

Tool Box Series

Part #1



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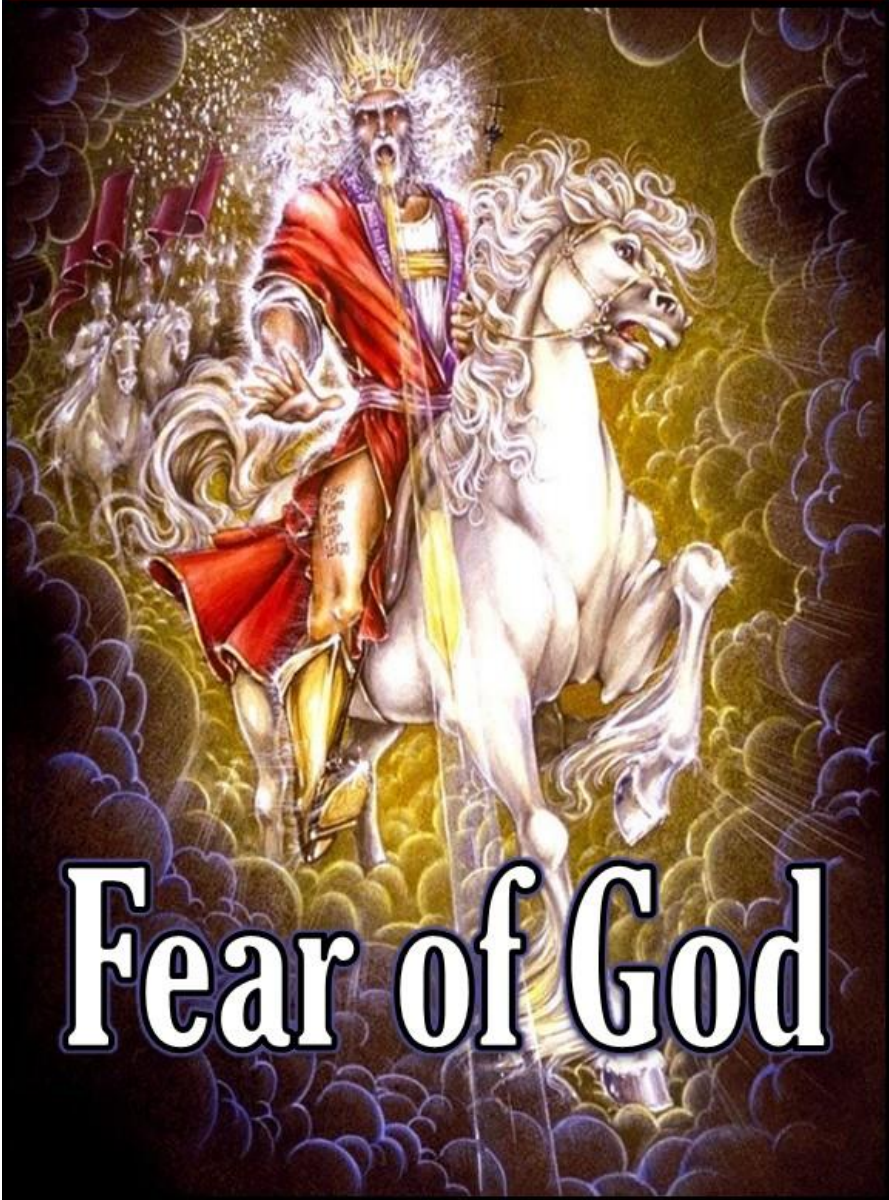
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Tool Box Series



The Fear of God

This is the beginning

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and is also the beginning point on our journey to know God. As we approach God, we must first understand that He is Almighty, supremely Holy, and will not tolerate sin, and we are the polar opposite. He desires to have fellowship with us, but our sin is an obstacle that separates us from him. The more we understand the distance between his infinite holiness and our utter sinfulness, the more we will grow in our fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

The fear of God exists from eternity, past, present, and future. At a time in the future, called the great tribulation, the worst time of human history, an angel will preach the everlasting gospel to everyone on earth. So, what is this eternally important message delivered supernaturally by an angelic being to a world convulsing in agony and marching toward the mass extinction of sinners? Fear God!

Revelation 14:6-7 *Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel to preach** to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people saying with a loud voice, "**Fear God and give glory to Him**, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."*

Adam

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had one simple rule: Don't eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Naturally, they broke the rule, so



suddenly, they realized they were completely naked and ran and hid from God. So why did they hide? Their new consciousness of good and evil told them that they had sinned, and the realization of their sin and nakedness struck them with fear, and they tried to hide from God.

Our conscience subliminally knows there will be a judgment against wrongs committed, which will drive us in one of two directions. We either run to God for forgiveness and mercy, or we run and try to hide or cover up our misdeeds. In either case, the fear of God produces our response.

Genesis 3:6-10 *... She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; ...*

... and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So, he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Isaiah

Isaiah was a fiery prophet who prophesied and pronounced judgment and doom against entire nations. But one day, he was caught up in a vision to see the throne of God filled with glory and with myriads of heavenly beings who thundered Holy, Holy, Holy with a voice that shook the place. Then Isaiah was struck by the fear of God as he realized that he was a sinner in the presence of an infinitely holy God.

Isaiah 6:5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

Hebrews 10:30-31 ... The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The closer we draw to God, the more we become aware of our sins. The natural reaction to being brought into God's holy presence is to be overwhelmed by our unworthiness contrasted to His holiness. Reverence, respect, and fear of God lead us to live right and avoid evil.

Psalms 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.***

*2 Corinthians 7:10-11 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, ... yea, what **FEAR**, yea, ... **In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.***

*Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: **fear the LORD, and depart from evil.***

Proverbs 16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Noah

When God told Noah to build a boat, it had never rained before. The ark was a massive project, and he did not have a Home Depot or electric tools. Starting from scratch with raw materials using primitive hand tools, they chopped down trees, sawed them into boards, then constructed and waterproofed a ship with three levels and 450 feet long. It is hard to imagine how hard Noah worked decade after decade, but he knew a flood was coming. His faith in God and the prophetic word he received caused him to move with fear to build the ark to save his family.



Hebrews 11:7 *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

When God gives prophetic warnings of events or coming judgment, the fear of God should motivate his people to take action. Bible prophecy tells us that Jesus will return, and he will snatch the church up to meet him in the air. But someone might say that has never happened before. That's true, but it had never rained before Noah built the ark. The rapture will happen, and believers with the fear of God will be watching and ready for it! And those who miss the rapture escape boat will go through the great tribulation instead of a flood.

2 Peter 3:10-12 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*

Titus 2:11-13 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,***

Philippians 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.***

Job

Job is known for his patience and endurance during a time of severe testing. But how did his afflictions begin? In a rare glimpse of a conversation between God and Satan, we see that Job was the topic. God was boasting about how Job feared God and was blameless, upright, and avoided evil.

Satan questioned the sincerity of Job because he had great wealth, a great family, and was so blessed. So, God permitted Satan to put him through an onslaught of painful events losing his children and possessions. God will test our sincerity by allowing circumstances that reveal our true character, whether we fear God or not. You know a Christian not by how they act but by how they react.

Job 1:7-11 *And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So, Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, ...*

.... *"Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a **blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?**" So, Satan answered the LORD and said, "**Does Job fear God for nothing?** "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. "But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"*

Job had lost everything, but he still maintained his integrity, so he passed the first series of tests. And again, God boasted to Satan about how Job kept his integrity. Then Satan replied that Job would curse God if he suffered pain in his body. Then God permitted Satan to attack Job physically by covering his body with painful running sores.

***Job 2:3-5** Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a **blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?** And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." So, Satan answered the LORD and said, "**Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.** "But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"*



These severe tests stripped Job of his wealth and his children and left him with excruciating pain in his body. Yet he would not curse God, compromise his integrity, or lose his fear of God. Job endured and passed every test. And in the end, Job had a better understanding of God and greater wisdom. God also restored his health and blessed him with double the number of children and the wealth he previously had.

Job 23:8-10 "Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take; **When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.**

The apostle Peter was also familiar with being tested by fire, and he could testify that suffering refines us and produces a genuine faith that is more precious than gold.

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Job compared searching for wisdom with searching for gold or jewels. Men will dig deep into the heart of the earth, building mine shafts and sifting through tons of dirt to find something precious.

Those who mine for wisdom are solitary and hidden from the view of other humans, animals, and birds. Their work and experiences are in secret places, known only to themselves and the Lord.

***Proverbs 25:2** It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.*

***Psalms 25:14** The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.*

From the bottom of a mine, Job comes to the surface to reveal the precious jewels that he discovered. What was the discovery? He found that the fear of the Lord is wisdom!

***Job 28:1-28** "There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.*



Man puts an end to the darkness; he searches the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness. Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways. The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire; sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold. No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it.

*Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there. Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains. He tunnels through the rock; his eyes see all its treasures. He searches the sources of the rivers and brings hidden things to light. **"But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.' It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver. It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires. Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold. **"Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"*****

Solomon said we should search for wisdom the same way people search for hidden treasures. In other words, we should be highly motivated, enthusiastic, creative, and work hard to gain godly wisdom.

Proverbs 2:1-5 *My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*

Isaiah 33:6 *Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.*

In 1848, a miner struck gold in California and started a gold rush. By the year 1849, over 300,000 people from all over the world traveled there with dreams of riches. These 49'ers were willing to forsake their home, family, friends and relocate thousands of miles away. They worked tirelessly for hours without end, day after day, enduring primitive living conditions with privations, and many lost everything. If people do this for material riches that won't last, how much more should we sacrifice for heavenly treasures that last forever?

If we were paid ten thousand dollars per hour to read the Bible and pray, would that suddenly change how much time we spend in Bible reading and prayer? What are we willing to do to find God's hidden treasures?

If we find that treasure, we will find the fear of the Lord and wisdom.

***Proverbs 22:4** By humility and the fear of the LORD
Are riches and honor and life.*

***Matthew 13:44** "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like
treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and
hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he
has and buys that field.*

***1 Corinthians 2:6-7** However, we speak wisdom
among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of
this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming
to nothing. **But we speak the wisdom of God in a
mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained
before the ages for our glory,***

***Proverbs 15:16** Better is a little with the fear of the
LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.*

Abraham

When Abraham was seventy-five years old, God promised him a child. Abraham waited twenty-five years for the son to be born, and he raised him for about twenty years. So, after investing forty-five years and placing all his hopes and dreams on this son, God asked Abraham to give him as a sacrifice on the altar. The elderly Abraham immediately proceeded to obey, but God stopped him as he raised the knife above his son.



Abraham had proven his unquestioning obedience because of his faith in God. Abraham believed that if God required the death of his son, then God would raise him from the dead. He walked with God for 45 years, yet it took the most extreme test of obedience to prove that Abraham feared God.

***Genesis 22:10-13** And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" so he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; **for now, I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**" Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So, Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.*

Hebrews 11:17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," **concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Moses

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, he brought them to Mount Sinai, where he received the ten commandments. God came down on the mountain in thick clouds, thunders, and a loud trumpet.

The sight was so terrifying that the people begged not to speak to God and asked Moses to talk to him. Moses himself was terrified. God was testing them so that the fear of God would keep them from sinning.

Exodus 19:16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thundering's and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; ...
... and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that ***all the people who were in the camp trembled.***

Exodus 20:18-20 Now all the people witnessed the thundering's, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and ***when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.*** Then they said to Moses, "***You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.***" And Moses said to the people, "***Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.***

Moses had a terrifying mountain-shaking experience in the Sinai, but at the second coming of Christ, it will not just be the earth that shakes, but God will shake heaven and earth and everything that shakes. We are approaching a time that Jesus said would be the most terrifying in all human history, so what kind of people should we be? We should serve God with reverence and godly fear!

Hebrews 12:21-29 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "***I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.***" But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,

to an innumerable company of angels. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven. "Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

David

Beginning from the moment David received the anointing to be the next king of Israel, his life completely changed. First, he defeated Goliath, and then king Saul became insanely jealous and repeatedly tried to kill him. Finally, David decided that he would be safer living with his enemies than living in Israel while Saul relentlessly tried to kill him. So, David went to the Philistine city of Gath and asked king Achish for refuge. That move was either unbelievably brave or extremely crazy because Gath was Goliath's hometown (1 Samuel 17:4, 23).

So, while David was asking for refuge from the Philistine king, the Philistine army officers reminded the king that David had killed Goliath and that Israel sang songs about how David had killed tens of thousands of the Philistines. The situation was unbelievably stressful and perplexing, and David had to do something.

So here was David's wise master plan for the situation, pretend to be insane! And by God's mercy, it worked! The king allowed him to live there (1 Samuel 21:10-15). It seems like David was dumb like a fox, again. After that incident, David wrote the following song.

Psalm 34:1-11** I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and **He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.** They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. **The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; **Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!** Oh, fear the LORD, you, **His saints!** **There is no want to those who fear Him.** The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing. **Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

David said because he feared the Lord, the angel of the Lord protected him. David wanted to share what he learned from this experience with others, saying, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Experience gives wisdom, and wisdom teaches the fear of the Lord. Eventually, Saul died then David became king. Once David was established in his kingdom, he decided to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem.

David made this a big celebration, with huge crowds. It was a joyful procession with music and dancing. But suddenly, disaster struck when Uzza put his hand on the ark and fell dead. Immediately the music stopped, the crowd went home, and they moved the ark to a different location, and David was afraid of God that day.



1 Chronicles 13:8-12 Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God ... **David was afraid of God that day**, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God to me?"

Only Levites from the priestly tribe were allowed to move the ark, and they were supposed to carry it on their shoulders. Uzza was not a priest, and the ox cart idea came from the Philistines. They were doing the right thing with good intentions but in the wrong way.

We may think that being busy with all kinds of church activities, surrounded by a crowd of sincere people, we are serving God.

But doing our own thing, even good things, with good intentions, if it is outside the boundaries of God's will and His word, we may bring judgment against ourselves. It is frightening to think about standing before Jesus at the judgment, anticipating a reward for service, only to hear Him say, I never knew you depart from me.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. "Many will say to Me in that day, '**Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?**' "And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!**'"

King David had become complacent towards the Law, and this incident with Uzzah shocked him into reality. The fear of God came upon David, so he organized the priesthood and the order of worship for the Temple in compliance with the Law given by Moses. David's instructions became the standard that Israel followed for hundreds of years. David wrote the following songs to be used to worship God.

Psalm 5:7-8 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; **In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.** Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.

Psalm 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Psalm 96:8-9 Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.

David had another experience that put the fear of God in his heart. He took a census of the military-age men, which greatly displeased God. As a result, the Lord sent a plague that killed seventy thousand people. When David and the elders saw the angel of the Lord standing over Jerusalem with a drawn sword in his hand, they immediately fell on their faces.

1 Chronicles 21:16 Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So, David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

After David escaped the Philistines, he declared that the Angel of the Lord protects those who fear him. When David sinned, he was in fear of the Angel's drawn sword. The sword has two edges, one for our enemies and one for us. There is no partiality, no favoritism, no exemptions with God, even if you are king David.

Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Solomon -wisdom?

The premise for this whole study comes from Solomon's proverb stating that the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We must be careful to identify which type of wisdom we are referring to, there is God's wisdom, and there is ungodly, worldly, and demonic wisdom. God's wisdom is considered foolish by the ungodly people of the world.

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

1 Corinthians 1:20-25 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Not all wisdom comes from God. You have heard of being "street smart," meaning sly, shifty, clever, and deceptive. The devil's wisdom is motivated by evil and is proud, worldly-minded, sensual, or demonic.

James 3:13-17 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. **This wisdom does not descend from above but is earthly, sensual, demonic.** For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.***

God gave Solomon wisdom, but he lost sight of God. He disintegrated into worldly wisdom, which became sensual and ended in the demonic realm. If the world's wisest man could fall into this trap, how easy would it be to deceive ourselves, and how careful should we be?

1 Kings 11:1-9 *King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women ... **He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. so, Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. ...***

... He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Spiritual adultery

Before we look at Solomon's sayings, let's establish that adultery can happen on multiple levels. There is literal adultery, sneaking in the back door after the spouse has gone to work. There is adultery in the heart, looking on a woman or man with lust (Matthew 5:27-28). Then, there is spiritual adultery when we give things that should belong only to God to anyone or anything else. The first commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. So, if we love or put anything above God, we are spiritual adulterers.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Spiritual adultery plays into end-time prophecy (the times we live in) because there will be a great falling away from the faith. The backslidden church is called the woman or the mother of harlots in the book of Revelation. We need wisdom and discernment to stay away from that church.

Revelation 17:3-6 ...The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations ...

... and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead, a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The apostle Paul feared that Satan would deceive the church and cause it to be unfaithful to Christ. He warned them not to be seduced, to follow a different Jesus, a different gospel, or a different spirit. Our goal is to stay focused only on Jesus and not pay any attention to the serpent's voice.

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I FEAR, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received or a different gospel which you have not accepted you may well put up with it!

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

When we read Solomon's sayings about the adulteress, it can have dual meanings. He could be speaking of a literal adulteress or the spiritual harlot church and false religions. We will comment on the harlot church with correlating verses about the adulteress to show the parallel meanings.

