

# *God's Progressive Revelation*

*By Dr. Donald W. Ekstrand*

This study was written to inspire every believer who has a strong desire to grow in his or her understanding of God's revelation to mankind. Due to the fact there is so much erroneous teaching and understanding of Divine Truth in our world, I felt it was necessary to essentially address the fullness of Divine Revelation. When people insist on employing sources other than Scripture in their theology, they will err and let fallen human thinking give definition to Divine Thinking.

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In order to understand what God has revealed to us in His Word, it is important that one have a contextual understanding of Divine Truth; without it, one can easily misinterpret what Scripture teaches. This has been the main problem for the believing world all the way the back to the time of Moses – which essentially was about 3500 years ago.

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My prayer is that the foregoing study will be a great encouragement to each of you who take the time to contemplate all that is written in this study. May God enrich your faith with Divine Truth.

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# “GOD’S PROGRESSIVE REVELATION”

by Dr. D. W. Ekstrand

## INTRODUCTION

Regarding this study, *essentially it’s a theological study of God’s revelation to man, and how it all transpired*; thus it gives definition to divine truth. Now because of the nature of this study, and its importance for understanding divine revelation, this study actually gives a “contextual understanding of what Scripture teaches.” Since most Christians do not take the time to understand the “context” of what Scripture says, many believers have a tendency to misinterpret what it says, thus causing them to have a very shallow faith. Before launching into this study let me state the following — since this study accentuates the context of divine revelation at a pretty deep level, it is important that one give careful consideration as to what is stated. This will make more sense to you once you launch into this study. Keep in mind, I am not the originator of all the truths that are revealed in this study, so it is my privilege to pass on to you some of the most significant teachings that many of the world’s most esteemed theologians and biblical scholars have provided for us. In this study, you’ll notice a number of words, phrases & sentences have been *italicized*, *underlined* and **emboldened** — I do this for the expressed purpose of accentuating what is being stated and giving extra emphasis to those particular words and statements; so with that in mind, read things accordingly. You will also notice that I list a number of *biblical references* after certain statements that help give definition to what was just stated; since this is a “*theological study of divine revelation*,” don’t just make it a casual read, but take the time to *reflect* upon the various passages listed. You will notice below that I have also included a *Table of Contents* to help give definition to this study — basically it identifies the various subjects that this study covers.

*The Essence of Divine Revelation . . . . .	p. 4
*Man’s Response to Divine Revelation . . . . .	p. 19
*The Ongoing Effect of Divine Revelation . . . . .	p. 35
*The First Years of Divine Revelation . . . . .	p. 48
*The Disciples Wrestled with Divine Revelation . . .	p. 51
*The Essence of Progressive Revelation . . . . .	p. 56
*The Significance of God’s Divine Covenants . . . . .	p. 62
*Scripture is Divine Revelation . . . . .	p. 70
*The Final Exhortations of God to Man . . . . .	p. 71

## THIS ESSENCE OF DIVINE REVELATION

*Divine revelation essentially is **God's self-disclosure to humanity** that they might come to know Him for who He is and what He is like, and what He expects from human beings.* Such revelation conveys the conviction that God exists and that He is transcendent, self-sufficient, immanent, eternal, powerful, good, and a hater of evil. Historical Christian leaders such as Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Hodge, Warfield, and Henry maintain that Scripture not only gives definition to God's existence, but to His character and His moral demands. Said **Luther**, "All men have the general knowledge that God is, that He has created heaven and earth, that He is just, and that He punishes the wicked." Said **Calvin**, "Even wicked men are forced, by the mere view of the earth & sky, to rise to the Creator." Thus all knowledge of God comes by way of revelation... human knowledge of God is *revealed knowledge*, and God alone reveals it. In short, *God bridges the gap between Himself and His creatures, clearly disclosing Himself and His will to them.* Again, by God alone can God be known (as you read this study, you might pause and consider the integrity of such statements). Biblical faith affirms that revelation is real because the personal Creator God has chosen to let His human creatures know Him. And Scripture points to *Jesus Christ* as God's final revelation. Remember, God has provided a source of knowledge about Himself and His Son, and that source is ***the Bible***. Though God has given man the wisdom to understand various aspects of life, man doesn't have the wherewithal to understand the fullness of life; that's reserved for God. Don't make God out to be a simplistic being; the truth is, He is *trillions* of times smarter than all of His creatures *combined*. Remember, God is *infinite* (there is no end to His knowledge), and His creatures are finite; as such, the two are *incomparable*. It should be clear to every believer, man is not the end all when it comes to knowledge... the reality is, he knows very little about anything including himself, yet he often claims to possess far more smarts than he has. If man had any sense at all, he would naturally admit that what he does know is simply "*his own opinion*," not absolute truth; yet the political world often makes some brash statements that are grounded in nothing but fallen human thinking (*i.e.*, opinion). Said David, "***The fool says in his heart, there is no God***" (cf. Ps 14:1; 53:1); thus when man rejects divine truth and embraces untruth, God gives him over to *a depraved mind*, which essentially is characterized by absolute foolishness (Rom 1:21-32). The truth is, proud hearts result in mindlessness... thus, if *humility* doesn't reign in a person's mind and heart, *God will make him pay a very steep price*, because He does not ignore *proud hearts* (cf. Gal 6:7-8; Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5).

Christian author and pastor, ***Wallace Smith*** (who serves at the International Headquarters for the *Living Church of God* in North Carolina) in an article he wrote on transcending our humanity, he said the following: "Though the Creator God created mankind in His own image, an increasing number of people have decided that it is **time for humanity to take charge of its own destiny and to transcend limitations that have long been considered**

*part and parcel of being a human being.*” The philosophy of “transhumanism” has inspired some scientists to push past mankind’s apparent biological limits and recreate him as something beyond human — through medicine and science, the race is on to create a new kind of human; *i.e.*, one who is stronger, smarter, and has a lifespan that far outlasts the one they know today. So, says Smith, “Can we really reshape our species and transcend our humanity?” Can human beings, through medicine and science, regain the sort of lifespans that were once enjoyed by the likes of Adam & Methuselah (*i.e.*, live upwards of a thousand years)? Some scientists today have been able to extend the life of “baker’s yeast cells” to ten times their normal length — and due to similarities in genetics, many people hope the results will transfer to humans. Should you care to study this, such was stated in “USC News” (Jan 14, 2008). Many people hope that with advances in medicine and science, that they will ultimately allow humans to live forever, all the while enjoying bodies the equivalent of a young person (20 to 25 years old). The question is this — Is this actually possible? Well Scripture intimates that “some extreme things” can be possible, but it also states that “nothing is possible outside of God’s approval.” So if God doesn’t okay such things, then it won’t happen. When the descendents of Noah started building themselves a city and a tower whose top would reach into heaven, the Lord responded with these words: “Now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them” (Gen 11:6) — as you may recall, the Lord then changed all of their languages so that they wouldn’t continue to travel down that same road; thus God ended their goal and scattered them all over the world. Obviously there are some things that God permits, and some things He doesn’t — everything that happens in this world “must be in accord with the counsel of God’s will” (cf. Eph 1:11; Is 40: 6-8; 40:13-17; 43:10-13; 45:5-7; 46: 9-11; 55:6-11). Again, it should be obvious, God didn’t make stupid creatures, He actually gifted them (after all, He created them in His image); nevertheless, they aren’t the final determinants of reality; God is the final determinant. Now, either we can align ourselves with God and His will, or we can belligerently fight for our own autonomy (*i.e.*, be the rulers of our lives), and be judged accordingly. As strange as it may seem — God let’s us choose the road we travel in life; He doesn’t force us to embrace Him; that’s a choice we make. As such, by God’s directive “we will reap what we sow in life,” thus when all is said and done, God will either bless us or curse us (cf. Gal 6:7-8; Hos 8:7; 10:12; Deut 28:1ff; Deut 28:15ff). One more thought — no matter how great man may become, or how long he may live on this planet... though he may be able to extend life hundreds of years, his eternal state is going to ultimately be a definite reality for him; so if one plays games with God, come what may, he is going to loose in the end (just like Satan is going to do).

Regarding this subject of “choice” — obviously we all make numerous choices in life every day; the question is, what is it that is guiding our choices? Is it our feelings, our emotions, our wants, our desires, our needs? what is it? Is it the foregoing, or is it God’s Word (*i.e.*, God’s revelation to man)? Several times in Scripture we are told to “walk in the Word”... “walk in the Spirit”... “walk in faith”... “walk in the light” — and to refrain from walking in the dark and the flesh (cf. Ps 119:9, 11, 16, 17, 28, 101, 105, 114, 160, Ps 103:20; 1 Jn 1:7). Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me... Blessed are those who hear

God's Word and observe it" (Lk 11:23, 28)... "If anyone loves Me he will keep My word" (Jn 14:23); "My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21)... "If you abide in My word then you are truly disciples of Mine" (Jn 8:31)... "Blessed are those who hear God's Word and observe it" (Lk 11:28). Said the apostle Paul, "Walk in the Spirit (i.e., in the Word) and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal 5:16); remember, God's Word and the Holy Spirit essentially are one (cf. Jn 14:17; 15:26; 17:17; Heb 4:12)... "Said Paul, "Walk by faith (i.e., by the Word), not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7)... "Walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8). Said the psalmist, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked... but who delights in the Word of God" (Ps 1:1-2). Then there are the words of King Solomon – "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path" (Prv 3: 5-6). Remember, the Holy Spirit dwells within us that we might please God and submit to His control (cf. Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Gal 5:16). The greatest of the Latin Fathers, Augustine, reminds us that there are "two wills" battling in us – the old self and the new self, the carnal and the spiritual, the old will and the new will (and the old will became tough with age – Gal 5:17). Thus we are to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), and let Him dwell within us richly (Col 3:16), and put to death the deeds of the flesh (Rom 8:13)... so we are to be filled with the Spirit and let God's Word control us; remember, we please God when self-denial rules in our hearts and minds. Long before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He said to His disciples, "Take up your cross and follow Me" (cf. Matt.10:38; 16:24); that is, deny your self-centeredness and follow Christ; die to yourself, the world, and the self-life. Obviously to walk in the Word, we must choose to do so... and this we do by understanding that it is God's will, and that He will give us the grace and the strength to do so when we humble ourselves before Him; so we are completely dependent upon God and not our own strength. Every believer must "learn" to walk with Christ; yes, it is a process we all must learn, and it is a difficult one, because Satan and our flesh will constantly be arguing against it, but it is not at all an impossible one; thus Jesus exhorts us to "take up our cross and follow Him." With the foregoing in mind, let's look at this thing called "divine revelation."

The word "revelation" refers to a disclosure of what was previously unknown. God's revelation is God's manifestation of Himself to mankind in such a way that men and women can know Him & fellowship with Him. Later on in His ministry, Jesus and His disciples entered into the district of Caesarea Philippi; while He was there He asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, and others say Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." And then He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To which Jesus responded, "Blessed are you Simon Peter, because flesh & blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (cf. Mt 16:13-17). The reality is, the knowledge of Jesus' Sonship has never been attained by human discovery, it has always come from God alone; and just as it was with Peter and the other disciples, so also is it with us in our lives. Remember, God is invisible and He alone can give definition to who He is. With that in mind, Peter affirmed his belief that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, and more than that, the Son of God. By this time

the disciples had seen Jesus perform many miracles, including a number of healings, the raising of man from the dead and the feeding of 5,000 people. So the disciples knew that Jesus was more than a prophet – He was absolutely unique, and in fact was “God in the flesh.” Though that indeed is who Jesus is, the fullness of that revelation was not fully understood until after Jesus ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit abided in them (I cover that issue in more detail later on). Though Jesus said numerous things to His disciples during His three year ministry with them, it is believed that they often did not fully understand what He was saying. According to Scripture, Jesus had refrained from telling His disciples about His death & resurrection until they had a better understanding of who He was; yet, the disciples still had a hard time processing what Jesus was telling them, as evidenced in Peter’s response (cf. Matt 16:21-23). Even though the disciples may have had faith in Jesus as the divine Son of God, they were extremely confused at the prediction of Jesus’ death and resurrection (see Mark 9:32); obviously, they did not fully understand things until the Spirit of truth (*i.e.*, the Holy Spirit) took up residence in their hearts after Jesus ascended into heaven (read Jn 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13; 2 Pet 1: 20-21 & Rom 8:16). Remember, the apostles didn’t write Scripture until twenty years or so after Jesus had ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit dwelled in them — so Scripture is the product of God, not man (again, cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21); though everything they wrote was something that they attested to (and discussed with each other)... it was only fully understood by them after Jesus was crucified, resurrected, ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit had entered into their lives (so Scripture is not just the product of human thinking).

Throughout history God has gradually revealed His message to man, starting in Genesis and continuing through the close of the canon. Furthermore, God did not reveal anything more to man than was necessary or that man was capable of receiving. Since all of us are called to grow in our faith, there is always more to know of Christ — “therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity” (cf. Heb 6:1; 2 Pet 3:18). Remember, the apostles were not spiritual geniuses any more than we are, so give careful consideration to what has been said. Though many of you may struggle with some of what has just been stated, take the time to seriously consider what it says (be sure to contemplate the verses that are listed). Without understanding the foregoing, one can easily read the four gospels and slightly misinterpret what each of the authors may have known prior to the death and resurrection of Christ — obviously, once the Holy Spirit came upon them, everything then made sense to them. Remember, the disciples didn’t write things until twenty years or so after Jesus had ascended into heaven, and it was the Holy Spirit who guided their words (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21). So here was a group of men who had reflected for a number of years upon all that had taken place in their ministry with Jesus, before they finally put it all in writing (take a moment and think about how long twenty years is — where were you 20 years ago? how much has transpired in your life since then? imagine studying something for twenty years). When God was instructing the prophet Jeremiah regarding Israel’s future restoration, after explaining what would ultimately happen, He said “In the latter days you will understand this” (Jer 30:24) — it was not at all uncommon for God’s prophets to not fully understand what He

was saying. Said Daniel, *“Lord, I heard but could not understand,”* to which the Lord replied, *“Go your way for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time”* (Dan 12:8-9).

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans said, *“From the creation of the world God’s invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse”* (Rom 1:20). The psalmist (Ps 19:1) saw the glory of God through the spectacles of special revelation; thus we can say that all that can be known about God in a natural sense has been revealed in nature — such is referred to as *natural revelation*; the reality is, it is God’s self-disclosure of Himself in a general way to all people. Though all men see it, all men don’t humbly embrace it, therefore God doesn’t *enlighten* their hearts to believe. Keep in mind, some of God’s revelation occurs through *nature*, through our *experiences*, in our *conscience*, and in *history*. In the wonders of the heavens and in the beauty of the earth, God manifests Himself (the entire created order reflects its Creator). Perhaps the following question needs to be asked: Why in the world would God ever make something that did not reflect Him; *i.e.*, that did not reflect who He is? Jesus taught that *“God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (cf. Mt 5:45), *thus revealing His goodness to all*. Says the author of the book of Acts: *“The living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them... did not leave Himself without a witness, since He did good — giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and satisfying our hearts with food and happiness”* (cf. Acts 14:15-17); yet many people do not express their gratitude to God for His goodness to them; why’s that? Because fallen man is so self-consumed, he does not honor God’s divine presence or His goodness to him. It’s important to remember, God makes Himself known in the continuing care and provision for the needs of mankind. The truth is, *the entire universe is God’s self-manifestation, and reality can only be defined by Him who created it*.

In the Old Testament Elihu’s speech to Job (cf. Job 36:24-37:24) draws attention to the rain that waters the earth, the thunder and lightning that strikes terror in the heart, the fury of a thunderstorm, and the brilliant shining of the sun following the storm’s departure. The text suggests that these natural phenomena attest to the power, majesty, goodness, and severity of the creator God, and that the evidence is there for all to behold (cf. Job 36:25). Moreover, God’s address to Job (cf. Job 38:1-39:30) indicates that natural phenomena (lightning, thunder, rain, snow), the daily rising of the sun, the majestic constellations in the heavens, and the animal kingdom attests to the existence and glory of God. According to Psalm 19 God reveals Himself through the book of nature (vv. 1-6) and the book of the law (vv. 7:13). In the first volume we read, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands”* (v. 1); that which the created order shows forth is the manifestation of God Himself. Remember, *“in God is life”* (cf. Gen 1:24, 30; 2:7-9; 6:17; 7:15; Job 33:4; Ps 36:9); incidentally, natural life has a beginning and *no end* — for the *saved* it involves endless union and fellowship with God... for the *unsaved* it involves endless existence in separation from God — there is *no end* to the existence of God’s creatures.



I find it interesting, though man and the world of science know life when they see it, outside of God they have no understanding whatsoever as to how it exists; the reality is, life transcends human thought... yet fallen man tends to think that he is a brilliant creature, and that all things simply exploded into existence at some point in time in the past. Though man can identify some things that are incorporated into life, their fallen minds are only able to travel “*an inch deep into it*” — I am reminded of Charles Darwin’s discovery of the cell; in so doing, he thought he had discovered the very foundation of every living thing, and the world around him embraced his discovery and invented something called “*evolution*” (a theory of organic development by natural processes of descent, in which modifications are selected by environment); however, little did the scientific world know that there is an endless amount of information in a cell that man cannot identify or understand. Just because man thinks that which is invisible to the human eye is inconsequential, is absolute nonsense — remember, everything can be divided over and over and over again; just because man cannot fathom something, doesn’t mean it is insignificant or that it doesn’t exist. This fallen world in which we live would do well to embrace the thinking of one of the greatest scientists in history — **Albert Einstein** — stated Einstein: “*The scientist is possessed by the sense of universal causation... his religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly **insignificant reflection**.*” As temporal creatures, much to the chagrin of this arrogant world in which we live, we are **extremely limited** in our understanding of reality. It’s only the diabolical fools in our world who think they are brilliant; the truth is, fallen man is an extremely destitute being, with a mind that he doesn’t even understand. The **apostle Paul** said the following words to the Romans, which are stated below (cf. Rom 1:18-25); keep in mind, the emboldened words in those verses are emphatic in Greek:

*The **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is **evident** within them; for God make it evident to them. Since the creation of the world God’s invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through **what has been made**, so that mankind is without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him **as GOD**, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was **darkened**. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man... Therefore God **gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...[the reality is] they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.*

As is stated in the “*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*” by Walter Elwell, “Scripture teaches that when confronted with the truth-content of general revelation, sinners consistently dismiss it from consciousness (cf. Rom 1:21-32). Thus instead of worshiping and

obeying God, the unregenerates assert their own autonomy and fashion lifeless idols, which they then venerate. The reality is, God responds by giving the rejecters of light over to the sordid impulses of their sinful nature (cf. Rom 1:24-28). Thus general revelation serves to condemn and establish guilt-worthiness before God” (cf. Rom 1:20).

Now, since “God created man in His image” (Gen 1:26-27), God also **reveals** Himself in man... so human beings are a mirror or reflection of God because they are God’s unique workmanship (cf. Gen 1:28; Rom 2:14-15). What I find surprising is that many in the Christian community don’t believe in the creation of Adam & Eve; *i.e.*, they don’t believe that Adam & Eve were the first two human beings (that’s what Roman Catholicism believes). Let me expand on that — in simplified form, the fundamentalist view is that Adam was a real person and the first person created by God, while the scientific view argues that human beings evolved as a group; therefore, some Christians hold that they must follow scientific finding (as incorrect as it is) and adapt their faith’s teachings to that information. The reality is, in the past the church’s statements regarding original sin have presumed that Adam and Eve were historical people, yet in the modern age the Catholic Church has seemingly rejected a fundamentalist reading of Scripture — as such, they interpret the primal stories of Genesis as metaphoric stories which simply express basic truths about humans and the human condition. So if science shows that there is no evidence of monogenism (*i.e.*, the practice of simply marrying only once during a lifetime), but that there is lots of evidence for polygenism (*i.e.*, development from more than one source), then Catholics believe “they need have no problem accepting that.” Obviously, when that approach is followed, Adam and Eve are not seen as historical people, but as important figures in stories that contain key lessons about the relationships of humans and their Creator. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “the account of the fall in Genesis simply uses figurative language” (of which there is not the slightest degree of evidence). Thus, according to their thinking, the man & woman of Genesis are intended to represent everyman and everywoman — they are paradigms, figurative equivalents, of human conduct in the face of temptation, not lessons in history. In recent years numerous evangelicals in the Protestant world have been debating the belief that science shows that the human race could not literally have descended from two progenitors (*i.e.*, Adam and Eve), yet numerous apologists and Christian professors have strongly defended the necessity of a literal belief in Adam & Eve, which Scripture strongly supports dozens of times (read the following: Gen 1:26-29; 2:7-8, 15-23; Gen 3 & 4; also 1 Tim 2:13; Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22; 15:45). Aside from the foregoing passages, there are numerous other passages that refer to God’s creation of man (cf. Gen 9:6; 5:1-2; Ps 8:5-8; 100:3; Prov 16:4; Is 45:12; Jer 27:5; Mal 2:10; Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6; Acts 17:26; Col 1:16; Jam 3:9; Rev 4:11). Obviously, if Adam & Eve weren’t the first human beings that God created, then who were the first human beings? And how can one reject such thinking when there isn’t the slightest bit of evidence to the contrary. Just because the Roman Catholic Church embarrassed itself years ago for embracing the commonly held world position that the earth was a “flat earth” (not a “round earth”)... a few years later it was determined that the earth was round, not flat (much to the embarrassment of Roman Catholicism — obviously, the world questioned the integrity of what it believed;

so they started placing a premium on what the scientific world knew & believed. Of all the Christian Churches in the world, the Catholic Church faces a particular quandary – the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, which was brought about by the success of the protestant movement and held in 1545-1563, was quite explicit on this particular topic: “Catholics are required to **believe** not only that Adam is the single father of the human race, but that Original Sin is passed on by a physical generation from him to the entire human race” (yet that is now no longer a foundational belief in the Catholic Church). One of the premiere problems with Roman Catholicism is that they believe that Papal authority is as significant as Scripture (in spite of the fact that numerous popes down through the centuries were extremely unrighteous, who actually killed and murdered people who didn’t embrace them or what they believed – Christian history was very ugly prior to the Reformation; that’s why it came about). Catholic apologists point to Pope John Paul II’s 1996 address in the Pontifical Academy of Science as evidence of the Church’s acceptance of evolution; thus Roman Catholicism believes that biological origins are scientific... that if science shows that there is no evidence of monogenism, and that there is a lot of evidence for polygenism, then Catholics need have no problem accepting that. For those of you who struggle with these differences of opinion, I understand that... Lord willing, that modern-day philosophical line of thinking is not one that you embrace. God’s Word emphatically states that all of Scripture was **inspired by God** (i.e., that it is all God breathed) and is the product of God’s Spirit through the prophets & apostles that were anointed by God (cf. 2 Tim 3:16; Rom 15:4; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Remember, God “spoke” and “breathed” all things into existence (cf. Gen 1:1-25; Gen 2:7; Ps 33:6; Jn 20:22; Job 4:9; 27:3; 32:8; 33:4; 37:10; Is 30:33; 33:11; 40:7; 42:5; Rev 11:11); I listed those verses because God’s breath is that which is ultimately the source of all things, so read those verses with that in mind and see God for who He is. Regarding Adam and Eve, **Why would one not want to believe in the persons of Adam & Eve?** and **What is it that is so disconcerting about God’s creation of Adam & Eve that causes one to not believe that they were the first two human beings that God made in His image?** Remember the words of Paul to his fellow servant Timothy, “It was **Adam** who was **first created**” (1 Tim 2:13); incidentally, the word first in that verse is emphatic in Greek. Lord willing, this particular paragraph has not been confusing to you.

Keep in mind, God gave us “**His Word**” (i.e., divine revelation) to lead us into the truth that we might forsake untruth and embrace divine truth. There are hundreds and hundreds of verses in Scripture that tell us to **listen and hear and obey the Word of the Lord**. Remember, Scripture (i.e., the Bible) is referred to as God’s Word and the Word of the Lord. Obviously, if one diminishes the significance of God’s Word (i.e., divine revelation), one’s faith will be seriously diminished, because he will be embracing untruth. Regarding God’s Word, the psalmists said: “**The word of the Lord is upright**” (Ps 33:4). “**Thy word have I treasured in my heart that I might not sin against Thee... I will meditate on Thy precepts... and not forget Thy word**” (Ps 119:11, 15, 16). “**Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven**” (Ps 119:89). “**Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path**” (Ps 119:105). “**The sum of Thy word is truth**” (Ps 119:160). Said the Lord to Isaiah the

prophet: *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the **word** of the Lord stands forever”* (Is 40:8). Said the prophet Jeremiah, *“**Thy words** were found and I ate them, and they became for me the joy and the delight of my heart”* (Jer 15:16). Said Jesus, *“If you abide in **My word**, then you are truly disciples of Mine”* (Jn 8:31)...also, *“Those who love Me will keep **My word**”* (Jn 14:23); said Jesus to His Father, *“sanctify them in truth; **Thy word** is truth”* (Jn 17:17). Said the apostle Paul: *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ**”* (Rom 10:17)... *“Let the **word of Christ** dwell within you”* (Col 3:16). Said James, the blood-brother of Jesus, *“In humility receive the **word** implanted, which is able to save your souls”* (Jam 1:21) — in other words, it doesn’t come without humility.

