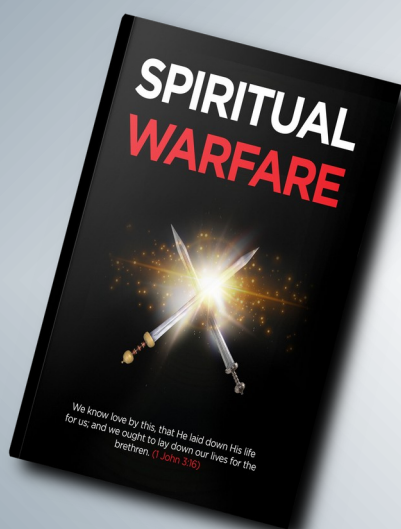
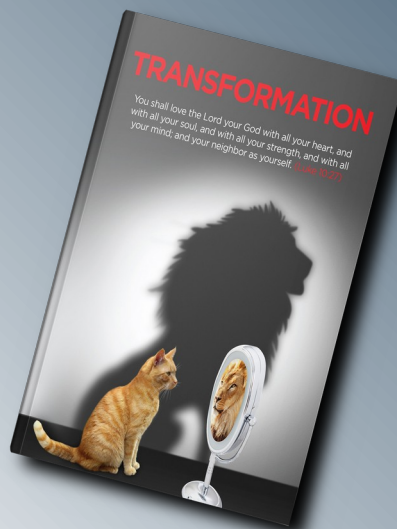
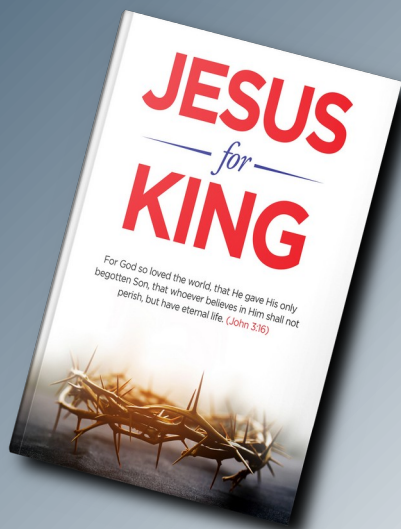
As you read John 20, consider the drama and the expression on the face of the Apostle Thomas as he recognizes who Jesus is after His resurrection: "My Lord and my God!"

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31-32)

The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Tim 1:5)

Partial List of Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled In Jesus Christ

Prophecy	Subject	Fulfilled
Genesis 3:15	seed of a woman	Galatians 4:4
Genesis 12:3	descendant of Abraham	Matthew 1:1
Genesis 17:19	descendant of Isaac	Luke 3:34
Numbers 24:17	descendant of Jacob	Matthew 1:2
Genesis 49:10	from the tribe of Judah	Luke 3:33
Isaiah 9:7	heir to the throne of David	Luke 1:32-33
Psalms 45:6-7; 102:25-27	anointed and eternal	Hebrews 1:8-12
Micah 5:2	born in Bethlehem	Luke 2:4-5, 7
Daniel 9:25	time for His birth	Luke 2:1
Isaiah 7:14	to be born of a virgin	Luke 1:26
Jeremiah 31:15	slaughter of children	Matthew 2:16-18
Hosea 11:1	flight to Egypt	Luke 3:3-6
Malachi 3:1	preceded by a forerunner	Luke 7:24-27
Malachi 4:5	preceded by Elijah	Matthew 11:13
Psalms 2:7	declared the Son of God	Matthew 3:17
Isaiah 9:1	Galilean ministry	Matthew 4:13-16
Psalms 78:2-4	spoke in parables	Matthew 13:34-35
Deuteronomy 18:15	a prophet	Acts 3:20-22
Isaiah 61:1-2	to bind up the brokenhearted	Luke 4:18-19
Isaiah 53:3	rejected by His own people, the Jews	John 1:11 & Luke 23:18
Psalms 110:4	priest after order of Melchizedek	Hebrews 5:5
Zechariah 9:9	triumphal entry	Mark 11:7, 9, 11
Psalms 8:2	adored by infants	Matthew 21:15-16
Isaiah 53:1	not believed	John 12:37-38
Psalms 41:9	betrayed by a close friend	Luke 22:47-48
Zechariah 11:12	betrayed for thirty pieces of silver	Matthew 26:14-15
Psalms 35:11	accused by false witnesses	Mark 14:57-58
Isaiah 53:7	silent to accusations	Mark 15:4-5
Isaiah 50:6	spat on and struck	Matthew 26:67
Psalms 35:19	hated without reason	John 15:24-25
Isaiah 53:5	vicarious sacrifice	Romans 5:6
Isaiah 53:12	crucified with malefactors	Mark 15:27-28
Zechariah 12:10	pierced through hands and feet	John 20:27
Psalms 22:7-8	was mocked	Luke 23:35
Psalms 69:9	was reproached	Romans 15:3
Psalms 109:4	prayer for His enemies	Luke 23:34
Psalms 22:17-18	soldiers gambled for His clothing	Matthew 27:35-36
Psalms 22:1	forsaken by God	Matthew 27:46
Psalms 34:20	no broken bones	John 19:32-33, 36
Zechariah 12:10	His side pierced	John 19:34
Isaiah 53:9	buried with the rich	Matthew 27:57-60
Psalms 16:10 & 49:15	resurrected	Mark 16:6-7
Psalms 68:18	His ascension to God's right hand	Mark 16:19 1 Corinthians 15:4 Ephesians 4:8



Bible Study Guides

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Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)