The immoral woman flatters her victims. We hear the same message from prosperity preachers, self-help gurus, and hirelings in the harlot church. These churches preach that **YOU** can be a better **YOU** and how **YOU** can be healthy, wealthy, and blessed, and **YOU** sing about who **YOU** are in Christ. If you're in a church like that, run for your life. Christ should have preeminence in all things. Paul said we don't preach ourselves, but Christ and him crucified.

Proverbs 7:1-5** My son, keep my words ... That they may keep you from the immoral woman, **From the seductress who flatters with her words.

The harlot will not stay home, is dressed to kill, and is hunting for souls. Like a wandering star, she has left her assigned position. She goes away from the word of God. She is being blown about and tossed here and there by every wind and wave of strange teachings. The harlot church departs from the true gospel that Jesus and the apostles had once for all delivered to the saints.

***Proverbs 7:6-11** For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, A young man devoid of understanding, And there a woman met him, With the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.*

She was loud and rebellious; her feet would not stay at home.

Ironically this harlot boasts about her religious offerings while trying to seduce someone into a bed of immorality. She brings sensuality and entertainment into the church. Skinny jeans, big screens, fog machines, and rock concerts will fill the seats and build the new tower of Babel. The message is that her bed allows any expression of sexual preference or activities, with no shame or accountability.

Proverbs 7:14-16 ... "I have peace offerings with me; Today I have paid my (religious) vows. I have spread my bed with tapestry, Colored coverings of Egyptian linen.

Jesus has a bed for spiritual harlots that cheat on him while he is away, and it is not spread with a tapestry but with sickness during the great tribulation.

Revelation 2:20-22 "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. "Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

This woman says her husband is not home and is away on a long journey. Jesus described his return at the second coming in the same way.

Jesus gave his servants responsibilities and expected them to watch and work. The harlot church mocks the return of Christ, is doing business as usual, is having fun, and could care less about Jesus' return.

Proverbs 7:19-20 ... For my husband is not at home; He has gone on a long journey; He has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home on the appointed day."

Mark 13:33-35 "(Jesus) Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning

The immoral woman has cast many strong and great men down to hell. Solomon was very wise but got duped by crafty and seductive women. No one was stronger than Samson, but he got his eyes poked out by a little woman. Both men and women need the fear of God to protect us from falling into the sensuality, seduction, and deceptions of the harlot in these last days.

Proverbs 7:25-27 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; For she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death.

Revelation 17:6. I saw the woman (harlot church), drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Jesus

The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus after he was water baptized and led him into the wilderness for forty days, and he returned from there in the power of the Spirit. Once the Holy Spirit anointed and empowered Jesus, he began his ministry and announced it by reading from Isaiah in the synagogue.



Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The Spirit & fear

Jesus moved in the power of the Spirit by doing miracles, signs, wonders, and healings. We recognize the Holy Spirit by his divine attributes.

Isaiah reveals that the Spirit of God is a Spirit of **wisdom**, understanding, and **the fear of the Lord**.

*Isaiah 11:2-3 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him (Jesus), **The Spirit of wisdom and understanding**, The Spirit of counsel and might, **The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD**. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears;*

The Spirit of wisdom, knowledge, and counsel directed every step that Jesus took. Jesus walked in the anointing with the oil of gladness, and the fear of the Lord was his delight.

*Hebrews 1:8-9 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. **You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.**"*

If we have a delight in fearing God, loving righteousness, and hating sin as Jesus did, we will experience the same godly joy in the face of any situation and the most extreme persecutions as he did.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Acts 5:41 *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

Jude 1:24 *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,*

1 Peter 4:12-14 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

Although Jesus had the oil of joy, he was also called the man of sorrows. Persecution and the cross are inescapable realities. The advice that Jesus gave regarding the fear of God was straightforward and to the point, fear him who has the power to send to Hell. Paul said that if we live holy lives, we will suffer persecution.

Matthew 10:28 *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

1 Timothy 3:12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

Followers of Jesus

There were many times in Jesus' ministry when people realized that he was not a mere man but the very presence of God, and many times they became overcome with fear. Let's follow some of those incidents.

Great catch of fish

So, how do you impress a fisherman? Ask Peter, who was a fisherman by trade. One time Peter had fished all night but failed to catch a single fish. Jesus got into his boat and asked him to cast his net again. Peter was skeptical, but he did it. When they cast out the nets, they caught so many fish that the boat was about to sink (we need Jesus in our boats!). Peter realized that he was in the presence of God. The fear of God came upon him, and he became so convicted of his sin that he asked Jesus to go away.



Luke

*5:5-8 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. so, they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. **When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ...***

... For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."

Healing a cripple

Jesus was teaching, and a large crowd gathered around the house. Some men brought a lame man on a stretcher but could not enter the house because it was too crowded. So, they went up on the roof, made an opening, and lowered the man in front of Jesus. Then Jesus looked at the religious leaders and posed this question to them, "Which is easier to say, 'your sins are forgiven' or 'arise and walk?' So, that you know that I (the Son of Man) have the power to forgive sins, I say, then he looked to the lame man and said, rise and walk." The lame man stood to his feet and walked, and the people were amazed and filled with fear. And, just for the record, healing is easy for Jesus!



***Luke 5:25-27** Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"*

Raising the dead

One day Jesus and his disciples were entering a city when a large funeral procession was approaching. The deceased was the only son of a widow, and Jesus felt compassion for her. When Jesus approached them, he touched the coffin and spoke, and the dead son came back to life. Then the fear of God came over everyone who was there.

*Luke 7:14-16 Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So, he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. **Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."***

Calming a storm

Jesus and the Disciples got into a boat to cross the lake. A big storm came up that was so violent that the experienced commercial fishermen on board thought they would die. Meanwhile, Jesus was taking a nap, and his panicked disciples came and woke him, fearing for their lives. So, Jesus stood and rebuked the raging storm, and the crashing waves and violent winds ceased, and the sea became calm.

When they saw his power over the storm, they felt a powerful conviction of God's presence and were afraid.



Luke 8:25 But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

Casting out demons

When Jesus and the disciples landed on the shore, a demon-possessed man encountered them. Jesus asked the demons for their name, and multitudes of demons replied that their name was "legion" because they were many. A Roman legion is between 4,000 to 6,000 troops. The demons begged not to go to the pit of hell and asked to go into a nearby herd of pigs. Jesus granted their request, so the demons entered the herd of pigs and drove them over a cliff to their death.

The people from town came out to see what happened and asked Jesus to leave their territory. Pigs are considered unclean under Mosaic law, and pigs were an abomination to religious Jews. But this town supported a big pig herd of possibly 4,000 or more pigs, which would have made them unclean by God's law. No wonder they were afraid and convicted by the power and presence of God and begged Jesus to leave. Who knows, maybe the demons left the pigs and entered the people. After all, these people preferred uncleanness over Jesus.

Luke 8:37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

Healing a woman

Crowds surrounded Jesus often, and once a woman was present who had suffered from severe blood loss (hemorrhage) for twelve long years. This woman had tried every available medical treatment and only got worse. She believed that Jesus was her only, best, and last hope of getting healed and thought if she could push through the crowd and touch him, she would be healed. She pressed through the crowd and touched his garment, and the power of God was released from Jesus, healing her. Then Jesus stopped and asked who had touched him, and the woman trembled with fear and fell at Jesus' feet, knowing that she was in the presence of God, and God healed her.



Mark 5:29-33 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

Pilate and his wife

During the Passover feast, the Jews could not put Jesus to death, so they planned to have the Romans kill him. They brought Jesus to Pilate and demanded that he would give him the death penalty of execution on the cross.

And although Pilate sat in judgment of Jesus, he knew that he was innocent and wanted no part in condemning him to death and tried to wash his hands of the illegitimate trial. Pilate was a cruel Roman ruler with no problems whatsoever in having people tortured and killed. But Pilate felt something different about Jesus because Jesus was no ordinary man, and Pilate feared him.

Mark 15:4-5 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." But Jesus still made no reply, and **Pilate was amazed, (marveled).**

John 19:7-9 The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." **When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.**

Pilates' wife had nightmares concerning Jesus, and she tried to warn him not to judge Jesus. She feared judgment for her husband's treatment of Jesus. Maybe they didn't realize it, but Pilate was judging the great judge of all mankind.

Matthew 27:18-19 *For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."*

Pilate's wife feared for good reason. Those involved in condemning Jesus met with untimely and horrible deaths. For example, Herod gave a speech and accepted praise from the crowd, claiming he was a god. His judgment was swift and painful.

Acts 12:21-23 *So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" **Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him** because he did not give glory to God. **And he was eaten by worms and died.***

After Pentecost

The church was born on the day of Pentecost, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Multitudes were coming to Christ. They witnessed the Holy Spirit move powerfully with supernatural signs and wonders, and the fear of God came upon every one of them.

Acts 2:41-43 *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Correcting sin

Just after Pentecost, the believers were so committed to Christ that they were selling their houses and lands and donating the money to support the work of God. One married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, sold a house and brought the proceeds from the sale as a donation to Peter. But in the process of giving the money, they lied to Peter by saying they gave everything from the house sale, but in reality, they only gave part of the money.



Let's put this story in today's setting. During a church service, a deacon is about to pray to receive the offering when a couple stands up and says they have a testimony. They go up to the pulpit, and the husband takes the microphone to testify. He says we have just sold a house and are giving all the money to the church. They hold up the check and say, here is \$250,000 for the work of the Lord, praise God! Loud shouts of praise thunder throughout the church. They drop the mic and head to their seats amidst the applause and cheers, giving high fives as they go. However, the house sold for \$300,000. What should happen if the Pastor knew they kept \$50,000 and lied to the church? Should the Pastor confront them? Should he ignore the lie, pocket the money, and go along with their story?

Acts 5:4-11 "(Peter speaking), While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**" Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last ... Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

From Peter's perspective, **EITHER** two sinners die, **OR** the whole move of God becomes dead. Remember how 2.5 million Israelis were defeated and stopped from advancing in their conquest of Canaan by the sin of one man named Achan (Joshua 7). Also, all of Israel had to stop and remain parked for one week in the wilderness because of the sin of one woman named Miriam, the sister of Moses (Numbers 12). That is evidence that one person can kill the move of God for millions of believers. So, how important are holiness and the fear of God for the church? Decisions have consequences, so what's your choice? Compromise, sin, money, and be part of the harlot church? OR truth, holiness, and the fear of God, and be the bride of Christ? Maybe this is one reason for so many dead churches!

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:
Psalms 93:5 Your testimonies are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.

You would think after Ananias and Sapphira died in the church, people would have been shouting, “Run for your life! People are dropping dead in that church!” No! It was very much the opposite. Great fear came on everybody who heard about it. But the good kind of godly fear with reverence, respect, and awareness of the presence of God in their midst. And great signs and wonders followed the apostles, with multitudes joining the church!

Acts 5:10-14 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. And through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women...

After persecution

Saul was a zealous Pharisee, and he persecuted, imprisoned, and was responsible for having Christians killed. One day, as he was traveling to attack Christians, he met Jesus, and everything changed. Saul became a Christian, changed his name to Paul, and became a powerful preacher of Christ. Following Paul’s conversion, the Christians enjoyed a time of peace, their faith grew strong, and the fear of the Lord was present in their lives.

Acts 9:31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Paul and Felix

The Apostle Paul made all unbelievers uncomfortable with his uncompromising message, and he was a formidable force in every aspect except his scarred, beaten, and deprived outward physical appearance. The Holy Spirit used the mental genius of Paul to debate Jewish law experts, Greek philosophers, judges, and politicians, and his writings laid the foundation of faith for the church of all ages. The Roman governor Felix was no match for Paul. When he questioned Paul, Felix was the one in the hot seat. Paul spoke to him about self-control, righteousness, and the coming judgment, which powerfully frightened Felix.

*Acts 24:24-25 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, **Felix was afraid** and answered, "**Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you.**"*

John

Jesus had an inner circle of three disciples: Peter, James, and John. But John was the closest to Jesus, and he was called the disciple that Jesus loved. But when John saw the risen Christ in his glorified body, with power and glory, he was so overwhelmed with fear that he collapsed like a dead man. John was overwhelmed by the fear of God.



Revelation 1:14-17 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. **And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.**

If John, who was closest to Jesus, collapsed in fear at the sight of the resurrected Christ, how much more will sinners be terrified when they stand before him in judgment. Everyone who has ever lived will one day bow before Jesus and acknowledge that he is Lord.

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that **every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

1Peter 4:17-18 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now **"If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"**

The key to holiness

Holiness is a separation from sin and this world's fallen thinking and lifestyles so we can separate ourselves exclusively unto God and maintain faithful obedience to his will. The fear of God will make us depart from the thought of doing evil and produce holiness and self-control in every area of our life.

2 Corinthians 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-23** Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (all appearance of evil). Now **may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

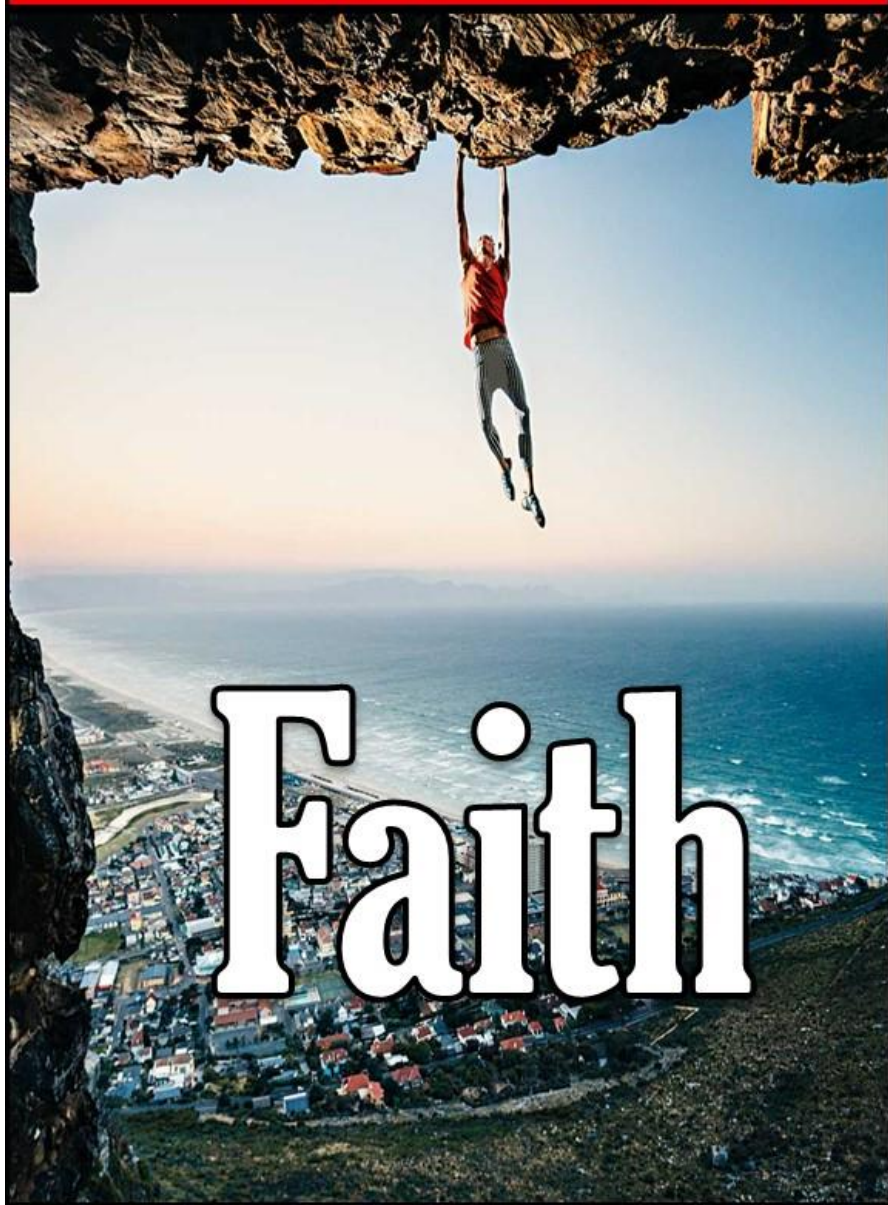
1 Peter 3:10-12** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

We are on a lifelong journey of learning God's ways and being transformed into the character of Christ while at the same time realizing our weaknesses and flaws. Anyone that sincerely wants to follow, serve, and love Jesus, will grow closer to him by the fear of the Lord, or they will drift farther away from him from lack of it. Let us make every moment count by keeping the fear of God as a priority every day of our lives.

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.**

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God** and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. **For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.**

Tool Box Series



Faith

Introduction

How important is our faith? Our eternal future depends on where we place our trust. Regarding eternity, the only thing that matters is what you believe about Christ. This study provides evidence for the existence of God and that Jesus was the promised Messiah and the only salvation for mankind.

Romans 10:6-9 *But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way ... "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Faith has evidence from many sources, God's creation, prophecy fulfilled and confirmed by archeological and historical records, testimonies of the prophets and patriarchs, miracles, signs, wonders, and the apostle's witness of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We can vigorously defend our faith with numerous examples of undeniable evidence for those with ears to hear.