## WHY DOES MAN REJECT THE TRUTH?

Think carefully – *what is so attractive about untruth that man would reject truth???* Why did Eve capitulate and eat of the forbidden fruit? Though she did not have a sinful inner-core (*i.e.*, fallen flesh), she still chose to eat of the forbidden fruit. Obviously, our minds do not fully understand reality (remember, *we are finite creatures*, and reality is infinite in scope); hence, we often make very ugly choices in life... what frequently governs our choices is *immediate satisfaction*. When one begins to *“argue against the truth,”* he will naturally capitulate and embraces untruth... this he does because he simply doesn’t see the bigger picture. Thus his thinking and his inner-core deceives him... and for some reason he places an extremely high value on his own autonomy (*i.e.*, on what he wants). So not believing God is like a child not believing his parents — you get the picture? Children don’t nearly have the capacity to think all things through that their parents do... thus human beings, in comparison with God, are very ignorant creatures regarding the fullness of truth, in spite of the fact that God has shared a degree of truth with them. Remember, Satan was the one who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden — she didn’t start the problem, but once Satan addressed the issue, she made a very ugly choice, knowing that God said *“death”* would be the result of such a choice! Though she probably didn’t understand the fullness of this things called death, nevertheless she did to some degree, because God is the one who communicated it to her. The reality is, fallen man’s problem is that he does not *fully believe* in God’s Word, because he does not fully understand it; thus there is argumentation that goes on in his soul, which causes him to exchange the truth of God for a lie (*i.e.*, untruth); and those who completely reject the God of creation, He gives over to a depraved mind (cf. Rom 1:25, 28; Ps 106:24-25).

It should be obvious to everyone reading this, **“truth”** needs to characterize our lives and our thinking; when **“untruth”** does, we will walk in the dark rather than the light. By the way, the only way one can be sure He is walking in the light is to **humble himself before the Lord** – why’s that? because without humility, one will embrace human reason over divine reason. The only requisite for knowing divine truth is **humility** (there is no other way to know it; truth is not simply understood by human reason) – **God must open one’s heart to the truth**, because it is only by **God’s grace** that we come to know the truth, and God only gives grace to the **humble** – He doesn’t give it to the proud (*i.e.*, to those who think more highly of themselves than they should – cf. Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). Regarding this thing called **“humility,”** essentially it means seeing oneself for who he really is: **“a fallen sinful creature in need of God’s love and forgiveness (if he has sinned)”** (arrogant man doesn’t see himself in that light). The reality is, when a man humbles himself before the Lord, **GOD then enlightens his heart with divine truth** – in so doing, **“God gives him the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen”** (cf. Heb 11:1).

Regarding this thing called **“truth,”** if it is a troubling construct for you to embrace, let me encourage you to read a study I did on it titled **“True Unequivocal Truth”** – you can access it on my website – **www.thetransformedsoul.com** – click on the **“Additional Studies Link”** at the top of the homepage. Remember, **Truth** and **Untruth** are both very prominent realities in our fallen universe (they are not insignificant opinions). Biblical truth is a divine reality that is not simply a matter of one’s own interpretation (cf. 2 Pet 1:20; 2 Tim 3:16; Rom 5:4) – the Bible is authoritative because it is the words of God that He passed on to man. **James Montgomery Boice** expresses it this way in his widely read work, **“Foundations of the Christian Faith”** (InterVarsity Press, p. 47) – **“When man studies God’s Word, God speaks to him and transforms him by the truth he discovers there;”** such is a direct encounter of individual believers with God. That’s what **Martin Luther** meant when he declared at the Diet of Worms, **“My conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God.”** Beloved, remember **“God’s word is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division between both soul and spirit... and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”** (Heb 4:12) – perhaps to the surprise of some of you, the word **“living”** is **emphatic** in Greek. While God’s Word is comforting & nourishing to those who believe, it is a tool of judgment for those who do not believe as they should; remember, the Word of God is **alive**, it is not just a stagnant reality; therefore it has the **power** to actually connect with one’s soul by the Holy Spirit. Said the Lord Himself, **“My word is like fire and like a hammer which shatters a rock”** (cf. Jer 23:29; also Eph 5:26; 1 Th 2:13; Heb 6:5; 1 Pet 1:23). So nothing but direct experience will ever convince anybody that the Bible’s words are the authentic authoritative words of God. As **John Calvin’s “Institutes”** states it – **“The same spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what has been divinely commanded”** (page 79). So the Bible is not just revealed truth, it is also **the living voice of God**, because the living God speaks through its passages. Remember, the Bible claims **GOD** is its ultimate author,

yet due to the fact that fallen man doesn't humble himself before God, he often misinterprets what God's Word says; this was the premiere problem with ancient Israel; proud people often ruled in their world; as such, they misinterpreted God's Word and stumbled and stumbled over & over again, and such has happened numerous times again today in the Christian world — to the chagrin of many professing believers, an inordinate number of them believe that most of what Scripture teaches is simply a matter of "one's opinion" (not absolute divine truth); beloved, that is a very sad commentary on the Christian world. I'm going to appeal to you one more time: that is precisely how the ancient Jewish world approached Scripture; they simply interpreted it as they saw fit... in so doing God passed very severe judgments on them as a nation — if you must study that, by all means do so; please don't treat that truth lightly. For some reason, few people truly humble themselves before the Lord... a proud heart is not uncommon in the religious world, and when pride characterizes people, they interpret Scripture differently than they should. Remember, the Gnostics back in the first century took the Scriptures and reinterpreted them according to their own opinions, thus causing great division in many churches — most biblical scholars believe it was a problem with the Galatians and the Colossians; it is also addressed by the apostle John (cf. 1 Jn 2:2; 4:2-3). Remember, the Gnostics thought faith was inferior to knowledge, and they placed a premium on ancient Greek philosophy.

As was the case with Martin Luther and John Calvin, Augustine's goal of biblical interpretation was also spiritual; the truth is, the spiritual dimension of the interpreter (i.e., his heart) plays an integral part in the process of understanding Scripture... in addition to that, believers must give significant time to the study of God's Word. With the foregoing in mind, it is also important to remember that divine truth is an invisible eternal spiritual reality, not simply something that is recorded on a piece of paper (be it a Bible or a magazine). So to think that the paper upon which truth is written is spiritual and holy in and of itself would be completely erroneous, because divine truth is a living reality (it is not simply stacked up in a little barn somewhere). Furthermore, spiritual truth actually resides in the minds and hearts of believers in varying degrees; remember, as believers we all have hearts that contain a lot of divine truths, because over the years we have learned numerous spiritual truths, and being as the Holy Spirit resides in our hearts as well, He is at work convicting us of its spiritual significance. So the physical reality is not the issue, it is the spiritual reality itself that is the issue. Interestingly enough, that particular construct has also affected many churches in our world — for some reason, some people actually think their church's worship center in and of itself is holy and divinely spiritual, and that the cross and some statue in the church is holy and spiritual; yet that does not at all coincide with divine truth. Just because the ark of the covenant was deemed holy by God (keep in mind, the ark was the original container of the ten commandments and the central symbol of God's presence with the people of Israel — cf. Ex 25:10-22; 31:6-11; 37:1-9; Num 10:35-36; Deut 10:1-5; 1 Sam 6:21-7:2; 2 Sam 6:2ff; Heb 9:1-10; Rev 11:19), that doesn't mean we can declare some physical object of our choosing holy and spiritual. Obviously man's spirituality is often very humanistic, and humanism is widely embraced in many Roman Catholic Churches. For some reason some Christian Churches insist on making some physical thing in their

church holy. Beloved, before launching into the next topic, let's briefly take a look at the Protestant Reformation, because it will help give understanding to divine revelation.

## ***The Protestant Reformation***

Over 500 years ago in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the European world was in an absolute mess; Rome was still dominating most of Europe, but Catholic papal authority had been on the thrown now for about a thousand years. Remember, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Germanic barbarian invaders had conquered Rome... since Christianity was the main religion in the empire, the Roman Church had not only survived, but it became the greatest unifying force in Europe during the Middle Ages, and effectively ruled the kingdom of Europe for a thousand years. Since there were hundreds of city states in Europe, none of them had much power, so the Church of Rome became a secular as well as a spiritual power, with the Pope being seen as a prince as well as a spiritual leader. By the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Pope was in effect the undisputed ruler of the west. Though Eastern Orthodoxy ruled in the east, Roman Catholicism ruled in the west; so nearly all of Europe and North Africa were under Roman Catholic influence. The Church of Rome became a center for learning, and evangelizing monks spread the theology of Rome and its laws, and popularized its church liturgy. In 800 Charlemagne was crowned The Holy Roman Emperor of Europe by Pope Leo III; as such, the power of the Church spread quickly, and Christian control of western society became complete. Remember The Roman Empire was now being referred to as The Holy Roman Empire. By the year 1000, the Church established itself as a form of theocracy that increasingly legislated on every aspect of politics and economics, and the everyday lives of people. Ultimately, the papacy took on a more authoritarian role, and took to itself more centralized powers of administration and jurisdiction. Abbots and Bishops became innovative elites in society. The darkest period of history for the Papacy was the 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> centuries — during this time, warring princes often controlled the church... pope after pope ended their careers being disposed from office, imprisoned or murdered. This era is often referred to as the Dark Ages, because it was such a dark time for the Church spiritually — a great deal of immorality existed among the popes during those days. Church historians of every stripe have recorded the disgusting behavior of dozens of popes during those years with great indignation (Renwick and Harmann, The Story of the Church; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1985, pp. 86-87). One of the worst leaders, Pope John XII, was deposed on charges of murder, blasphemy, and gross sensuality. Back during the Middle Ages, many kings habitually sold Church offices to the highest bidders, regardless of the character of the individual. The list of corrupt popes goes on and on; there's no point in listing their names (anyone can study it if they so choose). Remember, this was the CATHOLIC CHURCH in Europe back during the Middle Ages; by the way, the word "Catholic" literally means "Church universal" — all Christians in the strict sense of the word are "Catholics" (not Roman Catholics); being as Roman Catholicism hung on to that term, few Protestants identify with that term.

Regarding the Reformation, there were a number of historical events that led various people to express their displeasure at what was going on in the Church — to them, the Church had assumed too much power and had gotten involved in wrong issues, and did not give sufficient attention to spiritual matters; this particular perception became very prominent in the Church at Rome starting around 1100 AD, and markedly increased throughout the Reformation. In so doing, popes began to claim that they not only had power over Christendom, but power over the entire world as vicars of Christ (i.e., God's ecclesiastical agents in the world), and that they could step into any situation in which a sin had been committed. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Church erected beautiful cathedrals in which they displayed valuable relics and major works of religious art. The wealthy were heavy contributors through the purchase of favors and indulgences. The 14<sup>th</sup> century ended with the papacy in turmoil... this period of moral decline, confusion, and conflict led to a schism in the Church... thus reverence for the papacy would never fully recover among believers. The 14<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by deep social unrest and intellectual upheaval, and Europe was recovering from an outbreak of bubonic plague — the black death as it was called moved rapidly across Europe, killing nearly one half of the population. Not surprising, this period was characterized by great religious anxiety; many people believed the plague was an act of divine judgment, and they were terrified about their own survival & chances for salvation. As people began to question the teachings of Rome, the Catholic Church decided that it had to take drastic action... thus Pope Sixtus IV in 1478 embraced something known as the Spanish Inquisition, which brought about a reign of terror throughout Europe, and it resulted in the death of thousands of Jews, Muslims and Christians accused of heresy. Jews were singled out for persecution simply because they were Jews — Jewish children over six years of age were taken from their parents & given a Christian education. Though we could expand upon the absolute ugliness of what transpired back during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, that's not really necessary (again, if you so wish, you can study that subject on your own). With that in mind, the battles between the Church and State during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries were mostly fought over political power. By the way, the Spanish Inquisition was not formally abolished in Spain until 1834 by King Bonaparte. By the year 1500 there were numerous voices throughout Europe calling for urgent reform, and when this didn't happen, open dissent led to the Reformation. The Reformation was not an incident of protest, but a series of reform attempts.

The most significant reform movement before Luther was one associated with two university professors during the 14<sup>th</sup> century — John Wycliffe of England, and Jon Huss of Bohemia (present day Czech and Slovakia). Wycliffe believed religion had become too much a matter of clerical authority; so he declared that Scripture rather than the Church should be the only rule of faith. Remember, the Church at Rome back then believed that only they could read and interpret Scripture (this rule continued in Roman Catholicism until around 1960). When John Huss became acquainted with Wycliffe, he boldly began to preach against the heretical organization of the Church & the corruption of the clergy



— the resultant affect was, both Wycliffe and Huss were condemned by the Church and burned at the stake; so here were so-called Christians killing other Christians. Numerous individuals began to argue against Roman Catholicism, because *their actions did not coincide with what Scripture teaches*. *So the Protestant Reformation was a widespread theological revolt in Europe against the abuses and totalitarian control of the Roman Catholic Church*. Reformers such as **Martin Luther** in Germany, **John Calvin** in France, **Ulrich Zwingli** in Switzerland, **John Knox** in Scotland, and **Henry VIII** in England protested various unbiblical practices of the Catholic Church and promoted a return to *sound biblical doctrine*. It is important to understand the Catholic claim of *apostolic succession* — this doctrine says that the line of Roman Catholic popes extends through the centuries all the way back to the apostle Peter; yet few of the individuals selected and chosen through the ages expressed a level of spirituality that correlates with what Scripture teaches. Not only that, there is nothing in Scripture that supports the argument of apostolic succession. Thus for Roman Catholicism to believe in the infallibility of the pope (*i.e.*, when speaking ex cathedra) is unscriptural; so it's no wonder they value *papal thinking* as much as they do Scripture, and sometimes more. So for Roman Catholics to place *church teaching* on a level equal to Scripture itself, prompted numerous people in the Church to argue against them. The opposition to the false teaching of Roman Catholicism came to a head in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic monk, *challenged the authority of the pope* and, in particular, the *selling of indulgences*. The Church of Rome started teaching that *one could purchase an indulgence to reduce one's purgatorial debt*, thus people were told they could even receive eternal salvation in exchange for funds, or experience the possibility of damnation because they refused to give. In addition to that, indulgences could be made on behalf of departed friends or loved ones — the reality was, indulgence salesmen used that pressure to great effect. Now aside from the foregoing, at the heart of the Protestant Reformation lay four basic questions — *How is a person saved? Where does religious authority lie? What is the Church? and What is the essence of Christian living?* Reformers developed five essential points of biblical doctrine that separate Protestantism from Roman Catholicism —

1. **Scripture Alone** — The Bible alone is the sole authority for all matters of faith and practice. Scripture alone is the standard by which all teachings and traditions of the church must be measured.
2. **Salvation by Grace Alone** — Salvation is proof of God's undeserved favor; we are rescued from God's wrath by His grace alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit, not by any work that we do.
3. **Salvation by Faith Alone** — We are justified by faith in Christ alone, not by the works of the Law. It is by faith in Christ that His righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect standard (cf. Scripture passages listed below).

4. **In Christ Alone** — Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone; no one or nothing else can save. Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross is sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to God the Father.
5. **For the Glory of God Alone** — Salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God for His glory alone. As Christians we must magnify Him always and live our lives in His presence.

Essentially these five important doctrines are the reason for the Protestant Reformation. They are at the heart of the Reformers' call to **return to biblical teaching**. These five doctrines are just as important today in evaluating a church and its teachings. Remember, the Catholic Church taught that one was saved through a combination of *faith and good works*, that indulgences could procure God's favor, and that the pope was the supreme authority over the Church. Reformers, on the other hand, shared a strong commitment to the idea that salvation was by *faith alone*, that the authority for Christian faith and life was *Scripture alone*, and that the sale of indulgences was *not at all scriptural* — to embrace such thinking would give a person a false sense about their salvation. Keep in mind, **Martin Luther** was a Catholic monk who was greatly troubled about his salvation and a lack of personal peace with God — he didn't find it in the sacraments or the work of merit that was prescribed by the Church... ultimately he found it by studying the book of Romans, and he learned that *salvation can only be found by placing one's trust (faith) in Jesus Christ; that salvation is by grace alone, not at all by the works of righteousness*, as is clearly taught in Scripture (cf. Rom 3:20-21; 3:27-28; Gal 2:16; 3:11; Eph 2:8-9). *So Luther disallowed the authority of the pope as being the final interpreter of Scripture, as well as a loss of papal credibility and papal authority*. By 1520, Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Catholic Church, and was declared an outlaw by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V; thus, a German prince named Frederick III, kidnapped Luther after his trials to keep him safe from his would-be arrestors... so he removed Luther from the public arena, which led to the catastrophic *Thirty Years' War* from 1619 to 1648, in which conflict between pro-Catholic and pro-Lutheran German princes morphed into a European war that killed up to twenty percent of Europe's population. Meanwhile, Luther was able to spread the teachings of Scripture more quickly than ever before due to the invention of the *Printing Press* — if you are truly a born-again Christian, you can probably deduce that God caused it to surface in our world exactly at this time; and He used it to share vast amounts of information with people all over Europe, and hundreds upon hundreds of churches incorporated divine truth in their churches. Remember, when the Protestant Reformation first took place early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (some 500 years ago), there was an immediate elevation of the *Word of God* in Protestant worship services — *biblical doctrines* had long been covered over by the *traditions* and *ceremonial encrustations* of the medieval church. The reality was, *divine revelation* didn't play a prominent role in the Catholic Church, instead it gave prominence to Christians aligning themselves with the *physical actions* that they were led to believe were of divine origin (which they were not) — many Catholics down through the ages actually worshipped the *statues of*

Jesus that were placed in the church (such were actually deemed “holy” by Catholics); incidentally, this continues to dominate Catholic worship in Mexico and South America and numerous other countries. Beloved, few people in the Christian world believe in the absolute inerrancy of Scripture (i.e., that it is infallible and exempt from error), thus humanistic thinking rather than divine truth strongly influences many people in the Christian world — remember, though 35% of the world profess to be Christians, only about 13% are truly born-again. Incidentally, this problem also existed in the ancient Jewish world when Jesus came on the scene — divine revelation, as it was stated in Scripture, did not control their theology of thought; they simply let human thinking dictate reality to them. The reality is, divine revelation (i.e., God’s Word) must be that which not only rules in our worship services, but rules in our everyday lives — if it doesn’t, God is not the Lord or Master of our lives.

## MAN’S RESPONSE TO DIVINE REVELATION

Now, regarding the issue of divine revelation, it’s interesting to note that man ‘morally’ reveals God, because God has revealed Himself to man’s conscience — so morality is a strong characteristic of the entire human family (I didn’t say great morality, I simply said morality). The truth is, religious moral belief essentially characterizes the entire human race — why’s that? because such has been implanted in the minds and hearts of people by God. Every child is taught right and wrong by their parents, friends, schools, and the culture in which they live; little do they know, however, God is the one who has actively placed it in the hearts & minds of the human race; that’s just the way He made man, so most of our moral understanding isn’t something that our parents or any other human beings invented; it is all the product of our Creator — keep in mind, the entire world essentially embraces the same values and morals... so it should be obvious, they are clearly not the product of different cultures & people. In addition to that, the entire human family believes in some kind of supreme reality (i.e., some governing entity who they see as their creator or that dynamic reality that rules over the world & their lives), but that does not mean the entire human family defines that supreme reality in exactly the same way — they simply ascribe reality to some deity or force that rules in their world. Furthermore, no human being, except true born-again believers, sees that reality as being absolutely pure and completely intolerant of anything that is impure; thus all fallen creatures are inclined to see the supreme reality as being significantly less than it really is, and see themselves as being far greater than they really are; thus they see themselves as being acceptable to the supreme reality, so they demonstrate their acceptability by living a relatively moral life (at least from their vantage point). The problem with the majority of people in our world is that they actually pervert & ignore some of God’s divine revelation, because that which transcends human thinking and the physical world is simply contrary to what their fallen minds and their flesh believes; so they simply satisfy themselves with those finite things that meet with their approval. Now since fallen men have a difficult time embracing the revealed truth about God (for whatever reason), they suppress certain

aspects of divine truth, and believe something that they can accept with their fallen mind; obviously if certain values don't satisfy their fleshly thinking, they will not embrace them (that essentially defines fallen man in our world; the desires of their flesh and the culture in which they live pretty much defines what they choose to embrace and believe) — keep in mind, it is not as if everything they choose to do is grossly immoral, because some degree of morality is an integral part of the minds and hearts of God's creatures; remember, God has placed it in their hearts... He didn't just make human beings a bunch of valueless creatures without any qualities that He possesses; remember, God made man in His image (cf. Gen 1:26) — obviously human beings possess qualities that far exceed that of animals. With that in mind, the universality of religion on planet earth gives evidence to the fact that divine truth is a significant reality in the minds of men to some degree... the problem is, they diminish it in varying degrees so that it correlates with their fallen human thinking — that is simply the way fallen man interprets things — though fallen man doesn't necessarily know why he believes what he believes, he believes in part what God has wired him to believe.

Remember, the resultant affect of the fall is that man is no longer a holy creature, instead he is a sinful creature; as such, his very nature has changed... therefore it is no longer possible for him to conform to God's holy standards. The word "sin" in Scripture means "to miss the mark," it doesn't just refer to "overt evil" as some people think (which is why so many people think they hardly ever sin... their problem is, they don't understand the essence of sin, thus they interpret it wrongly). Now due to the fact we possess a sinful nature, we cannot measure up to God's holy standards (therefore we miss the mark). The wonderful truth about our salvation is the fact that Jesus Christ measured up to the perfect standard for us — "what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending His own Son as an offering for our sin" (Rom 8:3). As a believer, if the fact that you are a sinful creature is disconcerting to you, you need to reflect upon the following — due to the fact every human being who ever lived (except Christ) was and is a sinful creature, you need to rejoice in the cross of Christ if you are a believer, because it was through the righteousness of Christ that He forgave you of all your sins, and made you a child of God. Now because God did not remove your sinful inner-core (i.e., your flesh) from you when you placed your trust in Him, it ought to be very clear to you what God is asking of you — though Christ died for your sins, He is now asking you to die to your sins (that's the reason God has left you here on earth and has not yet taken you into heaven — cf. Rom 8:13); remember, He died for your sins that you in part might die to your sins. That is precisely why you and I live on this planet as believers... we are not only to die to our sins, we are to live a life of righteousness that honors God. When we get to heaven the fight will be over; but as long as we continue to live on this earth, we have a responsibility to fight the good fight. Is it easy? Of course not; it is an incredible challenge! No one ever said it was simple and easy (unless you have been duped by false preaching). So that is God's call upon our lives (read Rom 6-8), and at the end of the age God is going to remove our sinful flesh from us, and bring us into His eternal presence and give us a glorified body that shall never die! And no longer will there be any death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev 21:4)... and to the praise of God's glory, no longer will sin ever exist in

our lives! Meanwhile, He wants us to “**fight against our sinful flesh to the praise of His glory!**” (cf. Rom 6:12; 8:13; Col 3:15). Now because of our deficiencies as humans, none of us possess something known as supernatural goodness (cf. Lk 18:1; Rom 3:10-12); Christ is our goodness, and He simply asks us to obey Him to the best of our ability, recognizing that we all stumble over and over again in life (cf. 1 Cor 4:3-4; Jam 3:2; Ecc 7:20) — is that humbling and distressing? Absolutely! Look at life this way: if life was simply joyful and pleasant, you would be happy all the time and never fight the good fight, because your flesh would not constantly be warring against you. Remember, as God’s children we play an extremely important role in our transformation into the image of Christ; yet it is **not all** dependent upon us; if it were, none of us would end up being transformed; so we must be extremely grateful that God is doing the vast majority of the transforming work in our lives! (cf. Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:23; Phil 2:12-13; 3:20-21; Rom 8:28-29; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18). Yes, it is difficult to know exactly how much we are contributing to our transformation, but one thing is sure, we are contributing far less than Christ is! None of us can say we have done as much as Christ has done, because we are very inferior creatures, thus being proud of our efforts is not even possible (so if you think this life is about glorying in your self, you are simply in the dark theologically). Keep in mind, God knows our weaknesses as fallen creatures, and the presence of indwelling sin (*i.e.*, our flesh), so He sympathizes with us because of our innate tendency to cave into the flesh. The foregoing will make far more sense to you later on in this study.