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ... By faith*

we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Creation DNA

Let's start by looking at the evidence for God in creation. If we were to look through a powerful microscope to see the atoms of all living creatures, we would see proof of a divine architect, a designer with infinite wisdom, with all power to create everything out of nothing. We would see the Almighty God.

In 1953 was the discovery of the double helix, the twisted ladder structure of DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) that carries genetic instructions for the development, functioning, growth, and reproduction of all known organisms.



That and subsequent discoveries only confirm that the universe is not the product of some ongoing chaotic accident but made according to a divine plan and designed by unfathomable intelligence. God wrote the DNA codes and programmed every atom in existence according to His purpose, giving it function, balance, order, and destiny. You cannot honestly look at creation without seeing the creator and intelligent design, and anything to the contrary is inexcusable before God.

Romans 1:20-21 ... because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

John 1:3-4 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

God speaks and reveals himself to us universally through nature to all people, from every country, every language, and all generations. Anyone can look at God's handiwork with plants, animals, birds, fish, sun, moon, and stars and hear them screaming that there is a God who created everything!

Psalm 19: 1-4 ... The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.

When God designed everything, he formatted their DNA code, which determined their functions and instincts, equipping them with seemingly supernatural abilities that baffle the scientist. Let's look at a few examples from nature that reveal God, the master programmer who wrote the DNA code that genetically controls the instincts of all birds, fish, and animals.

Bird migration

Every year with changing seasons, birds migrate, and each generation of birds leave at precisely the correct time, flying



on autopilot, taking the same routes to the exact locations every year. The Arctic Tern will fly 44,000 miles in its migration from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and back. The endurance winner goes to the Bar-tailed godwit, which travels 7500 miles from Alaska to New Zealand, flying nonstop for 11 straight days.

The physical ability required for such a trip is astounding. They also get the award for navigation because they fly over empty oceans for days with no markers to guide them. Science is baffled by them. Where does this little bird that only lives a few years get the ability and strength to do that? They did not evolve to make the flight over millions of years (theory of evolution) because, in the first attempt, the whole flock would have died somewhere out in the ocean. If we gave you a sailboat with no GPS, maps, compass, food, or water, and you leave Alaska and set sail to New Zealand, could you make it in 7 days nonstop? Or at all? The only valid explanation is that they were uniquely designed and equipped for their migration by God.

Fish migration

Salmon will spend most of their adult lives in ocean waters and return to fresh waters to spawn. They can migrate up to 7,000 miles, from their saltwater feeding grounds, through ocean migration routes, and then to freshwater rivers. The longest migration river route is 1800 miles from Alaska to British Columbia, Canada, via the Yukon River. When the salmon advance through their home river, with what some call smell memory, they can follow the scent directly to the spot where they hatched so they can spawn their eggs and die. The eggs hatch and the process repeats, over and over, for thousands of years with no change. Again, Scientists are baffled at how salmon navigate and smell with such precision. How? They were designed, programmed, and equipped for a specific task, to take a precise route, by God.

Bears hibernation

What happens to bears when winter comes with freezing temperatures, snow, and no available food? Do they Starve? No! First, the bears feast on salmon (we just read about) and other prey to build up their body fat in preparation for the long winter. As the temperatures drop, they prepare a den, a hole, or crevice that fits their body size to retain heat. Then they sleep to conserve energy and slow their metabolism. Their temperature can drop by 5% (other animals by more than 34%), and their heart rate lowers. They recycle their proteins and urine without urinating for months. They stay hydrated with metabolic fat and do not eat or drink during hibernation.



Lowering the body temperature, reducing heart rate, not urinating, eating, or drinking for months are not acquired skills, and it doesn't happen by accident. God designed, programmed, and equipped bears to endure extreme cold, with no food for months, to perpetuate the species.

Clouds

Let's look at another example of nature, the clouds, but we'll skip lightning bolts and thunder and only look at the water. In one giant thunderhead cloud, there could be as much as 2 billion pounds of water. Think about millions of pounds of water hanging over your head next time you look up at a cloud. God designed the clouds to release the rain

one drop at a time instead of all at once. An average raindrop could fall at speeds of 14 to 20 miles per hour from approximately 2,000 feet, and it could take 1 to 7 minutes to land on your head, depending on its temperature and density.

Job 26:8 He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight.

Can you imagine clouds weighing 2 billion pounds dropping all that water as a solid mass? What a disaster that would be. Right? Well, that's what happened during Noah's flood, and it destroyed the world. However, God made a promise not to destroy the earth again by water and put a rainbow in the clouds to confirm that promise. The clouds show us the goodness or severity of God. One little raindrop or snowflake on the tip of your tongue can be fun, but an army of them can destroy cities. The right amount of rain brings bountiful harvests with plenty of food, green plants, full lakes, and rivers. The lack of rain causes droughts and shortages in food and drinking water. Who designed the clouds and controls if they are a blessing or a judgment? God.

***Romans
11:22
Therefore
consider the
goodness
and severity
of God***



Matthew 5:45 ... for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

You can easily find hundreds of documentaries that chronicle the marvels of God's creation, yet the world pushes the theory of evolution. They completely ignore intelligent design and a creator because they are either blind or hard-hearted, and the Bible says they are fools.

Romans 1:20-22 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,

The evidence of intelligent design behind the creation reveals the wonders of the Almighty, all-knowing, all-wise, omnipresent eternal God, and should inspire our faith in the invisible God who made everything we see.

The human body

God created man in his image as a trinity with a body, soul, and spirit. And all our various mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects make us both unique to nature, and a marvel above all of God's earthly creations. Just the construction and function of the human body are evidence of God. Above all, we possess an eternal spiritual dynamic that is a mystery to fallen man. God knew us before we were

born and before he created the world, and he predestined us to be here by design, so we are not an accident.



Psalm 139:13-18 For you (God) created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the

days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

The list below gives just a few statistics about the human body to show how fearfully and wonderfully we are made and we are nothing short of a miracle of God.:

The Human Body

We have 37.2 trillion cells that spread across 200 different types of cells. We can think about 60,000 thoughts a day that gets processed by 100 billion neurons in our brains. We have 127 million retinal cells in our eyes, and we can see over 10 million colors. We have 1,000 olfactory receptors

in our nose that can recognize 50,000 smells. We have 30 trillion red blood cells, or about 1.6 gallons of blood, that flow through around 42 billion blood vessels that could stretch around the earth four times. Our heart does 115,000 heartbeats that pump about 2,000 gallons per day! Our lungs process between 17,280 and 23,040 breaths per day. Adults have 206 bones, children have 300 plus bones, and some bones fuse as they grow. Our physical strength comes from 650 muscles connected by 360 joints. We have 100 billion skin cells with 100,000 hair follicles, and our skin can create up to 2.6 gallons of sweat per day to control our body temperature. The human body is a creation of divine intelligence and design.

o

The Soul & Spirit

Man is a trinity of body, soul, and spirit and is very complex. We can see people's outward physical behavior, but we cannot see their invisible souls with our physical eyes.



1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since we live in a technology age and many people live vicariously through their cell phones and tablet screens, we will use a computer analogy. So, we will attempt to show the correlation between spiritual and physical realities by looking at computer hardware and software.



For our example, we will compare our physical body to a computer, with all its hardware made up of many components, each having a function designed to communicate, process information, and interact with the external world. The computer hardware (like our body) must endure all the wear and tear of continual physical use and will eventually wear out and cease to function.

We will compare the software to our soul and spirit. The computer will not function without software, which gets stored in the hard drive, and like the brain, it operates the entire system and does the actual computing, processing, or thinking. The software's presence is not tangible but is an unseen force, and once downloaded, it becomes stored, communicated, or travels between various Wi-Fi and hardware components. Because it is not material, it never wears out and lasts forever.

Our soul and spirit are not tangible but control all our thoughts, emotions, and memories, and they come with a built-in filter called the conscience. And the same way that a computer cannot function without software, our bodies are dead when separated from the spirit.



To show the reality of our souls, let's contemplate this computer question. If a memory stick weighs 1 ounce, and we take a set of library books that weighs 100 pounds, and we download the contents of the books into the memory stick. How much does the memory stick weigh now? Does it weigh 100 pounds? No, it would still weigh 1 ounce.

From all outward appearances, there is no evidence that the books exist on the memory stick, no added weight, and no visible differences. So, sceptics might say there are no books in the memory stick because they can't see them! The books exist, but you cannot see them with your eyes, but you know they are there. The data weighing 100 pounds written on physical paper weighs nothing in the invisible, untouchable digital world.



A spiritual realm exists parallel to the physical world where we live, but we can't see it or touch it physically, but it is there. We are blind to the spiritual beings surrounding us, tempting and influencing our thoughts and actions.

In our analogy, evil computer viruses would be like demons, and antivirus software protection would be like the conscience that should safeguard against evil. Unbelievers cannot perceive the reality of the spiritual kingdoms in conflict. And even believers are blind unless God opens their spiritual eyes to see the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of God and his kingdom. Everyone needs to have a spiritual software download, upgrade, or update.

Ephesians 1:17-20 ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the EYES of your understanding being enlightened; that you may 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 exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

What are the chances that a memory stick could evolve by itself from nothing? Someone designed and created the memory stick to retain vast amounts of information and perform complex functions transferring data in collaboration with the computer hardware. Memory sticks are engineered with complicated designs and constructed to meet precise specifications and tolerances within thousands of an inch with microprocessors and many electrical components and connections. Memory sticks are no accident, and their creation or evolution would be impossible outside of an intelligent designer and builder.

The human trinity, body, soul, and spirit are vastly more complicated than anything we can make, and we are the product of intelligent design. And our spiritual software is eternal, requiring new hardware to function in the next life. Our soul is our spiritual memory stick, and everything we see, feel, or think in our entire life gets downloaded to our memory stick. And when our physical body dies, before we get a new eternal body or hardware, God will replay, review, and judge all the data evidence stored in our files or the books and the book of life. Then he will determine which new hardware we get and what will be the new email address for our memory stick.

www.rewards/eternal_life@heaven.com

or

www.punishment/eternal_death@hell.com.

We stay surrounded by an invisible crowd of witnesses but we can't see them, just like we can't see 100 pounds of books in a memory stick, but they are there, and that should motivate us to run after what is important to our souls.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Word of God

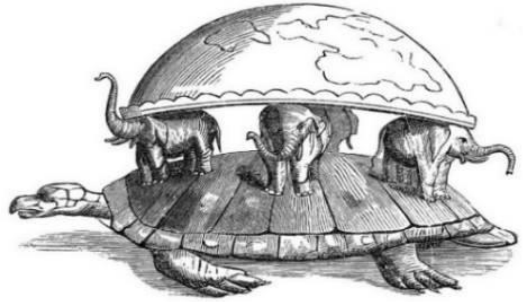
Faith comes from hearing God speak His word to us. We can have complete confidence in God's word because it is 100% truthful, accurate, and reliable. We have many examples from the earliest records of man's history, where scriptures stated facts about the world and the universe thousands of years before scientists knew they existed or could understand enough to verify the information.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Earth a globe

While the ancient world held to a myriad of mythologies to explain the earth's shape, and saying that it was flat, the

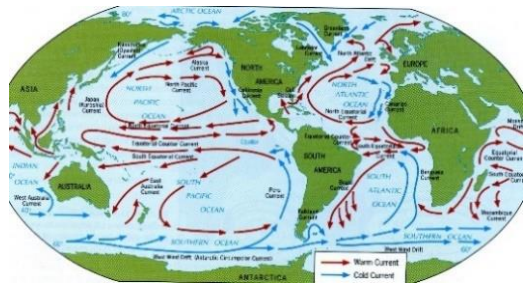
Bible said that it is a sphere globe with a circular horizon and also that it is suspended in the sky by nothing. All that information came from the book of Job, the oldest book of the Bible, and Job lived around 4,000 years ago. By comparison, the early Hindus taught that the world sits on the backs of elephants standing on the back of a turtle.



Job 26:7-9 He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing. He binds up the water in His thick clouds, Yet the clouds are not broken under it. He covers the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud over it. He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, At the boundary of light and darkness.

Ocean currents

The Bible mentioned the existence of ocean currents or paths as written roughly 3,000 years ago. In the mid-



1800s, Matthew Fontaine Maury, who served in the US Navy, “discovered” ocean currents. Matthew’s grandfather was the Reverend James Maury, who taught Thomas Jefferson. While reading the Bible, he came across a passage written by King David that mentions the paths of the seas. At the time, ocean currents were unknown, and Maury experienced ocean paths that led to his discovery.

Psalms 8:8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea that pass through the paths (currents) of the seas.

Ocean mountains

We all know the story of Jonah, who wrote about his incident with a big fish that happened to him close to 3,000 years ago. Some sailors threw Jonah overboard in the middle of the ocean, he got swallowed by a fish, and in the first submarine ride. He described his journey to the bottom of the mountains in the sea. For all the Jonah fish skeptics, underwater mountain ranges in the ocean were not "discovered" until 1938 and the 1940s, when they began to map ocean topography.

Jonah 2:5-6 ... the waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

Springs of the sea

While speaking of the oceans, starting 4,000 years ago, Job, Moses, and David told of springs of water coming up from the depths of the sea. When they talked about fountains of the deep, that would include deep-sea fountains of water springing from the ocean floor. The word "deep" in Hebrew is t@howm and means an abyss as a surging mass of water, the deep sea, or the underground water supply.

Job 38:16 "Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?"

Genesis 7:11 *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains (springs, NIV) of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*

Proverbs 8:27 *When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass (circle, reference to round horizon) upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:*

Only after they started mapping the sea floor, enabled by the advancement of underwater exploration equipment, did modern scientists "discover" deep-sea springs of water. Evidence for shallow sea springs was first "discovered" in the 1960s in the Red Sea and off the coast of Baja California. The first direct observations of deep-sea springs, or their mineralized vents, appear to have been made on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge in 1973.

The Sun's orbit

King David stated that the Sun travels in a circle, or an orbit from one end of the heavens to the other. For thousands of years, those facts were not "discovered," proving that the earth revolves around the Sun and the Sun revolves around the center of the Milky Way.



Psalm 19:1-6 *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork ... In them He has set a tabernacle **for the sun**, Which, is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. **Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit (or circle, orbit) to the other end;** And there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

In another astronomy note, Jeremiah (and others) said that the stars could not be numbered (by man), and of course, God has them numbered and knows each one by name.

Psalm 147:4 *(speaking of God) **He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.***

Jeremiah 33:22 *I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me **as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.**" (NIV)*

With the invention of the telescope in 1610, Galileo became the father of modern astronomy. Around 1910, astronomers found spiral nebulae (galaxies other than the milky way), and in 1914 they found that the spiral nebula is in perpetual rotation (or orbit). Until the early 1920s, most astronomers thought that the Milky Way contained all the stars in the universe, but after 1920 they showed that the Milky Way is just one of many galaxies.



The latest scientific estimate in 2021 was that there are roughly 200 billion galaxies, each having an untold number of stars. The same way the earth orbits the Sun, the Sun orbits the center of the Milky Way. Our solar system is moving with speeds of 515,000 mph, and it takes about 250 million years for the Sun to make one complete trip around the Milky Way, according to scientists, but what do they know?

We are amazed at how incomprehensibly vast the universe, galaxies, and solar systems are, but the Bible says that heaven of the heavens cannot contain God! How great is God! And how tiny, insignificant, and frail we are in light of God's magnificence, majesty, and glory! That's what King David thought about himself when he would look up and stare at the stars at night.

1 Kings 8:27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You.

Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

We have seen different aspects of how the Bible builds our faith through revealing the secrets of creation, but possibly the most profound effect of the word of God for us is how it directly impacts our lives. Here is a brief list highlighting the power that God's word makes available to us by faith.

Romans 10:17, **faith** comes by hearing the word of God
1 Peter 1:23, we are been **born again**, by the word of God
1 Peter 2:2, the word is like **milk** to help us grow
Hebrews 5:12-14, the word is **meat to make us strong**
John 15:3, the words that Jesus spoke makes us **clean**
John 6:63, Jesus words are **spirit**, and they are **life**
Psalms 107:19-20 God's word to **heal** and **delivers** us
Ephesians 5:25-26, the word **cleanses & washes** us
Jeremiah 20:9, the word a **burning fire** in heart & bones
Luke 24:32, scripture gives **burning hearts for God**
Ephesians 6:17, the word, the **sword of Spirit, a weapon**
Acts 20:32, word of **grace, builds up, gives inheritance**

The Patriarchs

Faith is a relationship of trust, obedience, and dependence on God. Faith is like a journey, and each experience of our faith builds on the previous ones. In the process, we change and grow in our understanding of God and ourselves.

If you want more faith, be ready to be put into impossible situations that force you to depend on God alone for help. Our faith also grows by seeing how God has taken people through impossible situations and has done the miraculous on their behalf. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 is what some call the faith hall of fame, with a list of the patriarchs and saints and the great exploits they did by faith. We will start by looking at Abraham.

Abraham

Abraham is called the father of faith, and we are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of his faith.