To expand upon the foregoing — the majority of modern day churches have gone astray from the historical teachings of the Bible, and as a result they do not teach that man is totally depraved. Most people in the Christian world don’t see all types of sinful behavior as being equal — some behaviors are seen as horrible, some as mediocre, and some as irrelevant. It is here where Roman Catholicism distinguishes between venial sin and mortal sin; they see venial sin as sin that is committed without full reflection or consent (*i.e.*, deep within the individual, though he commits the sin, his heart actually yearns to refrain from doing so); thus venial sin does not deprive the soul of spiritual life. On the other hand, they see mortal sin as sin that is deliberately committed, thus it does deprive the soul of spiritual life (*i.e.*, it extinguishes the life of God in the soul). But that does not coincide with what Scripture teaches. The apostle Paul expands upon the subject in the book of Galatians — he describes the deeds of the flesh (cf. Gal 5:19-21), and the deeds of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22-23). You’ll notice he says that those who “practice” these things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21) — now listen carefully, the tense of the Greek verb “practice” describes “continual habitual action,” and such action does not describe God’s children. Whereas unbelievers continually walk in the flesh (*i.e.*, they live according to the flesh), believers walk in the Spirit in spite of the fact that they frequently stumble in life (cf. Jam 3:2; 1 Jn 1:10; Rom 7:14-25); the reality is their flesh no longer rules non-stop in their life. The apostle John uses that same Greek verb when he said — “no one who abides in Christ sins” (cf. 1 John 3:6; 3:9; 5:18); though every believer stumbles in life over & over again, none of them live a life of continual sin (read the following verses — Jam 3:2; 1 Jn 1:10; Ecc 7:20; Prov 24:16; Ps 38:1-22; 40:12; 73:26). As believers, we strive to walk in the light... though we all

stumble and fall short frequently (not continually), we all get up and humbly confess our sins to the Lord when we do fall. The reality is every believer hates the fact that he sins as much as he does... now, such thinking does not at all define unbelievers – they do not despise the totality of their sinfulness or humbly acknowledged their sinfulness to God and express their love to God for His loving-kindness... so unbelievers constantly walk according to their flesh (*i.e.*, their fallen inner-core) and sin (their behavior does not at all meet up to God’s perfect standards; thus they literally miss the mark). Though we as believers cave into the flesh far more often than we want to, no believer continually walks in sin – when we do sin, we experience pain in our soul and confess our waywardness to the Lord; the truth is, *sin is a painful reality in the life of the believer... not so in the life of the unbeliever.* Remember, “warring against our flesh” is the battle we must fight in this world (cf. Rom 6:12, 14; 8:13; 1 Cor 15:31; Gal 5:16-17; 1 Pet 2:24). Because sin in the life of the believer is a difficult issue for us I felt it needed to be expanded upon. Regarding sin, Calvin and the reformers protested against what Roman Catholicism taught, and said that evil motions and desires in the heart are seen as sin to God. Remember, only true born-again believers see sin for what it really is; others only see sin as fleshly thinking defines it (and that is what has defined many people in Roman Catholicism down through the ages); again, without humility of thought, one will not see himself for who he really is. According to Scripture, *sin is a condition of the heart... that sinful thoughts defile a person*, and *that an outward act is the fruit of sin.* According to Jesus Himself, “Anger in the heart is the same as murder” and “Looking on a woman with lust is the same as adultery” (cf. Mt 5:21-22, 27-28)... yet this did not coincide at all with the ancient Jewish world. The truth is, this diabolical world in which we live insists on changing the discourse, which is precisely what the Jewish world did back during the time of Christ; they believed sin was only external, not at all internal (read those verses again in Matthew chapter 5). As Jesus declared, *real defilement in a person stems from his heart; i.e., his fallen human nature* (cf. Matt 15:18-20), and God is always looking at *the heart!* (read these verses: Ps 14:1; 36:10; 51:10; 95:10; 139:23; Prov 27:19; Ecc 10:2; Mt 15:8, 19; 22:37; Rom 6:17; Eph 6:6). The problem with many people, in particular those who don’t embrace biblical truth, is that they see sin as simply *some overt evil*... thus they exclude minor issues and those thoughts that float around in their mind; as stated earlier, this was precisely the case with the Jewish world back in the first century. Another problem most people have in our world is that they insist on being in a church that *aligns with their thinking* (as opposed to what Scripture teaches).

Remember, Scripture clearly teaches in both the Old and New Testaments that “*there is none righteous, not one... that there is none who seek after God... and that there is none who do good, not one*” (cf. Rom 3:10-12; Ps 14; Ps 53); yet that contradicts what many Christians believe. Regarding our innate sinfulness, read the following passages (cf. Rom 7:18-25; 14:23; Heb 12:4; Jam 3:2; 1 Jn 1:8, 10; Ps 38:1-22; 40:12; 73:26; Prov 24:16; Ecc 7:20). Remember, natural man does not see himself as being that wicked, or being at enmity with God. The premiere problem with fallen man is that he doesn’t understand “*the fullness of sin*” or “*divine holiness*,” those principles are so unreasonable and foreign to him, he doesn’t embrace them; so man’s values do not coincide with reality as it is stated in Scripture. According

to God's Word, man has been blinded by his enemy, and does not know his own heart; remember the words of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah: "The heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). And then there are the words of Solomon: "The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil... insanity is in their hearts" (cf. Ecc 9:3 also Is 1:6; Mt 13:15; Mk 2:17). The problem with many churches and many men in our world is that they form a god that suits their opinions & their religion; i.e., a god who will compromise with sin (to an acceptable degree)... a god who is not unreasonably holy... and a god that will conform to their thinking. Remember the words of the Lord: "These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought I was just like you, so I am going to reprove you before your own eyes" (cf. Ps 50:21). Many of the churches in our world hate God's justice and holiness, and His wrath and the punishing of sinners, and this thing called hell... thus they embrace a religion that suits their opinion so they can have peace of mind. Though such people can be fairly nice people (relatively speaking), they can also be very comfortable as long as God doesn't interfere in their lives. When Jesus came to expose the sins of the Jews, the people got very angry and wanted to kill Him. Though natural men can appear to be good, when the time comes, their total depravity will become very evident. The most religious leaders in the ancient world were the Pharisees; they appeared to be very good (read Mt 5:20; 19:24-26), until Jesus came and exposed their hearts; read the following verses in Matthew 23 (Mt 23:13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33). The reality is, such individuals are being deceived by the evil one. Remember the words of Scripture: "Out of the heart proceeds evil" (Mt 15:19)... "God, search me & know my heart" (Ps 139:23)... "Create in me a clean heart O God" (Ps 51:10)... "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart" (Ps 51:17). In the next two paragraphs we will be covering two subjects that play very significant roles in the lives of believers. Give very careful attention to them. We will be looking at both Sin and God's Word.

**THE PURPOSE OF "SIN" IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE** — The most important thing for believers, is that they take their eyes off of themselves, and put them on Christ (Heb 12:2); to not do so is a losing proposition spiritually speaking, because it will have a very adverse affect upon one's faith. By the way, why would one ever want to keep looking at his sinful self? Or is he actually making himself out to be something he is not? Remember, humility of heart is the foundation of righteousness; without humility one is simply deceiving himself. Literally, humility means to see one's self for who he really is — said the apostle Paul: "Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought; instead, think so as to have sound judgment, as God as allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom 12:3). "With humility of mind, let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Phil 2:3). Remember, "God is going to one day transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Phil 3:21). Keep in mind, the word "sin" literally means "to miss the mark;" i.e., not to measure up to God's standard. So if we as believers insist on deceiving ourselves by making ourselves out to be something we are not, we are going to struggle with our faith, because true faith requires aligning ourselves with divine truth — and arrogance is anything but truth; it is nothing but deception. Because we are fallen creatures, it is important to see ourselves for who we really are, and not envision our-

selves to be something we are not; the reality is, our innate sinfulness (*i.e.*, our flesh) will not be removed from us in this life. With that in mind, if you can envision God as being the supreme ruler of our lives, the following should make a lot of sense to you — God knows exactly what is **necessary** in our lives to move us in a right direction... if we are going to ultimately be transformed into the image of Christ, we must be continually **humbled by God**, because pride won't effectuate our transformation — and what is it that keeps us humble? The **sinfulness** of our fallen inner-core. If we never sinned again, we would all become very proud people, which is antithetical to what is needed to transform our lives. Remember the words of the apostle Paul: "I know that **nothing good dwells in me** (*i.e.*, in my flesh), the **wishing** to do good is present in me, but **doing** good is not... the good I wish to do, I don't do; instead I practice the very evil I do not wish" (the conflict that exists between our two natures [*i.e.*, the Spirit & the Flesh] is immense; the apostle Paul describes it in the following passages: cf. Rom 7:14-25 and Gal 5:16-17). God obviously had a very succinct reason for leaving our sinful flesh in us when we accepted Christ as our Savior (that wasn't mere happenstance). God so willed it because it involved keeping us **humble** without a lot of self-pride; remember, God only gives grace to the humble (cf. Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5), and our entire salvation is achieved by grace alone; so if we are lacking in humility, we will not experience much grace; and if we are proud, what is it that causes us to be proud? Beloved, we are no different than any one else in this world; we are all fallen creatures with a **sinful inner-core**... so there is nothing we can do to build self-pride in us. With that in mind, don't ignore this thing called "humility," because it is a God-send to us! Though sin is not something that's easy to tolerate, it does keep us very **humble** (and we can thank God for that). Who would ever have thought that "**sin**" would actually have a **positive effect** upon our lives? That may be a difficult construct for you to handle, yet that is the reality. Every believer who has ever lived has humbly struggled with his flesh — he struggles with it because it often rules in his heart, thus causing great consternation in his soul; though Satan may be the cause of something in our lives (just as he was in Job's life), "in spite of the fact that he means it for **evil**, God means it for our **good**" (cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10; Gen 50:20; 45:5, 7). Though many aspects of sin can be very distressing to us, yet the residual effects of sin can be very humbling and sobering to us... thus God uses sin to open our eyes to **the truth** that we might see ourselves for who we really are. So sin at times can have a very positive effect upon our lives; though it can be painful and distressing, yet it makes us very God-conscious and humbly confess our sins to Him; thus God puts His arms around us and ministers His grace to us. Beloved, God is well-aware of our fallenness, our weaknesses, our sinful inner-core, and He knows our frame and is mindful that we are but dust (cf. Ps 103:14; Heb 4:12). Remember, it is God who created us and **planned** the end from the beginning (cf. Ps 139:13-16; Is 46:8-11); sin was not a surprise to God when it occurred; it was simply the next step in the process of ultimately removing it from the universe. Keep in mind, nothing God does is evil or wrong; though the foregoing may be a difficult argument for you (because God is a Holy God), that is the reality. The truth is our sinful-state serves God's higher purposes — again, if that is somewhat troubling and questionable to you, let me encourage you to read a study I did titled, "Sin & Man's Eternal Purpose" — it's a short study that you can access on my website:



[www.thetransformedsoul.com](http://www.thetransformedsoul.com) – simply click on the “*Additional Studies Link*” at the top of the homepage. That study had a very positive effect upon my faith. To complete the foregoing argument, keep in mind, there is *NOTHING* God can’t do to show us our frailties, our sinfulness, and our weaknesses... so don’t ascribe it as some evil on His part – *the most significant thing He does, is let our flesh express itself*. The reality is, God left our flesh in us that we might fight against it to the praise of His glory... yes, it has a frustrating presence in our lives, yet it does serve a very significant purpose. Remember, “*God does not permit us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to endure*” (1 Cor 10:13), yet we still stumble frequently (does that make sense to you? why do we stumble frequently if we are believers? the answer is, we are not men and women of great faith, and our sinful inner-core has a very strong presence in our lives). Keep in mind, “*God is causing all things to work together for our good*” (Rom 8:28); again, does that make sense to you? Though we as believers sin often in life, that just demonstrates *how remedial our faith is*, and how much we need to grow in our faith; remember, none of us walk on water, so we are not great spiritual creatures, as some people like to think. The most incredible reality for us as believers is *being confident in God’s forgiveness* when we just keep stumbling and falling – *knowing that God loves us unconditionally* is a construct of thought that essentially transcends human thought. As the great British hymn writer **Charles Wesley** stated, “*How can it be that Thou my God shouldst die for me?*” yet a second question is, “*How can God keep on forgiving us?*” Since God’s love for us is an *everlasting love* (Read all of Psalm 136) we must grow in our confidence of His love, because it is His love for us that is a transforming reality. So we’ve got a war to fight, and fight it we must; we must fight against all untruth. Again, though this may be a difficult construct for you to embrace, keep in mind, *God uses our sinful inner-core (i.e., flesh) to humbly effectuate a greater level of spirituality in our lives*. One more time: *it is our sinfulness that causes us to be humble*; the reality is, sin is a real eye opener. Due to the fact this paragraph is a very significant one, you may need to read it a few times so that you might embrace the significance of what is stated.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF “GOD’S WORD” IN THE BELIEVER’S LIFE** – We all came to faith in Christ when God spoke to our hearts with divine truth, and it is His Word that contains divine truth. Without the knowledge of God’s Word, in particular in its written form, most of us would walk in the dark, because humanistic thinking would have too strong an influence in our lives. *Spiritual growth is always marked by a craving for and delight in God’s Word*; hence the apostle Peter said, “*Long for the pure milk of the Word that by ‘it’ you may grow with respect to salvation*” (1 Pet 2:2). Without God’s written revelation (be it taught to us or read), spiritual growth would not occur – in that sense, one could compare Scripture with *physical food*; without it our physical health would be grossly affected, because physical nourishment is absolutely essential for our physical well-being. Conversely, *God’s Word* is absolutely essential for our spiritual well-being. Said the psalmist: “*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked... but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day & night*” (Ps 1:1-2); note the contrast, one either walks in the

counsel of the wicked or the Word of the Lord; *i.e.*, either one walks in the dark, or he walks in the light — either one lets divine truth rule in his life, or he capitulates and lets human reason rule in his life. Said the prophet Jeremiah, “Thy words were found and I ate them, and they became for me the joy and the delight of my heart” (Jer 15:16). Said Jesus to some Jewish converts, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (Jn 8:31). As believers, we are to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7)... we are to walk by the Spirit, not by the flesh (Gal 5:16); we are to walk in the light, not in darkness (1 Jn 1:7). Remember, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17). Beloved, as believers we cannot change the discourse — reality is what it is; to deny it is to embrace untruth. As believers, we must study God’s Word to show ourselves approved to God, as workmen who do not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (cf. 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pet 1:10; Acts 17:11). The apostle John said the following to the believing world — “Little children, abide in Christ, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (1 Jn 2:28). To give definition to John’s message — to abide in Christ means to persevere in the faith God blessed us with when we were saved... such is simply evidence of being a true believer (cf. Jn 15:1-6). As believers “we are to love Christ’s appearing” (cf. 2 Tim 4:8), yet those who fail to persevere in the faith as God’s children, will be so ashamed of themselves when Christ comes, they won’t be able to look Him in the eye or speak to Him... instead they will turn away from Him in shame because they failed to persevere in the faith as believers; though every genuine believer will be saved, those who treat their faith lightly & fail to persevere in their faith in this life, will suffer the consequences of it prior to entering into the eternal state. The word translated confidence in English is “parresia” in Greek & literally means “freedom of speech,” so those believers who failed to persevere in their walk with Christ while they lived here on earth, will actually be speechless when Christ comes. I can’t even imagine what it would be like to be so ashamed of the way I lived my life as one of God’s children, that I could not even look Christ in the eye & speak to Him when He appears. Keep in mind, no one enters into God’s glorious presence without being completely humbled; so either we humble ourselves in this life, or we will be humbled prior to our entering into God’s presence in heaven. Beloved, make “abiding in Christ” the goal of your life, and don’t treat it lightly, so that when Christ appears you will run into His arms with great joy and not a bit of shame! — by the way, that doesn’t mean we ended up being individuals who actually walked on water! It simply means we strived to walk with Christ through all the ups and downs of life! Though all of us as believers stumble and fall often, we get up time after time and make confession and continue to walk in the light.

Regarding this thing called “divine revelation,” remember, the Bible portrays GOD as the Eternal Reality through whom all things exist (cf. Gen 1:1; Ps 33:6; 90:2; Jn 1:1-3; Acts 17:22-28; Col 1:15-17; Rev 1:8). The reality is, God has a power and content that is universal in extent and total in depth (*i.e.*, it extends through out the entire universe, as well as the fullness of its depth) — there is nothing in the universe that is not under His control, including every cell in existence and everything that exists in a cell — keep in mind, there are trillions

upon trillions of cells in the created order, and as temporal creatures we don't even have the capacity to comprehend such things. Remember, "the cell" is no longer the smallest thing in the universe, as it was thought to be when Charles Darwin discovered it; his discovery ultimately led to the conclusion by some in the scientific world that all things are the product of "evolution." However, man did not know back then that invisible cells contain far more content than they imagined — it wasn't long until the scientific world discovered that there are numerous elements in a cell. Yet, here we are today trying to go deeper into the cell and identify other elements that were unknown to man. Perhaps one could word it this way: Are there thousands of things in a cell that are completely unknown to the scientific world? Since when does man know the full contents of God's creative elements? Think about it, God might actually have a thousand pieces in a cell; just because we can't identify them doesn't mean that they don't exist... and just because they may be exceedingly small from a human perspective, doesn't mean they don't exist. The problem is our human minds simply don't have the ability to discover things that transcend human vision & human thinking. Keep in mind we are all temporal creatures, thus we are extremely limited in our capacities (compared to God). So just because something is far smaller than man can conceive of, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. The truth is, God might have placed a million items in a cell; though there may be 50 elements that are known to man, each of those elements may contain numerous other elements. Can the smallest items known to man contain thousands of other elements? Only God knows that, but just because something transcends human thinking, doesn't mean such things don't exist. Man is obviously an extremely limited creature — he can only exist in a world that possesses less than 300 degrees of heat (150 below zero to 150 above zero), yet God has the capacity to create endless degrees of heat (millions of degrees — the scientific world does not know how much heat God has placed in the universe); though that may sound bizarre to human creatures, keep in mind God is infinite and unlimited (thus to impose human limitations on God is foolish; after all, since when do we have the capacity to limit what God is capable of? Though human wisdom may conclude that some things are not possible, man's lack of infinite wisdom limits his ability to make such statements. The truth is, man cannot comprehend invisible reality, so our little minds are not nearly as glorious as man may think they are; remember, all man can do is judge things with his tiny little finite mind (obviously, one can't do what he is not able to do). Keep in mind, God is spirit (*i.e.*, invisible), He is not physical, thus He transcends space, mass & time. With that in mind, let's take a moment and reflect again upon what Albert Einstein had to say to the scientific world — "The scientist is possessed by the sense of universal causation; his religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection." If one has any integrity of thought at all, he can't help but admire Einstein's humility and his integrity of thought; here was a man who studied the depth of nature, and admitted that it transcends human thinking. To the regret of fallen man, few people appreciate honesty, integrity & humility. Remember the words of the Lord God Almighty to Abraham, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" (cf. Gen 18:14). By the way, if "God's eternality" is

lacking in your thinking, the truth is, you are going to make Him significantly less than He really is; remember, He is *infinite*, there is no end to Him; He is completely without limits. How one can take his little 150 IQ (maximum) and judge God's infinite IQ? To do so is absolute mindlessness to anyone with half a wit; yet many men arrogantly like to think they brilliant creatures (that is simply what it means to be a child of Satan; their reasoning simply completely lacking in integrity). Remember, just because we are finite creatures, does not mean God is anything like us. There is nothing God doesn't know... He is the essence of *all truth* – there is no truth outside of Him – God is truth... and in comparison with God, there is hardly anything man knows (he cannot conceive of one-trillionth of all reality, and most of what he does know is somewhat perplexing to him (the negatives of life simply overwhelm his soul; as such he can only hope that they pass away).

The Hebrew and Greek words – *Elohim* (also *El*) and *Theos* – define God as “*the eternal preeminent deity*” (cf. Gen 24:3; Mt 11:25; Acts 10:36; 17:24; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16). As is logically stated by the greatest theologians in our world: “*God is either Lord of everything, or He is not Lord at all.*” In a word, God is trillions of times bigger than the entire created order; there is no comparison between the two (cf. Is 40:17; Dan 4:35); the reality is, there is no end to God whatsoever. The truth is, there is no end to God's knowledge, any more than there is an end to numbers – they go on and on and on ad infinitum. God simply transcends human thought; how can He not? He is infinite and we are finite, and as finite creatures, the least we can do is *strive to understand God's own self-revelation to us* (after all, He forwarded it on to us exactly for that reason); since He ordained it, we must cooperate with Him and do as He says; though we cannot fully comprehend His self-revelation, we can understand it to a degree, because that is what He has so willed. So we must *humbly believe* what He says – it is here where the Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to believe (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; and Acts 16:14); infinite divine truth is not achieved by finite minds – human understanding is only achieved by God's Spirit. The following passages help define God (cf. Deut 4:35; 32:39; Job 42: 2; 1 Chron 29:12; Ps 62:11; 135:6; Is 40:13-26; 43:10-13; 45:5-7; 46:9-11; Jer 32:27; Mt 19:26; Rom 9:18-24; Eph 1:11). *God's eternity* is seen as being *Omnipotent* (i.e., all-powerful, God Almighty – cf. Gen 17:1; Jer 10:12; Rom 11:36; Eph 1:11; Heb 1:3)... *Omnipresent* (i.e., everywhere present; He's not limited by space or time – cf. 1 Kg 8:27; Job 11:7-8; Jer 23:23-24; Ps 139:7-8)... and *Omniscient* (i.e., all-knowing – cf. Ps 147:5; Rom 11:33; Heb 4:13; 1 Jn 3:20). Though those may not be easy constructs to understand, nevertheless we need to embrace them; God asks us to believe His Self-revelation, and as we humble ourselves before Him, He will give us the *grace to believe* (cf. Jam 1:21; Lk 24:45). Now with the foregoing in mind, God is the Universal Ultimate Reality who transcends all things; as Scripture clearly states – “*for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things*” (Rom 11:36); keep in mind, those emboldened words are *emphatic* in Greek. Inherent in God is the exclusivity of final truthfulness and completeness.

Regarding God's revelation to man, according to Scripture He has revealed Himself to humanity in four ways: through nature, through our conscience, through Jesus Christ,

and through the Bible. Regarding nature — said the psalmist David, “When I consider Your heavens and the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou has ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him?” (Ps 8:3-4). Remember, since the creation of the world God’s invisible attributes have been clearly seen... thus men are without excuse” (Rom 1:20). Yet the testimony of nature really only tells us about God in a limited way (cf. Job 26:8, 9, 14). The problem with arrogant man is, he is so self-consumed he refuses to even contemplate divine reality. Regarding our conscience — God has also revealed Himself through our inner-spirit or mind. All societies have a certain moral code built into them in which stealing, lying, murder & such are universally condemned — man’s sense of right and wrong testifies to God’s existence. Said Solomon, “God has set eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecc 3:11)... Said Paul, “God has made Himself known in man’s inner-being” (Rom 1:19). and, “When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law... these people show the work of the law written in their hearts and conscience” (Rom 2:14-15); that’s a pretty profound statement. Regarding Jesus Christ — God has revealed Himself to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Heb 1:1-2). Jesus Himself testified that He had come to earth to reveal the will of God the Father (Mt 11:27). Regarding Scripture — God also revealed Himself through the written Word (*i.e.*, the Bible) which is God’s revelation of Himself to mankind (1 Tim 3:16). The Bible is man’s source for the knowledge of God and His plan. So God has revealed Himself to man in each of these four ways — and each method testifies to His existence; therefore man has no excuse whatsoever for denying & rejecting Him, because it has been revealed through both the seen & unseen worlds; *i.e.*, both the physical and spiritual realms (cf. Rom 1:18-21). Nevertheless, most men reject the God of glory as He has revealed Himself... thus God righteously reveals His wrath against them. Keep in mind, divine truth & divine values are constantly being addressed in our world by born-again believers — as such, they are being persecuted & denigrated by the unbelieving world; the reality is, many unbelievers hate God and hate Christianity because of the restraints they emphasize. Remember, the unbelieving world refuses to deny its own autonomy, and be forced to embrace some values their flesh doesn’t like; when you tell unbelievers that they are sinners and in need of a Savior, the vast majority of them don’t agree with that, and many get upset with that. So one cannot say that the world is ignorant of divine truth & divine values; the truth is, this world is very much aware of God’s existence and His moral values... though some people may be more aware than others, everyone has a significant degree of awareness; the problem is, most people simply ignore it and refuse to contemplate it.

Now, though some of the foregoing might be a little troubling to some of you, let me add the game changer — without humility of heart, one will not embrace divine revelation (*i.e.*, ultimate reality and truth), because God is the one who must open one’s heart to fully believe. Thus the beauty of creation, and the conviction of the conscience, and the knowledge that is being dispersed about, won’t move a proud heart (*i.e.*, a sinful self-centered heart) in a godly direction. Remember, “God does not give what is holy to dogs,

*or cast His pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and scoff at them”* (cf. Mt 7:6). Jesus often spoke in parables, and this caused His disciples to ask Him, “Why He speaks to people in parables?” To which He replied, “To **you** it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to **them** it has not been granted.... I speak to them in parables, because while **seeing** they do not see, and while **hearing** they do not hear, nor do they understand” (Mt 13:10-13); incidentally, that’s the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (read Mt 13:14-15). Beloved, as previously stated, ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who opens the hearts & minds of men to believe divine truth; in other words, **God is the one who reveals Himself to man** — that logic ought to be very clear... since God is truth, how can one know truth and not know God — that would be akin to making some mathematical claim when one is completely ignorant of mathematics. Beloved, **God is truth**; so to say you know truth when you don’t know God is nonsense; that is a complete contradiction — remember, outside of God there is no truth; **God alone is truth**, so don’t change the didactic. Remember, God is ultimate reality — all things exist through Him; without Him was nothing made that was made. Should you insist on redefining reality to satisfy your conscience, in no way will that benefit you in the long run, because God will one day force you to “give an account for your diabolical thinking.”