Here's the catch, for faith to grow, the challenges must increase in difficulty. Abraham's first step of faith was leaving the comfort of his hometown of Ur, with its Babylonian idolatry, astrology, and wickedness. Abraham's faith grew step by step until he had complete confidence and trust in God, even to the level of resurrection faith. Let's follow Abraham's challenging journey that took him from faith to faith.

Romans 4:11-12 ... that he might be **the father of all those who believe** though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and **the father** of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but **who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham** had while still uncircumcised.

Abraham's journey began when he was 75 years old. God called him to leave the comfort of his hometown and his relatives to go out into the wilderness, not knowing where he was going. Can you imagine the conversations with his relatives? Oh, so you heard a voice, and this voice told you to go and wander in the wilderness? Are you crazy? And yes, faith can appear crazy to unbelievers sometimes, but Abraham obeyed God and went anyway. The steps of Abraham's faith are like this, 1. God speaks. 2. We obey. 3. Repeat. We do not proceed to the next steps until our obedience is complete where we are now. So, we go from one act of obedience to another and from faith to faith.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going (by faith).

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

After Abraham obeyed by leaving and forsaking the idolatrous Babylonian culture, God gave him the next step for faith to grow. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. One problem, Abraham was 75 years old, and his wife Sarah was 65 and unable to have children. That sounds like a big challenge, and apparently, it was not challenging enough. Maybe they were too young for God to get all the credit, so Abraham had to wait patiently for another 25 years for a son.

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Hebrews 6:12-15 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

So, after twenty-five years, Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90, but Abraham did not waver in his faith but was fully convinced, not in himself or Sarah, but in God's promise and his ability to do miracles. And Sarah's faith increased, her body underwent a restoration, and she received the strength to have a child.

Romans 4:12-22 ... who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Hebrews 11:11-12 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore, sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

God had one more test of obedience for Abraham and told him to offer his son, his only son, as a sacrifice (symbolic of the death of Jesus on the cross).

There are different opinions about how old Abraham was when he offered Isaac on the altar. For our example, he was 115, so Abraham had hoped, waited, prayed, and spent 40 years of his life focused on his heir, his only son, and now he is asked to end his life. The unbelieving mind cannot understand that request, but Abraham did. Abraham's faith had grown to the point that he believed that if God asked him to kill his son, then God would raise him from the dead. Abraham had resurrection faith which is the ultimate goal for all believers.

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only



begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

King David

King David was another hero of the faith, and when he was a young shepherd guarding his flock, a lion and a bear attacked his sheep. David did not run away but ran after them and killed the vicious beast with his bare hands. That gave him confidence and prepared him to face the Philistine giant, Goliath.

*1 Samuel 17:34-37 And David said unto Saul, thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a **lion**, and a **bear**, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. **Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them**, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, **The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.***

When David heard Goliath slander the God of Israel, his zeal for God made his anger rise, so he could not restrain himself from answering Goliath's "winner takes all" challenge. King Saul and his son Jonathan were the only two men in Israel who owned a sword. Saul offered his armor and sword to David, but David refused them and went to battle with his trusty shepherd staff and a slingshot.

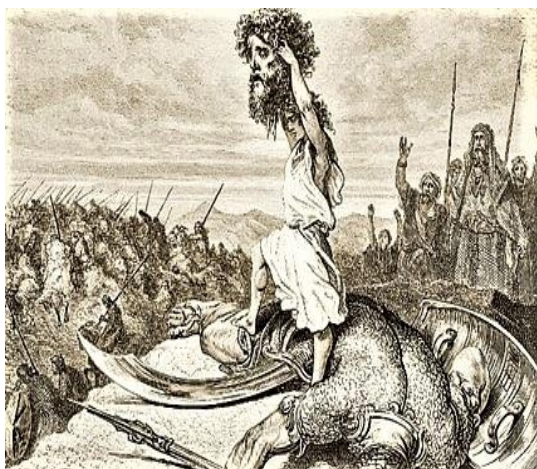
*1 Samuel 17:40 Then he **took his staff** in his hand; and he chose for himself **five smooth stones** from the brook, and **put them in a shepherd's bag**, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine.*

After Goliath cursed David by his gods, David stated his faith and purpose for engaging in the fight. David was fighting to defend God's honor.

Also, David demonstrated to the Israelites that they should not trust in themselves or their weapons, or lack of weapons, but commit the battle to the Lord and trust in God to give the victory by faith.

1 Samuel 17:45-47 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. "This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. "Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands."

The army of Israel had no weapons, so David showed them that they could defeat the enemy's biggest champion with a small rock. Rocks were readily available, were free, and anyone could pick up a rock. With David's victory, he armed all of Israel with swords from the defeated Philistines, but David kept Goliath's sword. More important than providing them with weapons, David gave Israel the gift of faith.



1 Samuel 17:50-52 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore, David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines

David's defeat of Goliath is a type of Christ's "winner takes all" victory over sin by his death on the cross. Jesus single-handedly defeated death, hell, and the Devil and stripped them of all their power. And Jesus kept Goliath's sword, the keys of death and hell. Then Jesus equipped all believers with the sword of the Spirit with authority over all the enemy's power. Jesus is our rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), he is our salvation, and praise be unto God who always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus. It's so easy that anyone can believe and pick up a rock and take down the giants by faith.

Luke 10:18-19 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ,

Abraham, the father of many nations, foresaw the gospel while offering his only son Isaac upon the altar when God stopped him and provided a lamb to take Isaac's place. The lamb was symbolic of Christ, God's only son, who took the sins of the whole world on the altar, the cross, bringing salvation to Jew and Gentile.

Galatians 3:6-9 ... just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore, know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So, then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

David as the King of Israel foreshadowed the Messiah, Christ the anointed one, the King of Jews and the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Jesus is returning as the conquering king, the son of David, to make war and judge the nations, trample them in the winepress of God's wrath, and then rule the nations from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.



Revelation 19:13-16 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called **The Word of God**. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**.

History & Prophecy

We have proof of the infallibility of scriptures and the existence of God because of the evidence provided by prophecy, archeology, and history. Here's the pattern; God inspires the prophets to foretell the future, things happen as predicted, things are forgotten and buried with time, centuries pass, then archeologist dig up the evidence that prophecy happened as foretold and teach it as history.

God gives details of future events so that after it comes to pass, we can recognize God alone has exact details of the future with 100% accuracy, as revealed by the prophecy of the scriptures. The eternal God created time with the creation of the sun, moon, and stars he made as markers of time, days, nights, months, and years. God is above the restraints of time and observes, occupies, and knows every detail of the past, present, and future. Simultaneously. The same power God used to create time; he will use to end it so that only the eternal things will remain.

In John's book recording the Revelation of Christ, Jesus gives his name as the beginning and end. who was. who is. and who is to come. So, prophecy will be fulfilled to the exact detail, vindicating the prophets and the only true eternal God.

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Isaiah 44:6-8 "This is what the LORD says Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come yes, let him foretell what will come. Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago.

Isaiah 45:21 Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me.

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Isaiah 48:3 I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.

Let's look at a few examples of God proclaiming and foretelling future events centuries before they happened. We will see statistical evidence that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were miraculous in their fulfillment to the glory of God.

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Prophecy Josiah

The first prophecy we'll consider is regarding the pagan altars built in Bethel by Jeroboam. Jeroboam had just led a rebellion against Judah and incorporated idolatry as a way to establish his kingdom. While Jeroboam was burning a sacrifice on the pagan altar, a man of God appeared and gave a detailed prophecy.

1 Kings 13:1 -4 And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' "And he gave a sign the same day, saying, " ***This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.*** " So, it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand ...

... from the altar, saying, "Arrest him!" Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

The first part of the prophecy happened right then, the altar split open, the ashes fell out, and Jeroboam's hand withered. But the second part did not come to pass for 350 years. That part of the prophecy stated that a child would be born named Josiah. The accuracy of the wording is notable in saying "a child shall be born named Josiah" because Josiah was eight years old when he became the King. Josiah was a good king, and he went throughout Judah and purged it from idolatry, and went into the northern kingdom, to Bethel and destroyed and desecrated the pagan altars and idols there. Josiah was the fulfillment of the prophecy 350 years later.

2 Kings 22:1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king

2 Kings 23:16-18 Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed,

Prophecy Tyre

Next, we use an example that includes a verifiable historical figure, Alexander the Great. Both Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied about him. For this example, we refer to the work of a professional statistician.

The quotes used are from the book *Science Speaks* by Peter Stoner, who illustrates the statistical probability of Bible prophecy happening by accident. Going to the prophecy of Ezekiel 26 concerning the city of Tyre, there are seven prophecies contained in the chapter, which Ezekiel wrote in 590 BC:

The Seven Prophecies of Tyre

1. Nebuchadnezzar shall conquer the city (vs. 7-11).
2. Other nations will assist Nebuchadnezzar (vs. 3).
3. The city will be made like a bare rock (vs. 4 & 14).
4. Becomes place for spreading fishing nets (vs. 5, 14).
5. Its stones & timbers will be thrown in sea (vs. 12).
6. Other cities will fear greatly at Tyre's fall (vs. 16).
7. The old city of Tyre will never be rebuilt (vs. 14).


Four years after this prophecy was given, **Nebuchadnezzar** laid siege to Tyre. The siege lasted 13 years. When the city finally fell in 573 BC, it was discovered that everything of value had been moved to a nearby island.

Two hundred and forty-one years later **Alexander the Great** arrived on the scene. Fearing that the fleet of Tyre might be used against his homeland, he decided to take the island where the city had been moved to. He accomplished this goal by building a causeway from the mainland to the island, and he did that by using all the building materials from the ruins of the old city. Neighbouring cities were so frightened by Alexander's conquest that they immediately opened their gates to him. Ever since that time, Tyre has

remained in ruins and is a place where fishermen spread their nets. Thus, every detail of the prophecy was fulfilled exactly as predicted. Peter Stoner calculated the odds of such a prophecy being fulfilled by chance as being 1 in 75,000,000, or 1 in 7.5×10^7 . (The exponent 7 indicates that the decimal is to be moved to the right seven places.)

Stoner proceeds to calculate the probabilities of the prophecies concerning Samaria, Gaza and Ashkelon, Jericho, Palestine, Moab and Ammon, Edom, and Babylon. He also calculates the odds of prophecies being fulfilled that predicted the closing of the Eastern Gate (Ezekiel 44:1-3), the plowing of Mount Zion (Micah 3:12), and the enlargement of Jerusalem according to a prescribed pattern (Jeremiah 31:38-40). Combining all these prophecies, he concludes that “the probability of these 11 prophecies coming true, if written in human wisdom, is... 1 in 5.76×10^{59} . **Needless to say, this is a number beyond the realm of possibility.**

Tyre Prophecy Fulfilled



Jetty of the 'Sidonian harbour', now submerged

Alexander charts 250 ships from Arvad, Byblos, Sidon, Rhodes, and Cyprus to blockade the harbours

The small present-day city of Sur (5,500 inhab)

The whole island was surrounded by a great rampart nearly 170 ft high, according to Arrian

Coastline today

Probable coastline of the island

Alexander's causeway, 200ft wide, built from the ruins of ancient Tyre on the mainland and cedars of Lebanon

During Alexander's siege the number of Tyre's inhabitants almost doubled, rising to 45,000





The lay-out of the 'Egyptian harbour', now submerged, was established in 1935/36 with the aid of aerial photos, graphs and divers

TYRE, 'THE ROCK'
Powerful commercial city, 'in the midst of the sea' (Ez 26)

586 B.C. Prophecy

254 Years

332 B.C. Fulfilled

Prophecy Cyrus

Another set of prophecies starts with Isaiah, then branches out and becomes intertwined with predictions from other prophets. Through Isaiah, God foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, that they would be in ruins, and the people would be taken captive. Also (150 years later), God would bring a pagan ruler to power named Cyrus, who would free the Jewish captives and enable and encourage them to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

Isaiah 45:1 "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: I have raised him up in righteousness, And I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward," says the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 44:28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."'

Jeremiah's 70 Years

One hundred years after Isaiah's prophecy, the Babylonians surrounded Jerusalem and laid siege to it for several years. After they conquered Jerusalem, they tore down the walls and burned everything to the ground, including the temple. The majority of the Jews were captured and taken as captives to Babylon. During the siege, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied that Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 *This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever.*

Isaiah's prophecy had been given 80 years before Jeremiah's, adding 70 more years, so after 150 years, the destruction, captivity, return, and rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple were coming to pass. That caught the attention of another prophet, Daniel, who was in Babylon with the other captives. Daniel was reading Jeremiah's writings and saw the prophecy regarding seventy years, so he went into intercessory prayer for Israel's restoration.

Daniel 9:2 ... *I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.*

Command to rebuild

Finally, the Medes and Persians destroyed Babylon (fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy), and Cyrus came to power and did everything that was prophesied about him 150 years before. Among those returning to Jerusalem were Ezra the priest, Nehemiah the governor, and two more prophets, Zechariah and Haggai. There was opposition to the Jews, but through the prophesying of Zechariah and Haggai, the work of rebuilding prospered.

*Ezra 1:1-2 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, **the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation** throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.*

*Ezra 6:14 So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, **according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.***

*2 Chronicles 36:21-23 The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, **until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation** throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:"' The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.'"*

Daniel's 70 Weeks

Remember Daniel reading about the 70th year? Daniel had one of the most significant prophecies in the Bible about the coming of the Messiah (Christ) that began **from the very day Cyrus gave the order** to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Daniel prophesied the exact day that Jesus would make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the five gentile world empires, and the signing of a seven-year covenant that begins the tribulation and the final global dictator known as the antichrist. So, Daniel's prophecies reached more than 2500 years in the future. But all his prophecies begin with Cyrus giving the command to rebuild Jerusalem.

Daniel 9:24-26 "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. "Know therefore and understand, **that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (7 weeks + 62 weeks = 69 weeks); The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. "And after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself**

In Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks, he prophesied to the exact day that Messiah (Jesus) would enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday 483 years in the future. Daniel's prophecy said from the command to rebuild the second temple to the Messiah will be 69 weeks of 7 years or 483 years.

The command to rebuild the temple came on March 14, 445 B.C., to get the correct date of the appearance of the Messiah we have to convert the Jewish 360-day calendar to the Roman 365-day calendar and account for the leap year differences, according to the language of the prophecy and the Jewish practices. 483 years x 360 days = 173,880 days converted to the Roman Calendar is 476 years & 24 days

173,740 days	173,740 days = 476 years
24 days	March 14 counting forward 24 days
<u>116 days</u>	116 days added for leap years
173,880 days	483 years or 69 weeks of 7 years

From March 14, 445 B.C., plus 483 years ends on April 6, 32 A.D., or the exact date that Jesus had his triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, in fulfillment of the prophecy of the 69th week, given by Daniel.

The prophet Zechariah also prophesied about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and he prophesied around 520 B.C., over 550 years before Christ entered Jerusalem.

Prophecy

Zechariah 9:9** "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! **Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

Fulfillment

***Matthew 21:4-9** All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Tell the daughter of Zion, '**Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.**'"*

Jesus knew perfectly well that he was fulfilling prophecy as he entered Jerusalem, saying if you would have known, on this your day (the exact day prophesied by Daniel). Christ the Messiah rode into Jerusalem exactly as predicted 550 years before by Zechariah and Daniel, the people did not know it, but Jesus did and wept over them. Jesus wept because the Jewish leaders had rejected him as their Messiah, and later, he prophesied the destruction of their temple as a consequence, which happened around 37 years later.

*Luke 19:37-42 Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: "**Blessed is the King (Messiah) who comes in the name of the LORD!**" Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." Now as He drew near, **He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.***

Impossible Odds

Let's return to Peter Stoner's statistics, where he calculated the statistical probability of just 8 Messianic prophecies fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

1. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The average population of Bethlehem from the time of Micah to the present (1958) divided by the average population of the earth during the same period.

Estimate: $7,150/2,000,000,000$ or 2.8×10^5 .

2. A messenger will prepare the way for the Messiah (Mal. 3:1). one man in how many, the world over, has had a forerunner (in this case, John the Baptist) to prepare his way?

Estimate: 1 in 1,000 or 1×10^3 .

3. The Messiah will enter Jerusalem as a king riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). One man in how many, who has entered Jerusalem as a ruler, has entered riding on a donkey?

Estimate: 1 in 100 or 1×10^2 .

4. The Messiah will be betrayed by a friend and suffer wounds in His hands (Zechariah 13:6). One man in how many, the world over, has been betrayed by a friend, resulting in wounds in his hands?

Estimate: 1 in 1,000 or 1×10^3 .

5. The Messiah will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12). Of the people who have been betrayed, one in how many has been betrayed for exactly 30 pieces of silver?

Estimate: 1 in 1,000 or 1×10^3 .

6. The betrayal money will be used to purchase a potter's field (**Zechariah 11:13**). One man in how many, after receiving a bribe for the betrayal of a friend, has returned

the money, had it refused, and then experienced it being used to buy a potter's field?

Estimate: 1 in 100,000 or 1×10^5 .

7. The Messiah will remain silent while He is afflicted (Isaiah 53:7). One man in how many, when he is oppressed and afflicted, though innocent, will make no defense of himself?

Estimate: 1 in 1,000 or 1×10^3 .