With the foregoing in mind, **God has so willed that all of His creatures live by faith**; i.e., believe Him and trust Him (cf. Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38; 11:1). Remember the words of Hebrews 11:6 — “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” That shouldn’t be a difficult construct to understand — do you think disbelieving your spouse would please him/her? Obviously not, so why would God be pleased with us if we didn’t believe Him? Now with regard to this thing called faith, essentially **faith means to live according to the truth of God’s self-revelation**; throughout Scripture, **faith is trusting God’s self-revelation** (cf. Ex 4:29-31; 12:21-28; Deut 11:1-11; Is 55:1-3); therefore faith involves knowledge of the truth. When one lives according to the truth, **he then rests on God’s promises**, thus faith is intellectual ascent to the truth (Jam 2:14-26). It’s also important to remember, **true genuine faith involves obedience to the truth**, not mere intellectual ascent (cf. Jam 2:26; Gal 5:6; 1Tim 5:8; Gen 15:6 and 22:12); so we must act upon what we believe — if you believe in being kind to people, and loving people, then loving kindness must be a part of your life; if it is not, then you either don’t believe in it or your faith is a very remedial faith. What makes faith difficult for us as fallen creatures, is the presence of indwelling sin in our lives (i.e., our sin nature/flesh), because it has very strong desires — it not only argues against certain intellectual truths, it attacks them because they don’t mesh with human thinking; as such, **our flesh wages war against the truth** (cf. Gal 5:17). Since that is the case, we must humbly study God’s Word, and prayerfully seek God’s will for our lives — in so doing, God will open our hearts and minds to believe with great assurance and conviction (Heb 11:1). Though the flesh will continue to argue against the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, we must humbly strive with God in spite of numerous difficulties that accompany us in life. The truth is, because of our sinful inner-core (i.e., our fleshly nature), **negatives can be very frustrating, discouraging and disconcerting to us** — if there’s anything our flesh hates it is a negative, and God uses negatives to grow our faith (cf. Heb 12:5-10; Jam 1:2-3, 12; 1 Pet 1:6-7; 4:

12). Keep in mind, we must continue to “grow in our faith” or we will cave into the flesh far more often than not; just because we are believers in Christ doesn’t mean we now possess enough spiritual strength to essentially treat our flesh like a weak little puppet; the truth is, our sinful inner-core (*i.e.*, our flesh) has a very strong presence in our lives. Obviously as physical creatures we live in a physical world with physical spouses, physical children, physical homes, physical jobs, physical churches, physical friends, physical possessions, physical food, physical devices, physical clothes, physical cars, etc., and we all also embrace some physical values in life – thus this physical world in which we live has a very strong presence in our lives; yet God is spiritual and asks us to believe in His divine values; *i.e.*, embrace that which is morally right & reject that which is morally wrong... and therein is the rub, because our fallen flesh does not agree with the divine values of God; instead, it insists on being a completely autonomous creature who makes his own judgment as to what is right & what is wrong and what he believes. Now with the foregoing in mind, the resultant effect upon the believer’s life is that many of our fleshly values are constantly challenging our faith – and as we walk through life, we have to learn to adjust our thinking accordingly. Though many of the things we value in this physical world may not be immoral... yet because we place too high a premium on them, does make them immoral (for arguments sake, you can apply that truth to possessions, money, and sports teams, etc.). The truth is, when our little world is turned upside down, that can be very disconcerting to us, because our physical values are being challenged; the reality is, we are not creatures who like pain, problems and difficulties; essentially, the negatives we experience in life are the premiere issues that cause consternation in our souls. So here we are as physical creatures doing all that we can to make life work, and be problem free and enjoyable, yet God frequently causes our lives to not be problem free... and therein is the rub, because that is what grows our faith.

It should be obvious, without our faith being subjected to difficulties, our faith would be a very remedial faith, because it wouldn’t be challenged – just as people build their physical strength with heavy weights, so believers build their spiritual strength with heavy issues. If we didn’t live in a world with opposition, life wouldn’t be difficult at all, but because life contains a lot of opposition (both internally & externally), life is often very difficult. Keep in mind, the reason our faith is challenged is that it is very difficult for us as fallen creatures to “make physical negatives spiritual positives in our lives.” It’s one thing to express faith when life is pleasant, but quite another when life is not pleasant. Negatives are meant to cause us to fight against our fleshly feelings and our sinful inner-core, because they have a very strong presence in our lives... and the more our flesh controls our thinking, the more remedial our faith becomes; as such, the negatives we experience in life often cause temporary damage to our faith rather than grow our faith – now because God is actually doing a greater work in our hearts than we are (cf. Phil 1:6; 2:12-13; Eph 1:3-5, 11; Rom 8:28ff; 1 Pet 5:10; Heb 13:20-21), over time He gets us to humbly accept those perplexing negatives (so don’t look at God as a distant reality in your life; He is present in your life just as He was in Job’s life; though Job seemed to go bonkers as well, and questioned everything that was going on in his life, God ultimately restored him and blessed

him — incidentally, God never told him “why” He subjected him to all the difficulties that he experienced. Beloved, if everything depended on us, we would never get into the eternal state... so with that in mind, do your best to humbly strive with God and fight the good fight of faith, that you might experience even more grace in your life; do the best you can to keep your flesh from ruling in your life. Will you struggle? Absolutely you will struggle... but do so with the understanding that GOD is at work in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil 2:12-13); that’s not a maybe, that’s an absolute (Rom 8:28-39). Remember, you are God’s child, and there is nothing He won’t do to see you through to the very end! Do you dump your kids when they screw up? No! Then why do you think God would dump you? Again, He knows exactly who you are and the absolute mess that is in your inner-core (*i.e.*, your flesh), and if there is anything God is going to do, it is see you all the way through to the end! Our problem as fallen creatures is that we don’t fully understand the bigger picture — a pleasant little life is simply far too important to us.

I find it interesting, many believers want God to physically reveal Himself to them, and show them His love for them by building a physical relationship with them, that they might walk with Him on this earth and do as He so wills. Many believers make the following deduction — having a relationship with God without any physical contact is just too difficult, because of all the problems that exist in our physical world. Though that argument is not necessarily illogical, let’s not insist on going down that road, because it does not mesh with reality; and reality must be the supreme goal of our lives — remember, we don’t set the rules in life... God does; so to embrace some satanic argument is not the answer — though it may be logical from a human perspective, it is not grounded in reality (*i.e.*, divine wisdom)... so either we accept that reality, or we will simply capitulate and defer to fleshly thinking... as believers, we must remember, our fleshly minds are temporal minds; thus they have very little if any understanding of eternal truth (*i.e.*, eternal reality); remember God is infinite and invisible, whereas man is finite and physical... so to embrace temporal thinking at the expense of divine truth is a losing proposition (remember divine wisdom is reality; human wisdom is simply the product of fallen creatures, thus it is not reality). With the foregoing in mind, Jesus said to His disciples the night before He went to the cross — “In this world you have tribulation (i.e., suffer affliction), but take courage, I have overcome the world” (cf. Jn 16:33); obviously, such thinking does not mesh with human thinking, so our flesh constantly argues against all of the negatives we experience in life, because fallen creatures simply can’t rationalize such things: Why all the suffering in life? How can anyone defend that kind of thinking? Though we vehemently argue against it because it does not mesh with our flesh, divine wisdom far exceeds human wisdom... thus there must be a very significant reason why God permits us to experience such things in our lives; without which one would be seriously lacking. The fundamental ground for enduring trials and tribulation is this: just as it was through the crucifixion whereby we experienced forgiveness and became God’s children... so it is through affliction whereby we grow our faith (*i.e.*, grow as spiritual creatures; such is simply not possible without experiencing “negatives” in our lives... and due to the fact



that Jesus overcame the world at the cross, believers are on **the winning side**; though our glorification won't be experienced immediately, in the not too distant future every believer will experience it in all its fullness. Keep in mind, as believers we are all in the process of being transformed into the image of Christ, and that transformation requires us to embrace divine truth even when the enemies of our soul (*i.e.*, Satan, the world, and our flesh) are constantly doing all they can to destroy us — now the explicit reason why God permits us to experience suffering as His children, Scripture does not give us a comprehensive explanation why we are subjected to it; as stated earlier, God's reasons and purposes simply transcend finite human knowledge; so at times we must trust God without fully understanding (just like Job had to do; God never told Job why He subjected him to all that he experienced; and it was very grievous). Therefore, at times we must trust God without understanding, just as Job did (cf. Job 42:2-3; Is 55:8-9; Hab 2:2-4). According to Scripture, we will not have complete answers until we enter into the eternal state (cf. Jn 14:1-3; Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 2:9; 15:1-58; 2 Cor 4:16-18; 1 Th 4:13-18; Rev 21:4-5). Though we sometimes suffer because of sinfulness, sometimes we suffer because of demonic forces, yet at other times God subjects us to suffering to teach us, discipline us, and mature us. Remember, God disciplines those He loves (cf. Ps 94:12; Prov 3:11-12; 1 Cor 11:32; Heb 12:3-13). Every one of Jesus' twelve disciples was slain for his faith (with the exception of the Apostle John). Said the Apostle Paul: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18). Obviously the foregoing statements are very poignant ones, but they are absolutely true; beloved, this life is not the end all — heaven is! And it is that reality (that absolute hope) that must be the premiere goal of our faith (cf. Rom 8:20-25; Eph 1:18; Col 1:5; Titus 1:2; 3:7; Heb 10:23; Jam 1:2-12; 1 Pet 1:3; 1:6-9; 1 Jn 3:3). Regarding the trials and difficulties we go through in life, humbly reflect upon the following verses (cf. Jam 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-7, 13; 4:12-13; 5:10).

Keep in mind, the ultimate source of God's personal revelation is Jesus Christ — "in Him the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (cf. Jn 1:1, 14; 14:9). The redemptive revelation of God is that Jesus Christ has borne the sins of fallen humanity, has died in his place, and has been raised to assure justification. The content of biblical revelation essentially is God Himself (be it through His prophets or His apostles); yet a degree of mystery does remain in God's self-revelation, because the infinite eternal One cannot fully reveal Himself to finite temporal creatures — due to the fact that infinite thinking far exceeds finite thinking, there is no way we can fully understand the God of creation (the most glorious angels in heaven don't have the ability to fully understand God Himself. There is only one infinite eternal reality in the entire universe and that is GOD!). That's why the Lord said to Isaiah, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways... as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways & My thoughts than your thoughts" (Is 55:8-9). Think of it, how can one make a finite creature and give him infinite knowledge? Though that construct may be somewhat perplexing to you, that is the reality; God's wisdom is vastly superior to mans (though that may be a negative to you, it should actually be an extremely encouraging positive to you, because of the mess our temporal minds often make of life). Thus God's message ought to be clear: God's

thinking completely transcends human thinking, so He simply asks us to **believe** in Him and stop arguing against Him. To somehow think that we have the capacity to fully understand God is completely illogical; that would be akin to placing the entire ocean in a little tea cup. The truth is, our infinite, eternal God vastly transcends our human minds” (remember, God is infinite and we are finite; thus the two are completely incomparable even from a human perspective. I’m reminded of the wisdom of **King Solomon**—the Lord said to him: “I have given you wisdom that exceeds that of any other individual who ever lived before you or who ever will live after you” (cf. 1 Kg 3:12). With that in mind, here are the words of King Solomon: “I set my mind to explore by wisdom all that has been done under heaven (i.e., here on earth) — it is a **grievous task** which God has given to the sons of men. I have seen all the works that have been done under the sun; behold, all is **vanity** and striving after wind.... I set my mind to know wisdom; I realized that this also is striving after wind, because in much wisdom there is **much grief**... and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain” (cf. Ecc 1:13-18; 2:26; 3:10; 5:16-19; 6:2; 8:11, 15; 9:9; 12:11). Apparently, Solomon thought happiness could be attained by understanding reality at a deep level, so he devoted himself to research & exploration, but soon discovered that learning is not at all the sure road to fulfillment; thus he concluded that knowledge was not at all a happy work with which God has allowed men to occupy themselves (i.e., the deep inner drive to find out the meaning of life). So is it any wonder why men have stated down through the ages, “Ignorance is bliss” & “What you don’t know won’t hurt you.” — the reality is, the wiser people are the more they worry, and the more they know the more it hurts. Such led **Malcolm Muggeridge**, the renowned 20<sup>th</sup> century British journalist & author, to claim that “education is the great fraud of the ages, that it only serves to enlarge stupidity and inflate conceit” — think about it, if all the knowledge you learn is on the left side of the line (i.e., only temporal in nature), your innate learning will be absolutely meaningless, because one must learn that which is on the other side of the line (i.e., divine in nature), if his knowledge is going to amount to anything worthwhile. As Muggeridge believed, innate bias is absolute mindlessness. So, is it any wonder why uneducated poor people are much happier than educated rich people? Beloved, that shouldn’t be a difficult construct for you to embrace, because the entire human race essentially possesses the same level of “smarts,” because all people basically have the same mental capacity; only the proud people in our world deny it, so smarts isn’t only reserved for proud educated people! As has been stated in numerous other studies, the so-called “tribal people in our world” aren’t dumb idiots like many claimed back in the 20<sup>th</sup> century — after numerous studies were done on them, the scientific world was absolutely astounded at how smart they really were (so they weren’t a people that reflected more evolutionary character than many in the scientific world had believed). What they discovered was this — their vocabulary was two to three times greater than basically every vocabulary in the western world, and they possessed far better memories than the educated people in our world, so evolution became a joke to many scientists; once again, here were a bunch of proud fools believing absolute nonsense that was completely lacking in integrity). Remember, **pride** is an “extreme negative” for man, because proud thinking doesn’t correlate at all with genuine wisdom.

## THE ONGOING EFFECT OF DIVINE REVELATION

Though knowledge can play an important role in man's life, without Christ being an integral part of one's life, his constructs of thought are meaningless — though godless people think knowledge gives definition to reality, they are simply delusional because God has given them over to a "*depraved mind*" — cf. Rom 1:18-32); so human knowledge in and of itself is sheer vanity & meaningless. The reality is, there is no such thing as wisdom independent of God, because nothing good resides outside of God (cf. Lk 18:19; Rom 3:10-18); though some things may appear to be reasonably good according to fleshly thinking... nothing accomplished by ungodly creatures is good. So the question is, do you want to experience "*goodness*" in this life, or are you simply satisfied with experiencing your own fleshly desires? Remember, your fleshly desires will ultimately prove themselves to be meaningless desires, and won't satisfy your soul as you may think; in the end all fleshly desires will appear as being *absolutely worthless*, not at all what the ungodly thought they would be. Remember the words of Solomon, "*Naked we come into the world, and naked we leave the world*" (cf. Ecc 5:15; Job 1:21). As the popular Christian television ministry personnel, **John Ortberg**, says in his book "*It All Goes Back in the Box*" — "*When the game of life is over for unbelievers, everything goes back in the box; nothing will accompany them in the eternal realm; only believers will take what was done for Christ into the eternal realm*" (cf. 2 Cor 5:10; Eph 6:8; Col 3:24); so believers must seek to do "*God's goodness*" in life, "*and do all things unto the Lord*" (cf. 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17). Contrary to what many believers might think, *we don't live for ourselves, we live for Christ's glory*. Remember, Adam & Eve decided to "*live the self-life rather than the God-life*;" in so doing life was no longer peaceful and enjoyable to them, because God no longer ruled in their lives and hearts; they not only died physically, but even more importantly they died spiritually (as such, they became fleshly creatures). As the apostle Paul stated, "*To live is Christ (not self), and to die is gain*" (Phil 1:21). Ortberg reminds us that everything we *own* is just on loan, "*that God is the One who gives us the power to make wealth*" (Deut 8:18); such is not of our own fleshly doing (though we may think it is), yet as sinful creatures we pride ourselves in all we accomplish in life. What fallen man is unaware of is this: God is continually *testing us as His creatures*, and when we humble ourselves before Him, He ministers grace to our lives and makes us brand new creatures (2 Cor 5:17). Remember, everything on this earth *belongs to God*, and only that which is *done for Christ* will last — so for fallen man to make life what he wants it to be (to his praise and glory), that is a dead end street. Remember, God is the one who created us and gave us our skill-set and all that we accomplished — so why does fallen man glory in himself? (that's about as stupid and arrogant as man can be); think about it, what do you possess that is simply the product of your doing? Who do you think gave you your brain, your looks, your skill-set, your physical skills, your personality, and your contextual life? You could have been born in another country at a completely different time in history... so at some point, as a believer you need to give careful consideration to the God of your

life, and acknowledge Him for who He really is, and make Him the Lord of your life. Remember, He redeemed you with His own blood that you might be forgiven, and made you a brand new creature, and He simply asks you to believe Him and trust Him and make Him the Master of your life. Keep in mind, when all is said and done “everything goes back to God” (after all, everything in existence is God made and God owned), and every man will be judged according to how He used God’s gifts. Let me encourage you to read Jesus’ “Parable of the Talents” — essentially, it describes the foregoing (cf. Mt 25: 14-30) — God gave various talents to various people, with the expressed purpose of measuring their faithfulness to Him. The question is, what are you doing with everything God has placed in your life? Are you using it for His glory or your own? So when all is said and done, man should rejoice in his temporal goodness, knowing that it is from the hand of God, and simply focus on his relationship with God, knowing that God will ultimately bring every one of man’s acts to judgment (cf. Ecc 12:13-14; Mt 10:26; 25:31-46; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 4:4-5; ). Obviously man’s search to understand reality can be very difficult at times... yet such tasks are God-given (Ecc 2:26; 3:10); He wants us to consider divine truth at a deeper level; in so doing He will increase our wisdom and grow our faith; to remove God from reality (as unbelievers do) is a dead end street. Keep in mind, if the very foundation of reality is God, how can one remove Him from it and think his own actions and thinking are meaningful? Now, though understanding reality is not necessarily easily attained, God does not continually leave us as believers in the dark; so there is a strong upside to what God subjects us to. Remember, “God has so worked that men should fear Him” (i.e., revere, respect and worship Him; not be afraid of Him; Ecc 3:14). Said Solomon, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7; 9:10); if man wants to be the person God made him, one must begin with reverencing God & trusting & obeying Him, and humbly studying His Word (i.e., His divine revelation). Since knowing God is the foundation of true knowledge, to deny such thinking is to be totally deceived. As King Solomon said, “There’s a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (cf. Prov 14:12). Beloved, we can’t simply satisfy ourselves with human reason (again, that is a dead end street); we must humbly reflect upon divine truth. Solomon concluded his work by saying this: “The conclusion when all has been heard is, fear God and keep His commandments, because God will ultimately judge every act of man” (cf. Ecc 12:13-14). Remember, only that which is done for Christ will last; everything else will fade away (cf. Is 24:4; 1 Pet 1:4, 24); thus, to live is Christ (Phil 1:21). Remember the words of Paul, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that He might recompense us for all our deeds” (cf. 2 Cor 5:10 and Eph 6:8). Take the time to carefully reflect upon the words of Solomon listed above, knowing that they are divinely inspired words (cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21).

Over the years I have frequently tried to reconcile everything in my life with divine truth (just as many other believers have), though I often arrive at significant answers; at times deeper issues have been placed on my plate, and oftentimes they were very sobering and overwhelming. Like everyone else, I must accept divine truth as it is stated (regardless of what it is), and not insist on knowing what I cannot know. Again, it is a grievous task that God has given to us — imagine losing everything you own, losing your job, losing a loved

one, suffering a bad injury, being unfairly treated, being lied to, being rejected — how would you handle that? By the way, it is at this point where *our flesh* strongly presents its argument to our heart and manifests its feelings — and it is our “*feelings*” that often rule in our lives; the reality is, one of the most important things in life is to *feel good*... as the old saying goes, “*nothing feels better than feeling good... and nothing feels worse than feeling bad*.” The truth is, our feelings play a very significant role in our lives. Remember, the dynamic of the flesh is *feeling*, and the dynamic of the Spirit is *faith*... and our feelings can often rule in our minds in the moment, thus causing significant consternation in our soul; and there-in is the fight we must fight... and fighting against strong feelings is no easy task. For one to say he doesn’t have a problem accepting difficulties, is to disavow the presence of his flesh & overstate the maturity of his faith. Remember, the night before Jesus went to the cross, “*He was very distressed and troubled in His heart*” (cf. Mk 14:33); while He was out in the garden of Gethsemane with Peter, James and John, He said to them, “*My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death*”... and moments later He pleaded with God to “*remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thy will be done*.” When Jesus suffered on the cross the next day it was *extremely distressing to Him*, so He cried out to the Lord, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” And soon after that “*Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last*” (cf. Mt 26:36-39; 27:46-50; & Mk 14: 32-38; 15:33-37). Again, we’re talking about ***God-incarnate!*** If *pain* was very difficult for Christ (who obviously was not a fallen creature), why would it not be *extremely difficult for us*, and cause us to stumble far more often than not? The truth is, we do not possess a perfect faith like Jesus did when He walked on this earth; He trusted God completely, nevertheless, He suffered greatly at times. So the questions you need to answer are these: Would God be a significant gracious contributor to you in the midst of some painful trial you may be experiencing? What if God failed to heal you or help you? What if God just remained silent and didn’t answer any of your questions? What if He appeared to be a very distant reality to you? What if you started experiencing more pain, not less pain? How would you handle the frustration of God’s silence? How would you handle the unpleasantness you are going through? How would you handle your anger? (remember, your fallen flesh is a very present reality in your life). Obviously, life can be very taxing at times (in particular, later in life); as such, God will urge you to *wrestle* through all you are going through, and that will involve both the Spirit and the flesh (cf. Gal 5:16-17) — though at times God helps resolve the negatives and gives us peace in the midst of the upheaval... at other times God leaves the negatives in our lives, and asks us to live with them (or so we may be inclined to think) — though that can be very disconcerting, over time most believers learn to *accept* what they are experiencing (but that in itself doesn’t happen in 24 hours), and learn to *rejoice in God’s love for us*, in spite of the negatives in our lives. When we are young, the *positives* in our lives seem to play a very vital role in our faith (and rightly so because we are still young), yet when *negatives* come into our lives they essentially have an adverse affect upon our faith (because God becomes a discouraging reality in our minds, due to our flesh); but after days & weeks & months (and sometimes years), we learn to see God in a different light... thus life takes on a different look, and becomes a far more serious one and a far more sober one; no longer is life just

a pleasant life of happiness. Look at it this way, little babies are often been held in their mother's arms when trouble comes into their lives... yet when they are no longer babies, discipline begins to play a vital roll in their live; and such often defines the believer's life as well. Obviously, this thing called "faith" is not an easy matter... because Satan, our flesh, and the world are all doing everything they can to move us in a godless direction, and oftentimes are fighting against us. Though we may be men and women of faith, our faith is not nearly as glorious as some believers think (cf. Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8), yet God is actively working in our lives to build our faith, and this He does by subjecting us to trials and tribulations (cf. Jn 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Th 3:3; Jam 1:2-3; 1 Pet 1:7; 2:21; Heb 12:4-11).

I find it interesting that "all believers pray for positives in their life," in spite of the fact that they aren't the healthiest thing for our faith; all they do is make us feel good. It's easy to be happy when everything goes the way we want it to go, but that isn't going to make us men & women of great faith – remember, the English word "happy" is a derivative of the old Norse word "happ," from which we get our English words "happy" & "happen" – when the circumstances we go through in life are pleasant, they make us happy...when they are not pleasant they make us unhappy. So happiness depends upon pleasant circumstances; it does not exist in situations where the circumstances are unpleasant. The question is, can we as believers be "happy" when we are being subjected to trials & tribulation? Again, the answer is "no." As stated above, Jesus was "not happy" the night before He went to the cross, or the day He went to the cross; He was extremely troubled in His soul (cf. Matt 26:36-39; 27:45-46); how could He not be? (remember, He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, so He knows what it is like to be a fleshly creature – cf. Rom 8:3; Heb 4:15-16). The author of Hebrews words it this way, "Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross" (Heb 12:2) – our redemption is that which motivated Christ to die on the cross for us; so it was our becoming His children that brought great joy to Him, in spite of the fact that the cross was extremely painful to Him (not at all joyful) – Lord willing that makes sense to you. Keep in mind, the word "joy" is radically different from the word "happy," because joy can be experienced even when a person is not happy. The essence of "joy" is this – "joy is the fruit of a right relationship with God;" when we humble ourselves before God and embrace Him for who He is, God gives us the grace to rejoice over Him. Joy is not something that has temporal significance, or something people can create by their own efforts; it is the residual effect of our relationship with God that was achieved through the cross of Christ. So joy is a state of delight and well being that results from knowing and serving God. Obviously, if one is not cognizant of all God has done for him, joy will often times be lacking in his life. Remember, divine joy came into focus in human history when Jesus Christ came into the world (cf. Lk 1:14, 44; Mt 2:10). The most profound words in Scripture were those an angel shared with the shepherds: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (cf. Lk 2:10; Jn 15:11; 17:13). Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples the night before He went to the cross that their sorrow would soon be turned into joy (cf. Jn 16:20-22; Lk 24:41, 52); and shortly after the death of Christ, the disciples came to see that His death was necessary for them to experience true unequivocal joy (cf. Heb 12:2). Let's return to the subject at hand – when we start experiencing

negatives in life, it is at this point where our faith begins to coincide more with divine reality, and where the things of this world become far less significant to us; no longer is life simple and fun, life now becomes serious and God's divine revelation becomes far more significant to us. Again, life ultimately is not just about enjoying a bunch of positives that God puts on our plate; it's about embracing God's love for us and suffering for Him... though that is a very difficult construct for us as fallen creatures to accept, it is a divine reality that God asks us to embrace. The truth is, when God takes center stage in our lives, the things of this world will no longer be the primary goals in our lives (not at all)... so our car, our house, our wealth, our job, our work, our clothes, our favorite sports teams, even our health, no longer remain the supreme elements of our lives (not even close). Remember, God has a way of getting our full attention in life... though it seldom happens in the younger years of our lives, after years of living, He is then able to get our attention (beloved, this isn't some strange construct that is only reserved for a very few people — this is God's call upon our lives as His children; God knows our frame and is mindful that we are but dust, and He patiently awaits the day when He can move us more profoundly in a divine direction; it was no different for Job and the disciples than it is for us — this will make far more sense to you after reading this entire study). Carefully consider the following verses (cf. Jn 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17-18; 2 Cor 4:7-11; 6:4-5; Phil 1:29; 3:10; 1 Pet 4:1; 5:10).