8. The Messiah will die by having His hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16). One man in how many, since the time of David, has been crucified?

Estimate: 1 in 10,000 or 1×10^4 .

Multiplying all these probabilities together produces a number (rounded off) of 1×10^{28} . Dividing this number by an estimate of the number of people who have lived since the time of these prophecies (88 billion) produces a probability of all 8 prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of one person. That probability is 1 in 10^{17} or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. That's one in one hundred quadrillion! Stoner proceeds to use the eight previously mentioned prophecies about the Messiah and calculates the odds of their accidental fulfillment in one person as being 1 in 10^{17} .



To picture this imagine filling the State of Texas knee deep in silver dollars. Include in this huge number **one silver dollar with a black check mark on it**. Then, turn a blindfolded person loose in this sea of silver dollars. The odds that the first coin he would pick up would be the one with the black check mark are the same as 8 prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of Jesus. The point, of course, is that when people say that the fulfillment of prophecy in the life of Jesus was accidental, they do not know what they are talking about. Keep in mind that Jesus did not just fulfill 8 prophecies, He fulfilled 108. The chances of fulfilling 16 is 1 in 10^{45} . When you get to a total of 48, the odds increase to 1 in 10^{157} . **Accidental fulfillment of these prophecies is simply beyond the realm of possibility.**

One of the most remarkable Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures is the one that precisely states that the Messiah will die by crucifixion. It is found in Psalm 22:16 where David prophesied the Messiah would die by having His hands and feet pierced. That prophecy was written 1,000 years before Jesus was born. When it was written, the Jewish method of execution was by stoning. The prophecy was also written many years before the Romans perfected crucifixion as a method of execution. Even when Jesus was killed, the Jews still relied on stoning as their method of execution, but they had lost the power to implement the death penalty due to Roman occupation. That is why they were forced to take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, and that's how Jesus ended up being crucified, in fulfillment of David's prophecy.

We have looked at just a few of the more than 800 prophecies in the Bible; we have seen different prophets in our examples; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, David, Micah, and Malachi. They lived centuries apart and prophesied centuries into the future with 100% accuracy.

All the prophecies sounded like they came from one person, and they did because all Biblical prophecies came from the inspiration of God.

*1 Peter 1:10-12 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time **the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.***

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

Revelation 19:10 ... Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The Resurrection

The resurrection of the dead is the backbone of the Christian faith because if Jesus did not rise from the dead, our faith would be useless, and believers would be pitiful.

1 Corinthians 15:14-19 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact. period. The birth of Christ is our marker for time, either B.C. before Christ's birth or A.D. after Christ's death, although the godless are trying to remove the name of Christ from public dialogue. We have irrefutable historical documentation for the life, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Christ died, and three days later, he was resurrected from the dead and appeared to his apostles and disciples. Then for 40 days, he was seen by 500 witnesses. According to the law, you only need 2 or 3 witnesses to establish evidence in court (Deuteronomy. 17:6, Matthew 18:16).



Acts 1:1-3... all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by **many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days** and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.** After that **He was seen by over five hundred brethren** at once ... After that He was seen by **James, then by all the apostles.** Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

1 John 1:1-3 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

John 20:24-29 Now **Thomas**, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So, he said to them, "**Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.**" And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" **Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and**

reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**"

The Apostle Peter

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive power. On the day of Pentecost, 120 disciples were praying in an upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon them and filled them with the power of God. Then Peter, who just 40 days before had denied the Lord out of fear, was now filled with boldness and preached a powerful and searing message to the same people who had crucified Jesus. Peter's message pierced their hearts, so they repented, and 3,000 converted to faith in Christ.

*Acts 2:22-32 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs **which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know** "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, **you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;** "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. ... "he (King David), foreseeing this, **spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.** "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.*

Acts 2:37-41 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ... Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Soon after that, God used Peter for the miraculous healing of a crippled man. When the people ran to see what happened, Peter preached to them. Again, Peter held the crowd accountable for having Christ crucified and preached the resurrection and faith in Christ to them.

Acts 3:13-16 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom **you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate**, when he was determined to let Him go. "**But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life**, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

The same religious leaders that had Jesus crucified, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came and had Peter and John arrested and thrown into jail. The next day the rulers, elders, scribes, and high priests threatened the apostles and commanded them to be silent about Jesus. But Peter was bold and fearless, saying he could not stop preaching Christ.

Acts 4:18-20 *And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

Peter did not shut his mouth, and he never ceased preaching about the resurrection of Christ. At the end of his life, Emperor Nero sentenced Peter to die by crucifixion because of his faith. Peter said that he was not worthy to die in the same way as his Lord Jesus, so Peter requested to be crucified upside down, and they granted his request. Can there be a more powerful eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ than someone who would die for their faith?



The Greek word for witness is the root word for martyr, and the overwhelming number of witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus confirmed their testimony with their blood and died as martyrs. Ten of eleven apostles died as martyrs, and millions have followed their example of faith. All those believers who chose death rather than denying Christ give irrefutable veracity to their witnesses for Christ.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses (martyrs) to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Apostle Paul

From the moment Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, he became possibly the most vocal, zealous, tireless, relentless, and unstoppable missionary of all time. However, everywhere he went, he suffered severe persecution as a result.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

What was the driving force behind Paul? Paul was on his way to a successful academic career with multiple degrees from the top teacher of his day. What could compel a man to throw away success, honor, and fame to continually risk his life with beatings, imprisonment, deprivations, and scorn? What was the burning desire inside of Paul that motivated him? His passion was to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

Philippians 3:8-11 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul was a living testament to the cross of Christ and his resurrection. Paul forwarded the premise that since Christ died for his sins, he was dead, and Christ was living vicariously through him. At the end of his life, Paul became a martyr for his faith in Christ.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 6:4-5 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

For the last 2,000 years, an innumerable multitude in the hundreds of millions made the same profession of faith as Paul, about the life of Christ abiding inside them. Believers from every generation, nation, and every class and level of the social hierarchy have put their faith in a poor man who was rejected, scourged, beaten, crucified, and died naked on a cross. And his followers have been publicly shamed, persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, and killed for their faith. Who in the right mind would sign up for that?

Yet these followers turned the world upside down, transforming cultures, societies, and nations one life at a time of their own free will. And, from the most despised and evil outcast to the most powerful, successful, and honorable among us, they all share the same testimony that their lives have been changed, transformed, and made new by Christ, who lives inside their hearts by faith. How do you explain that kind of voluntary commitment, sacrifice, and transformational power in the lives of so many people over 2,000 years, except that it must be by the providence of God!

Faith & Conscience

God created man in his image as a trinity consisting of body, soul, and spirit. The conscience is the dialogue with ourselves in our mind as we make plans, motives, excuses, rationales, arguments, and mentally judge between right and wrong. When we feel guilty, condemned, or double-minded, we cannot expect to have faith or answers to prayer. We need a pure conscience to have confidence, trust, and faith in God.

Romans 2:14-16 ... their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

1 Timothy 3:9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

Hebrews 4:12-14 For the word of God ... penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

James 1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

God designed the conscience to be sensitive and give us discernment between good and evil as a guide to lead us to do what is right. But we were born with a sinful nature that always conflicts with our conscience pulling us to satisfy the vices of our fallen nature. A little child has a pure conscience and doesn't know how to lie. But with every lie, the conscience becomes less sensitive, and it becomes easier to lie. If we repeatedly go against our conscience, our hearts will become hardened and eventually unable to feel remorse for doing wrong, and we can damage or lose our souls.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such

teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

1 Timothy 1:19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

There is only one answer for a guilty conscience, and that is by faith in what the shed blood of Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Only because Jesus sacrificed himself for us can we have a pure conscience before God. But we need to bring our sins out of the darkness, expose them to the light, and confess them to God, and he will forgive us, cleanse our conscience, and restore our faith and confidence to stand before him.

*1 John 1:5-9 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.** If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

As a result of having faith in God, we may be prompted to do works of obedience as a demonstration of our faith.

James 2:17-18 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have

faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

However, our good deeds cannot save us, we do not do good works to be saved, we do works of obedience because we are saved. Our only hope of salvation is by having faith in Jesus alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Galatians 2:6 *"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

In the first church they could summarize their belief system and lifestyle by using just two words, "the faith" which was synonymous with Christianity and the gospel.

2 Timothy 4:6, 7 *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Romans 16:26 *but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to*

*all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for **obedience to the faith** to God*
Acts 6:7 ... *the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were **obedient to the faith**.*

Romans 1:5 *Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for **obedience to the faith** among all nations for His name*

We have different ways to build up our faith, and faith comes by reading, hearing, and preaching the word of God.

Romans 10:8-14 *But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, **the word of faith which we preach**): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And **how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?***

Romans 10:17 *So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."*

Another way to build our faith is by prayer, especially Spirit filled prayers.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

Our faith grows by hearing the testimonies of others. In Hebrews chapter 11, we see the testimonies of the heroes of faith written to encourage our faith; Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

Just like the saints who preceded us, our faith and testimony will endure testing to reveal the level of our sincerity and convictions. If we pass the tests, our faith grows and becomes more and more precious. Times of testing are bitter-sweet, bitter at the time of testing but sweet when you look back and see how many ways God carried you, and ultimately increasing your faith in him.

1 Peter 1:3-9 ... In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an

inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Revelation 3:18-19 (Jesus) "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich ... "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.

Ultimately, faith is a gift from God, and each believer is given a measure of faith.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

Romans 12:3 ... as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Rapture

If we agree with all the evidence for faith put forward up to this point, then we have to believe that all the unfulfilled future prophecies will come to pass also. The unfulfilled prophecies outnumber the fulfilled prophecies by 8 to 1. That means the greatest and the worst of times are coming. The rapture will be the most glorious miracle ever, with millions of believers being snatched up into heaven by Jesus in the twinkle of an eye, and it could happen at any time.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the

*voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.*

***Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,** according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

***1 Corinthians 15:51-53** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*



After the rapture comes a time that will last seven years, and it will be hell on the earth, and that time is called the great tribulation. That will be the worst time in human history with wars, plagues, torments, a global tyranny, the martyrdom of believers, and most of the earth's population getting killed. The great tribulation is ended by Christ at His second coming when he destroys the armies surrounding Jerusalem and judges the nations smashing them in the winepress of God's wrath.

*Matthew 24:21-22 "For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. "And **unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved**;*

*Matthew 24:29-30 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in **heaven**, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.***

*Revelation 6:8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named **Death**, and **Hades** was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth (**possibly 2 billion people**) to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*

Revelation 9:15 And the **four angels** who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. **(Possibly 2.4 billion people)**

Zechariah 14:12 And this shall be the plague with which the **LORD** will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: ***Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.***

The great tribulation will be the closest thing to hell this side of eternity, and all who miss the rapture will go through it. But thank God that believers in Jesus are not appointed to go through it, but we should pray to be found worthy to escape it.

Luke 21:35-36 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Peter asks the question since all these things are coming, what kind of people should we be? In other words, if you believe, it demands a response. Peter's answer was to live godly, holy lives.



*2 Peter 3:10-12 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?***

We should build our faith and live in expectation of the rapture, our blessed hope. We cannot save ourselves, so our faith is in Christ, who began his work in our lives and is faithful to complete it and prepare us for the rapture and his kingdom.

Hebrews 12:2 ... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,

Philippians 1:6 ... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Titus 2:13-14 ... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy ...

Repentance

Introduction

The nature of fallen man is to stray away from God, and even blood-bought born-again believers can stray from God. But through repentance, we turn around to get on the right track and seek God. Whether a lost soul in the pit of despair, lukewarm pew sitters flirting with the devil, or an entire nation with a cloud of judgment hanging overhead, it is only humble repentance that can move us from guilt and condemnation to becoming the object of God's mercy and forgiveness. The basic idea of repentance is to stop sinning and do what is right.

Isaiah 53:6, All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him (Christ) the iniquity of us all.

*Daniel 4:27, Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; **break off your sins by being righteous**, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.*

Types of sins

What does the Bible mean by sin? Everyone can have their own opinions about what constitutes sin, and man's definition can change, usually by lowering or dropping the standards so that anything goes. The real question is, how does God define sin? We also know that God's standards are fixed and will never change.

If we are wrong about our assumptions of what God will tolerate and what he will judge, we put ourselves in eternal jeopardy. We do well to know God's precepts regarding sin and respond accordingly. We will begin with a generic definition of sin and explore more specific categories of sins that are less familiar. Here are a few Biblical examples of various sins.

Law breaking

In our first example, many religious, self-righteous, hypocritical leaders are in for a big surprise when they stand before God. They look for rewards for all their good works, but because they did their own thing in God's name, Jesus does not know them, and their good deeds are sins of lawlessness. When we operate outside the perimeters of God's revealed will in the word of God, we are disobedient, rebellious, and lawless.

Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. '**Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

John 3:4, Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Partial obedience is disobedience, we cannot serve two masters, and it's one or the other.

Therefore, we cannot do our own thing, be worldly-minded, give room to the devil, and give total obedience to God. God commanded Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, men, women, children, and cattle, because of their wickedness. But Saul spared the best of the cattle and Agag the king but boasted that he obeyed the command of the Lord. Saul's partial obedience was disobedience, rebellion, and witchcraft.

1 Samuel 15:22-24 Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king." Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

Wickedness

All wrongdoing, evil, and wicked actions and words can be sins. Even if nobody else is affected or knows about it, a secret sin is still a sin. When Potipher's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he rejected her because he did not want to commit wickedness against God. Joseph was saying that all sins are against God. Adultery and all kinds of sins can be hidden and kept secret from man, but there is nothing hidden from God.

1 John 5:17, "All unrighteousness is sin."

Genesis 39:9, (Joseph speaking to Potiphar's wife),
"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has
he (Potiphar) kept back anything from me but you,
because you are his wife. **How then can I do this
great wickedness, and sin against God?"**

Sins of omission

Sometimes sin is not what you do but rather what you did not do. Look at the example of the sheep and goat judgment, the sheep receive rewards for what they did, but goats get judged and condemned for what they did not do.

James 4:17, *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

Matthew 25:41-43 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, '**Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'**

Also, for the priest, prophet, and judge Samuel it would have been a sin to stop praying for Israel. If we know what we should do, there are no excuses for not doing it.

1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, **far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.**

Sins of conscience

The conscience is a delicate instrument designed to sound alarms in our soul if we get too close to sin, or if we have sinned, the conscience will sound alarms until we change directions. That is if we have not shut off or damaged our conscience. Whenever we go against our conscience and sin, we put our spiritual life in peril. The same is true if we knowingly do anything that defiles or causes someone else to sin against their conscience. Even if that is something like eating meat if that bothers another person's conscience. If eating meat or any questionable activity creates a conflict of conscience, we should not offend or defile other people's conscience and stop doing the activity in question (in front of them).

***1 Corinthians 8:12,13** But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

***Romans 2:15-16** ... their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

***Acts 24:16** "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

Sins driven by fear

There are two types of fear; the first is a godly reverence and respect for God, which keeps us away from sin, gives us wisdom and understanding, and is good. The other kind of fear is evil involving torment and bondage and drives us to do evil out of self-interest and preservation.

Fear is the opposite of faith because fear is believing that the wrong things will happen, taking us captive to the enemy. Fear can cancel or void our faith and can be a trigger that pushes us to sin. Fear is one of the biggest weapons of Satanic powers to manipulate and control us, and if we submit to it, we come under its bondage to sin.

Romans 14:23, "... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He (Jesus) Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Romans 8:14-15 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

Turning point

Another definition of repentance is a change of attitude, purpose, and direction. The word "turn" is a keyword used repeatedly in the scriptures to describe repentance. It is not enough to say you will stop doing something, repentance requires a change of direction, a different course of action.

Ezekiel 18.21-32, "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die... "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live" Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. "Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore, turn and live!"

*Acts 9:32-35, "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and **turned to the Lord.**"*

*Acts 11:21 "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and **turned unto the Lord.**"*

*Acts 14:15, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passion with you, and preach unto to you that ye should **turn from these vanities unto the living God.**"*

*Acts 15:19, "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the gentiles **are turned to God.**"*

*Acts 26:17,18, "... Unto to whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to **turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,** that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."*

God repents

Another aspect of repentance is remorse or regret, which produces a change of attitude or behavior. Concerning sin, God would never need to repent for himself because He exists in eternal perfection and is infinitely holy, righteous, and just.

*Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, **that he should repent.**"*

However, when we repent and turn from sin, God may turn away from the judgment he had previously declared against us and show us his mercy. The contrary is also true if we turn away from God, he could turn from the blessings he once intended to give and deliver us over for the judgment we deserve.

Genesis 6:5-7, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth,

Jeremiah 18:7-10 "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, "if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. "And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, "if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

Ezekiel 33:13, 18-19 "When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity (repenting of repentance), he shall die because of it. "But when the wicked turns from his ...

... wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it.

God brought Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand, sending ten miraculous plagues, opening the Red Sea, and destroying Pharaoh's army. Then Moses went up Mt. Sinai for forty days receiving the ten commandments directly from God, and meanwhile, the Israelites were bowing to a golden calf at the base of the mountain. God was outraged and ready to destroy the entire nation.

Exodus 32:9-10 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

Moses stood between God and Israel and interceded to stop God from destroying Israel. Moses appealed to God's testimony among the nations and was bold enough to ask God to repent.

Exodus 32:11-12, Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent (repent) from this harm to Your people.

Again, this is not a reference to the repentance of sin on God's part but to turning away from executing the judgment that the people fully deserved. How did God respond to Moses?

Exodus 32:14, "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

We see an example of this principle happen regarding **King Saul** after he had disobeyed God's command to destroy the Amalekites. God promised to bless Saul until Saul turned away from God in disobedience and rebellion.

1 Samuel 15:10,11 "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying it repented me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me"

1 Samuel 15:35 "... and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." (See also II Sam. 24:16, Ps. 106:43-46, etc.)

When God sees us turn away from our wickedness, he will turn from bringing his judgment upon us. Consider the example of the people of **Nineveh**. God sent Jonah to that evil city with a message of certain doom, and the people believed Jonah and repented with urgency and sincerity.

Jonah 3:5,8-9 "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" ...

... "but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not."

How did God respond to their sincere repentance? When they repented and turned away from evil, God repented and turned away from judgment.

Jonah 3:10 "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

If God spared this evil, godless city when they repented, there is hope for anyone who will turn to God! Let's look at another example, evil **King Ahab**. Notice how the Bible depicts Ahab.

1 Kings 21:25,26 "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up and he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites."

Besides all of Ahab's Wickedness and idolatry, he killed an innocent man and stole his vineyard (actually, Jezebel did it, but God held Ahab responsible for it). So, God sent Ahab's hated enemy, Elijah, the prophet of God, with this message:

1 Kings 21:19 "And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth (the man that he killed) shall dogs lick thy blood even thine."

You would think there would be no hope for such dirty, low-down-scoundrel like that loathsome Ahab! We would give up on people like Ahab, thinking he's as good as dead because God had pronounced his destiny as dog meat (1 Kings 21:23-24). Some would say, thank God, he deserves it, but that was not the end of the story.

1 Kings 21:27 "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth and went softly (or and went about mourning, NKJV)."

You can probably guess how God responded. God is no respecter of persons no matter how bad or evil they are, and if they repent, God may also repent of sending judgment against them.

1 Kings 21:28-29 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

Let's take one more example into consideration, one of the most wicked kings from the tribe of Judah, **King Manasseh**.

2 Kings 21:2,6 "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen" ... "And he made his son pass through the fire (burned his baby alive in worship to a demon), and observed times and used enchantments (used witchcraft), and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards (and consulted spiriting and mediums): he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger."

You would think that if there were anyone that the Lord would want to zap with a lightning bolt, this would be the guy! Yet, God patiently tried to speak to him.

2 Chronicles 33:10 And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

The inevitable had to happen, and Manasseh could not escape God's judgment. The Babylonians captured him, and their treatment of him was very severe.

2 Chronicles 33:11 So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

Well, that takes care of that problem, and God has washed his hands of this despicable, good for nothing, evil man, so good riddance! Right? Wrong!

2 Chronicles 33:12-13 Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.

So, did Manasseh sincerely change his attitude and turn the direction in his life once he got relief and was returned to his kingdom, or was he all talk?

2 Chronicles 33:14-16 He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.

NOW THAT'S CHANGE!!!

God's will

As we saw from the previous examples, if we do our part in turning to God, God may turn our situation around and have mercy on us. The will of God is clear that His desire is for all men to come to repentance so that he may save them.

2 Peter 3:9 *"the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness **but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**"*

Ezekiel 33:11 *"As I live saith the Lord God **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die O house of Israel?**"*

Our choice

God has given us free will to choose for ourselves, and he will not impose upon our will. He sets before us blessings and curses, life and death, and asks us to make a choice.

Deuteronomy 30:19 *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you **that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.***

Joshua 24:15 *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**"*

Repentance rejected

Although God desires all men to come to repentance, the truth is that a majority will not.

God's patience and longsuffering with people should not be confused with indifference or tolerance because he gives time for repentance.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, **but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

There will be those who, in the worst adversity, will absolutely refuse to turn to God and harden their hearts even more, like the people who will go through the great tribulation.

Revelation 16:9-11 "... and his kingdom was full of darkness: and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

Revelation 9:18-21 By these three plagues a **third of mankind was killed** by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone ... But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons,**

and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Repentance frauds

Many pretend to repent only to get relief from their situation, but when things get better, they return to their former behavior. Look at the example of **Pharaoh**. After the seventh plague that God brought upon Egypt, Pharaoh repented with his words.

Exodus 9:27-28 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said to them. "The LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the LORD, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer."

Do you think Pharaoh's repentance was real? Keep reading.

Exodus 9:34-35 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. So, Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.

Repentance in vain

Others will make a show of repentance but without any results because of irreversible consequences. If you sell something as **Esau** did, it belongs to someone else, and your

tears will not make it yours again. Some situations or damages cannot be fixed, repaired, or restored by repentance.

Hebrews 12:16-17 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Judas sold Jesus over to death for 30 pieces of silver, and being sorry could not reverse what he had set in motion. Returning the money (in this case) could not rectify the situation. Nothing could change what Judas had done.

Matthew 27:3-5 "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and the elders, Saying, I sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said what is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." (See also Hebrews.6:4-6).

Not a religious show

Some people make a grand display of repentance and put on a big outward show for people, but they do not impress God. Self-abasement, physical abuses of the body, and emotional outbursts are not signs of true repentance and can be in vain.

For example, look at the prophets of Baal after Elijah challenged them to a contest between the God of Israel and Baal.

1 Kings 18:24 "Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God."

How did the prophets of Baal pray and try to get the attention of their god Baal? By self-abasement, cutting themselves, and loud crying in a big entertaining show.

1 Kings 18:28-29 "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass ... that there was neither voice nor any answer, nor any that regarded."

The followers of Baal put on a religious three-ring circus from morning to night without any results, except for the need for medical attention. By contrast, listen to Elijah's short prayer to turn Israel's heart back to God in repentance.

1 Kings 18:36-38 "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the LORD fell

The same type of vain religiosity as displayed by the prophets of Baal was what the Apostle Paul had to warn the Colossian church to avoid. Crying, loud wailing, and afflicting yourself do not score any points with God, especially without true repentance from the heart.

Colossians 2:18-23 ***These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.***

Or as written in the N.A.S. version: "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."

If we are paying attention, there are many ways that God tries to speak to us to bring us to repentance, so let's look at just a few.

By the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit searches our hearts and minds and convinces us of our sins, warning us of right and wrong, how we should live, and what to do. The Holy Spirit takes our hardened sinful hearts, gives us a tender heart, and writes his law on our hearts and minds, and He leads us on the paths of righteousness and away from sin. Without the Holy Spirit, it would be impossible to repent (Matt 12:31, Heb 10:29).

John 16:8 And when he (the Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove (convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Ezekiel 36:25-26 ... I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

2 Corinthians 3:3 ... clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

Psalms 51:10-11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

By the conscience

One of Paul's goals was to have a pure conscience before God and man, with the view that we will stand before God at the judgment to give an account. Our conscience can be a sensitive tool for identifying anything not pleasing to God or offensive to other people. Without a pure conscience, we cannot have faith, so when our conscience condemns us, we need to repent, turn and fix the problem.

Hebrews 9:14 ... how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Acts 24:16 "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

1 Timothy 1:19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

Romans 2:15-16 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, *their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;*) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

1 Timothy 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

By confrontation

Sometimes God will send one of his servants on a rescue mission to confront somebody who has sinned but has not repented. King David committed adultery, had the woman's husband killed, and tried to cover it up. God sent Nathan, who told David a story and asked for his judgment.

Nathan asked David (a shepherd) what should happen to a rich man who owned a large flock of sheep, but took his poor neighbor's family pet, a lamb, to feed a visiting friend. David was outraged and pronounced the death penalty against the offender. Then Nathan responded, you are the man! Then Nathan went through the list of David's sins. And David immediately repented.

2 Samuel 12:5-7, 13 So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ... Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! ... David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

A similar kind of confrontation happened between Paul and Peter because Peter and others had returned to Jewish legalism, creating divisions and other problems in the church. Paul was not as coy as Nathan, and he confronted Peter directly to his face in front of everybody.

Galatians 2:11-14 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed ... And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even **Barnabas** was carried away with their hypocrisy. **But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?**

Paul, writing to Timothy, urged him to instruct (confront) people who oppose themselves and call them to repent so they can be released from their self-inflicted trap and escape from the Devil.

2 Timothy 2:25, 26 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

By the word of God

The word of God can give stinging rebukes and corrections, or it can also raise preventative boundaries to help us keep our distance from sin. Whether the rebukes come from another person or our personal Bible reading and memorization, God's word cuts like a sword right to the soul to bring conviction and repentance.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)*

Hebrews 4:12-13 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

Psalms 119:9, 11, 67 *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. ... Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! ... Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep Your word.*

Through miracles

Miracles produce the fear of God in those who witness them, resulting in either repentance or rejection of God. When Jesus did miracles in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, he was insulted that they did not repent, saying that if he did the same mighty works in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, they would have repented.

Matthew 11:20-24 *Then He (Jesus) began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you,*

Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

How do you impress a fisherman? Jesus did a miracle of a great catch of fish, and Peter realized he was in the presence of God and confessed he was a sinner (in repentance).

***Luke 5:6-8** And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So, they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"*

Through preaching

The people of Nineveh were cruel and wicked, but at the preaching of Jonah, they repented. But Jesus came as the promised Messiah, but his generation of Jews rejected his preaching and hardened their hearts, refusing to repent, bringing a stricter judgment on themselves.

Matthew 12:41-42 "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed, a greater than Jonah is here.

Paul writes to Timothy to preach, convince, rebuke, and give exhortations with sound teaching. Those words do not describe cotton candy and sugar-coated sermons tickling itchy ears to be popular, but implies giving strong messages to produce repentance and godly living.

2 Timothy 4:2-3 ***Preach the word!*** Be ready in season and out of season. ***Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

Through dreams

Abraham lied to King Abimelech by saying his wife Sarah was his sister, fearing that Abimelech would kill him to take Sarah to be his wife. Abimelech did take Sarah, but God came to him in a dream to warn him to return Sarah to Abraham before he sinned. And, so God spoke to Abimelech in a dream and turned him away from sinning with Sarah.

Genesis 20:2-18 ***And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a***

dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife ... And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore, suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Through visions

Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, had a party and decided to use golden cups taken from the temple in Jerusalem, in mockery of the God of Israel, to drink wine and praise his pagan gods. Then a vision appeared that everyone at the party could see. A hand appeared, making handwriting on the wall and leaving a message that only Daniel could interpret. That message said that Belshazzar had been judged and would lose the kingdom. Belshazzar repented, but it was too late, and he lost his kingdom and his life that night.

Daniel 5:2-6, 30 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand,

*and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another ... **That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.***

There is no better example of how a vision can bring repentance and turn a life around than what happened to Saul of Tarsus, who, while on his way to persecute and imprison Christians, had a vision of Christ that knocked him to the ground and turned him around. Saul became Paul and turned his life's mission in the opposite direction, from a persecutor of Christians to being persecuted for Christ.

*Acts 26:13-16 (Paul speaking). "at midday, O king, along the road **I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun,** shining around me and those who journeyed with me. "And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "So, I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.*

Through testimonies

After Paul's conversion, he used the testimony of his heavenly vision to testify to everyone that they should repent and turn to Christ. Let's look at the continuation of Paul's testimony to King Agrippa, speaking of what Jesus told him in the vision.

*Acts 26:16-20 (Jesus speaking to Paul). 'But rise and stand on your feet; for **I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'**(Paul speaking) "Therefore, King Agrippa, **I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.***

Paul used his testimony very effectively in bringing people to repentance and leading them to Christ, and even King Agrippa was impacted and close to conversion.

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

Of course, all Christians should witness how Jesus turned their life around from darkness to light, and from Satan to God.

Through circumstances

On the Passover, Jesus knew he would be betrayed, beaten, and crucified, so he told his disciples that all of them would fall away from him that night, but Peter spoke up and boldly proclaimed that he would never fall away. Famous last words. Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crows. Peter forgot his vow, and while standing nearby where Jesus was undergoing a sham trial, he was warming himself by a fire, surrounded by Jesus' haters. Those around the fire recognized Peter as one of Jesus' disciples, and Peter denied it. When the rooster crowed, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. The circumstances hit Peter like a sledgehammer, and the realization of what had just taken place overwhelmed him, and he ran away. The circumstances surrounding Peter brought him to tears and repentance.

***Matthew 26:34-35** Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise, also said all the disciples.*

***Matthew 26:73-75** And after a while came unto him, they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely, thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayed thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying,*

I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Do you want to talk about circumstances? Jonah was on a boat in the ocean, was thrown overboard, swallowed by a giant fish, and was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights. If that doesn't get your attention, then I don't know what will. After three days in the belly of a fish, he finally repented from his boycott of preaching to Nineveh, and he prayed, and God caused the fish to barf him onto the beach.

Jonah 2:1-2 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.

By preaching

The most influential preachers in the New Testament began their ministries with a message of repentance. And many of those same preachers ended their ministry by being killed because they would not stop preaching repentance and faith in Christ. Let's look at a few examples.

Preached by John the Baptist

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest prophet up to that time because he was the messenger who would come in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for the coming of

the Lord, Messiah, Israel's King. How did John prepare the way? By preaching repentance.

Matthew 3:1-2** In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 3:7-8** But when he (John) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! **Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? "Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance.

When he was asked by ordinary people, the tax collectors, and soldiers what they should do regarding repentance, John gave each group specific answers to how they should repent.

***Luke 3:10-14** So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." **Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"** And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." **Likewise, the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?"** So, he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."*

Preached by Jesus

Just the presence of Jesus inspired people to repent, but other times after healing or speaking to them, he would say go and sin no more. Sinning no more would be the very essence of repentance, and Jesus taught more about repentance and hell than anybody, as you can see from the following examples.

***Luke 5:32** "I have not come to call the righteous, **but sinners, to repentance.**"*

***Matthew 4:17** From that time **Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent:** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

***John 5:14** Afterward Jesus found him (a cripple he healed) in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. **Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.**"*

***John 8:10** When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman (accused of adultery), He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "**Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.**"*

Luke 13:1-5** And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans (killed by Herod) were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? **"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

"Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Preached by Peter

After Peter got filled with the Holy Spirit, he became a fearless and fiery preacher. In Peter's first message, he confronted the Jews who were present while Jesus was crucified and commanded them to repent.

Acts 2:22-23 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In Peter's second message, he preached to the same crowd of Jews who participated in condemning Christ and asking for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus (Matthew 27:16-26). Peter goes directly at them for that sin and calls

them to repentance for it.

Acts 3:13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Preached by Paul

The apostle Paul went on a missionary trip, and while in Athens, he took note of the myriad of different gods and idols they worshipped. Then He preached to them and spoke about their ignorance of the only true God, but he didn't accept ignorance or any excuses but commanded them and all men everywhere to repent.

Acts 17:30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

Paul had spent some time in Ephesus, and the believers there were mature and understood the advanced teachings of the gospel. And while Paul was saying his goodbyes, he reminded them that he never held back the truth but continued to preach the basics, namely repentance.

Acts 20:20-21 And how ***I kept back nothing*** that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, ***repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.***

7 Signs of sincerity

When most people think of repentance, they think about crying, depression, and sadness, which (depending on the circumstance) may or may not be part of turning from sin. But like Jesus said, go and sin no more, so repentance is when you stop sinning. Stopping is the key, so if someone continues to sin, they have not repented. Remorse, sorrow, and other similar emotional displays can be vain, destructive, and useless if a person does not repent and continues in sin.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that ***your sorrow led to repentance.*** For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For ***godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.***

Godly Sorrow = Salvation **Worldly Sorrow = Death**

Paul continued by telling this church that he could recognize how repentance had changed their lives, and he listed seven areas of repentance that confirmed their repentance was sincere.

2 Corinthians 7:11 For observe this very thing, that you **sorrowed** in a godly manner: What **diligence** it produced in you, what **clearing** of yourselves, what **indignation**, what **fear**, what vehement **desire**, what **zeal**, what **vindication!** In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

As we just read, Paul mentioned seven different aspects of repentance, and they are as follows:

1. Diligence

When Paul said what diligence it produced in you, he commended the Corinthian church on using diligence to take care of a situation in the church, namely the repentance and restoration of a brother who fell into sin. Paul followed by saying he used that situation to show his and Titus' diligent care for their church.

2 Corinthians 7:12 Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, **but that our care (diligence) for you in the sight of God might appear to you.**

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 But thanks be to God who puts **the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.** For he not only accepted the exhortation, **but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.**

These verses imply that we should be diligent to respond immediately to any sins that may surface with an individual or in the church.

The same word is used in the following verses to show fervent diligence in living right and correcting wrongs.

Romans 12:6-8, 11 *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us ... he who leads, with diligence ... not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

2. Clearing of yourselves

This clearing of yourselves is to resolve or remove any sins or wrongs that offended or would cause conflict or guilt so you can clear your reputation and testimony. When a corrupt tax collector, Zacchaeus, invited Jesus for dinner, the people complained that he was a sinner. But Zacchaeus cleared himself by pledging half his money to the poor and restoring four times more than he took. The result was that Jesus said that salvation had come to him.