Remember Solomon's most poignant words: "*Vanity of vanities! All is Vanity!*" (cf. Ecc 1:2, 14; 2:11, 26; 4:8, 16; 12:8). Here was a man of great wisdom who interpreted reality as it needed to be interpreted. The conclusion he drew was the fact that life is fleeting, that nothing on this earth provides us with a valid goal of existence; thus all is vanity under the sun. As the apostle Paul stated: God subjected creation to "futility" because of Adam's disobedience (cf. Rom 8:20); so creation has been subjected to frustration and disorder (thus life is not the little joy-ride that people try to make it). Obviously God had a purpose in subjecting our world to futility — that is precisely what should cause man to look up & turn to God. Think about it, if life on earth was grand and glorious, why would man ever turn to God? Incidentally, this construct also applies to believers — remember, it is through trials and tribulations whereby we grow in our faith; God dispenses them for our good (cf. Heb 12:5-11; Jam 1:3, 12; 1 Pet 1:6-7; 4:12-13). Yet even with the foregoing in mind, the vast majority of unbelievers do not turn to God; instead they insist on having their own autonomy and doing all they can to make life what they want it to be — grand and glorious (though that never occurs; as men grow older they are convinced of this truth). The Hebrew word translated "vanity," literally means meaningless, empty and futile — Solomon in his old age, after exploring all the world has to offer, found everything in this world to be empty and void of meaning (Ecc 1:14). He listed ten things that are absolutely meaningless without God — human wisdom (Ecc 2:14-16), labor (2:18-23), amassing things (2:26), life itself (3:18-22), competition (4:4), selfish overwork (4:7-8), power and authority (4:16), greed (5:10), wealth and accolades (6:1-2), and perfunctory religion (8:10-14). Remember, when Adam sinned, God cursed all that He had made (Gen 3:17-19); thus the entire created order is now falling short of its original purpose; rather than working in harmony with God, the inhabitants of

the world have turned on each other and against God – the chaos & insanity of the world as we know it are due to the fact that God has subjected creation to futility; thus everything in this world essentially is vanity & meaningless. Solomon had possessed wealth beyond human comprehension, and accomplished things no other man has ever accomplished, and he tried everything under the sun to satisfy himself, but when he left God out of the equation, absolutely nothing satisfied him – incidentally, numerous unbelievers of great wealth and great accomplishment, have voiced very similar thoughts at the end of their lives. So here they were after a lifetime of increasing their wealth and doing incredible things in our world, reflecting upon all that they possessed, and coming to the conclusion that it was simply meaningless and not at all gratifying to the soul. One of our country's greatest business magnates, who was a record-setting pilot, engineer, film director, philanthropist, and the owner of Air West, Hughes Aircraft Company and Trans World Airlines, etc. – Howard Hughes – was one of the world's most famous men back in the 40s, 50s & 60s, and one of its wealthiest men with just over 1.5 billion dollars (which is the equivalent of 7 billion dollars today)... when he was in his young 40s he was in a plane crash (1946) and from that point on he began to retreat from the world; 20 years later in the 1960s he lived on the entire top floor of the Desert Inn in Las Vegas and conducted all of his business from that hotel suite; few people ever saw him after that, so hear was a man in the later years of his life finally telling the world he would give everything he owned for a happy marriage (something he had never experienced). Obviously, all of us older people knew Howard Hughes (he had a very prominent presence in our world), yet those of you who are younger probably do not know him; nevertheless, the principle stated is one nearly every old person in our world believes, that no great achievement in this life is extremely gratifying to the heart; essentially to them, such things are almost meaningless (though the have-nots may think it is wonderful, the haves know better – it is simply meaningless. As Solomon essentially said after years of inquiry, “There is purpose in life, and it is found in knowing God and keeping His commands” (which has nothing to do with worldly values) – “so when all is said and done, fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecc 12:13). Beloved, without reverencing God, and embracing His will, one's life will simply be absolutely meaningless.

It is interesting to note, unbelievers hate God (i.e., they want nothing to do with God), and believers can get angry with God – in the distant past unbelievers killed the prophets, the apostles and Jesus Christ, and today they are doing whatever they can to completely remove God from society – God has been removed from school textbooks, and prayer has been eliminated in schools and vast areas of the public arena. The reality is, the unbelieving world hates moral constraints with a passion; they refuse to be ruled by some source other than themselves; furthermore, they absolutely hate the construct of hell. Remember, when Jesus entered the world and denigrated His people for rejecting divine truth as it was clearly expressed by the prophets, the Jewish world killed Him... the problem was, the Jewish world had defined sin simply as external behaviors that weren't that difficult to overcome; they did not believe in the innate sinfulness of man that Scripture teaches; thus the Jewish people saw themselves as being “good people,” not sinful people (cf. Rom



3:9-20, 23, 28; 4:7-8; 11:32; Lk 18:19; Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3). Incidentally, that is pretty common in our world — most people see themselves as being “relatively good” (*i.e.*, good as society defines it); though they know they are not perfect, they essentially see themselves as good people. It was the atheist **Julian Huxley**, about a hundred years ago, who expressed a strong hatred for Christianity and this thing called God; yet his brother **Aldous Huxley** said, “If God does not exist, shouldn’t atheists just relax & seek a good time before they become plant food? Why should it matter if people believe in God?” The point is clear, “How can one hate something that doesn’t exist?” Think about it, if a group of people believed some ancient idol was the spiritual force in the universe, and that they worshipped that idol, how many people would actually hate that idol? The answer is, very few people would; they may not embrace it or respect it, but they wouldn’t have extreme emotional hatred for it. Yet here are people today hating this divine deity called “God!” Why? The reason is, God is the supreme reality in the universe that Satan hates with a passion, and he is doing all he can to remove Him from the world and convince his arrogant children that God doesn’t exist.

Now being angry with God is a completely different issue, yet it is a very poignant one. When we experience negatives in life that are very frustrating to us, that can make us angry... and our anger can be directed toward God. After all, as believers we operate under the impression that life should be fairly pleasant (especially when we walk in the light), and that God can and should prevent difficult realities from happening to us. The problem with negatives is that they affect our emotions, and since our emotions are hard to control because they dominate our thinking — that is simply what it means to be a fleshly fallen creature... if we weren’t fallen creatures, that would be one thing, but we are completely fallen creatures, and it is our flesh (*i.e.*, our fallenness) that causes us to go bonkers when we are subjected to difficult negatives. To counter the foregoing argument, many people in the Christian world claim that God essentially is a deist who is not at all responsible in any way for all the negatives that we experience in life, that they are simply the result of living in a fallen world; therefore God has absolutely nothing to do with them. But that is not at all what Scripture teaches — though God may not be the author of all negatives, nothing happens in our lives that does not go across God’s desk and “get His stamp of approval” (cf. Eph 1:11; Ps 37:23; Prv 16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24; Is 55:12; Jer 10:23). We will cover that subject in more detail later. Once again, fallen human thinking often dictates reality in the Christian world (especially in Roman Catholicism); as such, it often rejects certain aspects of divine revelation. The reality is, when we lose faith in God’s sovereignty (*i.e.*, we no longer identify Him as the supreme reality who governs the entire universe), we won’t see Him for who He really is (a God of great love who is working all things after the council of His will for our ultimate good). Our problem as fallen creatures is that our frail human flesh is grappling with our frustration and our lack of control over all that we are experiencing in life. When good things do happen in our lives, we attribute them to God’s kindness and His blessing... however, when bad things happen, we sometimes question our sovereign God and get angry with Him for causing them or not preventing them. The reality is, because we as believers have placed our trust in Christ and have

embraced Him as the Lord & Master of our lives, we are inclined to believe that we should be somewhat immune from unpleasant circumstances. Since that's a natural construct for Christians to believe, it is also a troubling one at times, because everything that happens in life is either caused by or allowed by God, and since we have been told that "we reap what we sow in life" (cf. Hos 8:7; 10:12; Job 4:8; Prov 1:31-33; Gal 6:7), life can be very disconcerting to us when we put forth our best efforts, and still reap a whirlwind (cf. Hos 8:7). Regarding anger, Merriam-Webster defines it as "An intense emotional state induced by displeasure." Obviously being angry with God is never right; it is always wrong to disapprove of what God does and permits, because God only does what is right and just (cf. Gen 18:25; 1 Jn 1:5; Rev 16:7). Nevertheless "we all still experience the sinful emotion of anger against God," which is simply what it means to be a fallen fleshly creature. For one to deny the presence of indwelling sin in his life (*i.e.*, sinful flesh), essentially is akin to denying divine revelation — if Scripture makes an emphatic statement, we cannot deny it; we must learn to believe it and embrace it. It is here where Scripture must play a vital role in our lives — rather than arguing against what it says (which is what our sinful inner-core does), we are to humbly align ourselves with divine truth and fully embrace what it says. Regarding those things that are difficult to believe, one must humbly study the subject in depth, rather than ignore it. Remember, our flesh continuously interjects diabolical thoughts into our minds; thus it gets us to question God, to question the integrity of our faith, and to question our spiritual growth. Keep in mind, God understands our humanness, and how difficult it is for us to accept things; nevertheless, He asks us to strive with Him and embrace divine truth as He has stated it in His Word (that is God's call upon our lives). Remember the words of Lord to the Jewish world back during the time of Babylonian captivity — "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, "Seek and you shall find" (cf. Mt 7:7-8). Jesus never changed the didactic.

There were times when the prophet Jeremiah was greatly encouraged at what God was doing in his ministry, yet there were times when he was very discouraged at what God was doing, so much so that he wished he had never been born. Said Jeremiah, "Lord, Thou has deceived me... I cannot endure it... cursed be the day when I was born" (cf. Jer 20:7-18). The reality is, life consists of both positives and negatives, and sometimes the negatives can be very disconcerting. Job reminds us that "man is born to trouble" (Job 5:7), that life is "full of trouble" (Job 14:1). Just because we come to Christ for salvation from sin, does not mean that life will be pleasant and problem free. Remember the words of David: "How long, Lord? Wilt Thou forget me forever? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts, and every day have sorrow in my heart?" (Ps 13:1-2). "Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? Rescue my soul" (Ps 35:17). "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me? God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer. In Thee our fathers trusted... and Thou didst deliver them" (Ps 22:1-4 and vv. 22-31). Wrote the choir director of the sons of Korah: "Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why must I keep mourning and be oppressed by the enemy?" (Ps 42:9). Regarding man's heart, God said to Jeremiah: "The heart (*i.e.*, the seat of desire, emotion & conscience) is more deceitful than all else

*and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds”* (Jer 17:9-10). The reality is, fallen man doesn’t understand his heart... even believers don’t fully understand their hearts — man’s inner-being is not without significant problems; as such he is easily deceived. God’s Word must continuously be contemplated by believers; to somehow think that is not necessary is to be deceived. Remember, our inner-core is not wise or righteous... to think that our flesh can simply be quelled by prayer is to be deceived — as long as we live on this planet, our flesh is going to continuously express itself, and it is that expression that we need to reject... by not doing so, we will often walk in the dark and become spiritually perplexed, and wonder why God isn’t keeping us in the light and giving us the grace we need to overcome all of the problems we are experiencing. Our spiritual confidence often waivers because of the presence of indwelling sin. Remember, enjoying a pleasant life is not what this world is all about — that’s reserved for heaven — this sinful world is an atrocious reality that God is one day going to completely destroy; as such, He has decreed that we live in it and fight against it to the best of our ability (since we are not perfect creatures, we will often stumble (cf. Jam 3:2). Now to fight the good fight and walk in the light we must constantly take steps to reflect upon God’s revelation, because therein lies divine truth. However, because of the indwelling presence of sin in our lives (*i.e.*, our flesh), it constantly interjects fallen thoughts into our minds, and rather than embracing those thoughts, we must reject them.

With the foregoing in mind, our flesh constantly attacks our faith and our spirituality, and denigrates our righteousness — though we don’t have a righteousness of our own that we can glory in, we possess Christ’s righteousness, and it is that righteousness that we must constantly glory in. The author of Hebrews tells us that we must be careful to enter into God’s Sabbath Rest, and not try and work out our own salvation (Heb 4:9-11) — this rest is peace in the assurance of Christ’s purification for “sins” that prevent us from reaching the ultimate goal of worship. Remember, God is merciful to our iniquities, and will remember our sins no more (that’s *emphatic* in Greek — Heb 8:12). Christ is the perfect priest, who makes it possible for God to forgive our wickedness and completely forget our sins. Christ is our merciful and faithful High Priest (cf. Heb 2:17; 4:1-3, 9, 14-15; 6:20; 8:1; also Heb 5:1-3; 5:5-6); if you don’t understand that construct, take the time to study it carefully. Remember, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation, God rested from all His work (cf. Gen 2:2), and God’s desire is to share this rest with His people (Heb 4:9) — those who have believed are to enter that rest (cf. Heb 4:3), and rest from their own work (just as Jesus did on the 7<sup>th</sup> day); this rest is peace in the assurance of access to God without our accomplishing some additional work on our own part — beloved, what in the world do you think you can do to make yourself acceptable to God? Either you believe in the all-sufficient work of Christ, or darkness will rule in your soul. The unequivocal truth is, our spiritual rest was accomplished by the finished work of Christ! Therefore, as believers we must rest completely on Christ’s work, and not some remedial work that we might do; though we often stumble in life (Jam 3:2), it is the finished work of Christ that we must rely upon (not some corrective work that we might do as a result of some wrong we have committed)...

the truth is, there is absolutely **NOTHING** we can do to make up for our own sinful actions. For arguments sake, let's say you commit some sin that can only be excised by paying God one-billion dollars in cash... yet here you are a person who is financially bankrupt — so what are you going to do? Plead with God to let you work for Him for ten thousand years to pay the debt? *i.e.*, embrace some kind of redemptive work on your part? Keep in mind, to embrace that kind of thinking, you will grossly undermine the work of Christ on the cross and treat it lightly. No matter how awful you may feel about the mess you have made with your life, just run into the arms of Christ and experience His acceptance & forgiveness. The truth is, God will not throw you out into the woods and punish you for a thousand years! Remember, God is extremely mindful of our sinful inner-core (cf. Ps 103:10-14), and the fact that it often rules in our hearts & minds — so why do you insist on changing the didactic? Remember, at the end of the age, God is going to remove our sinful flesh from us **forever!** Beloved, if the significance of God's redeeming work does not over-whelm your soul, your flesh will be far more dominant in your life than it need be. At some point, you need to embrace the power of the cross, and rejoice in God's eternal goodness to you. That is precisely why we are exhorted over and over again in Scripture to **study God's Word** (cf. 1 Pet 2:2; Rom 12:2)... if you don't, fleshly thinking will often give definition to your relationship with God.

Said Jesus to His disciples the night before He went to the cross: "In this world you will have **trouble**, but I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33); remember, Christ's overcoming the world is that which ultimately enables us to have peace in our souls, regardless of the storms in our lives (Jn 14:27) — so it is our eternal hope that needs to have a prominent presence in our lives, because **this world** is not the end all for us — the truth is, this world is a fallen diabolical wreck. The problem for most believers is that they make this world a very significant reality in their lives; essentially, it is that constraint that controls most believers — they simply do everything they can to make this little earthly life a pleasant life, and when things fall apart it is very disconcerting to them. Few believers make their eternal home the dominant focus of their life — such simply transcends human thinking; heaven is a construct that is too much for them to contemplate. When I was younger this construct seemed too much for me... I couldn't even fathom it; so I simply focused on this life, and tried to make it as pleasant and glorious as possible as I walked with Christ (which pretty much characterized the Christian world). Regarding this subject, look at it this way — we are all physical creatures living in a physical world... but Christ came into this world to make us spiritual creatures destined for the eternal spiritual realm in heaven. Remember we were all dead spiritually, and God made us alive spiritually (cf. Eph 2:1-5; Col 2:13). The difficulty in still being a physical creature, is that we have numerous physical values that we have grown up with; be it our bodies, our family, our home, our friends, our possessions, our jobs, our experiences, our sleeping, our food, our shopping, our cars, our world, our vacations, etc., etc., etc., etc. This physical world has played an extremely prominent part in our lives; even our churches are physical ones. So when our world is turned upside down, it can be very frustrating. By the way, at the present time, I'm going through some difficult health issues — my urologist just went into my bladder

(because of the presence of cancer I have experienced), and then he went into my prostate (which is somewhat problematic as well); though God seems to be keeping it in check to a degree, it is not at all a comfortable issue for me. Sometimes the negatives I am subjected to can be very frustrating and painful... yet at other times God seems to give me the grace to endure them. Obviously if I had my way, I'd eliminate those problems from my life, but I don't control all that transpires in my life... God does. Again, I don't say this so that you will pity me (what in the world good would that do?); I am simply telling you this to awaken you to this physical realm in which we live (the truth is, it frequently is not a joy-ride); the good news is, the eternal realm is going to be radically different than this earthly realm; no longer will we groan & mourn & suffer — God is going to cause those things to ultimately pass away (Rev 21:4); meanwhile, that is not the case, and we have to learn to live with it. Now due to the fact these things play a significant role in our lives, they are not at all easy to ignore; obviously this world has a very strong presence in our lives, and some things we experience in this world can be very disconcerting... so God tells us to focus on our eternal future in heaven with Him, not on this frustratingly grievous world here on earth.

Remember the words of the apostle John: “Do not love **the world**, nor the things in the world.... for the things in the world (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) are all going to **pass away**” (cf. 1 Jn 2:15-17); so this world is not the end-all of life or its answer — if you insist on making it so, you are going to really struggle in life, in particular you are really going to struggle spiritually. Said the apostle Paul, “Do not be conformed to **this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (cf. Rom 12:2). Now since trials and unpleasant difficulties seem to dominate our lives at times, that should be very clear evidence from God that He never meant this life to be a glorious and pleasant one — though the early years of my ministry were fairly pleasant and glorious, that has not been the case now for many years; life in the past 20 years has actually been filled with problems; as such, God has gotten me to focus on Him and His will, rather than on this broken world and its presence in my life... as a result of having experienced some very difficult negatives, God has so willed that I study this matter in great depth... as such, I have written extensively on this subject, and this has resulted in my website getting upwards of 1,500 hits a day — so the message is this: this is not at all an uncommon problem in the Christian world; many believers from all over the world have responded to things I have addressed on my website... many of them are **extremely troubled** over what they are experiencing in life; as such, many of them are questioning God (and I can sympathize with that, just as the prophets & apostles could). The problem with the Christian world here in America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is that it taught that life can be a joy-ride if you place your faith in Christ — but that does not at all coincide with what Scripture teaches... thus many believers have been disillusioned with their faith, and rightfully so, because it has been grounded in humanistic thought, not divine truth. It has always been troubling to me that the Christian world, in particular here in our country, has been so reluctant to address much of what Scripture teaches, as if it is sim-

ply a matter of human opinion — to the regret of many, humanistic thinking has been a major problem for believers down through the ages, because it contradicts Scripture. It should be obvious, when things don't mesh with what Scripture teaches, they must reject humanistic thought and embrace divine thinking — if that is a problem to you, then take the time to study God's Word on the matter — to make light of divine revelation is absolutely foolishness for the believer. By the way, nowhere in Scripture does God ever punish His children — nowhere — He punishes unbelievers, but He doesn't punish His children; rather than punish His children, He chastens them (Heb 12:5-11); *i.e.*, He subjects them to pain to accomplish His purposes in & through their lives. Though punishment and chastening may be equally painful (Heb 5:11), the motivation is entirely different; chastening is always helpful in its orientation; never punitive. God always has our good in mind (cf. Rom 8:28-31; Phil 1:6). Remember, God is the One who superintends everything that goes on in our lives; so God either causes things, or He permits them (*i.e.*, at times He lets Satan take actions in our lives, just as He did in Job's life (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6). The reality is, nothing happens to the believer that does not first go across God's desk and "get His stamp of approval — nothing." (cf. Eph 1:11; Ps 37:23; Prv 16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24; Is 55:12; Jer 10:23); and everything He permits us to experience in life, He uses to accomplish His purposes (cf. Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11); and His purposes are perfect, pure and good; keep in mind, when God is dealing with you as a believer, He never punishes you for your sin; He bore the price of your sin on the cross — essentially, all God does to His children is discipline them that they might share His holiness; though it is not necessarily a joyful experience, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (reflect on Heb 12:1-11). The truth is, there are no accidents whatsoever in God's kingdom; yet many believers constantly argue to the contrary because God's revelation is not known to them... thus their flesh simply controls the vast majority of their thinking — beloved, that's exactly how it was in the ancient Jewish world.

Now regarding divine truth, everything Christ declared clearly coincides with all other revelations, so man cannot reason against what Christ has stated. Thus the proper expression of revelation is the Christian faith; *i.e.*, believing God (Heb 11:1, 6) — incidentally, God makes Himself known on a far deeper level once man places his trust in Him. Remember, when one humbles himself & receives God's divine revelation with faith, he experiences the new birth by the Holy Spirit; *i.e.*, **he is made alive in Christ, that he might one day enter into the kingdom of heaven** (cf. Jn 3:3-8; 2 Cor 5:17; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:23; 1 Jn 3:9; 5:18). Faith is the glad recognition of truth and the reception of God's revelation without reservation (cf. Rom 10:17). **The Bible is of crucial importance to man, because it is the living Word of God, and through it the Holy Spirit witnesses to individuals about the significance of God's grace and the need of a faith response.** Thus we can say that God initiated His revelation of Himself to mankind, that they might come to know Him and grow in relationship with Him. So, for believers "the Bible" is the source of God's revelation. To expand upon the principle of divine revelation, it is supernatural communication from God to man through the entire contents of Holy Scripture; it is God unveiling Himself; *i.e.*, His Being, His moral will, and His redemption in Christ. Obviously, this is over and

above what He has made known through the *physical realm* (i.e., nature). All Scripture is God's written revelation and is the final authority man needs for faith and practice. Now, divine revelation is made certain for us by the attestation of both miracles and prophecy. Remember, *miracles were used by Jesus to authenticate who He is, thus substantiating what He had to say* (take the time to read the following verses, because this is a theological construct every believer should understand – cf. Deut 13; Mt 11:21-22; Mk 16:20; Lk 7:22; Jn 2:11; 4:48; 5:36; 10:37-38; Acts 4:29-30; Rom 5:19; 1 Cor 1:27; 14:21-22; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:14). The problem with many in the Christian world, is that they think miracles were simply a kind act that God was doing, because He was feeling compassion for people – though that no doubt was true at times, that was not the chief reason for His performing miracles; incidentally, there were also times when God did not perform miracles, and there were times when God even healed unbelievers – so modern day thinking on this subject (in particular the thinking of those who are ultra-charismatic) does not fully coincide with what Scripture teaches. If this subject is somewhat questionable to you, take the time to read all of the verses that are listed above. With the foregoing in mind, *miracles are the natural accompaniments and attestations of new communications from God*, and oftentimes certify the truth of doctrine and the commissioning of the prophets and the apostles (again, read those verses). The starting point, according to Jesus, is to “believe in His works” (cf. John 10:25-26, 37-38; 15:24). Hence, revelation essentially is the act of God speaking, whether it be through the prophets, apostles or through His Son (Heb 1:1-3). When it came time for His message to be inscripturated, God inspired the message (cf. 1 Tim 3:15-16). Keep in mind, no knowledge of Christ (who is the image of God – cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3) can be acquired except through the Scriptures, which testify of Him (cf. Jn 5:18ff; 10:25, 37-38; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21). As **Don Stewart**, a highly regarded international Christian apologist, and fellow graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary, and the author of more than 70 books, states in an article he wrote on Divine Revelation – there are several conclusions that we can make about special revelation:

1. Divine Revelation is Complete — Nothing more needs to be added to Scripture. Jude wrote: “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (cf. Jude 1:3).
2. God's Revelation is True — The words of Scripture are true. Jesus said to His Father: “Sanctify them in the truth, Your word is truth” (cf. Jn 17:17; also 1 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21).
3. Scripture is Not Exhaustive — Divine revelation is partial; God has told us everything that He has done or everything that we need to know about Him. It is written: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (cf. Deut 29:29).
4. God's Revelation was Progressive — God did not reveal everything at once to man; His revelation was in states. “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the

prophets at many times in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, who He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe” (cf. Heb 1:1-2).

5. The Purpose of Divine Revelation is to Bring Salvation — The purpose of Scripture is to save sinners. Said Paul to Timothy: “From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). The apostle John wrote: “If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is that He has testified to His Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their heads... those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; those who have the Son have life, and those who do not have the Son of God do not have life” (cf. 1 Jn 5:9-12).

Once again, the five conclusions that can be made about God’s special revelation to man are these — It is complete (nothing more needs to be added)... it is accurate in all that it teaches... although true, it is not exhaustive... it is progressive in nature... and its purpose is to bring salvation to the lost.

## THE FIRST YEARS OF DIVINE REVELATION

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and a creature called “man.” In so doing, the Lord took him and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And the Lord commanded him saying, “From any tree of the Garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (cf. Gen 2:16-17). So God defined the life man was to live — work was an important and dignified part of representing the image of God and serving Him (cf. Rev 22:3). The only thing God forbid man to do was eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; i.e., don’t question the integrity of divine truth — which is precisely what Adam and Eve did; and as a result they experienced death (i.e., separation from God); no longer would they enjoy absolute divine peace and joyful fellowship with God (cf. Gen 3:6-10). Once Adam and Eve sinned God gave definition to the aftereffects of their sin (Gen 3:13-19) — Satan would be crushed and thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity (cf. Rom 16:2; Rev 20:10)... Eve would suffer pain in child-birth, and would be subject to her husband her entire life... and Adam would have to toil the grounds (which God had cursed with thorns and thistles) his entire life with the sweat of his face for food. In addition to that, God moved Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden to cultivate the ground from which he was taken (Gen 3:23); no longer would they enjoy the glorious Garden that God had designed for them... and at the end of their lives they would return to dust (Gen 3:19). Incidentally, Adam & Eve sinned without possessing a “fleshly inner-core” — they weren’t fallen creatures, nevertheless they chose to sin (just like Satan and his cohorts did in heaven in eternity past prior to the creation of man); yet once they did sin, their inner-



core became “sinful flesh,” and ruled in their lives from that point on — remember, our sinful flesh constantly argues against divine truth (Gal 5:16-17), so warfare in the soul simply defines fallen creatures (that is simply who they are). As the apostle Paul explained it: “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin” (Rom 5:18). Furthermore, “If by the transgression of the one many died, much more did the grace of God through Jesus Christ abound to the many... on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification” (cf. Rom 3:15-16); the wonder of it all is this: God grants grace to those who not only commit one sin, but numerous sins. The consequences of Adam’s sin did not only fall upon the first family, but on all mankind, and even the earth (cf. Gen 3:17; Rom 8:19-21) — descent from Adam not only resulted in physical death but in spiritual and moral corruption as well (cf. Eph 2:1, 3). Following Adam & Eve’s sin, they then gave birth to two children, Cain and Abel... and over time as they grew up, their parents taught them that God is the creator of all things and the ruler of their lives... and as you’ll recall, when they brought their offerings to the Lord as young adults (Gen 4:3-5), only Abel’s offering was deemed acceptable to God, thus Cain became angry... yet God said to him, “If you do well you will be **blessed**, however, if you don’t do well, you will be **cursed** — you must master sin” (cf. Gen 4:6-7). Ultimately, Cain killed Abel because God had accepted his offering and rejected his own... so God told Cain “the ground upon which you work shall be cursed — it will no longer yield its strength to you, and you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth” (cf. Gen 4:11-12). Keep in mind, everything that had transpired up until that time had been passed on to all of Adam & Eve’s descendents — it wasn’t as if Adam and Eve had withheld everything from their children; obviously they not only instructed them as to God’s existence, but to the importance of doing what is right in life, as such, it was not at all uncommon for God’s creatures to call upon the name of the Lord (cf. Gen 4:16-26).

After the death of Abel, Adam and Eve gave birth to other sons and daughters (Gen 5:3-4), the first of which was a son that he named Seth, and one of his son’s decedents was a person named Enoch, “who walked with God” (Gen 5:22-24), and Enoch became the grandfather of a man named Noah (Gen 5:29-6:27), who also walked with God. However, when Noah lived “the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was **great** on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only **evil continually**” (Gen 6:5)... “yet Noah himself found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). So God told Noah to “**build an Ark** and load it with two of every animal on the face of the earth... because He was going to flood the entire world with water, and destroy all flesh, and cause everything on the earth to perish” (Gen 6:14-22). So Noah built the Ark as God had commanded him, that He might spare the righteous and destroy the unrighteous... so God blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the earth (Gen 7:1, 21-23). After floating in the flood water for about a year, the Ark finally settled down on the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4), and God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1), “and every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you” (Gen 9:3). No longer was man to simply eat vegetables; he was now set free to eat every moving

thing, including all animals & fish. God then established a covenant with Noah and his descendents... and put a Rainbow in the heavens as a pledge that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood (Gen 9:8-17). Regarding the covenant God established with Noah, we will cover that shortly — the important thing at this point is understanding the fact that **God had clearly conveyed His will to man**, and that it was passed on to all the future generations — in so doing, God blessed those who obeyed Him, and cursed those who did not obey Him.

Now after a thousand years or so, it became evident that man did not do what God told him to do — “man was to fill the earth,” but that wasn’t his goal; instead “he built himself a city and a very large tower (i.e., the tower of Babel), whose top was to reach into heaven (i.e., very high into the sky), that he might make a name for himself (i.e., that he might be extremely proud of himself) less he be scattered over the face of the earth” (cf. Gen 11:4); such had become the symbol of man’s pride & God-defying disobedience (Gen 11:1-6). So here were fallen men glorifying themselves rather than God — they were so united and self-centered, there was nothing they wouldn’t do to satisfy themselves; so God’s desires essentially were meaningless to them. The resultant effect of their sinful choice was — “God decided to confuse their language so that they wouldn’t understand each others speech” (Gen 11:7); thus frightening them and causing them to stop building the city and scatter them over the whole earth (Gen 11:8-9). Because they refused to fill the earth as God had so commanded them, God confused their language so that they had to separate and simply live in regions where their own language was spoken. Incidentally, every language on planet earth is the product of God, not human beings. Now about a thousand years after man had been scattered over the whole earth, it was then that God brought **Abraham** onto the world stage to accomplish His purposes. So everything that transpired from the time of Adam to the time of Abraham is generally believed to have been 3,000 to 4,000 years... remember, Abraham entered our world about 2,100 BC, which basically is a little over 4,000 years ago... so the first eleven chapters of Genesis identify all that transpired during the first three to four thousand years of man’s existence. By the way, scientists and scholars believe the world’s population 4,000 years ago back during the time of **Abraham** in 2100 BC was about 27 million people... and during the time of **David** in 1000 BC was about 50 million people... and during the time of **Jesus** back in the first century was about 200 million people — with that in mind, the population of the world didn’t reach one billion people until 200 years ago (around 1800); and today in 2020 the world’s population is now 7.5 billion people. Now once Abraham entered the world stage in 2100 BC, 1700 years later the Old Testament era ended (which was about 400 BC) — so that 1700 year period (2100 BC to 400 BC) essentially is the entire Old Testament starting at the end of Genesis 11, and ending with the book of Malachi... and then came the 400 year Intertestamental Period; i.e., the period between the Old & New Testaments. Jesus entered our world at the beginning of the first century AD, so He was born a little over 2,000 years ago... and it was at that point that the New Testament Age began, and it is that age that defines the Christian world today. Below is a calendar of human history dating all the way back to the time of **Adam** (who was created about 8,000

years ago) and the time of *Jesus* and His apostles —though all of the dates from the time of Abraham until the coming of Christ are fairly accurate; only the dates that are prior to Abraham are guesstimates. The scientific world is pretty confident in dates that go back around 4,000 years (*i.e.*, to the time of Abraham); it is the years prior to that that are somewhat questionable to them.

## GLOBAL TIME LINE

- \*Adam — 6000 BC (guesstimate)
- \*Noah — 4000 BC (guesstimate)
- \*Abraham — 2100 BC
- \*Moses — 1441 BC
- \*Judges — 1375 to 1050 BC
- \*David — 1010 BC
- \*Prophets — 870-400 BC (God-ordained spokesmen)
- \*Divided Kingdom — Judah & Israel's Division took place in 930 BC
- \*Northern Kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Assyria — 722 BC
- \*Southern Kingdom of Israel was taken captive by Babylon — 586 BC
- \*Intertestamental Period — 400 BC to First Century AD
  - During this particular time Greek & Roman Empires ruled
- \*Christ's Advent into the World — First Century AD
- \*Christ's Apostles and Their Ministry — First Century AD
- \*New Testament — God Inspired New Testament Writings by the Apostles between the years 50 AD and 90 AD; thus starting about twenty years after Christ's resurrection

## THE DISCIPLES WRESTLED WITH DIVINE REVELATION

One of the most perplexing things about the Easter story is that Jesus' own disciples did not understand it... all the way up to (and even beyond) Jesus' resurrection, His disciples, who had traveled, studied, and ministered under Him for nearly all of His public ministry, were actually very confused about what was happening. As **Andy Rau**, the former senior manager of content for "*Bible Gateway*" and a leader at Calvin College, said: "During the events of Easter week, we see many examples of the disciples failing to comprehend what Jesus was plainly telling them." For example, they did not understand Jesus' statement that one of them would betray Him. Jesus said, "*Truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray Me.*" His disciples were obviously astonished at what Jesus was saying to them, so they stared at each other completely at a loss to know who He was referring to. At this

point, Simon Peter motioned to his friend John who was reclining next to Jesus and said, “Ask Him which one He means.” Jesus answered John saying, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” After dipping it, He gave it to Judas... and as soon as Judas took the bread Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor (cf. Jn 13:21-29).

This was typical of the disciples — they failed to believe or understand what Jesus was telling them about the events of Easter week. Even after the resurrection, His disciples were unclear about what had happened until He finally explained it to them. Despite the miracles they had seen Jesus perform, they refused to believe He had been resurrected until He demonstrated that “He was not a ghost.” Why did the disciples struggle to believe and understand? Had Jesus failed to warn them in advance about what was going to happen to Him? No He hadn’t. He had foretold them of His death and resurrection several times before the actual events of Easter week occurred. As Andy Rau states it, “Sometimes Jesus spoke in deliberately vague terms; thus it is probably understandable in these cases that the disciples wouldn’t have picked up on Jesus’ meaning without help.” For example, Jesus predicted His death and resurrection early in the gospel of John using a metaphor — The Jews then responded to Him: “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus’ answer was, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (cf. Jn 2:18-19). However, in other places, Jesus spoke plainly and directly about His imminent arrest, death, and resurrection. From that time on He began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life (Mt 16:21) — at that point Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!” (Mt 16:22), to which Jesus replied, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (Mt 16:23). When Jesus was going up to Jerusalem with His disciples, He told them that He would be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law, that they would condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified... and that on the third day He would be raised to life! (Mt 20:17-19). As Rau asks, “Why then were the disciples so confused and frightened during the drama of Easter week?” Ultimately he states, “we don’t know the answer to that... that much of their confusion was simply the result of being human — like everyone else, they were prone to forgetfulness & misunderstanding.” Remember, Jesus’ teachings profoundly challenged the Jewish religious assumptions that His disciples had grown up with. Because Jesus taught in both plain speech and parables, the disciples obviously had trouble understanding when He was speaking literally and when He was speaking metaphorically. Even though Jesus’ disciples had seen Him work many life-giving miracles, they apparently couldn’t bring themselves to believe Jesus’ most dramatic claim: that He

would die and rise from the grave. Obviously the events of Easter week were stressful to say the least.

Remember the words of the Lord to His disciples in the Upper Room the night before He was crucified on the cross: “You do **not** realize now what I am doing, but **later** you will understand... I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am” (cf. Jn 13:7, 19). After Jesus was raised from the dead, His disciples recalled what He had said to them... so it was then that they truly believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken (Jn 2:22). After being raised from the dead, Jesus met with His disciples and said to them: “**O foolish men and slow of heart to believe** in all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and the Prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (cf. Lk 24:25-27). He said to them: “This is what I told you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Then **He opened their minds** so they could understand the Scriptures” (Lk 24:44-45). Like many prophecies throughout Scripture, Jesus’ predictions weren’t always understood and believed by those who first heard them. As Rau states, the passages above specifically note that understanding often comes **after** the prophesied events have come to pass — the predictions were made so that when the disciples finally got around to remembering Jesus’ words through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, they would see in His words further confirmation that Jesus indeed was who He claimed to be. Though it is tempting to scoff at the disciples for their weak faith and ignorance, to do so is to miss the point — we are no different than they were. Like the disciples, we don’t always understand what God is doing in our lives. We read God’s clear promises in the Bible, yet often succumb to stress and doubt when life gets tough. Sometimes it isn’t until after God has brought us through a trial that we are able to look back at Scripture and understand that He was with us from the beginning. God loves us as He loved the disciples, and wants to bring us into understanding and belief. He wants us to look back at events in our lives, then examine Scripture to see His words and promises confirmed. And while we sometimes want to roll our eyes at them, we can be grateful to Jesus’ hapless disciples for providing us an object lesson in human ignorance and divine patience.

As we reflect back upon the apostles and what they believed, Scripture reminds us that as followers of Christ they still believed the earthly form of the “**Kingdom of Messiah**” would soon be established (cf. Lk 19:11; 24:21; also Mk 15:43; Lk 9:11; 11:2; 17:20; 19:31; 22:16; 23:51); remember the Pharisees and the majority of those in the Jewish world believed that the Messiah’s triumph would be immediate, and that they were looking for Him to come and overthrow Rome, and set up the Millennial Kingdom... as such, the disciples still mistakenly assumed that Christ was now going to establish His kingdom on earth at Jerusalem (cf. Lk 19:11). They also knew that Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 connected the coming of the Kingdom with the outpouring of the Spirit that Jesus had promised. Even after the resurrection of Christ and just prior to His ascension into heaven, they asked Him, “**Lord**,

*is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”* (cf. Acts 1:6). Christ’s program was altogether different — instead, He was inaugurating an era in which the Kingdom would be manifest in *the rule of God in men’s hearts through faith in the Savior* (cf. Lk 17:21; Rom 14:17). The reality is, the earthly, visible manifestation of the Kingdom is yet to come (cf. Rev 20:1-6). Another interesting point regarding the Kingdom of Messiah, was that the mother of the sons of Zebedee (*i.e.*, the mother of James and John), just a short while earlier, came to Jesus with her sons, and bowing before Him she made a request of Him: *“Command that in Your Kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one of your right and one on your left”* (cf. Mt 20:20-28; also 19:28). Incidentally, knowing that this had occurred caused the other ten disciples to become indignant with the two brothers. Remember, the disciples had frequently discussed with each other *“which of them was **the greatest**,”* this even occurred when they gathered together at Passover the night before Jesus was crucified (cf. Lk 22:24; Mk 9:34; Mt 18:1; 23:11) — the reality was, *“personal greatness”* was highly valued in the ancient Jewish world.

Regarding Jesus, He spent the first thirty years of His life in relative obscurity, working as an unheralded carpenter in Nazareth, a small village a few miles west of the sea of Galilee. But during the following three years He uttered words that astounded all who heard them... He also performed miracles no other human being ever had — calming storms, healing diseases, restoring sight, and even raising the dead. He then claimed to be the Son of God who loved us so much He became a man to die for our sins, offering us eternal life with Himself. During His years of ministry, *He picked a number of very ordinary people to be His followers* (*i.e.*, *His disciples*) — remember, Galileans were not highly esteemed in the ancient world (cf. Acts 2:7; 4:13; Jn 1:46; 7:15, 41, 52); they were seen as being uneducated and unsophisticated by the southern Judean Jews. Jesus spent three years teaching them about Himself and explaining to them the deep truths of God’s Word; in addition to that He performed numerous miracles, made audacious claims, and lived an incredibly righteous life. When His followers first encountered Jesus, they had no idea who He was. However, as they heard His profound words and saw Him restore sight to the blind and raise the dead, it is possible (but not likely) they may have recalled a prophecy indicating that the Messiah would be God Himself (cf. Is 9:6)... yet as they saw Him dying on the cross, Jesus must have appeared defeated and powerless; thus any thoughts they might have had that Jesus was God in all probability would have vanished at the cross. Nevertheless, three days after that traumatic event, Jesus miraculously appeared alive to His followers — they saw Him and touched Him and ate with Him and heard Him talk of His glorified position as the supreme authority in all the universe. Remember, *“Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of His majesty, and the words spoken by God the Father — ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ — we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain”* (cf. 2 Pet 1:16-18; Mt 17:1-5). Though they heard God’s claim earlier that year, doesn’t necessarily mean that they fully understood what God was saying — the question is, did they henceforth regard Jesus as God? According to Scripture, there were many things that His apostles did not fully understand, so Jesus ultimately told them that *“the day will come when the*

*Spirit of truth will enter into your lives and teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have told you*” (cf. Jn 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). So, did the apostles who wrote the New Testament really believe that Jesus was God prior to His resurrection, or did they simply regard Him as an incredible divinely created being that God had sent into our world to share divine truth, and whom they simply believed was the Messiah of God (i.e., the Christ, the anointed of God – John 1:41). It has long been wondered by countless people why Jesus did not appropriate the title Messiah to Himself instead of the less clear title Son of Man — that particular title is used numerous times in the New Testament; following are just some usages of it in the book of Matthew (cf. Mt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64). Acts 2:36 affirms that Jesus was “made” Christ — the sense of the verb being that by the resurrection Jesus was confirmed as the Christ, the Messiah of God (cf. Rom 1:4; Phil 2:9-11). Obviously, there is no way to fully identify what the apostles truly believed prior to Jesus’ ascension into heaven, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, because there seems to be a little argumentation that goes both ways; though some very poignant words are stated, exactly how they interpreted them is difficult to know — yes, the apostles heard the divine truth that Jesus had told them, but did they fully embrace and understand what He had told them? Again, there is no way to know.

Now it wasn’t until Jesus ascended into heaven that the apostles wrote down the words and deeds of Jesus, and this they did in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 Tim 3:16-17). So after Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles stunned both Jews and Romans by declaring that “**Jesus is Lord!**” (i.e., the God of creation). And henceforth the apostles did the unthinkable and worshipped Jesus and prayed to Him — Stephen prayed: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” as he was being stoned to death (cf. Acts 7:59). The apostles passed on their knowledge of Jesus to church fathers who carried on their message into the next generation — **Ignatius**, a disciple of the apostle John, in a letter to Polycarp said “Jesus is God,” He is “God incarnate,” and to the Ephesians he wrote, “God Himself appearing in the form of a man, for the renewal of eternal life.” The reality is, after the resurrection, the apostles saw Jesus with “new eyes”... and before He left the earth, Jesus began to unfold mysteries to them about His identity. Recalling the Lord’s words, John began His gospel by revealing who Jesus is: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **God**... all things came into being **by Him**, and apart from Him **nothing** came into being.... **In Him** was life, and the life was the light of men” (cf. Jn 1:1, 3, 4). Beloved, keep in mind, the emboldened words in those verses are emphatic in Greek. So John reveals that before creation, “the Word already existed, and was with God, and in fact was **God**.” Then in verse 14 he writes, “The Word became flesh (i.e., human) and lived here on earth among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (cf. Jn 1:14). Likewise the apostle Paul said to the Colossians: “Jesus is the image of the **invisible** God... that all things have been created **by and for Him**, and that **He** is before all things, and **in Him** all things hold together” (cf. Col 1:15, 17) — once again, those emboldened words are emphatic in Greek (also cf. Heb 1:1-3, 6, 8; 13:8). It’s also important to remember that Matthew, Mark, Luke & John did not write the four

gospels until 20 years after Jesus had ascended into heaven; so a lot of thought went into their writing the gospels — they must have spent significant time reflecting upon and discussing all that had transpired in their ministry with Jesus; and it was the Holy Spirit who guided their thinking.

## THE ESSENCE OF PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Progressive revelation refers to the idea that God revealed various aspects of His will and His overall plan for humanity at *various stages* throughout history... it wasn't as if God revealed the totality of divine truth to human beings when He first created them. That should not be a difficult construct to understand, and Scripture clearly reveals it. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans said *"the mystery of Jesus Christ was kept secret for long ages past"* (Rom 16:25); so Paul made a distinction between the revelation which God formerly gave and that which He was presently giving. Though the Old Testament is very accurate in what it states, it is incomplete — the fullness of certain teachings cannot be found in the Old Testament. For instance, the Old Testament contains a number of predictions that still had not yet been fulfilled, including the coming of Elijah who was to prepare the way for the promised deliverer — the Messiah (cf. Mal 4: 5-6). The message is this: *"revelation found in the Old Testament is somewhat incomplete, whereas revelation found in the New Testament is complete."* Remember, Jesus said the Law would be entirely fulfilled, not discarded — *"Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single stroke of a letter will pass from the Law until all is accomplished"* (cf. Mt 5:18). Jesus fulfilled Old Testament Law, He did not contradict it. The Bible makes a distinction between what the Old Testament taught and what Jesus taught — *"the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (Jn 1:17). The author of Hebrews said, *"God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things"* (Heb 1:1-2). And then there are the words of Jesus to His disciples the night before He went to the cross: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now"* (Jn 16:12) — and then He went on to say, *"When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth... and will tell you what is yet to come"* (Jn 16:13-15). In addition to that, *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). Obviously, much of God's divine revelation is progressive — in the Old Testament period all the newborn males of Abraham's descendants were to be *"circumcised"* (Gen 17:10), yet in the New Testament we are told that circumcision is no longer of benefit to God's people (Gal 5:2). Conversely, the Lord told Israel to *observe the Sabbath* (the seventh day — cf. Ex 20:8); yet in the New Testament age the believers met on the first day of the week (not the seventh — cf. Acts 20:7; Col 2:16-17). Early on in His ministry with His disciples, Jesus told them to only go to the Jews with His message (cf. Mt 10:5-7 and 15:25), yet later on He told them to preach His message to all nations (Mt 28:18-20). Now if some of this is troubling



to you, you need to take the time to “*study these issues*,” rather than question them. The reality is, Scripture testifies to a progression of God’s self-revelation to humanity. God didn’t reveal the fullness of truth to mankind in the beginning, yet everything He did reveal was always true — each portion of Scripture was built on the previous one. Incidentally, nothing Jesus ever said was invalidated by something that He later said.

Then there are the words of Paul to the Ephesians — “*By **revelation**, there was made known to me **the mystery of Christ**, which in **other generations** was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His Holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit... to be specific, **the Gentiles** are now fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace.... To **me**, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the **Gentiles** the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been **hidden** in God, who created all things, in order that the **manifest wisdom** of God might now be made known through the church*” (Eph 3:1-10). The apostle Paul essentially said the same thing to the Romans (cf. Rom 16:25-26). Beloved, keep in mind the emboldened words in those verses are *emphatic* in Greek. With the foregoing in mind, remember, the people of the Old Testament era did not know that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He would die, and that His death would be the basis of salvation; hence, this was not a construct that was easily identified by the disciples (that Christ would be crucified was simply unimaginable to them). So how then were people saved in the Old Testament? As **Charles Ryrie** (1929-2016), a highly esteemed Bible scholar and Christian theologian, and the author of more than 25 books, including “*The Ryrie Study Bible*,” states it: “The *basis* of salvation in every age is the *death of Christ*... the requirement for salvation in every age is *faith*... the object of faith in every age is *God*... and the *content* of faith changes in the various ages.” In other words, no matter when a person has lived, *their salvation ultimately depended on the work of Christ and a faith placed in God*, but the amount of knowledge a person had concerning the specifics of God’s plan has increased through the ages via God’s progressive revelation. Salvation has always required a humble acknowledgement of one’s sinfulness, and belief in the love and mercy of God — *faith in God* has always been the avenue of salvation (with that in mind, give careful consideration to the following passages — cf. Gen 15:6; Joel 2:32; Heb 10:4; 11:1-2; 11:6). *Scripture teaches that God has **always** given people enough revelation to exercise faith*. Because Christ’s work has now been accomplished, the requirement has changed, the “*times of ignorance*” are over (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30; Rom 3:25). Prior to Christ’s coming, God was foreshadowing Jesus’ death via the *sacrificial system* and conditioning His people to understand that sin leads to death. Remember, the Law was given to be a *tutor* to lead people to the understanding that they were sinners in need of God’s grace (cf. Gal 3:24). But the Law did not revoke the prior Abrahamic Covenant, which was based on *faith* (remember, the Abrahamic Covenant predated Moses and the Law by 650 yrs); it is Abraham’s covenant that is the pattern for salvation today (cf. Rom 4); essentially, *faith* is what it always has been. So progressive relation does not mean that God’s people in

the Old Testament were without any revelation or understanding. As **John Calvin** states: “Those living before Christ were not without the preaching that contains the hope of salvation and of eternal life, but... they only glimpsed from afar and in shadowy outline what we see today in full daylight” (cf. Gal 3:23 – Institutes, 2.7.16; 2.9.1). The **basis of Salvation** has always been the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and the **means of Salvation** has always been **faith in God**. However the **content** of a person’s faith has always depended on the amount of revelation that God was pleased to give at a certain time. Now as Ryrie stated, the detailed content of our faith has increased through the ages so that people today actually have a more direct understanding of what God requires of them.

With the foregoing in mind, we will never understand the book of Genesis properly if we insist on reading into it the Law of Moses, a Law which was not revealed by God until 500 years or more after the end of the book of Genesis (remember, the period of time from Adam to Moses was somewhere around 4,000 years). Though people with greater knowledge are blessed more than those with lesser knowledge, it is important to remember, God also requires more of them; *i.e.*, they have greater responsibilities. As **Mike Penny**, the twentieth century British writer and administrator and editor of “The Open Bible Trust,” says, “In the opening chapters of Genesis there seems to be no difference in God’s dealings with different people. However, the words of Genesis 12:1-3 herald a change; the descendants of Abraham are to be treated differently. They may have great blessing, but they are also to have greater responsibilities.” Those who descended from Abraham, Isaac & Jacob became the people of Israel, eventually known as Jews. Those from all other nations are called Gentiles. Thus when reading the Bible we need to distinguish what God says of Jews from what He says of Gentiles. Sometime it may be the same, yet sometimes it is different. When we read the Old Testament, the people of Israel (the Jews) dominate the scene. There is a plan and a purpose which God had for Gentiles, but it was obviously secondary to the one He was working out with the Jews. It isn’t until we come to the later letters of the apostle Paul that all people of all nations are treated the same by God; just as they were prior to Abraham’s presence in the world. There is no longer one Law for the Jews, and another for Gentiles. Everything has come full circle. The special plan and purpose that God had for Israel ceased at the end of Acts. Now individual Jews and Gentiles are alike (cf. Rom 3:22; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:13-16; Col 3:11). “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (cf. Rom 3:23; 11:32); both Jews and Gentiles... none are righteous, neither Jews or Gentiles. All need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, to experience forgiveness, gain righteousness, and have the gift of eternal life.