Luke 19:7-9 *But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;*

3. Indignation or Anger

The anger mentioned is against sin, not people, so we restrain ourselves from venting our anger at others that would be sin. Jesus did experience anger at the Pharisee's hardness of heart, but he is God and never sinned. We, on

the other hand, cannot handle anger with people so well, and James tells us that our wrath does not produce God's type of righteousness. Anger at sin is good, but anger at people is not.

***Mark 3:4-5** Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. **And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts,** He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.*

James 1:19-20** So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, **slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

***Ephesians 4:26** "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath. (Be angry at sin)*

Anger against sin and ungodliness is needed to fight and repel it. If we enjoy, tolerate, or approve of sin, we will not fight against it, and it will defeat us. If we love sin, we lose. If we consistently fight against our sins, we will go from being attracted to them to hating them with godly anger as Jesus and David did.

Psalms 139:20-22** For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain. **Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I

not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.

Proverbs 3:7, 8:13 "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." "The fear of the LORD [is] to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

4. Fear

The Corinthians experienced the fear of God, which is reverential respect and awe for the greatness of God and comes from knowing that we will give an account to God at the judgment. The fear of God is a powerful motivation in turning away from the passing pleasures of sins to live with a vision of eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Proverbs 16:6 ... by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

5. Desire

The Psalmist compares his desire and thirst for God to a deer running and panting to drink water from a brook. He had an unquenchable thirst for God while surrounded by multitudes of religious people, but he was unsatisfied with dry, dead religion and needed to feel God's presence. The Psalmist yearned for God in his soul, and separation was unbearable.

Psalm 42:1-5 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So, pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, "Where is your God?" When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.

The Apostle Paul was similar to the Psalmist in his urgent pursuit of God, and there was no price too high, nothing he would not give up, and no suffering could stop him from pressing forward to gain Christ. Paul repented from being a Pharisee and became an example of a burning desire for Christ.

Philippians 3:7-11 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I ...

... have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

6. Zeal

Jesus speaking to the church of Laodicea, rebuked them because they had become lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. It sounds like they have no emotion, motivation, or enthusiasm, right? Blah, blah, blah. Jesus gives them a strong rebuke and then commands them to repent.

Revelation 3:15-16, 19 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth ... "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.

In the original Greek, the word for zealous means: to burn with zeal, to be heated, or to boil with envy, hatred, or anger. So, this church was lukewarm, blah, blah, blah, and Jesus told them to repent and get boiling hot. Never before have Christians needed to repent, get on fire, and get red hot boiling for Jesus more than now! Repent, Jesus is coming soon!

7. Revenge

We fight spiritual warfare with spiritual weapons, specifically in prayer. Prayer is our weapon to pull down

powers and principalities of the Satanic realm and the thoughts and arguments against God that are like fortresses in people's minds. Our revenge comes by getting victory over sin and the devil.

2 Corinthians 10:6 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Jesus gave us an example of prayer where a little widow pestered a judge until he eventually agreed to take vengeance on her enemies. Jesus compared that story to the elect who cry out day and night and how the Son of Man (Christ) will avenge them speedily at the second coming.

Luke 18:5-8 ... 'yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Our revenge comes by beating the Devil, so the best revenge is when someone repents.

Luke 15:7 "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Repentance & Faith

Repentance alone is not sufficient for us to turn to the Lord. Repentance must be mixed with faith to bring about real change and transformation in God.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

Mark 1:14-15, " Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Acts 20:20-21 ... "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, ... "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The blessing

If we turn away from our sins, God may do more than grant us forgiveness but may even pour out his blessings on us.

Joel 2:12-14 Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him."

Acts 3:26 "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

The rebellious dwell in a dry, barren land, without water, in the blistering heat of the hot sun (Psalms 68:6). But when they turn to the Lord, it's like sweating outside in the scorching heat, coming inside to a nice cool air-conditioned room, and drinking a tall glass of ice-cold water. We can experience times of refreshing in the presence of the Lord.

Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,



God's Plan of

Salvation

God's Plan of Salvation

The big question

The most important question we can ask ourselves is this; **where do I go when I die?** The Bible only gives two options, heaven or hell, and each person chooses where they go. That was the simple answer, but for more details, we will look at the big picture explaining how each person determines their eternal destiny according to God's plan. Our examination of God's plan for mankind begins with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve.



A living soul

In the beginning, God created the world, sun, moon, oceans, mountains, rivers, plants, animals, fish, and the first man Adam in six days. God formed man from the dust and breathed life into him, and Adam became a living soul. Interestingly, the scriptures did not say the body came to life, but that man became a living soul. God created man in his image, so man is a trinity with a body, soul, and spirit.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing **even to the division of soul and spirit**, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Law of sin & death

God created Adam and Eve and gave them dominion over the world with absolute freedom, or “free will,” to do whatever they wanted. All the animals were friendly, the land was fruitful, and it was a beautiful paradise in a perfect world. There were no laws or restrictions of any kind until God gave one commandment, do not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God also warned of the consequences if they ate the forbidden fruit, which was immediate death that day.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; **but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**”

Here is an outline of what we can conclude so far:

- God created Adam a living soul.
- God gave one commandment to Adam.
- Breaking the command was punishable by death.
- Adam and Eve had the freedom to obey or disobey.
- Adam and Eve had a pure conscience up to this point.

The goal of the law is to guard and protect the innocent and punish the lawbreakers. Adam and Eve only had one commandment, obedience is rewarded with life,



while disobedience would result in death. The law is like a chain because if just one link gets broken, it ruins the whole chain. The breaking of just one law makes someone completely guilty. Ultimately, the law brings death.

James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

Romans 7:7-10 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. ... But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

Temptation

The first sign of evil influence came through a talking serpent, who we can identify as Satan (Rev 12:9, 2 Cor 11:3). Satan tempted Eve before she sinned, showing that temptation existed before sin, and we know it will be around until the end of the world. God allows temptations to exist to expose a person's inner character, separating those who choose to obey him from those who do not.

Notice how the serpent, aka Satan, knew the word of God spoken to Adam and twisted those words to deceive Eve. Satan knows the Bible so well that he tried but failed to trick Jesus by using the scriptures. We will identify how Satan played on Eve's weakness and tempted her into willful disobedience to God. Satan first questions the word of God, saying, "has God said?" Then he twists God's words, saying "every tree," when God only mentioned one tree.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Then Satan contradicts the word of God, saying you will not die, inferring that God lied. Then Satan tempts her with the same sin that caused him to fall, that being grasping after equality with God.

Genesis 3:4-5 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When we examine how the serpent tempted and deceived Eve, we can recognize a pattern that perpetually repeats with every sin. This pattern reveals how we go from temptation to lust, lust to sin, and from sin to death. The cycle feeds on three categories of human weakness coming through the physical body, character, and pride.

The cycle of sin proceeds in the following order:

1. Temptation 2. Lust 3. Sin 4. Death

*James 1:14-15 But every man is **tempted**, when he is drawn away of his own **lust**, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth **sin**: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth **death**.*

Mankind's areas of spiritual weakness:

1. Lust of the Flesh 2. Lust of the Eyes 3. Pride of Life

*1 John 2:6 For all that is in the world the **lust of the flesh**, the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life** is not of the Father but is of the world*

The serpent mesmerized Eve, and she took his bait, hook, line, and sinker. Eve thought about Satan's suggestions, contemplated the information, rationalized, and justified why she should eat the fruit, and she willfully chose to sin. Let's diagnose Eve's temptation in the light of the cycle of sin and mankind's spiritual weaknesses.

Genesis 3:6-7

Temptation	<i>So, when the woman saw</i>
Lust of the flesh	<i>that the tree was good for food</i>
Lust of the eyes	<i>that it was pleasant to the eyes</i>
Lust	<i>and a tree desirable</i>
Pride of life	<i>to make one wise</i>
Sin	<i>she took of its fruit and ate.</i>
Death	<i>She gave to her husband and he ate.</i>

Spiritual death

God told Adam the day you eat the fruit, you die. Did Adam and Eve die immediately? Adam did not experience immediate physical death but lived to the age of 930 years (Genesis 5:5).

Adam was a living soul, but the moment he sinned, his soul died spiritually. The soul that sins shall die.

*Ezekiel 18:4 [God speaking] "Behold, **all souls are Mine**; The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; **The soul who sins shall die.***

Ezekiel 18:20 "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

God created man to be like children in a family relationship with him as our Father, so spiritual death is to be separated or cut off from his presence. This separation leaves Adam's children with lost, empty souls that nothing physical can replace or satisfy. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he describes those dead to God as sons of disobedience, children of wrath, without Christ, aliens, and strangers from the covenants of God, without hope, without God, and enemies far from God. Spiritual death is a great gulf that separates souls from God's love, joy, peace, and comfort.

*Ephesians 2:1-5 And you He made alive, **who were dead in trespasses and sins**, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], the spirit who now works in the **sons of disobedience**, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath***

*Ephesians 2:5 ... even when we were **dead in trespasses**, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

*Ephesians 2:11-13 ... at that time you were **without Christ**, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel and **strangers from the covenants** of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world**. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were **far off** have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

*Ephesians 2:17 ... And He came and preached peace to you who were **afar off** and to those who were near.*

*Colossians 1:21-22 And you, who once were **alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works**, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you **holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight**.*

God wants to reconcile all men to himself through Christ and offers to give them eternal life. It is so sad that the people who reject Christ and are separated from God now, at the time of death, their souls will go to hell to experience eternal separation from God in the second death.

*Revelation 21:8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars **shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**"*

Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Defiled Conscience

When Adam and Eve sinned and realized their nakedness, their conscience was stricken and defiled, innocence was lost, their eyes were open to sin, and they hid, separating themselves and mankind from God.

Genesis 3:7-10 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" so he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

The fig leaf solution that Adam and Eve came up with only superficially covered their outward physical appearance but was of zero value for their spiritual condition. Human efforts and fig leaf religion cannot save mankind. Only God can bring a dead soul back to life. Later God gave Adam and Eve leather clothes, pointing to the fact that an animal had to be put to death and shed its blood sacrificially to make a symbolic covering for the nakedness of their sin.

Genesis 3:21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

God confronted the guilty pair about their sin, starting with Adam. Then Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent, then God was finished asking questions.

Genesis 3:11-13 And He said, "who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Foreknowledge

God was not shocked or surprised by Adam's sin, and his response was not a spur-of-the-moment reaction but was preplanned in eternity past before the creation of the world. God knew what Adam would do and was ready with the plan to redeem mankind. God also knew before creation who would choose to obey and trust him for salvation and who would be lost. Not because he had preassigned people to their eternal destiny, God did not create robots. God knows who will be in the book of life because he is eternally existent, unrestricted by time, almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise beyond human comprehension, and he knows the future. On our part, the only thing we can comprehend, and all that we need to know, is that God gives an open invitation of salvation to everyone in the world.

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

So, God knowing all things, wrote the names of those who would believe in Christ in the book of life, and the plan that began in eternity past will extend into eternity future.

Revelation 13:8 ... written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4 ... just as He chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world

1 Peter 1:18-20 ... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world

John 1:29 ... John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Revelation 22:1 ... [Speaking of heaven] And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The first gospel

When God passed judgment on the guilty trio, he started with the serpent and cursed him more than all the animals making him crawl and eat dust. But in the midst of judgment, God did not leave mankind without hope.

God declared a prophecy to the three of them by saying that "her seed," a singular seed, one person, would crush the head of the serpent or Satan, but Satan would bruise his heel. That was the first gospel message, the good news, the promise of the coming Messiah, Christ.

*Genesis 3:14-15 So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, **you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field;** On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust All the days of your life. **And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed;** He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*

The prophecy mentioned two seeds, "your seed" speaking of Satan and "her seed" speaking of the woman. The theme of the two seeds runs through the Bible, light vs. darkness, wheat vs. tares, sheep vs. goats, believers vs. unbelievers, obedience vs. disobedience, and so forth. The unusual thing about that prophecy is that women cannot produce seeds, but they can only make eggs. That points to the virgin birth of Christ. Mary miraculously conceived and give birth to Christ, the promised "seed" of the woman in fulfillment of the prophecy given in the garden of Eden.

The prophecies about the promised "seed" that would crush Satan's head did not end in the garden of Eden. God also promised Abraham that his seed, obtained by faith, would make him the father of many nations, as numerous as the sand and the stars. God also promised King David that his seed would have an everlasting kingdom and would rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Every time, and in each promise and prophecy, the "seed" spoke of the same person, Christ.

Galatians 3:16, 29 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

*Romans 1:3-4 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was **born of the seed of David** according to the flesh, and **declared to be the Son of God** with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the **resurrection from the dead.***

*2 Timothy 2:8 Remember that **Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,***

Sickness & Death

Adam and Eve received a perfect world, but when they sinned, there were consequences. Adam caused a curse to come upon the earth, producing thorns, and the animals became wild and dangerous. The curse brought mankind under subjection to hard labor, difficulty in childbirth, and marital issues. The curse also made man physically subject to corruption, sickness, infirmities, deterioration, aging, and death of the body that decomposes into dust.

Genesis 3:16-19 ... To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

The good news is that Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God the Father in sinless perfection. Since Jesus was sinless when he died on the cross, the curse of sin and death had no power over him, and it was not possible for death and corruption to hold him. Jesus defeated sin, death, and the Devil, and we are partakers of his victory by faith in him.

Acts 2:24, 30-32 [Speaking of Jesus]. "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. "Therefore, [king David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Satan & Worldliness

On the day Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell under the curse of sin and death, another earth-shattering change happened. Adam's dominion over the earth was lost and forfeited to the devil. The scriptures tell us that your master is who you obey (Romans 6:16), so when Adam and Eve obeyed Satan's voice, they forfeited earth's dominion over to him.

God rules over everything, including Satan, but God has allowed Satan to have limited power over the world for a predetermined time. Satan is called the ruler or prince of this world, and he has a kingdom system with a hierarchy of fallen angelic powers, principalities, rulers, and demons. Satan tempted Jesus by offering to give him all the "kingdoms of the world," and Jesus did not dispute his claim of rulership. When Jesus said a kingdom divided cannot stand, he was referring to Satan's kingdom.

Matthew 4:8-9 Again, **the devil** took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and **showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory**. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Mark 3:23-24 So He [Jesus] called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "**How can Satan cast out Satan? 'If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.**

John 12:31 [Jesus' speaking] "Now is the judgment of this world; now **the ruler of this world** [Satan] will be cast out.

John 14:30 [Jesus' speaking] "I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world** [Satan] is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

2 Corinthians 4:3,4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom **the god of this world** [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not (Amplified Version)

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you **He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to [Satan] the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,**

Because Satan assumed rulership, he has set up an invisible evil kingdom that rules over the earth by influencing governments, cultures, morals, philosophies, and individuals. The Bible refers to this as "this world" or "worldliness," it is the sinful governmental and social systems spiritually influenced by Satan which impacts the physical planet.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the **rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this [present] darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places.** (Amplified Version)

The Devil's way of ruling is through the world's cultures and appealing to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life to create a mindset that opposes and undermines everything that honors God or his kingdom.

*1 John 2:15-17 Do not love **the world** nor the things in **the world**. If anyone loves **the world**, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in **the world**, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from **the world**. **The world** is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (NASB)*

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Previously we saw the two seeds mentioned in the prophecy, and we focused on the promise of Christ, the Messiah. Now we will look at Satan's seed who reject God and rebel against him and are called the children of the Devil, children of wrath or disobedience.

God grants everyone free will, and each person chooses to identify with God or the Devil by obedience and faith or by rebellion and sin. The children's paternity is recognizable by their resemblance to their father. Spiritually the father's likeness is recognizable by manifesting the character of the spiritual father, God or Satan.

John 8:44 *"You are of **your father the devil**, and the desires of **your father** you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it.**"*

Hebrews 12:6-8 *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? **But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons.***

Two Adams

Adam and Eve polluted the entire human race with the knowledge of evil, sin, guilt, sickness, and death. The root of all human misery, suffering, and torments can be traced back to Adam's sin, so just one sin resulted in the avalanche of sins that continues to multiply. That is why Jesus came, to be the second Adam and restore everything the first Adam lost.

Romans 5:12-19 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of **Adam's transgression**, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift.*

For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of... one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Free will & faith

Adam and Eve's sons had the promise regarding Eve's seed that the future Messiah, Christ, would come to take their sins. And somehow, Abel understood the principle of a substitute sacrifice, that the penalty for sin is death, so putting an animal to death in his place would symbolically pay the penalty for his sin, life for life. So, Abel sacrificed an animal to God, and God was pleased with him. But Cain offered some plants as a bloodless sacrifice, which did not gain any respect from God.

Genesis 4:3-5 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not ...

... Respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Free will, or the freedom to choose, was evident from the beginning with the first brothers born in the world. God's warning to Cain to master his anger shows how sin is our choice and that we either control sin or it will control us. Your master is who you obey, God or sin.