Probably the best example of progressive revelation in the Bible is the doctrine of the trinity. The Old Testament only alluded to this truth, whereas the New Testament goes on to explain it more fully. In Genesis when God said “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:27), He used a plural term, not a singular term; *i.e.*, He was speaking as if there was more than one person present. Though Jesus expressed the triune nature of God at various points, man didn’t seem to grasp it until after the resurrection. The apostle Paul

under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us in Colossians 1:15 that “Jesus is the image of the invisible God.” Likewise, the author of Hebrews said, “Jesus is the radiance of His (i.e., God the Father’s) glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb 1:3). Paul tells us in Colossians 1:16 that “Jesus created all things, both in heaven and on earth” ... “that all things were created by Him and for Him.” Again, the author of Hebrews said, “God, after He spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Heb 1:1-2). Though God the Father & God the Son & God the Holy Spirit are distinct persons in the Godhead, yet they are **one** – though that is not an easy construct for us as finite creatures to understand, that is divine reality; God is three distinct persons in one! Remember, Jesus not only proclaimed His own deity (cf. Jn 8:58; 10:30; Mt 28:19), so did His disciples (cf. Jn 1:1-14; 20:38; Jn 14-16; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pet 1:2; also Acts 1:9-11; Jude 1:17-25; Rev 1:1 and 19:11-18; 22:12-13, 16, 20-21). With the foregoing in mind, remember Jesus is often referred to in the New Testament as the Lord Jesus Christ. Though the New Testament gives us the full revelation about the person of God, obviously the Old Testament world did not have as much revelation as we do now. Though we have been privileged to know more about God in New Testament times, there is still far more to know about God that we simply cannot understand in our current state – when we arrive in the eternal state (heaven), we are going to see things we never dreamed of or ever thought possible. The important thing for us as believers is that we embrace the wisdom and knowledge that God has given to us, and strive to walk in the light and have fellowship with our God of grace. If you struggle with believing in the deity of Christ and the triune nature of God, let me encourage you to read a study I did titled, “The Triune Nature of God” – you can access it on my website – **www.thetransformedsoul.com** – simply click on the Additional Studies Link at the top of the homepage, and then click on the Spiritual Life Studies.

Remember the words of the apostle Paul — “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power & divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (cf. Rom 1:18-20). Obviously, God has worked in different ways during different ages, thus requiring different things from man, based on the amount of revelation that man had at that time... yet never has man been completely devoid of divine knowledge. The truth is, the plan of salvation has never changed — it has always been “faith in God” through His revealed truth. “Abraham believed in the Lord, and God reckoned it to him as righteousness” (cf. Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; Jam 2:23). Abraham was not deemed righteous by keeping the Jewish laws that were handed down to Moses (another 600 years would pass before Moses was even born)... “faith in God” is the pathway to salvation; not some work on our part. It should be obvious to every believer, since we are fallen sinful creatures, we don’t have the capacity to earn our salvation with good works; such is clearly taught in Scripture (read Luke 18:19; Rom 3:10-18;

3:20-24; 5:20; 7:7; Gal 2:16). Obviously if we could earn God's love that would be one thing, but we don't have the capacity to earn it – remember, there is nothing inherently good in us as fallen creatures (cf. Rom 3:9-18; 7:18), so how could we possibly merit salvation? That shouldn't be a difficult construct for any believer to understand, because every believer is well aware of his own fallenness and his innate sinfulness. Now once man believes in God unto salvation, God then gives him the grace to do good (keep in mind, true goodness is a derivative of the heart, not simply an outward action). Abraham the father of our faith, showed his faith by putting God before even his own son (Isaac); he accepted God as the King and Master of his life – this faith is what saved him, not some works he did. He responded to God in willing obedience, and his obedience showed his faith. Remember, God makes the rules, we don't; and the rule of God is that man believes Him! Now since New Testament times, as Peter said, "There is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (cf. Acts 4:10-12) – so believing God means believing in His Son. Obviously where more revelation is dispensed by God, the greater is man's responsibility; again, though God doesn't hold people responsible for what they don't know, God does hold people responsible for what they do know, because God has revealed it to them.

As previously stated, God didn't tell His entire plan for humanity all at once, instead He continued to increase His revelation down through the ages, and ultimately revealed the fullness of it through His Son, Jesus Christ. Perhaps the premiere reason why God did not send His Son into the world earlier than He did, is that the human family needed to be absolutely convinced of its innate sinfulness, and only man's ongoing significant failure could apparently prove that to fallen man – no matter what God did or said to fallen man prior to sending His Son into the world (remember, He punished man over & over & over again), nothing ever seemed to convince man of his corrupt nature – nothing! John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ in our world, who preached to the people of Judea saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (cf. Mt 3:2) – the King would soon appear, but He would not reign over people who clung to their sins; therefore they must confess and forsake their sins – God was calling them from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of heaven. So when Jesus entered into the world, He likewise preached the same message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (read the following – Mt 3:2; 4:17; 11:20; Mk 6:12; Lk 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). Later on, the apostle Peter wrote: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is being patient, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance" (cf. 2 Pet 3:9). The call of repentance is a call to radically surrender to the purposes of God and to live in this awareness; such is required of all people – said the Lord Jesus to the people of Judea, "Unless you repent, you will all perish" (cf. Lk 13:3). In His final words to His disciples following His resurrection, Jesus demanded that the same message of repentance be preached to all nations (cf. Lk 24:47). Fallen man must turn from His sinfulness, and embrace the righteousness of Christ – without doing so he will perish.

The author of the book of Hebrews said, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world” (Heb 1:1-2). Christians have long affirmed that God didn’t reveal Himself to human beings all at once, which according to **R. C. Sproul** (the founder of Ligonier Ministries), helps us account for many of the differences between the old covenant & new covenant (which is referred to as “progressive revelation”). Remember, following the first years of creation, the Lord then made a covenant with Noah... and then with Abraham... and then with Moses... and then with David... and finally through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, through whom all of God’s final changes were announced. Remember, Jesus redefined murder, adultery, divorce, and more in His Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). He changed the afterlife from a vague and uninteresting existence in Sheol, to the ultimate celebration of a worthy life in heaven for believers, and the ultimate punishment in hell for the wickedness of unbelievers. (incidentally, the Old Testament Hebrew word “Sheol” referred to an intermediate state in which souls of both the righteous and the unrighteous are dealt with according to their lives on earth; so Sheol was a place where men experienced rewards or punishment that would ultimately come to them in final judgment; by the way, the Greek word Hades is a coe-quivalent of the Hebrew term). Furthermore, Jesus changed Yahweh from the God of just the chosen people of Israel, into the God of all people... circumcision and kosher food laws became unnecessary... sacrifices were eliminated... and the worship day was changed. So after God originally spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden, He then spoke to Noah... to Abraham... to Moses... to David... to the Prophets... and then the Lord’s final revelation came in the incarnation of His Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) and the Apostolic writings that explain His person and work (cf. Heb 1:1-2); so the old covenant (i.e., the OT) is different in some ways from the new covenant (i.e., the NT); nevertheless, we don’t reject or ignore Old Testament revelation, because Scripture cannot be broken (cf. Jn 10:35) – what is important is that one have a contextual understanding of what Scripture says, and why it says what it says. We need the Old Testament as much as we need the New Testament to know our Creator and how to love and obey Him (study the following passages: Ex 3; Is 63-65; Matt 1; Acts 7). Progressive revelation means that we who live in the new covenant era are blessed to know more about God’s plan and its outworking than those who lived under the old covenant. So progressive revelation is not a movement from error to truth, but from less truth to more truth. So the New Testament gives us a greater and fuller understanding of what the Old Testament states – later revelation complements and supplements earlier revelation... it does not contradict it or shift from untruth to truth. As **Dr. Don Stewart** expresses it: “Each portion of Scripture was built on the previous one,” which is a very good way of expressing it – thus one can compare the totality of divine revelation to an incredibly beautiful structure that was “built” – though some of the internal sections and lower sections may not appear to be as significant and glorious as the outward and higher sections, the truth is, the entire structure is an amalgamation of absolutely perfect work; remember, all of Scripture is equally inspired (2 Tim 3:16). By the way, some of the most significant revelations that the New Testament gives definition to are these: the doctrine of the Trinity... the deity of the Messiah... the absolute signifi-

*cance of faith alone... justification by grace alone... the presence of indwelling sin in the believer's life (i.e., his flesh)... the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life... the inclusion of Gentiles in the plan of God... the assurance of salvation... the spiritual gifts God gives to all believers that they might serve Him... and the eternal states for both believers and unbelievers (i.e., heaven and hell).* Obviously the foregoing does not include every single new revelation that God has included in the New Testament, they are simply some of the most profound ones. Regarding the foundation of divine revelation, reflect upon the following passages (cf. Ps 78:1-4; Mt 13:17; 13:35; Jn 5:39; Rom 16:25-26; 1 Cor 2:7-8; Heb 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:10-12).

One of the principle problems for religious understanding both in Judaism and Christianity down through the centuries, has been their erroneous understanding of what Scripture actually states. **Gnosticism** was no exception – essentially, it valued what it experienced, and what their elders told them, and what Greek philosophers said, rather than what was contained in Scripture... thus we see elements of Gnosticism in the Galatians; *i.e.*, a mixture of Gnostic values and a belief brought in by Judaizers (Gal 1:8), that justification could come by works of the law. **Judaism**, though it had its roots in the Old Testament, essentially they saw God's Word through the lens of Hellenism (Greek thought) and the traditions of Jewish scholars and teachers through the centuries. The **Galatian Christians** gave God's Word lip service, but did not depend on it as the source of their beliefs and practices. Similarly, the **Colossian Christians** were affected by an ascetic form of Gnosticism that included ordinances that are found in God's Word, but were simply the doctrines of men as well as demons (Col 2:8, 20-23). The distrust of God's Word is readily seen in today's **Catholicism** and some elements of **Protestantism**. The Catholic Church holds that Scripture is only one of three sources from which its dogma is derived – the writings and traditions of previous Catholic saints are highly esteemed in Catholicism. Though they often utilize the Bible, it can easily be overridden by the words of a Pope or some theologian, living or dead. Once again, human words and traditions are often considered more trustworthy than God's Word. Though Protestantism generally has a higher regard for Scripture, it too often accepts the traditions of men in some beliefs; be it the immortality of the soul, the issues of divine judgment, and the existence of heaven and hell. By the way, the further one reads in the Bible, the more enlightened he becomes, so to distance oneself from the word, will only increase the likelihood that one will give greater emphasis to human thinking.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD'S DIVINE COVENANTS

Before we address this subject, let's define this thing called a "covenant" – essentially, a biblical covenant is an oath-bound promise whereby one party solemnly pledges to bless or serve another party in some specific way; thus a covenant defines God's relationship to man through a transaction that He has made with him. Basically, the Bible contains seven significant covenants, four of which God made with the nation of Israel; these are

referred to as Abrahamic, Palestinian, Mosaic, and Davidic — and three of these covenants are unconditional in nature; *i.e.*, regardless of Israel's obedience or disobedience, God still will fulfill these covenants with Israel. The only conditional covenant of the four is the Mosaic Covenant, and this covenant results in Israel's either being blessed or cursed, depending on her obedience or disobedience. Aside from these four covenants, there are three others covenants — Adamic, Noahic and New — that were made between God and mankind in general, and are not limited to the nation of Israel. Now with the foregoing in mind, these seven covenants are crucial because they are the backbone of the storyline of the Bible, and the story unfolds and advances through the covenants God made with His people. The truth is, if one doesn't understand the covenants, he will not accurately understand the Bible because he won't understand how the story fits together. The best way to see this is to survey what Scripture has to say about these 7 covenants. So let's begin with the Adamic or Creation covenant — because some prefer to use the word "creation" to define some of the first covenant, I thought I would mention that as well. So here are the 7 covenants —

1. **The Adamic Covenant** — God created the world and human beings, revealing that He is the sovereign ruler of all things. He created Adam and Eve as priest-kings, as those made in His image, to rule the world for God. They were to extend God's rule over the entire earth. The initial covenant God made with his creatures is that they were to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over it (cf. Gen 1:28-30; 2:16-17) — man was given authority over all life. He was free to eat of any tree in the Garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; *i.e.*, he was not to argue against or reject divine truth — in so doing, he would suffer death (*i.e.*, separation from God). After the fall of man (cf. Gen 3:14-19), God cursed the serpent (Satan) and told him that He would ultimately destroy him... regarding the woman (Eve), she would experience pain in childbirth and be under the authority of her husband... and regarding the man (Adam), he would have to contend with thorns and thistles in cultivating the ground which God had cursed — his work would involve sweat and weariness, and he would eventually return to dust, from which he came. By God's grace the story doesn't end as some think, because the Lord promised that He would triumph over the serpent through the offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15). As history unfolded, the horrific consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve became evident — evil and corruption permeated the world... by the time of Noah there were only eight righteous people left in the world, and the promise of redemption through the offspring of the woman seemed like a distant memory. By the way, it is believed that the time between Adam and Noah was about 2,000 years (though that is a guesstimate), with that in mind the world must have had a pretty large population during the time of Noah, because most people seemed to have lived 500-700 years prior to the flood; so it is probably likely that the earth's population then was about 20 million people... God was obviously very patient with them. Remember, after Noah's flood, the earth's population essentially was starting all over again.

2. **The Noahic Covenant** — After God instructed Noah to build an Ark and put two of every living creature in it, He destroyed every living thing with a worldwide flood (cf. Gen 7); after the flood had subsided God promised Noah (cf. Gen 8:20-9:27) that He would never again curse the ground or destroy the earth again with a flood. He gave the Rainbow as a pledge of that. The covenant also included the establishment of human government (up until this point the world never had government); those governing were to do so with the power of capital punishment. In addition to that, God guaranteed the regularity of time periods and seasons (remember, the weather changed drastically after the worldwide flood — up until then, there was never any rain on the earth, and the temperature was always the same every day, because the atmosphere on the earth was radically different prior to the flood then it was after the flood). I address that subject in detail in a study I did titled “True Unequivocal Truth” — you can access it on my website: [www.thetransformedsoul.com](http://www.thetransformedsoul.com) — After the flood God also directed man to repopulate the earth, and continue to exercise dominion over every lower creature. God also reminded fallen man that He can and will judge sin (cf. 2 Pet 2:5). Furthermore, man could now add meat to his previous vegetarian diet.
  
3. **The Abrahamic Covenant** — Following Noah’s flood man was to fill the earth, but that’s not what man did; instead “he built himself a large city and a very large tower, known as the tower of Babel, that he might make a name for himself, lest he be scattered over the whole earth” (Gen 11:4); so here was fallen man glorifying himself rather than God (Gen 11:1-6). The resultant effect of their sinful choice was this: “God confused their language so that they wouldn’t understand each others speech” (cf. Gen 11:7); thus frightening them and causing them to stop building the city and the tower and scatter them over the whole earth (Gen 11:8-9). Now about fifteen hundred years after God had scattered man over the entire world because of their reluctance to obey Him, it was then that God brought Abraham onto the world stage to accomplish His purposes. So the total amount of time that passed on from the days of Adam to the days of Abraham was probably 3,500 to 4,000 years; keep in mind, Abraham entered the world stage in 2100 BC (which according to theologians and the world of science is the beginning of “accurate timing” in the ancient world; up until that point dating is difficult to determine). So when Abraham entered the world, the people all spoke their own languages and pretty much had their own identities & their own territories. The population of the world at that time is believed to have been about 27 million people. Scripture introduces us to Abraham (the first Hebrew patriarch) at the end of Genesis chapter eleven (cf. Gen 11:26ff) — when God called him, he was living in Ur of the Chaldees (a city in the Old Babylonian Empire, that was located in the southern region of present day Iraq on the Euphrates River).

When Abraham entered the world stage, God made a covenant with him; as Scripture states — “The Lord said to Abram, go forth from your country, and from your fathers house, to the land which I will show you, and I will make you a great nation and bless



*you... I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (cf. Gen 12:1-3). "And Abraham believed in the Lord and God reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Keep in mind, the Lord promised him land (Canaan), offspring (Isaac), and a blessing that would extend to the ends of the earth (read Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-8; 17:1-8). And as incredible as it may seem to some of you, this particular covenant is "unconditional" — only God Himself was involved in the making of this covenant (cf. Gen 15:12-21); thus making it an absolute. God put no conditions on Abraham, thus everything God stated came to pass at some level and is still coming to pass — obviously, our sovereign God is able to "work all things after the council of His will" (cf. Eph 1:11; 1:4; 3:11; Rom 8:28-30; 9:11; Titus 2:14; Heb 6:17) — thank God our eternal destiny doesn't ultimately depend upon us, because if it did, none of us would ever get there! The covenant that God made with Abraham includes the following promises to him and his descendants — a great nation (Israel); personal blessings to Abraham; a name of renown; being a source of blessing to others (Gen 12:2); divine favor to his friends and a curse on his enemies; blessing to all nations (fulfilled thru Christ — Gen 12:3); everlasting possession of the land known as Canaan and later as Israel and Palestine (Gen 13:14-17); numerous posterity (natural and spiritual — Gen 13:16; 15:5); a fatherhood of many nations and kings (through Ishmael and Isaac — Gen 17:4-6); and a special relationship with God (Gen 17:7). So Abraham was like a new Adam and Canaan was to be a new Eden where God dwelt with His people. As the children of Abraham trust in the Lord and obey Him, all the promises would be fulfilled... and because of the indwelling presence of God's Spirit in believers lives today, that is what occurs. Again, God pledged that He would keep His promise, and that He would do it through the obedient offspring of Abraham.

4. **The Mosaic Covenant** — God established the Mosaic covenant just after a significant development anticipated in Genesis chapter 15 had taken place: the emancipation of Abraham's descendants from oppression in the land of Egypt (cf. Gen 15:13-14; Ex 19:4-6; 20:2); God made a covenant with Israel after they were freed from Egyptian bondage by God's grace. Remember, "Israel" had gotten its name from Abraham's grandson "Jacob" (whose name God had changed to Israel; cf. Gen 32:28), and it was through the nation of Israel that God's blessing would flow to the whole world. The children of Israel lived in Egypt for 430 years (Ex 12:40), and were subjected to Egyptian bondage for the last 100 years, at which time Israel's population was more than two million (cf. Ex 12:37); remember, populations back then simply mentioned the number of men in a particular country (it did not include women or children; thus Israel's population was at least two million when they exited from Egypt and moved into the land of Canaan, which was to be like a new Eden for God's people; *i.e.*, a place where God ruled and dwelt in the midst of a holy people). Keep in mind, Moses became God's servant for His people in 1441 BC, about 650 years after Abraham had come on the scene. Regarding the stipulations of the covenant with Israel, they are summarized in the ten commandments that God had given to Moses at Mount Sinai... the Lord promised blessing if they obeyed, but if they violated what God commanded they would suffer

the consequences; God would even eject them from the land and place them in exile. So the Israelites were to conduct themselves in the land as the unique nation that God intended them to be; God's goal for the nation of Israel was that they were to be God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (cf. Ex 19:5-6). The reality was, Israel had to keep God's covenant by submitting to its requirements (*i.e.*, the stipulations set forth in Exodus chapters 20-23). Though part of the Mosaic Covenant was the Ten Commandments (cf. Ex 20), the rest of the Law contained over 600 commands — roughly 300 positive and 300 negative. The books of Joshua and Esther, two history books of the Old Testament, detail how Israel succeeded at obeying the Law and how Israel failed miserably by disobeying the Law. The book of Deuteronomy details the  blessings/cursing  motif (cf. Deut 11:26-28 and Deut 28:1ff; 28:15ff). By adhering to these and other covenant obligations that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai, Israel would be manifestly different from other nations and thus reflect God's wisdom & greatness to surrounding peoples (Deut 4:6-8). So the Mosaic covenant was a conditional covenant, requiring man's obedience (which according to Scripture is "weak through the flesh," as Paul states in Romans 8:3) — keep in mind, the Decalogue was never intended to provide salvation, but rather to produce the conviction of sin and failure. Incidentally, nine of the Ten Commandments are also referred to at various points in the New Testament (with the exception of the Sabbath), not as law with some penalty attached, but as behavior suitable for those who experienced salvation by grace. Remember, Christians are under grace (not law), and are bound to Christ by love (which is actually a far higher motivation).

Now with all of the foregoing in mind, remember Moses entered the world stage in 1441 BC, about 650 years after Abraham did. And just prior to the Israelites entering into the Promised Land (*i.e.*, the land of Canaan) after they had exited out of Egypt, Moses passed away, and God's man Joshua replaced him and led the people of Israel into the Land (Deut 34:9). After leading the people into the Promised Land, Joshua then warned them of the conditions upon which their property depended, and caused them to renew their covenant with God. Shortly after that Joshua passed away in about 1365 BC at the age of 110 (cf. Josh 24:29)... it wasn't long until the Israelites were once again disobeying the Lord, and living life as they wanted (which is all contained in the book of Judges). Essentially, the book of Judges is a tragic sequel to Joshua; under Joshua the people were obedient to God in conquering the Land... however in Judges they were disobedient, idolatrous, and often defeated because of their apostasy. The book of Judges lists five basic reasons for Israel's moral & spiritual decline: 1) disobedience in failing to drive the Canaanites out of the land (Judg 1:19-23)... 2) idolatry (Judg 2:12)... 3) intermarriage with wicked Canaanites (Judg 3:5-6)... 4) not heeding the God ordained judges (Judg 2:17)... and 5) turning away from God after the death of each of the judges who ruled them (Judg 2:19). Essentially, God had placed fourteen different judges in Israel over a period of about 325 years (from 1375 BC to 1050 BC) — it appeared as though one generation after another made the same diabolical choices... just when everything seemed to be on an upward slope, the people would stumble and give

precedence to their own desires — the reality was, “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg 21:25). If there is anything man learns from history it is this: “man doesn’t learn anything from history!” he is simply too self-centered; that’s the only thing that really matters to him — so when a judge would pass away, the people would simply let their own desires rule in their life. Following failure after failure after failure, the time ultimately came when the people of Israel asked God to give them a “King!” This transpired when the last judge of Israel — Samuel — was old; the result was all the elders of Israel gathered together and said to him: “Behold, you have grown old, now appoint a **King** for us to judge us like all other nations” — though that was displeasing to Samuel, the Lord said to him, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they’ve not rejected you, they have rejected Me from being King over them” (cf. 1 Sam 8:5, 7). And a short while later in 1050 BC, God chose a man named “Saul” to become Israel’s first king (cf. 1 Sam 9:17 and chapters 10-13). We will expand upon that when we reflect upon the sixth covenant.

5. **The Palestinian Covenant** — The Palestine Covenant has to do with the still-future occupation of the land which God promised to Abraham “from the river of Egypt (i.e., the Brook of Egypt, not the Nile) to the great river to the east, the Euphrates River” (cf. Gen 15:18). According to the terms of this covenant, if the people disobeyed, God would cause them to be scattered around the world (Deut 30:3-4), yet He would eventually restore the nation (verse 5). When the nation is restored, they will obey Him perfectly (verse 8), and God will cause them to prosper (verse 9). Remember, Israel has never fully occupied the entire land that God designated for them, though countries in the eastern portion paid tribute during King Solomon’s reign (cf. 1 Kgs 4:21, 24), that does not mean Israel possessed it or occupied it. The Palestinian Covenant foresees the dispersion of Israel among the nations because of disobedience... their return to the Lord... the Lord’s Second Advent... their regathering to the land... their prosperity in the land... their change of heart (to love and obey the Lord)... and the punishment of their enemies (cf. Deut 30:1-10). So when the nation of Israel is fully restored, they will obey God perfectly, and God will cause them to prosper significantly.
6. **The Davidic Covenant** — As previously mentioned, the first king of Israel was “Saul,” who was not only a very handsome man, but a giant of a man, taller than any of the people (cf. 1 Sam 9:2). So Samuel said to all the people of Israel, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people.” So the people shouted out and said, “Long live the King!” (1 Sam 10:24). Yet very early on Saul acted foolishly and did not keep the commandment of the Lord... thus Samuel said to him, “Your kingdom shall not endure — the Lord has sought out for Himself a man after **His own heart** to rule over His people” (1 Sam 13:13-14). The problem with King Saul was that he did things according to his own thinking and what seemed to please him, thus he often stumbled. His violation of a holy war ban led to his break with Samuel and rejection by God (cf. 1 Sam 15:7-23). The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and was replaced by an evil spirit that tormented him. The resultant effect was,

God sent Samuel to the Bethlehemite named “Jesse” because He had chosen one of his sons to be king — in so doing He said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:1, 7). Prior to “David’s” becoming the next King, he soothed Saul’s troubled heart by playing the lyre before him (a musical instrument – cf. 1 Sam 16:14-23). However, after David killed Goliath (1 Sam 17), Saul became jealous and fearful of David (1 Sam 18:6-9, 12), eventually making several spontaneous and indirect attempts on David’s life (1 Sam 18:10, 11, 25; 19:1, 9-11). Saul’s fits of rage ultimately resulted in his being killed at the hands of the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam 31), not by David who honored Saul because he was God’s anointed king. The reality was, when Saul failed to meet God’s standards for kingship (1 Sam 15:23, 25, 16:1), God sent Samuel to anoint David (Saul’s replacement – 1 Sam 16:13-14) as King in 1010 BC. Though the enigma of Saul negatively impacted the people of Israel, David became a giant among godly leaders because of his ability to rule with God over the nation. Though David grieved long and deep over his own sinfulness with Bathsheba and her husband (2 Sam 11:1-27; 18:19-23; Ps 32:1-11), God restored David’s kingdom and blessed him richly; thus David became the role model for Israelite kings (cf. 1 Kg 3:14; 9:4; 11:4, 6, 33, 38; 14:8; 15:3, 11; 2 Kg 14:3; 16:2; 22:2).