Genesis 4:6-7 So, the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ***"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."***

Romans 6:16-18 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And ***having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.***

With Cain and Abel, we see the world's first two religions, the first produced a murderer, and the second a martyr. Cain killed Abel over religious jealousy, which shows another principle, the flesh wars against the Spirit.

Genesis 4:8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that ***Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.***

Galatians 4:29 *But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.*

Galatians 5:17 *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

As we just saw, there are two types of people, and Cain exemplifies a lost soul who lives without consideration for God or man. After he killed his brother, God passed judgment and gave him his sentence to be a fugitive and a vagabond, and Cain said his punishment would be unbearable. That again points to separation from God and others as the worst possible punishment, also known as hell.

Genesis 4:13-16 *And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! "Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." ... And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.*

The Apostle John confirmed that Cain was a child of the wicked one, and makes a distinction between the children of God and the Devil.

1 John 3:8-14. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who ... does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers righteous. ... We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Law & traditions

Years later, God looked to establish a people for himself, making a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God gave Jacob the name Israel, and he had 12 sons, which later became the nation of Israel. When Moses became their leader, God made a covenant with Israel and gave them the ten commandments with 613 laws. These laws distinguished Israel and set them apart from the other nations because the Law instructed them on living a healthy, moral life while serving only one God, the true and living God.



But, while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the ten commandments, written by the finger of God on stone tablets, the Israelites were at the bottom of the mountain,

dancing around a golden calf worshipping another god. Israel violated the covenant and broke the Law as Moses was receiving it. So, when



Moses came down the mountain, he smashed the stone tablets into pieces and ground them to powder. Israel not only broke the Law but completely obliterated it. Like Adam and Eve, with one Law and Israel with 613 Laws, the Law will always fail because it has a weak human partner. Nobody can be righteous before God by keeping Laws, religious rules, and routines.

Galatians 3:10, 11 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.”

Romans 3:19-20 ... it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God ... for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Galatians 3:23-24 Now before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, [perpetually] imprisoned [in preparation] for the faith that was destined to be revealed, with the result that **the Law has become our tutor and our disciplinarian to guide us to Christ**

Galatians 2:20 ... by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Those who are zealous about keeping the laws and traditions of men become self-righteous, legalistic, judgmental, and full of religious arrogance. Which only makes them worse sinners, more condemned, and hypocritical fools, according to Jesus (Mathew 23). Jesus gave scorching criticisms and loathed the pompous religious leaders but showed mercy and compassion to the worst of sinners.

The most frightening thing for zealous law-keepers is that they have self-inflicted blindness keeping them from seeing faults in themselves, with their pride, hypocrisy, sin, and how they fail to live up to their own standards. Being religious can be destructive and dangerous because the judgments we use in criticizing others testify against us, making us guilty before God. The bottom line is that keeping the Ten Commandments, laws, traditions, and church attendance cannot save anyone. Salvation is only by faith in Christ, who alone was perfect in obedience to the Law, so he alone cancels the curse and judgments of the Law against us.

***Mark 7:6-9, 13** He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you **hypocrites**, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And **in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**' "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men ... He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. ... "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Galatians 3:11-13 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

Good works, religion

Some may think they can earn entrance into heaven as payback for all the good deeds done in their lifetime. The Almighty God, who created the heavens and the earth, is not astonished or impressed by our service or works, but He is concerned about our motives. Doing religious activities thinking that we can earn righteousness by our goodness before a holy God is a big deception and arrogance. Only the work of Christ makes anyone righteous before God, and all of our most noble feats of righteousness are like filthy rags before an infinitely holy God.

Isaiah 64:6 For we all have become like one who is [ceremonially] unclean [like a leper], And all our deeds of righteousness are like filthy rags; We all wither and decay like a leaf, and our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing], like the wind, takes us away [carrying us far from God's favor, toward destruction].

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’**”

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 *If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. (The Message)*

The enemies of God

It's popular to say we are all children of God, but that's not true. We look like our spiritual father, so if you lie, cheat, steal, or sin even one time, guess what? The Devil is your spiritual father! Except if you have been born again, and God the Father has adopted you into his family. Even if you profess to be a child of God, you must form the character of Christ in your life and accept correction when you do wrong. And if you reject his discipline, you are not his child.

Ephesian 5:1-6 *Therefore become imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father]; ... the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [those who habitually sin].*

Hebrews 12:3-11 *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined and everyone undergoes discipline then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness***

John 8:44 *You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to practice the desires [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks what it natural to him, for **he is a liar and the father of lies and half-truths.** (Ephesians 4:17-19)*

1 John 3:10 *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.*

Everything up to this point reveals how all mankind has sinned and is spiritually dead to God; until they experience a spiritual new birth. The worst part is that most people are spiritually blind or have chosen to enjoy sin rather than have a relationship with God. Here are the facts one more time:

- **We are born under the curse of sin and death.**
- **We are spiritually dead, needing to be born again.**
- **This world system is under Satan's influence**
- **We cannot keep the law without sinning.**
- **Our good works cannot earn salvation.**
- **All have sinned and cannot save themselves.**

After reading that list, you might think that salvation is impossible and out of reach for everyone! You would be right! The disciples of Jesus felt the same thing and asked Jesus about it.

Matthew 19:25, 26** When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, **“Who then can be saved?”** But Jesus looked at them and said to them, **“With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Salvation is impossible for all men because all have sinned, all will die, and all will be judged guilty and sent to hell, with only one way of obtaining mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. Jesus is the way, the truth, and life, and no one goes to heaven apart from him.

John 14:6** Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Acts 4:12 [speaking of Jesus] "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

God's Plan

From eternity God planned the perfect solution for the fallen race of Adam, he would humble himself, taking the form of a man, and God would become their Savior. Then Christ would restore everything Adam lost while defeating sin, death, and the Devil.

John 1:1-3, 14 In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus was born without sin. Jesus was truly man and truly God, so he was perfectly sinless, flawless. So, Christ entered the world to become the second Adam and redeem, or buy back God's children through his life of sinless obedience.

1 Corinthians 15:45-47 So it is written [in Scripture], "The first man, Adam, became a living soul (an individual);" the last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit [restoring the dead to life].

Jesus is the second Adam, born without sin, and he lived a life of perfect obedience and therefore became the perfect sacrifice for sin. And by His death, burial, and resurrection, he fulfilled the law, and prophecies, then he defeated sin and death to give the gift of eternal life to those who believe in him. His one sacrifice was sufficient to redeem all mankind, by faith in Him.

Hebrews 10:10-14 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified

Acts 4:10-12 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole ... "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Jesus, God & Man

When Jesus walked among us, he was truly man and truly God and was the exact representation of God the Father to man. He could empathize with humanity sharing in all of life's experiences. Jesus demonstrated contempt for the hypocritical religious leaders from God's perspective while showing mercy and compassion to the despised and afflicted from a human perspective. He felt hunger, rejection, love, pain, and every human feeling and emotion, so he has compassion, sympathy, and understands our troubles.

***Hebrews 1:2-3** ... but in these last days he (God) has spoken to us by his Son (Jesus), whom he appointed heir of all things, and **through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.** After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

***Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one (Jesus) who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet was without sin.*

***Hebrews 2:14-15** Since the children have flesh and blood, he (Jesus) too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

The Cross

Many people look at the cross superstitiously without appreciating how powerful the eternal impact and consequences were for all creation. First, all men are sinners, so what can men do for the forgiveness of sins?

In the Old Testament, they would offer animal sacrifices as a symbolic gesture to appeal for forgiveness and a clear conscience before God. The priest would sacrifice an innocent animal to pay the sin debt as a substitute for the guilty people, life for life. Whenever Israel made animal sacrifices, it reminded them that they were sinners. They could never forget that they had sinned. Animal sacrifices of bulls, goats, and sheep could never purge someone's conscience of sin or cancel Adam's curse of sin and death.

To pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind would require a totally innocent man that has lived in sinless perfection, who had fulfilled over 100 Messianic prophecies for the first coming of Christ as the Son of God and Son of man, the Lamb of God who came to redeem mankind. That narrows it down to one man, the man, Christ Jesus. With one sacrifice on the cross, he redeemed humanity, forgiving all our sins and giving eternal life to those who believe and are born again.

Hebrews 10:5-7 *Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. ... In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of Me to do Your will, O God.'"*

Hebrews 9:9-14 [*speaking of Old Testament sacrifices*] *It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience, (but Jesus as High Priest) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Nobody could forcibly take Jesus' life, but he voluntarily laid it down as our sacrificial lamb, taking our punishment as our scapegoat. Jesus tasted death for every man, and the price he paid goes beyond human comprehension.

Hebrews 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*

John 10:14-18 *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep ... "Therefore, My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*

Of Course, that was all part of God's eternal plan, and he spoke through the Old Testament prophets King David, Hosea, and others that Christ would destroy sin and death.

Psalms 16:9-10 [David speaking] Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol (Hell), nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Hosea 13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.

The cross was a hidden mystery, like a trap, Satan ignorantly thought he would destroy Christ, but the cross was like a nuclear bomb that exploded in his face.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Absent from sin, death has no power. Since Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life of obedience and flawlessly fulfilled all the law, death did not have a rightful claim on him. So, when Jesus was crucified and died on the cross, death could not hold him, and he conquered sin and death.

After the resurrection and on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to 3,000 people and quoted from King David's prophecy regarding the resurrection of Christ.

Acts 2:27–31 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

Acts 2:23-24 "Him (Jesus), being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Jesus' victory is universal for all who believe and He is the only salvation, redemption, justification, righteousness, and resurrection to eternal life.

1 Peter 2:24 ... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:9-10 (Jesus) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Cross, power of God

The spiritually dead and blinded unbelievers are unaware of the spiritual realities of the cross and the consequences of rejecting what Jesus did on the cross. They think the cross is foolishness. But when Jesus hung on the cross and cried out, "it is finished," He fulfilled every scripture, took all our sins, removed the curse of the law, bore all our infirmities, and nailed everything that was against us to the cross, where he destroyed all the works of the Devil. Then three days later, he rose from the dead by the power of God.



1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness [absurd and illogical] to those who are perishing and spiritually dead [because they reject it], but to us who are being saved [by God's grace] it is [the manifestation of] the power of God.

1 John 3:8-9 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

Cross, unites

Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22), and the Jewish people were very strict about staying separate from the nations that could draw them into worshipping foreign gods. Only after the resurrection of Christ and 8 years after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit did the Apostles receive the revelation that Gentiles (non-Jews) could receive salvation like Jews. And even more shocking to orthodox Jews was that Gentiles would be unified with Jews in one assembly and be fellow heirs of the promises of God. Removing that wall between Jews and Gentiles was only possible through Christ' death on the cross.

Ephesians 2:14-16 For He (Jesus) Himself is our peace, who made both groups (Jews & Gentiles) into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might ...

... reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Cross reconciles

God knows everything about us, the good, the bad, and the ugly, what we have done, and what we will do. And even when we were enemies of God, Jesus loved us and died for us. Jesus offers total forgiveness to everyone if they believe he paid the penalty for their sins on the cross and trust in Him.

Colossians 1:19-23 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

Romans 5:8-10 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when 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.

Cross & the law

The law contained curses for law breakers, which includes all humanity. Since Jesus fulfilled the letter of the law, the curse was nailed to the cross by his death. When we relate to his death, considering ourselves crucified with Christ, we are dead to the law and free from its curse.

Colossians 2:13-15 **When you were dead in your sins God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.**

Galatians 3:13 **Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (the cross) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Cross, Satan loses

Because Jesus never sinned, death had no power over him, so when Jesus died, he took the keys of death and Hell and defeated the entire realm of Satanic powers and authority.

Hebrews 2:9, 14-15 **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ... Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death that**

is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Colossians 2:13-15 ... And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Cross removes guilt

The blood that Jesus shed in giving his life for us enacted a new spiritual law that overrides the previous legal system, granting us freedom from sin, guilt, and condemnation. Jesus' death on the cross is our Declaration of Independence from the Devil or our Emancipation Proclamation from slavery to sin, which brought into force the new covenant, his last will, and testament that took effect after his death. Christ left an inheritance of mercy, forgiveness, and a pure conscience free from condemnation and guilt.

Luke 22:20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

1 John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 8:1, 2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to

the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Hebrews 9:14-18 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant (testament), that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living ...

Resurrection life

Jesus has provided forgiveness and eternal life, but He has given everyone the free will to choose whether they receive Christ by faith with the gift of salvation and eternal life. Or if they reject Christ choosing to go to Hell. So, why would anyone reject Christ and eternal life? The reason for most people is that they don't want to give up their sins! We must question that rationale, what could be more important than where you spend eternity?

John 1:10-13 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave

the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:16-19 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

God's plan

Here is where God's master plan comes into play. God will have a kingdom free from rebellion because he will screen everyone who enters it. Man has a "free will" to make his own decisions and is allowed to choose to accept or reject God. So, everything is **ONE GREAT BIG TEST!!!**

It's like the world is a giant amphitheater, and our lives are the show. There is a myriad of unseen eyes from heaven and earth that never cease from watching us. Mankind daily endures sickness, suffering, sorrow, hunger, injustice, and the like, and each situation reveals character while showing the contrast between God's children and the Devil's. And when this life is over, each one will stand before God to give an account for their life.

The courtroom will be filled with multitudes of witnesses, and every thought, word, and action will be called into account before the Judge, God Almighty. Then God will reward or punish each one according to what they have done.



Hebrews 12:1, 2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Revelations 20:11-15 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

1 Corinthians 4:9 For, I think, **God has exhibited us apostles at the end of the line, like men sentenced to death [and paraded as prisoners in a procession], because we have become a spectacle to the world [a show in the world's amphitheater], both to angels and to men.**

We just read about the Second Death, hell, and the Lake of Fire, which leads to another big question. What prevents you from following Jesus? Whatever it is, is it worth going to hell for? What would it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Now is the best time to dedicate your life to Jesus. You don't know what tomorrow will bring, or even if you will have a tomorrow.

2 Corinthians 6:1 “In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” **Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

James 4:13 ... you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.**

Luke 12:19-21 I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.” But God said to him, **‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’** So is the man who stores up treasure for

himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Mark 8:36-38 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Turning to God

Repentance is always the first step to approach God. John the Baptist, Jesus, and all the Apostles preached repentance as essential to turn to God, (Matthew 3:1, Mark 2:17). Repentance is acknowledging that you have sinned, turning away from that sin, and then making things right. Repentance brings healing, forgiveness, a clear conscience, and draws us closer to God.

2 Corinthians 7:9-11 *I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were **made sorrowful to the point of repentance** . . . for the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces **a repentance without regret, leading to salvation**, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! **In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.***

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ... if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

God wants us to acknowledge our wrong doing and confess it to him. If you confess your sins to God, he is faithful to forgive and cleanse us, because of what Jesus did on the cross.

1 John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Born again

If you seriously decide to follow Jesus, first turn away from anything that would displease God and ask for forgiveness from God and the people you have wronged. Believe in Jesus for salvation by faith, trusting, and depending on God in every situation, sincerely pray, read the Bible, and your life will change.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Scripture tells us to “be transformed” by renewing our minds. The word transformed comes from the Greek word metamorphoo, where we get our word **metamorphosis**. An example would be how caterpillars become changed into butterflies. We change our character and lifestyle, from darkness to light, from rebellion to obedience, from Satan to God.



***Romans 12:1-2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind.*

***II Corinthians 5:17**, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

If you follow Jesus, your lifestyle will change, and you will develop a hunger for Bible reading and a growing need to talk to God in prayer. Your family and friends should see the difference in you, which will be your opportunity to share Jesus with them.

Jesus is with you; he is faithful to finish the work he begins in your life to present you blameless in God's presence.

Jude 24, Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling or falling into sin, and to present you unblemished [blameless and faultless] in the presence of His glory with triumphant joy and unspeakable delight, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

A relationship

Building a relationship with God requires time, commitment, and discipline. We are not suggesting rules or laws, and that's not how you get to know someone. Jesus is the word of God who became flesh, so reading the Bible is one way to spend time with Jesus. Prayer is talking to God, so the more you talk to him, the more you will know him.

The book of Psalms in the Bible has many great examples of prayers, and you can use Bible verses as a prayer script. As far as Christian friends go, pray for wisdom and discernment to have godly friends who are serious about Christ and are grounded in the scriptures. Then live by faith in God.

Call to Action

We are in the end times; our world is changing quickly to line up with Bible prophecy. Jesus said the signs of his

return would be like birth pangs, growing globally in intensity and frequency. We are seeing those signs happening weekly in real-time with wars, food shortages, pandemics, shutdowns, and natural disasters, all leading to global tyranny. There will be global persecution of Christians and Jews, and it's not a question of if, but when. There will also be a great falling away from Christ, and we can see it happening already. So-called churches are already becoming sexually immoral, politically woke, and in bed with the government. As more churches go apostate or get shut down, true believers may have to find or create small groups for fellowship. While we have time and freedom, we should study the scriptures, share the gospel, and watch for Jesus to return.

This book is part of a series of studies that all Christians should know and teach. We call it the "toolbox series" because these studies are tools to equip you to share your faith with others. For free resources and study materials, visit our website at Ears2Hear.online.



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