Remember what the book of Genesis states: the promise of victory over the serpent and his offspring will come through a child of Abraham (Gen 3:15; 12:1-3), but in God’s covenant with David a new feature of the promise appeared — if one reads the story carefully there were indications of this promise all along (2 Sam 7). The new feature is that victory over the serpent would come through a king — the child of Abraham who will conquer sin and death will be a son of David. In addition to that, the promise of land and universal blessing will be secured through David’s dynasty. The king, then, was a kind of new Adam in a new land, and for a brief time it almost looked as if all the promises would come to pass during Solomon’s reign (who was the son of David). The covenant with David, however, had conditional and unconditional elements as well. If the kings transgressed they would face God’s judgment. As history progressed, it became evident that something was radically wrong with both the kings and the nation — the truth is, the sin of the kings of Judah and Israel were so significant that Israel was expelled from the land... and God pledged that the world would be transformed through a son of David, but the promise was actually going backwards! The northern kingdom of Judah was ejected from the land by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and the southern kingdom of Israel was ejected from the land by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The promises to David in 2 Samuel 7:8-16 are significant: God promised that David’s lineage would last forever and that his kingdom would never pass away permanently (v. 16). The 89<sup>th</sup> Psalm gives definition to the Lord’s Covenant with David; it reads as follows: “I will sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord forever, and make known Thy faithfulness.” Said the Lord, “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations” (Ps 89:1-4). “I have anointed David My servant... and

*I will crush his adversaries... My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with Him forever... I will establish his descendents forever” (Ps 89:20-29). “If his sons do not keep My commandments, I will visit their transgressions with the rod... but I will not break off My lovingkindness from him... My covenant I will not violate. Once I have sworn by My holiness, I will not lie to David... His descendants shall endure forever” (Ps 89:30-36). The message is clear: though God disciplines His children when they disobey Him, He will never reject them! Take the time to read that psalm several times if that construct of thought is difficult for you to accept. Obviously the Davidic throne has not been in place at all times, but there will come a time when someone from the line of David will again sit on it and rule as king forever, and this future king is **Jesus!** (cf. Lk 1:32-33; Mt 21:5; 27:11; Rev 15:3-4; 19:15).*

7. **The New Covenant** — Israel had made a mess of things, and it almost seems as if the promise of triumph over the serpent had been withdrawn, but we remember that the promise in Genesis 3:15 was unconditional, and that the Lord also guaranteed that victory would come through a child of Abraham and a son of David... still there was a problem with the covenant God made with Israel, and the cancer that resided in its people — they failed to keep God’s commands and thus experienced the curse of the covenant. The Lord enacted a new covenant with His people which fulfilled the promises made to Adam, Abraham, and David (cf. Jer 31:31-34). The New Covenant finds its fulfillment in **Jesus Christ** who is the true son of Abraham, the true Son of David, the Son of Man, the true Son of God, and the Servant of the Lord. The new covenant promise of forgiveness of sins is fulfilled in Jesus, and thus He pours out His Spirit on His people so that they are enabled to do God’s will (Ezek 36:26-27). Though the New Covenant was first made with the nation of Israel, ultimately it is a covenant with all mankind. While the new covenant requires faith in Christ, this faith itself is a gift from God, given to all who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior (Jn 1:12; Eph 2:8-9). Henceforth as Christians, we can rejoice that we have peace with God (Rom 5:1), that we have a heart that is favorably disposed to do the will of God (Jer 31:33), that we have eternal life (Rom 6:23), that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:27; 1 Cor 3:16), and are in the process of being transformed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Remember, Jesus came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matt 5:17) and create a new covenant between God and His people, and now that we are under the New Covenant, both Jews and Gentiles can **be free from the penalty of the Law**, because we are now given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift from God Himself (Eph 2:8-9). However, Israel as a nation has not as yet received the benefits of the New Covenant, but will at the Lord’s Second Advent. In the meantime, true believers do share some of the blessings of the covenant. The fact that the church is related to the New Covenant is seen in the Lord’s Supper, where the cup represents the covenant and the blood by which it was ratified (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). Also, Paul spoke of himself and the other apostles as ministers of a New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6).

Regarding the New Covenant, the prophet Jeremiah said, “Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day I took them out of the land of Egypt (My covenant which they broke)... But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel... I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people... For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (cf. Jer 31:31-34; Is 43:25; Heb 8:7-12). Beloved, the New Covenant promises mercy for an unrighteous people and eternal forgetfulness of their sins. Remember, the Mosaic Law was inflexible, “every transgression and disobedience received a just reward” (Heb 2:2); though the Mosaic Law provided for the atonement of sins, it did not provide for their removal — the sacrifices prescribed in the Law made a man ceremonially clean, but this ritual cleansing did not touch a man’s inward life, or provide moral cleansing and give him a clear conscience. Thus the New Covenant is an unconditional covenant of grace, because its fulfillment depends upon God alone, and He cannot fail!

Keep in mind, Divine Covenants are some of the most important theological constructs in biblical theology. It is reflected in the traditional labels “Old and New Testaments” (i.e., Covenants). The concept exists at significant points in the Bible’s storyline and is the theological glue that binds promise to fulfillment. While Jeremiah and Ezekiel use different terminology to describe it, both anticipate a fundamental change taking place in the covenant community: Jeremiah speaks of internalizing the Torah (Jer 31:33), and Ezekiel speaks of spiritual surgery and radical transformation (Ezek 36:26-27). For both prophets, this inner renewal would result in the ideal divine-human relationship. In the New Covenant all the hopes and expectations of previous covenants attain climactic fulfillment. It is unsurprising that the New Testament (covenant) declares that all God’s covenant promises are realized in and through Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 1:54-55, 69-75; 2 Cor 1:20), the long-awaited Davidic Messiah (cf. Matt 1:17-18; 2:4-6; 16:16; 21:9; Luke 2:11; John 7:42; Acts 2:22-36). Ultimately the reality is, the New Covenant was ratified through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross (cf. Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).

## SCRIPTURE IS DIVINE REVELATION

What one believes about God will ultimately define how one lives his life, and having a grasp about what Scripture teaches is crucial to living life to its fullest, because therein is the fullness of God’s revelation. Sadly, the average believer has a very elementary understanding of the basic doctrines upon which the Christian faith rests. The Bible states in no uncertain terms that the written word contains God’s self-revelation of Himself to man, and that “His divine power has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). Because the Bible is the primary source of divine truth (cf. Jn 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17), obviously if one doesn’t study it, he will have a very remedial faith. Since

no other book can make these claims, it stands to reason that the Bible is the ultimate book of life. Remember the words of Peter, “Long for the pure milk of the Word that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet 2:2); yet most believers have only read bits and pieces of Scripture, and haven’t really studied it. If Scripture wasn’t really the breath of God, that would be one thing, but all of Scripture is God breathed (cf. 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Heb 2:12; Rev 22:18-19). The Bible actually unveils a great mystery — said Paul: “The word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from past ages and generations, has now been revealed to His saints” (Col 1:25-26). Daniel declared, “God gives wisdom to the wise... and reveals deep and secret things” (Dan 2:21-22). Conversely, “the secret things belong to the Lord, but those things which are revealed belong to us” (Deut 29:29). Remember, divine mysteries are not understood by everyone (cf. Luke 10:21; Matt 13:10-13). Zechariah said, those who refused to heed God’s Word are rebellious people (Zech 7:11-12). Said Jeremiah, “God instructed people for their good, yet they do not obey or incline their ear” (Jer 7:24) — the reality is, active listening is required... like in school, one must listen to learn. The truth is, only those who want to do the will of God understand the mysteries of the kingdom — said Jesus: “If any man is willing to do God’s will he shall know it” (Jn 7:17). The apostle Paul explains that the mysteries of God are comprehended only by people who value spiritual realities (cf. 1 Cor 2:6-14). The reality is, “The mystery of the grace of God is revealed to us by the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:12). “The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him; besides, he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14); it is the Holy Spirit in one’s heart whereby one understands divine truth. Said Paul, “By revelation God made known to me the mystery... which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles” (cf. Eph 3:1-4). **Albert Mohler**, the president of Southern Seminary stated it this way: “God’s revelation about Himself through Scripture is the primary basis for all Christian knowledge and education;” thus to treat it lightly is almost to disavow that which is true; because if it indeed is true, then why does one not fully embrace it? Obviously we all possess a fallen inner-core... but as believers, we are to fight against are flesh, and not let it reign in our lives (cf. Rom 6:12; 8:13).

## THE FINAL EXHORTATIONS OF GOD TO MAN

Throughout Scripture, man is being told the essence of divine truth, and often times he is being encouraged to embrace it and obey it. The New Testament is God’s final revelation to man, and in it there are numerous exhortations; i.e., formal requirements that God desires His people to embrace. Due to the fact that there are probably about 500 different statements & exhortations that God would have us reflect upon and make a significant aspect of our faith, and an integral part of our lives, I thought it would be good to state about 250 very poignant ones. Since there is a fair amount of repetition in the four gospels, I don’t repeat these requisitions over & over again. What I decided to do is this — I decided to quote the most significant exhortations in each book of the

New Testament, starting with the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)... it should be remembered, the four gospels contain the statements & exhortations of Jesus Himself to man. Following those particular quotes, I then launch into all of the teachings and instructions of the apostles; *i.e.*, all of the other books of the New Testament. My thinking is, this should give believers a pretty good understanding of God's will for their lives. You'll also notice I have **emboldened** certain words in each statement to help give emphasis to what is stated; so contemplate each statement accordingly. With that in mind, let's begin with gospel of Matthew —

## The Gospel of Matthew

- \*Man doesn't just live by food, but by **God's Word** (4:4)
- \*Man must **worship** God and Him alone (4:10)
- \*Man must **repent** of all His sins (4:17) — Matthew 5-8 is the Sermon on the Mount
- \*Blessed are those who are **beggardly pour** in spirit (5:3)
- \*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **righteousness** (5:6)
- \*Blessed are the **merciful** for they shall receive mercy (5:7)
- \*Blessed are the **peacemakers** and those who are persecuted (5:9-10)
- \*You are to be the **light** of the world, so let your light shine (5:14-16)
- \*You shall not contemplate **adultery** in your mind (5:27-28)
- \*You shall show **kindness** to your enemies (5:43-48)
- \*Daily take the time to **pray** to the Lord in private (6:6-15)
- \*Lay up treasures in **heaven**, not here on earth (6:19-21)
- \*No one can serve **two masters**, he will love one and hate the other (6:24)
- \*Seek first **God's kingdom**, and He will provide all your needs (6:33)
- \*Do not pass **judgment** on others (7:1-2)
- \*Ask, seek and knock, and God will **respond** to you (7:7-11)
- \*Treat others the way you want to be **treated** (7:12)
- \*Build your life on a solid foundation of **divine truth** (7:24-27)
- \*Focus on being **compassionate**, not some outward ritual (9:13)
- \*The harvest is plentiful, but the **workers** are few (9:37-38)
- \*Remember, a disciple is not above **his master** (10:24)
- \*Do not **fear** those who persecute you (10:28)
- \*Make **Christ** the premiere source of your life (10:37-39)
- \*Said Jesus: Take **My yoke** upon you, and learn from Me (11:28-30)
- \*The tree is known by its **fruit** (12:33)
- \*The mouth speaks out of that which fills **the heart** (12:34)
- \*Remember, a prophet generally **lacks honor** in his home town (13:57)
- \*Not many, if any of us, **walk on water** (14:28-31)
- \*That which proceeds out of the mouth comes from **the heart** (15:18)
- \*Those who follow Christ must take up His cross and **deny themselves** (16:24-25)
- \*With God all things are **possible** (19:26)
- \*The greatest believers are **servants** (20:26; 23:11)



- \*Blessed are God's servants who are found serving when Christ returns (24:45-47)
- \*In as much as you serve the needy you are serving God (25:35-40)
- \*Go and make disciples of all nations and all people (28:18-20)

## The Gospel of Mark

- \*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief (9:23-2)
- \*With men things are impossible, but with God all things are possible (10:17)
- \*Not even the Son of Man came to be served, but to serve (10:45)
- \*Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (12:17)
- \*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away (13:31)
- \*Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation (14:38)

## The Gospel of Luke

- \*Give and it shall be given to you (6:38)
- \*Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, and ignore the log in yours? (6:41)
- \*Why do you call Me Lord, and do not do what I say (6:46)
- \*Those who are forgiven much love much; those who are forgiven little love little (7:47)
- \*Lord, teach us to pray (Lk 11:1-4; Mt 6:9-13)
- \*Be on guard against greed, because all things belong to God (12:15)
- \*Where your treasure is, there your heart is also (12:34)
- \*He who exalts himself will be humbled; he who humbles himself will be exalted (14:11)
- \*He who does not carry his own cross, cannot be My disciple (14:26)
- \*He who does not surrender his possessions, cannot be My disciple (14:33)
- \*He who is faithful in a very little thing, will be faithful in much (16:10)
- \*No servant can serve two masters (16:13)
- \*At all times, pray and not lose heart (18:1)
- \*Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat (22:31)

## The Gospel of John

- \*He who drinks the water I give him shall never thirst (4:14)
- \*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth (4:24)
- \*Jesus is the light of the world; he who follows Him will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life (8:12)
- \*He who abides in God's word shall know the truth (8:31-32)
- \*He who is of God hears the words of God (8:47)
- \*The Lord's sheep hear His voice and follow Him (10:27)
- \*Unless wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; however, it if dies it bears much fruit (12:24)
- \*Not believing in Christ blinds one's eyes, and hardens his heart (12:37, 40)
- \*A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you (13:34)

- \*Believe in God the Father and believe in Me (14:1) – Upper Room Discourse (Jn 13-17)
- \*I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me (14:6)
- \*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (14:15)
- \*After I ascend into heaven, I will send the Spirit of truth to dwell within you, and lead you in all things (Jn 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13)
- \*If you abide in My word, ask what you wish and it will be done for you (15:17)
- \*In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, for I have overcome the world (Jn 16:33; Acts 14:22)
- \*Said Jesus to His Father: “Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth” (Jn 17:7)

## The Book of Acts

- \*We must obey God rather than man (5:29)
- \*The people in Berea received the word with Great eagerness, and examined the Scripture daily to see whether these things were so (17:11)

## The Book of Romans

- \*Man is justified by Faith apart from the works of the Law (3:28)
- \*The reason it is by Faith, is that it might be in accordance with Grace (4:16)
- \*Having been justified by Faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ (5:1)
- \*The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (5:5)
- \*The Law came in that transgression might increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (5:20)
- \*Consider yourself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (6:11)
- \*You died to the Law through Christ that you might bear fruit for God (7:4)
- \*Nothing good dwells in our flesh (7:18)
- \*Jesus Christ sets us free from the body of this death (7:24)
- \*There is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus (8:1)
- \*We are to put to death the deeds of the body by the Holy Spirit (8:13)
- \*The sufferings we go through, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us (8:19)
- \*In hope we have been saved (8:24)
- \*God causes all things to work together for good in our lives (8:28)
- \*If God is for us, who can be against us? (8:31)
- \*No one can separate us from the love of Christ (8:35)
- \*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (10:17)
- \*The gifts and the calling of God are irreversible (11:29)
- \*Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, which is your spiritual service of worship (12:1)
- \*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (12:2)
- \*Whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23; Jam 4:17)

\*Whatever was written in ages past was written for our instruction (15:4)

## The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians

- \*A natural man cannot understand the things of God, because they are spiritually appraised (2:4)
- \*Each man's work will one day become evident; either it will be rewarded or burned up (3:12-15)
- \*It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy (4:2)
- \*Flee immorality; your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you (6:18-19)
- \*You have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body (6:20)
- \*Knowledge makes arrogance, but love edifies (8:1)
- \*Run in such a way that you may win (9:24)
- \*Said Paul: I buffet my body and make it my slave (9:27)
- \*No temptation has taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able — and He provides the way of escape that you will be able to endure it (10:13)
- \*Every believer has been gifted for the good of others (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:12)
- \*Now abide faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love (13:13)
- \*Don't be deceived, bad company corrupts good morals (15:13)
- \*Be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (15:58)

## The Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

- \*God comforts us in our affliction, that we might be able to comfort others who are being afflicted (1:4)
- \*You are a letter of Christ being read by all men (3:2)
- \*You are being transformed into the image of Christ (3:18)
- \*Though our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day (4:16)
- \*We walk by faith, not by sight (5:7)
- \*We will all eventually appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and be recompensed for all our deeds (5:10)
- \*All believers in Christ are new creatures — old things have passed away, and new things have come (5:17)
- \*All of us as believers are to be ambassadors for Christ (5:20)
- \*Let us perfect our holiness in the fear of God (7:1)
- \*He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully (9:6)
- \*God is able to make all grace abound to you (9:8)
- \*We are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (10:2)
- \*Said God, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (12:9)

## The Book of Galatians

- \*As believers, we have been crucified with Christ... so the life we are now called to live is a life of faith in Christ who loved us and died for us (2:20)
- \*Having begun by the Spirit, we cannot perfect ourselves by our flesh (3:3)
- \*The righteous man shall live by faith (3:11)
- \*For believers, circumcision means nothing, only faith working through love (5:6)
- \*Remember, the whole Law is fulfilled in one word – “love” (5:14)
- \*Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (5:16)
- \*The flesh sets its desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; they are in opposition to one another, so that we cannot do as we please (5:17)
- \*Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the Law of Christ (6:2)
- \*Do not be deceived... for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap (6:7)
- \*Do not lose heart in doing good, for in due time you shall also reap (6:9)

## The Book of Ephesians

- \*God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3)
- \*God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (1:4)
- \*God made known to us the mystery of His will (1:9)
- \*God works all things after the council of His will (1:11)
- \*God being rich in mercy because of His great love for us, made us alive together with Christ (2:4-5)
- \*By grace we have been saved through faith, it is the gift of God (2:8)
- \*We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (2:10)
- \*May God strengthen you with power by His Spirit in the inner man (3:10)
- \*God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think (3:20)
- \*Walk in a manner worthy of God’s calling (4:1)
- \*God has gifted each of us for the work of service, that the body of Christ might be built up in love (4:12, 16)
- \*Lay aside your old self, and put on your new self (4:22-24)
- \*Be imitators of Christ and walk in love (5:1-2)
- \*You formerly walked in darkness, now walk as Children of light (5:8)
- \*Understand what the will of God is, and be filled with the Spirit (5:17-18)
- \*Be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might (6:10)
- \*Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to resist the devil (6:13)

## The Book of Philippians

- \*He who began a work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (1:6)
- \*May your love abound more and more in real knowledge (1:9)
- \*To live is Christ, and to die is gain (1:21)

- \*Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (2:17)
- \*It has been granted for Christ's sake, to not only believe in Him, but to suffer for His sake (1:29)
- \*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of regard one another more important than oneself (2:3)
- \*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God is at work in you (2:12-13)
- \*Forget what lies behind, and press on toward the goal of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus (3:13-14)
- \*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, that His peace might guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus (4:6-7)
- \*You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (4:13)

## **The Book of Colossians**

- \*May you be filled with the knowledge of God's will, so that you might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (1:9-10)
- \*God delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (1:13)
- \*Christ reconciled you to Himself through death, in order to present you before Himself holy and blameless and beyond reproach (1:22)
- \*As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him (2:6)
- \*When you were dead in your transgressions, Christ made you alive together with Him (2:13)
- \*Set your mind on things above, not on the things of this earth (3:2)
- \*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (3:16)
- \*Above everything, put on love, and let the peace of God rule in your heart (4:14-15)

## **The Books of Thessalonians**

- \*This is the will of God for you, your sanctification (1 Th 4:3)
- \*God's call upon our lives is our sanctification (1 Th 4:7)
- \*Pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Th 5:17-18)
- \*Faithful is He who called you, and He will bring it to pass (1 Th 5:24)
- \*God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth (2 Th 2:13)

## **The Letters to Timothy**

- \*The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart (1 Tim 1:5)
- \*The church of the living God is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15)

- \*Discipline yourself for the purpose of **godliness** (1 Tim 4:17)
- \*Do not neglect the **spiritual gift** in you (1 Tim 4:14)
- \***Godliness** is a means of great gain (1 Tim 6:6)
- \*Fight the good fight of **faith** (1 Tim 6:12)
- \*Guard what has been **entrusted** to you (1 Tim 6:20)
- \*God has not given us a spirit of **timidity**, but of power, love and discipline (2 Tim 1:7)
- \*It is a trustworthy statement – even if we are faithless, God remains **faithful** to us, (because His covenant with us is a unilateral covenant) (2 Tim 2:11-13)
- \*Be **diligent** to present yourself approved to God, handling accurately the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15)
- \*All Scripture is **inspired** by God (i.e., it is God-breathed) (2 Tim 3:16)

## The Book of Hebrews

- \*The word of God is living and active and **extremely powerful**, and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (4:12)
- \*We have a high priest who **sympathizes** with our weaknesses, because He was tempted in all things like we are... therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive **mercy and grace** to help in time of need (4:15-16)
- \*Hold fast the confession of your hope, for He who promised is **faithful** (10:23)
- \*Let us consider how to **stimulate** one another to love and good deeds, and not forsake our assembling together as is the habit of some (10:24-25)
- \*Faith is the assurance of things **hoped for**, the conviction of things not seen (11:1)
- \*Without faith it is impossible to **please God** – we must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (11:6)
- \*Let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on **Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith (12:1-2)
- \*Do not regard lightly the **discipline** of the Lord... though discipline is not pleasant, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (12:5, 11)
- \*Said Jesus: “I will never leave you or **forsake** you” (13:5)
- \*May the God of peace **equip** you to do His will in all things (13:20-21)

## The Book of James

- \*Consider trials joy, knowing that the **testing of your faith** produces endurance (1:2-3)
- \*Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by **his own lust** (1:14)
- \*In **humility**, receive the word implanted, which is able to save your soul (1:21)
- \*Prove yourselves **doers** of the word, not merely hearers who delude themselves (1:22)
- \*This is pure and **undefiled religion** in the sight of God – visiting orphans and widows in their distress, and keeping oneself unstained by the world (1:27)
- \*Remember, faith without **works** (i.e., obedience) is useless (2:20)
- \*Let not many become **teachers**, because you will incur a stricter judgment (3:1)

- \*God's wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy & good fruits (4:6)
- \*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives/self-pleasure (4:3)
- \*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (4:6)
- \*Resist the devil and he will flee from you (4:7)
- \*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (4:8)
- \*To know the right thing to do, and not do it, to him that is sin (4:17)
- \*We count those blessed who endure (as Job did); the Lord is full of compassion to such people (5:11)

## The Letters of Peter

- \*Because of God's great mercy, we have been born again to a living hope thru Christ's resurrection (1 Pet 1:3)
- \*In this you greatly rejoice, even though you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith may be found to result in peace (1 Pet 1:6-7)
- \*Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:13)
- \*Fervently love one another from the heart (1 Pet 1:22)
- \*Long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Pet 2:2)
- \*God called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9)
- \*Abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul (1 Pet 2:4)
- \*Christ bore our sins on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness (1 Pet 2:24)
- \*Sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart (1 Pet 3:15)
- \*Since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same purpose, because He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin... that you might live to the will of God (1 Pet 4:1-2)
- \*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of God's grace (1 Pet 4:10)
- \*Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, it comes upon you for the testing of your faith (1 Pet 4:12)
- \*If it is difficult for the righteous to be saved, what will the godless be subjected to (1 Pet 4:18)
- \*Cast all your anxiety on the Lord, because He cares for you (1 Pet 5:7)
- \*Satan prowls about seeking someone to devour... but resist him firm in the faith (1 Pet 5:8-9)
- \*After you have suffered for a little while in this life, the God of all grace will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you (1 Pet 5:10)
- \*God's divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3)
- \*With great diligence supply moral excellence to your faith (2 Pet 1:5)
- \*Be diligent to make sure of His calling and choosing you (2 Pet 1:10)

- \*No Scripture is an act of human will, but men moved by the **Holy Spirit** spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21)
- \*The Lord knows how to **rescue** the godly from temptation (2 Pet 2:9)
- \*The day of the Lord will come like a **thief in the night**, and the heavens and the earth will pass away with intense heat (2 Pet 3:10)
- \*According to God's promise, we are looking for a new heaven and a new earth in which **righteousness** dwells (2 Pet 3:13)
- \*Be diligent to be **found by Him** in peace, spotless and blameless (2 Pet 3:14)
- \*Be on guard, beloved, and **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18)

## The Letters of John

- \*If we **walk in the light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn 1:7)
- \*If we **confess our sins**, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn 1:9)
- \*Do **not** love the world, or the things in the world; to do so is to not love the Father (1 Jn 2:15)
- \*The **lust** of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of God, but is from this world (1 Jn 2:16)
- \***Abide in Christ**, so that when He appears, you will not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1 Jn 2:28)
- \*Everyone who has his **hope** fixed on Christ, purifies himself just as He is pure (1 Jn 3:3)
- \*Beloved, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in **deed and truth** (1 Jn 3:18)
- \*If we keep God's commandments, whatever we ask we shall receive from Him (1 Jn 3:22)
- \*Beloved, let us **love one another**, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 Jn 4:7-8)
- \*This is the victory that overcomes the world – **“our faith”** (1 Jn 5:4)
- \*These things were written to you who believe, in order that you may **know** that you have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13)
- \*Thus saith the Lord, “I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and **opens the door**, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev 3:20)
- \*God's final message to the believing world at the end of New Testament is this: “Behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me**, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev 22:12-13)



**In closing — God’s message to the Sons of Israel through Moses was this:**

“The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face to shine on you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance on you,  
And give you peace [both now and forever].”  
(cf. Num 6:24-26)